Episode 344 | LEADING BEYOND PERFORMANCE

Featuring Kathy Oneto, Mark Crowley & Carol Kauffman

Kathy Oneto | 00:00

you know, what's led me on my journey and learning like as a hard worker, I'm not always the best at managing myself. And how do I better manage myself to not get myself in those situations? Or honoring, you know, how I'm wired and how I might work. And then if that's the case, how do I keep myself sustained?

Mark Crowley | 00:20

So when I started managing people out of college, I unconsciously decided to give people what I always believe would have made me infinitely more successful at that point in my life.

Carol Kauffman | 00:30

No matter what it is that's being thrown at us, how do we stay steady and create a space for ourselves?

Tony Martignetti | 00:38

When we think about great leadership, we often think about the visible things, the results, the milestones, the extraordinary drive it takes to move people and organizations forward. But there is another side of leadership that doesn't always make it into the highlight reel. What happens to us when ambition becomes relentless? What happens to the people we lead when performance matters more than how they feel? And in the moments when the pressure is greatest. How do we decide who we want to be? Welcome to the 12th and final episode of our special 12-part journey around the virtual campfire. Throughout this series, we've revisited conversations that remind us leadership is shaped by our experiences, our choices, and the courage to grow. For this final gathering, I brought together three voices that offer a powerful way to think about the future of leadership. Kathy Oneto challenges us to pursue ambitions we can sustain. Mark Crowley reveals why caring for people is not separate from performance, but central to it. And Carol Kauffman helps us understand the space we can create between what happens to us and how we respond. These conversations happened at different times, but I hear them speaking to one another. Together they ask us to rethink. Not only what success looks like, but what it feels like for ourselves and for the people whose lives we touch. Let's begin with a drive to achieve, and the moment we realize that drive needs direction. Around every campfire, stories have helped us make sense of the world and ourselves. They remind us that change often begins with a moment of curiosity, courage, or connection. I'm Tony Martignetti. Welcome to the virtual campfire. The fire is lit. Let's gather where stories spark transformation. One of the things I appreciate about Kathy's story is that she doesn't reject ambition. She has always been curious, willing to take risks, and eager to discover what's possible. Those qualities open doors for her, but she also learns something many high achievers eventually confront. Just because we have the capacity to take on more doesn't mean we can keep doing so indefinitely. There's a difference between being energized by a challenge and And feeling responsible for every challenge that comes our way. Sometimes the qualities that make us successful are the same ones that make it difficult to recognize when we're running on empty. Listen to how Kathy began to see the tension in her own journey.

Kathy Oneto | 03:30

From a startup experience?

Kathy Oneto | 03:33

A couple of things. I mean, one, kind of over stretching myself, right? Like getting a little burned out. And, you know, again, that's part of, you know, what's led me on my journey and learning, like as a hard worker, I'm not always the best at managing myself. And how do I better manage myself to not get myself in those situations? Or honoring, you know, how I'm wired and how I might work. And then if that's the case, how do I keep myself sustained? through those kind of moments. And, you know, and then honestly, I also think I am somebody who is wired. I really enjoy the upfront creation component part of projects. I really appreciate that as opposed to being an operator. And so, you know, I like the strategy. I like the upfront creation. and then Frankly, once it starts to get into operating mode, I start to get a little bored. And by the, you know, the the third time you're starting to be like, well, let's relook at the brand again and let's like revisit the website. It's kind of like, no, I think you can find somebody else to probably do that a little bit better than me at this stage. So I also, as I said, each step in my journey, as I reflect back now, I can recognize that it was both driven by, well, what am I? curious about next and what do I want to learn next or what do I want to deepen. And so recognizing that, I really love strategy. I'd really love this opportunity because I had worked at Young and Rubicam and I'd had an opportunity to work with Landor, which is one of the preeminent design agencies, and had a lot of familiarity with them and had also thought, maybe that's something I might want to do in the future. And so I didn't work at Landor, but I looked worked at another global design firm and brand strategy. And so Yeah, even though I could play in multiple sandboxes, it's funny, Tony. I hadn't ever connected that those dots either. So you're giving me a lot of insight today. But it's interesting because other people often, when they ask me about, well, how did you go to a startup? So many people ask me that. Like, how could you go from a large organization and how did you transition into a startup? And it just it wasn't difficult for me. And I think maybe it is because of what you're saying. I I am multidisciplinary. I light it like a lot of different things. I am curious and it gave me that opportunity.

