This is Be Known, and I’m Kerrah Fabacher. You’re listening to episode \_31\_\_\_\_\_. We were made for relationship, but so often our relationships are broken. And when our relationships are broken, *we* are broken. One of our deepest human desires is to be known, but we often have lost ourselves along the way. This is a podcast to help you get your relationships back to a place of wholeness. A place of authentic connection, where you feel truly known.

So come on in and sit a while. Let’s exchange fear for love and finally see what good relationships are made of. And let’s see what kind of healing happens here.

One of the most important things I teach about is vulnerability, specifically being honest and assertive when we need to be. Honest about our thoughts and feelings and needs and concerns. Assertive about our boundaries and to stand up for ourselves. To call someone out when appropriate. Speaking up for ourselves is all of these things. This is how we learn to value and use the voice we’ve been given.

Sometimes our words can bring healing and change. We tell someone their actions have hurt us, and they learn from our words and begin to change their actions. We tell another how we’ve been battling sadness and grief, and we already feel a tiny bit better from getting it out. We tell someone we were wrong, that we’re sorry, and reconciliation happens. We tell God how we really feel, and he finally has the open door He needs to bring deeper healing.

Our words matter.

They can bring life.

They can make all the difference in the world.

As a counselor, I coach people how to find and use their words all the time. Her husband is doing something that is hurting her feelings, and we talk about how to *tell* him that. His friend is taking advantage of him, and we talk about how to *tell* the friend it isn’t okay. Her pastor talked down to her, and we talk about how to *tell* him he can’t speak to her that way. He is angry with God, and we talk about how to *tell* God that.

Our words matter.

But sometimes our words don’t do what we hoped they would.

Because a conversation is two-sided. And the other side may not respond in a way that is helpful or kind. They may not listen to your words. They may not change the behavior that hurts you. They may not care about your pain. They may write you off and shush you up and even turn it all back to you somehow, blaming you for things they are responsible for. They may get defensive or tune you out. They may not help you or try to understand your point of view. They may try to change for a little while and then go right back to how they were acting before.

People are broken.

And they won’t always treat us how we want or deserve to be treated.

They will disappoint us at times. It is part of being fallen— our relationships are fallen, too.

Recently a friend of mine went home to have a difficult conversation with her parents who are getting divorced. She knew she needed to tell them some uncomfortable, vulnerable things, but something in her knew that her words wouldn’t change the situation. She was brave enough to say them anyway, but she was right. Her parents reacted as she thought they would, and she left feeling heavy, but proud of herself for saying the hard things.

I think it’s important for us to know what to do when this happens in our lives, when we say something and it falls on deaf ears. Because it will.

1. Understand the power of acceptance

We need to remember that there are things *not* in our hands, and thank God for that. There are things we cannot control, and the response of another is one of those things. That’s on them, and sometimes that response will not be what we hoped it would be. We must be willing to embrace acceptance here, acceptance of the things we cannot change. This is not a blind acceptance or letting someone mistreat you repeatedly. This is more of a peaceful, quiet acceptance within, a knowing that you did what you could, that this situation or person may never change, that restoration may not look like you thought. And then moving forward from there in the way that seems best.

2. Believe in redemption

People are people, and that means they won’t always respond helpfully when we share vulnerably. They will have bad moments when their emotions get the best of them or they are distracted for various reasons. They cannot change overnight, and they may need time to process what you have shared. We need to have realistic expectations here, and give grace when needed. But we can also choose to believe that one or two bad conversations don’t always destroy a relationship. Every thing is redeemable, in one way or another. Though not all relationships can be salvaged, it is healthy to believe at some level they can be. To believe in redemption, even if that redemption is your own only. If it doesn’t extend to the relationship or to the situation. Again, we are not just saying, “it’s fine that this person never listens to me when I say something.” We are saying, “redemption *is* possible.”

3. Practice forgiveness

It is one of the most frustrating things in the world when others do not hear what we say. They do this intentionally or unintentionally, but it’s still frustrating. We long to be heard. To be treated like our voice matters, too. This goes deeper than frustration, though. It becomes hurt. And that hurt, when taken root, can become toxic to us, a kind of bitterness that drives a wedge between us and our people. We can choose forgiveness— a forgiveness that does not justify their hurtful behavior, but that releases the hurt within us. A forgiveness that does not forget about how they respond in painful ways, but chooses to release the anger that eats away at us. A forgiveness that does not always mean reconciliation, but it can.

4. Know when it’s time to walk away

When a person continually responds in unhelpful, and even hurtful ways to you when you share assertively or vulnerably, maybe it is time to consider that this relationship may be coming to an end. Or maybe it’s not the relationship, maybe it’s the conversation that needs to end. It is not okay to share your heart over and over in various ways and for another to not listen or try to change if their behavior is negatively affecting you. Walking away from these relationships may be right for you. If it doesn’t feel like the right thing, maybe the next conversation is about how you feel unheard and why.

5. Don’t be silent.

Say it anyway if it is necessary. Don’t let someone’s bad response shut you up. You still matter, and your voice still matters. It can still bring healing and change and life. It can do mighty things. Believe that. Deep within you. Don’t be silent because one or two tried to shut you up. Keep on speaking. Don’t put a wall up because you’re scared to be vulnerable now. Remember it’s that vulnerability that creates deeper relationships, more whole relationships. It’s wise to pay attention to *who* you *can* talk to and *when*, but keep on speaking, dear friend. Keep telling your story and sharing your heart. Be brave.