This is Be Known, and I’m Kerrah Fabacher. You’re listening to episode \_\_\_24\_\_\_. 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.

Confession time. Listening has not always been my strong suit. My parents could attest to that about teenage me. I 100% spoke my mind (a bit loudly, I might add) to my parents, and I was told a lot that I was disrespectful. I remember one time I just would not be quiet in the car with my mom. I kept at it, not listening to her. And it got to the point where every new sentence added another month to my grounding.

I was grounded for like 6 months.

Who would have thought that I would be a star student? Yep that was me. Teacher’s pet much of the time. Good grades. Turned everything in on time. Followed all the rules.

Except for the pesky little hole in my face that never shut up.

The only thing I ever got in trouble for in school was talking too much. My 7th grade history teacher named Coach Walters despised me. If I ever said words out of my mouth, he made me go home and memorize five Japanese words. And I had to do that a lot.

I just could not shut my mouth. Which, if you are paying attention, means I was not a great listener. I never really remember doing this well with my friends, either. I wanted to share about my things and my stories and whatever drama was happening with whatever boy at the time, but I don’t remember being genuinely interested in what was going on in my friends’ lives. I was one of those people who pretended to listen, but I was just thinking about what I needed too say next or what personal story could one-up the other’s story.

It’s kind of embarrassing, honestly.

As an adult, I’ll admit, I’ve still struggled with this, too, but when you go to school to become a counselor, you have to develop some listening skills or no one will want to be your client. So I’ve grown in it. I think. I hear clients say that they do not feel like others listen to them, and if I’m honest, I do not like it when people aren’t listening to me. And y’all know that’s happening in this house with a husband with ADHD and 3 kids 6 and under.

And recently I was sharing with some of my writing friends about a meeting I had that did not go well. The thing that bothered me the most about was I did not feel heard. I said one thing, he said another. I went one direction; he kept going another. And it felt like we were getting nowhere. Not feeling heard is the worst.

If this seems to be a universal complaint, I’m guessing that means it is also a universal struggle. Maybe no one is a naturally strong listener. Maybe it takes time and practice to learn these skills. And sadly, many people aren’t going to invest that kind of time. Probably because we always think we listen just fine.

The term I will use here to describe the kind of listening I want us to begin practicing with others is *active listening.*

Some say there are three components of active listening:

- Comprehend

- Retain

- Respond

We want to understand what the other is saying as much as we can, but misunderstanding is often the result of poor listening. We want to remember what is said and what is not said, and then we want to respond in a thoughtful, reflective, and humble way. If I don’t think you care to listen to me, I probably won’t give you much more of my time. And I bet you feel the same way. We need to grow in this skill, in interactions with others in person and online.

We need to be active listeners. The word active indicates that we are invested in the person and the conversation, that we are not passively pushing them aside to do whatever we are doing, but to show them their voice matters. We need to do this at work, at home, and with friends. People will never complain about you being such a great listener. But they won’t want much to do with you if you are *not* a great listener. So how do we do this? I’ll share five simple ways that we can become

## Turn toward and make eye contact.

There is a lot of power in pausing whatever you are doing in a moment, facing your body toward a person talking to you and make eye contact. Parents of small children can even bend down so that you are eye-level with your child when they speak. If you do not do this, you are intentionally or unintentionally communicating that you do not care about what this person is saying. And people notice that. Either they will try to get your full attention, or they will give up on the conversation completely.

## Pay attention to the nonverbals.

Some say that nonverbal communication accounts for around 90% of what is actually being said. The words make up the rest. I think we should be paying close attention. If a person is not looking at you during the conversation, maybe looking down or all around the room, that means they could be uncomfortable, anxious, or angry. If a person is crossing her arms, it could indicate that she is frustrated. If someone’s tone of voice is melancholy and lacks inflection, they may be feeling sad or tired. When we pay attention to nonverbals, we are looking for what is not said. We look at facial expressions, body language, eye contact. We are listening for tone of voice, rhythm of voice, and any pressure behind the words. We can’t make an assumption based on these things, but they are telling.

## Wait for your turn to speak.

Goodness, why is this so difficult? I think it’s because we just have to be heard, but I think we forget that our voice is not the only one that matters in the room. We need to give the other the floor and let them say what they need to say. So we wait for our turn and do not interrupt. If a person clearly is finished talking, you can simply ask, “may I speak now?” or just naturally begin speaking. If the person is not finished, they should clarify that. If we are too passive here, we just won’t speak at all and we let people talk at us instead of with us. So we do need to respond, just not while the other is speaking.

## Ask clarifying questions.

When it’s your turn, ask clarifying questions about what the person has just said. This will help you retain the necessary information. These questions could be something like, “I’m hearing you say this. Is that what you mean?” or “Can you give me an example?” or “You seem to be upset with me; is that accurate or is something else going on?” “Are you feeling \_\_\_\_\_\_?” “What do you need from me right now?” While you do this, you can also summarize what they have said so that you don’t miss anything. If something is not clear, seek as much clarity as possible.

## Share your thoughts when the other is finished.

After this process of listening and clarifying, then you may have the floor. If the situation requires a response from you, now is the time to share it. Watch your own defensiveness here, especially if the other person is upset with you. Take a deep breath. Remain calm. And respond in a way that is kind, humble, and assertive. There is no formula for responding, but a powerful statement that is easy to implement is some form of, “I hear you.” We don’t always need to give our opinion unless it is necessary, and we don’t always need to share our thoughts or feelings about something a person has said. Sometimes, it is simply enough to show them you’ve heard.

I love this quote so much that I’m sharing it with you. It’s by William Hazlitt. He says, “The art of conversation is the art of hearing as well as of being heard.”

Listening is powerful. Poor listening can be the downfall of any type of relationship, but active listening? Gosh that can be the very thing that heals it. I pray that we will be the ones who choose to listen intentionally.

Thanks for sitting a while with me. I trust that becoming an active listener will help you make one more step toward wholeness so that you can finally see what good relationships are made of.

I know it’s so real that we can grow in our own listening skills til we are blue in the face, but our people don’t always follow suit. And that can feel exhausting. Why listen when no one listens to us? I get it. That’s so real. If you need a listening ear, I would love to work with you on a one-on-one basis. You can find out more about what I offer in online coaching at [www.kerrahfabacher.com/book-online](http://www.kerrahfabacher.com/book-online).

You can find me on instagram @kerrahfabacher or at my website, [www.kerrahfabacher.com](http://www.kerrahfabacher.com).

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And a big thanks to my friend, Robert Hargrove, for creating the music for our podcast, and fellow hope\*writer, Alana Dawson for editing the show.

Until next time, friend.

I’ll see you soon!