This is Be Known, and I’m Kerrah Fabacher, your host. You’re listening to episode \_\_\_10\_\_\_. 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.

If you have not noticed by now, there is a pattern with these episodes. Every week I teach you a simple practice that will help you have a healthier relationship with others, God, or yourself. And I rotate between all three every three weeks. Today, this topic can apply to all three, but it is mainly a way to have a healthier relationship with yourself. A practice of immense self-respect and self-worth.

Years ago I worked with a client I will call Anne. She came faithfully to counseling every week for years to work on her depression and past sexual trauma history. What was fascinating to me about Anne is that during all of the difficult conversations we had, she always had a flat look on her face. She may have cried once ever in session. Once.

She did not express much emotion other than numb.

No tears. No sad expression. No fury. No confusion. Just flat and numb.

Though this is a common experience with people who have trauma in their stories — and it takes a lot of work in therapy to break through that wall — it was eye-opening for me to watch it.

Anne had learned to stuff, avoid, and neglect her emotions as a means of protection in her life. Feeling felt too dangerous. What would she find in her if she let herself feel too much? Something she did not want to see. She did not know how to tune in and pay close attention to her emotions, to welcome them in, to be curious about them.

Many people who have grown up in the church have been indirectly or directly taught to neglect our emotions. No, Sally, don’t be angry. Be forgiving. No, Jim, you don’t have anything to be depressed about. You have a great life and a great God. No, Sarah Sue, don’t be sad. He is in a better place. No, Kerrah, don’t be confused. God must have wanted your babies in heaven instead.

But we serve a God who not only felt and expressed his emotions, but did so tangibly in the person of Jesus.

A Jesus who allowed himself to weep when he found out his friend Lazarus had died.

A Jesus who allowed himself to feel anger in the temple when people were misusing the house of God.

A Jesus who allowed himself to rest when he felt tired.

A Jesus who allowed himself to feel sorrow that came out in tears of blood in the Garden of Gethsemene.

It does not seem God wants us to just “not feel” or “ignore” the emotions we feel.

It seems he wants us to pay attention, to listen.

Our emotions are communicating something to us.

Will we listen?

I think it is important to note that we cannot be whole and heathy people if we are not aware of our emotions, and we can’t have whole relationships either. And when our relationships are broken, we are broken.

Any relationship issue you can think of is only able to be remedied by awareness.

Awareness of what is wrong.

Awareness of the miscommunication.

Awareness of how you feel and what you need.

Awareness of how things have changed.

Awareness of the boundary being crossed.

Awareness of how you need to grow.

Awareness of the other person.

Awareness of self.

Awareness of God.

So if tuning in is this important, I say let’s tune in to those emotions first. Let’s lean in and listen intently as we would with a friend.

Today, I want to give you four ways to be aware of your emotions.

1. Slow Down

We can’t practice awareness if we are not still at some point. I don’t necessarily mean physically still. It could mean a stillness of the mind, too. In her book, *Stay,* Anjui Paschall tells the story of a three-week retreat she took for her spiritual and mental health. She says, “The retreat was designed to deal emotionally with childhood pain that had been thought through, but not actually felt. Digging, digging, digging graveside, ferociously fighting against the earth, and mud, and decay to get to the dead bones. Screaming, attacking, beating, and battling my demons until I didn’t just know my pain, but I felt it.”[[1]](#footnote--1) Don’t you feel this on so many levels? She battled for the first few days against it, but eventually she was able to feel, to really feel what she had been going through. But here is the key: she had to be still with herself to become this aware. From that experience, she began to walk in freedom like she never had before.

We can choose to busy ourselves with all the things and ignore the emotions we have. Or we could slow down.