Tony Martignetti | 05:49

There's an honesty in Kathy acknowledging that she could be drawn to exciting work and still find herself stretched too thin. I think many of us recognize that feeling. We say yes because the opportunity is meaningful, because we're curious, or because we don't want to let someone down. Then, almost without noticing, the things that once energize us begin to drain us. For me, the important question isn't simply how to recover from that point. It's how to recognize the signs sooner and how to build a definition of success that doesn't require us to reach the breaking point before we make a change.

Kathy Oneto | 06:30

Yeah, I mean, this was probably actually the core of what actually started to get me interested in this topic and exploration. It was the initial thread, even though it's kind of, you know, sustainable ambition actually is a complex topic and it has a lot of different tentacles. But this notion of like, well, how do you stay engaged over time? And how do you, like you said, keep that fire lit? And it's something that I think about quite a bit. And I think that, you know, one of the things this has been a learning over time. It continues to be a learning. I'm I'm sure with the topics you explore too, Tony, like it's not like it stops with the book is written and launched. You know, you continue to learn and you continue to experience. And I'm learning just along the way with everybody else in terms of my own experience. And more and more I'm starting to really see our navigating of ambitions over time as following a creative process. And that I've always thought like we kind of, I believe ambition ebbs and flows over time in that what often is happening is we're going through these cycles of kind of well, what might be next and exploring what might be next and trying to get more clarity around that. And oftentimes we don't give ourselves enough space and time to allow that to gestate and to take

shape and to take form. And then once it's clear, then we get into execution mode. And then having to recognize, like as we get into execution mode, that's still going to be a learning process. But then we can also get to, just as that idea of an S curve of learning or growth, that we can get to that point where, okay, I'm done with this, right? I'm I'm ready to move on for something new. And it's often why, you know, I pee borrow from Peter Drucker, where I say, you know, we need to plant seeds sooner than we think. Peter Drucker had talked about, you know, especially he was talking a lot about the second stage of our careers. I think this is true anytime, especially now, which is, and this is why I think it's important for all of us to remain curious that. You know, we need to plant seeds sooner than we think because oftentimes most of us want that clarity that comes in the middle. Okay, what am I doing next? Where's that clarity? So that I can get into execution mode. But I think we ignore the fact that we need this upfront exploration time and gestation time and kind of getting to clarity to kind of figure out what might be next. so I think that's part of as you're saying, how do you keep things lit over time? There's a lot of nuance within that, but that's one idea.

Tony Martignetti | 08:54

What strikes me about that experience is how easy it is to confuse momentum with meaning. We can be moving quickly, taking on exciting work, and still lose sight of whether the pace fits the life we're trying to build. Kathy's story makes me think about the difference between having ambition and being driven by it. And I think this distinction matters for leaders. We set the pace not only for ourselves, but often for everyone around us. If we're constantly proving our commitment by how much we can carry, what are we teaching other people about success? Kathy offers a more intentional way to think about ambition. One that starts by asking what truly matters, rather than simply asking what else we can accomplish.

Kathy Oneto | 09:45

Yeah, well, let me frame just first like what sustainable ambition is about. You know, I think about it as, you know, you've kind of framed it up, but it's about, you know, pursuing goals and dreams in a way that's really fulfilling, focused, and manageable both in the short term and the long term, rather than be all consuming and leading to us sacrificing ourselves or our lives in the process of pursuing what we want for ourselves, right? And so what I present in the book is, you know, oftentimes we think that what we're searching for is we use this term work-life balance when we end up feeling discomfort with what we're what we have. But I don't think that term serves us. And I don't think it helps us navigate what really we're challenged by, which are the con how do we navigate the conflicts around all we want to do in our life and in our work? And so I present a method in the book around, you know, this idea of really directing our ambitions consciously and wisely by aligning the right ambitions at the right time with the right effort. And the book really offers a mindset and that method too that I hope people can come back to again and again because I do think it's a practice. It's not something we just get right at one time. It really takes discernment and adjustment and adapting over time. But that could The method can help us define goals at any life stage, really prioritize across life and work and what we want to focus on and what matters now, while achieving success and personal success with really more resilience and sustaining ourselves over time.

