

## BElonging (Recording Transcript)

### 1. Valentine Letters:

*"my husband and I had a terrible loss in 2018. Our daughter Lucy passed away January 27. In 2018, and she was almost 10 She had been born with a very rare metabolic disease, which meant she was very compromised in every sense. It was, you know, complete care. So she needed help with every aspect of living. So that was, you know, that was a lot. But we managed it at home. And it was remarkable. It was a remarkable decade of caring for a child who needed help with literally everything. And doing it in our home. Together, and, you know, not really knowing what to do, either. So it was, it was a remarkable time. And a time of great, you know, discovery with respect to what we were capable of, in terms of parenting and being, you know, for me, specifically a mother. So, that's sort of the groundwork, you know, and there were so many, so many. So, I mean, I can't even begin to list how many kindnesses and acts of service and, you know, outreaches within multiple communities, our neighbors, our friends, you know, the kids, the other kids, so it's, we have, we have two other children. Lucy was our middle child. So, you know, it's impossible, it was it was like a stream. And the one that I wanted to share with you, you know, amongst the millions that I could think of was right after she died. And, you know, it was such a strange time period, because you are busy. We had, you know, arrangements to make, and yet you are completely isolated in your grief. So, you know, we had a lot of people supporting us. And by support, I literally mean people coming to our home, and like, holding us up. And, you know, every time I looked up, there was somebody new in my house. Somebody bringing juice, somebody bringing, you know, just stopping by, I mean, it was just a stream of people. And that was, I guess, you know, I guess that's what people do. But I remember, there was one afternoon, where it was finally kind of quiet. And I had just a little bit of time to myself. And this was before her service, which we were also you know, planning and organizing and, and a friend knocked on the door. I didn't really know her very well, actually. And she just left a little bag at the door. And I went, and I got it. And you know, like we were literally there were so many things that were coming to the house. Okay, I opened it up. And it was a bag of Valentine's cards, plank, Valentine cards, and a little rubber rubber stamp that she had included. So she had gone to the store and picked out some cards and an ink pad and a stamp. And I just thought, wow, you know, that's so such a strange thing to bring. And then I realized, oh, Valentine's Day is coming up. And the kids are going to need my other two kids are going to need these cards to hand out to their friends. And they're going to be you know, in math that I was even thinking, you know, I wasn't thinking about anything except for, you know, Lucy. But this friend, I don't know, she just knew somehow that that was kind of important in our family. Because I had made cards with the kids in the past and we'd always given them out and she sort of anticipated that and And the fact that that was a bag of love, like, literally heart shaped paper cards. I just I have that's always kind of stayed with me. And I remember thinking that he was another mom, who, you know, doesn't really have a shared experience with me, but understands on a very basic level that, you know, mothers, as we mother, we, you know, we have those moments where we want everything to stop, where we can just lie down on the floor, but you still have to make dinner, you still have to pay the bills, you still have to, you know, after this, I'm gonna go return the sweatshirts for my daughter, you know. And, you know, I just, I guess it was an instance of feeling very taken care of, but also feeling like, there was a large group of mothers out there who, even though they have very different shared experiences,*

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*could really tap into that instinct, and that very strong need to keep going, you know, like, you know, we still need to do all this stuff, and you have to take care of the people who are in your family. And, you know, look after the other two kids.”*

### **2. Things Get lost in Translation:**

*A time that someone made me feel like I belonged was the first thing that comes to mind was my freshman year of college. I had grown up in a small mountain town in northeast Tennessee. And so it's that southern Appalachian area which is kind of bridges the gap between mountain town and the Deep South and so you have a combination of cultures but the greatest factor of being it's a small town, and I had just moved to a college six hours away south in Birmingham, Alabama. It was a small private Christian University and I picked it because I was too scared to get out of my comfort zone. I grew up with hearing loss in a predominantly conservative and Christian family and really craved a smaller area for me to feel safe and secure. I think a big issue with this type of disability, albeit it is pretty minor is that things get lost in translation. I don't know what I don't hear. And not everybody realizes what I don't catch all the time. And in time that I felt truly seen and that I belonged was making, or introduce being introduced to and making certain friends. Primary one, her name is Grace. Grace now lives in Idaho with her husband. And she is a wonderful person, but grace and I used to hate each other. She was from a another small town in Arkansas. And I was from my small mountain town, and we were squabbling over which type of cow is the best behaved. Who would have thought, right. And we were paired up in a writing class, a freshman writing class, and we hated each other. And then, three weeks later, we were put into the same sorority. And so you know, that started to break down the barriers a bit. And so one of the writing prompts in this class, we were required to write an essay about overcoming a challenge or a setback. And honestly, I grew up at a really, really lovely home with really lovely parents. And we always had plenty of money. So there weren't a whole lot of challenges for me to overcome in such a short span of life. And that is truly a huge blessing to anybody. And that's all any parent could ever ask for, for their kids. But it's really hard for somebody who always had it easy to talk about overcoming a challenge. But I was telling her about the disconnect, that I feel for most people, especially in loud spaces, or big crowds, or a bumping party, because I just feel like I'm in a glass bowl, and a room full of strangers. And so she started doing research. And she started picking up ways with speech pathologist to kind of read my facial expressions, she would help order me food at restaurants. And that was a time I really felt seen. And that's how we really became friends. And we became roommates for the remaining three years of my undergrad experience. And she has taught every boyfriend that I ever dated how to deal with me since then, save for the one now, because he's known me my whole life. And that's a story for a whole nother time. But that was a time I felt really seen that somebody went above and beyond because I never expected anyone to do that for me outside of my own family.*