Slowing down, putting away the phones and calendars and distractions for a moment, is the only way. The only way to self-knowledge, to God-knowledge. The only way to freedom. And isn’t that what we all are longing for? Adam S. McHugh says that “listening requires being,” sitting with your feelings and the voices in your head like you would sit with your friend in the living room.[[2]](#footnote-0)

2. Listen

“Listening, really listening, is like learning another language. Listening is a risk. It can be a scary space. It requires releasing control.” -Anjuli Paschall, *Stay[[3]](#footnote-1)*

Once we are able to slow down, to be quiet and attentive and reflective, we need to listen.

If the goal is whole, healthy, life-giving relationships that are marked by love, this is necessary. We pause, and we listen to ourselves. We listen to our bodies, our minds. We listen to the Spirit of God within us. We listen to the situation. Adam S. McHugh talks about it in this way:

How you listen to yourself will determine how you listen to others. Do you dismiss your own emotions? Then there is a good chance you will make a regular habit of dismissing the emotions of others. Those who are able to discern their own emotions will be most responsive to the emotions of others…

Self-discovery is not the ultimate end of listening to your life: love is. If we want to listen to others with compassion, gentleness and attentiveness, then we must learn to listen to ourselves with those same qualities.[[4]](#footnote-2)

Tune in. Notice any uncomfortable sensations or tension or pain in your body. Notice the thoughts in your mind. Notice you feel.

3. Be Curious

We have already determined that in order for us to be aware, we must first slow down, pay attention and listen. Now it is our turn to ask the hard questions.

A curious posture is where learning begins.

So let’s be curious.

Ask yourself questions like this:

When did I begin feeling this way?

What exactly am I feeling?

In what situations do I feel this way the most?

What is my body telling me?

What is my reaction to this emotion?

What is this feeling telling me?

4. Name your experience

“If you take time to name something that has remain unnamed within you — a fear, a loneliness, a heartbreak, a dream, or a regret — resist the urge to grab and go. Instead, give that name some space to rise up and take shape. Then get curious about it. Hold it in the presence of Jesus. Ask Him for direction and wisdom. Let yourself be a gatherer of information when it comes to what’s happening beneath the surface.”

-Emily P. Freeman, *The Next Right Thing[[5]](#footnote-3)*

This is hard work we are doing. It can feel strenuous to stop and be with ourselves, listen to our experience, and be kind with our curiosity. Because maybe this is the first time anyone has shown you this kind of “compassionate attention.”[[6]](#footnote-4) Showing it to yourself may feel unnatural, an unworked muscle.

The last piece of becoming aware is naming your experience.

Give the emotion a name.

Anger

Grief

Sadness

Fear

Confusion

Loneliness

Joy

Loved

It’s not so scary, right? It is just a name.

We don’t want to listen to our emotions because we don’t want them to take over. But naming them takes away some of their power. Where they are simply present in the room but not ruling the room. They are in the car but not driving.

Loving yourself means welcoming your emotions. Listening to your emotions.

We cannot do one without the other.

We don’t have to obey our emotions. But we do need to listen to them.

Enter music.

Slow down. Listen. Be curious. And name.

I know that we are opening places you may have kept hidden on a shelf for many years. I know you hear about awareness, and you may feel afraid. What are you going to find behind the closed door? What will happen then? What if you don’t like what you see? May we all remember that we do not have to practice awareness alone. Our Jesus is near. He is gentle and kind, and He wants you to know the depths of your soul. Because He has already seen it, known it. And He knows you are missing out if you don’t get it to know it, too.

1. *Stay: Discovering Grace, Freedom, and Wholeness Where You Never Imagined Looking.* Anjuli Paschall. Bethany House: Minneapolis, MN. 2020. (60). [↑](#footnote-ref--1)
2. *The Listening Life: Embracing Attentiveness in a World of Distraction.* Adam S. McHugh. InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove, IL. 2015. (179, 181). [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
3. *Stay,* p. 74. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
4. *The Listening Life,* p. 178-179. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
5. *The Next Right Thing: A Simple, Soulful Practice for Making Life Decisions.* Emily P. Freeman. Revell: Grand Rapids, MI. 2019. (40). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
6. From *Try Softer.* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)