Tony Martignetti | 11:16

What I hear in Kathy's definition is permission to be deliberate. We can be deeply committed to doing important work while still asking whether the way we're pursuing it makes sense for this stage of life. That requires us to let go of the idea that success has only one pace or one shape. And there's a leadership lesson here too. If our own priorities change as life changes, why will we expect everyone on our teams to be? To have the same needs, motivations, and capacity at every moment.

Kathy Oneto | 11:51

Yeah, well, and what I say is ambition is good. Look, if we weren't ambitious, we wouldn't have many things in our lives and we wouldn't have the drive to create and really have the agency, right, to create what we want for ourselves and we wouldn't have these amazing things that happen in the world. And so I say ambition is good. It's just about dialing it in to get it just right so that it is sustainable. And so, you know, I I think that you can have too little ambition. One of the things I talk about in the book is this idea of a U curve of ambition. And, you know, you can have too little ambition where you start to feel stagnant, or you can start to lean in and have a little bit dialing of the ambition where it starts to get into what I call the severe zone. And, you know, just that danger zone of, okay, now I'm on this achievement treadmill or constantly striving and I'm not attached to it. And I'm also ignoring other parts of my life that really are important to me and I'm burning myself out. Like that's not the great, you know, side of ambition. So how do you get it dialed in just right to make it sustainable for yourself? So I also think that I like to this idea of really reclaiming the term ambition to make it good, but also to reclaim it from a sense of like, first off, it's not just about work. It's about life ambitions as well. Anything that you want, that it ebbs and flows over time. It's not just this constant trait, I think about it as a state, as well as, you know, it doesn't have to mean that we're driving hard all the time. Yes, an ambition is something that you want, that you desire and that you're willing to put hard work in to go after. But that doesn't mean that you drive so hard it that you drive yourself into burnout. And I think by reclaiming the term and allowing for some of this rethinking of it, you know, because sometimes Using this term, just as you said, hey, you're ambitious. Sometimes that comes across people are like, that's a negative thing. But also when somebody thinks of themselves as being ambitious and see it as part of their identity and something shifts on them, it also starts to make them feel bad. Like, well, wait, if I'm not ambitious anymore, what does that mean? And so it's like, well, it's not perhaps that you aren't ambitious, it's just that you're in a different state right now.

Tony Martignetti | 14:05

There is something liberating in the idea that ambition can change shape. We don't have to want the same things at the same intensity in every season of our lives. Making room for that change isn't giving up. It may be one of the most honest ways we can stay committed to the things that matter. But this conversation also raises a bigger leadership question. If we want a more sustainable relationship with our own ambition, What responsibility do we have to create that possibility for others? We can tell people to take care of themselves, but if the environment we create rewards exhaustion and treats vulnerability as weakness, our words won't mean very much. That brings me to Mark Crowley. His understanding of leadership didn't begin with the management framework. It began with an absence, with the support and care he needed growing up, but didn't receive. What he chose to do with that experience became the foundation of a very different way to lead. As you listen to Mark, I invite you to notice something that can be easy to overlook. His story is about hardship, but it's also about a choice. He could have repeated the patterns of leadership he knew. Instead, he began giving his teams the encouragement, safety, and belief that had been missing in his own life. What I find so compelling is that he didn't lower expectations. He believed in his people and expected them to do meaningful, demanding work. He simply understood that people are more capable of rising to a challenge when they know someone is in their corner. His story asked us to consider whether the way we lead brings out people's confidence or quietly erodes it.

Mark Crowley | 15:59

So honestly, Tony, I could give you the whole journey because I realized that the the whole sequence of why we're even talking connects to my early childhood and all the way through to today. And so what I'll try to do is encapsulate it as as efficiently as I can. But I'm really what I'm gonna try to do is tell you my life story in the next three minutes. Mom died when I was young, didn't no one told me she was dying, major shock. Point forward, raised by my father, very successful business guy, but a

very ineffective, actually very destructive human being who psychologically and emotionally abused me for the rest of my childhood, pretty much crippled my self-esteem and then kicked me out of the house right after I graduated from high school. He was a very wealthy guy, could have paid my tuition, could have given me first in months last rent, could have put food in the cupboard, none of that, never went back for Christmas, never went back for a birthday. It was over. And so I had a real struggle to try to figure out how am I gonna survive. I didn't have it, I was working like 10 hours a week thinking I'm getting ready to go to college and had the rug pulled out from under me. So I it took me six years to graduate. I ended up pretty much getting myself stable, but the first couple of years were really brutal. And when I finally got to a point of graduating, graduated from a top university, one of the top 10 public schools in the country, and actually No, well, I didn't do very well at the beginning. I did very well at the end. And I started to see people that were graduating and they were going off to graduate schools and law schools. And I'm like, was just feeling like, thank God I got through this. Like, like I didn't even believe that I had accomplished it. And I started thinking about, well, what what is it about these people that made them so confident to go off to Harvard Business School when I'm thinking nobody's gonna want me. Like I don't deserve to go to any of these great schools or even apply to them and And I realized that what was should be obvious is that they had caring people in their life, people that love them, supported them, encouraged them, propped them back up when they weren't doing well or approved of them when they got a good paper and all those kinds of things. And also place to go home to. So if you went away to school and you came home for a holiday, you knew mom was gonna cook something for you. And you know, there was just that love. And I didn't have any of that. So when I started managing people out of college. I unconsciously decided to give people what I always believed would have made me infinitely more successful at that point in my life. I did it unconsciously until I was 43 years old. And I just kept getting promoted, promoted, promoted. And my teams just did phenomenally. I cared about them. I made them feel safe. I taught them everything that I knew. I wanted to grow them. I Encourage them, I basically love these people while also setting very high expectations and being seen as a great leader. No one was looking under the hood to see what I was doing. They just so give that guy more responsibility because he's really good at this, right? So one day a woman who'd worked for me for 40 for 20 of my 43 years walked into my office and very aggressively just said to me, You realize you manage people very differently than everyone else, don't you? Like everyone around you. And I'm like, calm down. Like, what are you talking about? And she started to give me like illustration of the things that I did that were clear to me that my peers weren't doing. Like they were managing with command and control and fear and intimidation. And, you know, if you don't get this done, bad things are going to happen to you, that kind of stuff. Whereas I'm coming at it where we're going to hit our goals. I know we are. I believe in you. You know, I've taught you everything I know. You're supported. You've got everything you need. We're going to go nail this. And of course, we did. So she started to give me these examples. And I was think I would consciousness was finally open to the fact that, my God, like I did this all in response to my childhood and the whole way that I'd been raised. And so what that taught me was that what I was doing was not only uncommon, but it had a profound impact on people. And so what that ended up leading me to was a 25 year career where every business I ever run, I was named leader of the year for a business that I still have no business running. They just said he's a good leader, give it to him. And so when I left that and started to write a book, somebody challenged me, a friend of mine who I used to work with. He goes, you know, you're gonna have to explain why what you're writing about and the practices that you're talking about, why they would work for anyone else. Because otherwise people are gonna think you need a shitty childhood in order to lead this way. I was sitting in the same place I am right now, Tony, and I'm like, my God, I never even realized. I just thought people would take me at my word. So just to complete the story. What I found, I spent over a year of res research trying to look to see if there was validation for what I thought I was doing to people. And what I thought I was doing to people was affecting them so deeply in their hearts that

this is why they were motivated to scale mountains for me. Matter man or woman, age, didn't matter whatever job they were doing, everywhere I went, they had the same impact on people. And so I found science that confirmed that the heart and mind are. entwined, they're communicating to each other all the time, and that we've been ignoring the heart in leadership. We just think everything has to be rational. And what I'm saying is that if you affect people emotionally, you're affecting them in their hearts. And their hearts are actually communicating to the brains on how to act. So when people feel supported and they have all the experiences that I gave them, turns out I'm setting them up for optimal performance. That's what science has concluded. So that's what gave me the courage to call the book Lead from the Heart. But the next step of this is that now there's science that just simply says, just ask people how they're feeling and respond to that. And that's all you need to do. So we don't need 12 questions twice a year that no one pays attention to and no one's accountable for. Just regularly ask people. How are you feeling about, you know, the culture? How are you feeling about the support you're getting from your manager? How are you feeling about the growth that you're experiencing in your job? And you just do it 54321 or bright green emoji, I'm happy as can be, or red, bright red, I'm angry as can be. And you look at these, and there's Oxford's research. And I went there in December and talked to the guy who's the economist who'd done it, it's a professor there. And he's shown if people are generally in the green, feeling positive emotions regularly. Even though the work is hard, you're gonna see productivity and all the key metrics that are important to you go up. And when people are feeling in the orange and the red, that you're gonna see a decline. So it's like a natural progression of everything. And so I hope I didn't take any more than four or five minutes to tell the whole story.

Tony Martignetti | 22:45

Yeah.

Mark Crowley | 22:45

Last as I've ever done it, by the way. So I'm like, wow, like you can do that. So

Tony Martignetti | 22:52

I keep coming back to the moment Mark realized he had been leading differently all along. Sometimes our most important gifts are so natural to us that we don't recognize them until someone holds up a mirror. For Mark, caring wasn't a tactic he added to improve a metric. It was something he practiced because he knew what it felt like to go without it. And that leads us to a question worth sitting with. What are people experiencing when they work with us? Not what do we intend for them to experience or what do we say in our leadership values, but what do they actually feel? Do they feel safe enough to learn, supported enough to take a risk? Seen as people, not just as a set of responsibilities? Mark's reflections make that question much harder to avoid.

Mark Crowley | 23:49

Well, you know, it's it obviously I've had a lot of discussions around this because it's the preface of my of Lead from the Heart. So people heard the story and I tell sort of more of the story when I speak. And so I've had a lot of interaction with people and the the common reaction is is that and I know this to be true, that most people who have the upbringing I have turn on people. Like they want to give people the same crappy experience that that because that's what they know. So I didn't get it, you didn't get it. And so I think the unconscious part is what I find so interesting to me, that there was something guiding me, but not telling me it's like we're gonna take over the steering wheel for the next 20 years of your life and let you manage to have this experience and then we'll give you the wheel back with the knowledge that this is what you were doing all along. But I'll I'd one of the dimensions of this that the reason that I did it for all those years wasn't that I was getting promoted and getting bigger jobs. It was because the satisfaction that I was getting in seeing people grow under

my leadership and the accomplish was healing. It was massively healing. Like, like there was a part of my consciousness was going, see, if you had gotten that, you know, it was like massive validation, but I had no knowledge of it. I mean, it was so amazing that this woman would say this so late. Forty three isn't old, but it's long into a a career. to not be fully aware of what you were doing. And then of course after that, I really just paid close attention to what I was doing and refined it and really figured out exactly what the practices were that would inspire people to perform like that.

Tony Martignetti | 25:31

There is something deeply moving about Mark discovering that the care he offered others was also part of his own healing. But I don't want us to miss the practical challenge in his story. We could admire the idea of leading from the heart and still fail to translate it into everyday behavior. The real test is what happens in the regular moments, when someone makes a mistake, when performance slips, when a team member needs support. Or when a difficult conversation can't be avoided, that's when care has to become more than a philosophy. It has to become a practice.

Mark Crowley | 26:09

So I'm not saying completely cave in on engagement. What I'm saying is that we need to stop talking about engagement and we need to stop measuring twice a year, thinking that we're doing something with any sincerity. And we need to create a system that's going to ensure that if you do ask people how they feel, which is something that is essential, you just need to do it more regularly. And there needs to be accountability for it. So there's technology now. Basically, I can send you a survey, Tony, and go. Tell me how you feel about working for Mark and his support. And it's bright green, bright red, everything in between. Well, I do this to you and 30 other people that are working for me. And the very next day I get the results and I see how people are feeling and I see their comments. Guess who else gets my my feedback? My boss, his or her boss, you know, on and on it goes, right? HR seeing it. So let's say I'm a toxic manager. Let's say that I get results every quarter. Like everybody thinks on the star. But then they start to see this trend. You're asking people, how's Mark as a supportive person? How's Mark in terms of growing your career? How's Mark in terms of appreciating you? And you start to see this trend that this star we think we have is somebody who is really disabling people, undermining people, making people hate their jobs, and probably quit some point if we don't deal with this. This is a gap that's profoundly missing with engagement, right? So then You get these surveys. So let's say changing roles here. I work for you. So you get the feedback and you go, Amongst all the people that work for me, Mark's not getting very good grades. He's getting a lot of red. So then you can meet with me immediately and go, Hey, did you see the surveys? Did you see everybody else's surveys? Everybody's kind of in the green. You're in the way red. So we need to fix this. So I need you to think about it. Go talk to some people in the green, come back to me in a week and tell me what your plan is to turn this around. And if you need some support from me, I'm gonna do it. So now you're making people accountable. And if you don't improve Mark's behavior as a manager, then you can have a different conversation and say, if you want to continue to be on my team, i.e. a manager, you have 30 days to turn this around. So the surveys, you can't go and browbeat people into giving you better results. You need to change as a leader. This to me is a profound thing, right? But so part of it is pulse surveying regularly as opposed to doing an insincere check the box massive study that is way in arrears and too late to get anything and no one ever responds to it, and then builds resentment, ironically, lowers engagement even further when employees go, What a stupid exercise this is. Nobody's taking this seriously, no one's gonna do anything about it, right? So the other dimension of this is. There is like such amazing sir study. But this economist, economics professor, has done a multi-year study. Jan Emmanuel Deneve is his name. He's at Oxford. And basically what he's shown is that if you just ask people, how did you feel this after this work week? And you don't go, hey Tony, before you give me a grade, like you don't have

any marital problems, do you? You're not stressed out financially. You're you you know what I mean? Because You need to take all that into consideration and take that out before you give us. They just said, How did you feel at the end of this week? They didn't go any, they didn't ask for anything. No caveats, in other words. And what they did was week to week, they just monitored the responses and then monitored their key performance metrics and were able to demonstrate, as we were talking about earlier, that they went up significantly and down significantly depended upon people's well-being. So You were laughing or smiling, and I loved it earlier but when I said this, it's like you don't need to ask them 12 different questions in an engagement. You just have to ask them specific to this topic, how do you feel? And feelings drive behavior, which is my thesis. So even though I'm challenging assumptions again, and there are gonna be people that are gonna, you know, wanna wanna resist what I'm talking about again. It's directly aligned to everything that I've been talking about. Well-being is attached to feelings and emotions. And so I know I'm right with what I'm saying. The final part of your question was, how do you think it's going to be received? I think people realize I've paid my dues and they can see that what I've done proved to be right. And so what I'm hoping is is that people take a leap with me. And early feedback so far seems to be like I'm not getting. That's wrong. That's that's stupid. You know, you don't bring heart into leadership. I'm not getting that time. So maybe I'll get my parade after all.

Tony Martignetti | 31:00

Mark challenges a false choice that shows up in leadership all the time. Either we care about people or we care about results. His experience suggests those goals can strengthen each other. But caring isn't only about how we feel towards our teams. It has to show up in how we listen, how we make decisions, and how we respond when things don't go according to plan. That's where the next conversation becomes so important. Even a leader with the best intentions can react out of fear, frustration, or urgency. Under pressure, we can become the very kind of leader we never wanted to be. So how do we create enough space to choose something different? Carol Kauffman's work on real time leadership offers a way to approach that moment with greater awareness and purpose. Carol's perspective brings us from the philosophy of leadership to the Into the moment by moment practice of it. It's one thing to say we want to be thoughtful, compassionate, and effective. It's another to hold on to those intentions when a conversation becomes difficult, a decision feels urgent, or the outcome is uncertain. What I love about her approach is the reminder that we may not control the situation in front of us, but we can often expand how we see it. That space matters. When we're locked into a single interpretation, we tend to see a single response. When we widen our perspective, we begin to see choices we didn't know were there. And sometimes that small shift is what changes the entire conversation.

Carol Kauffman | 32:44

There really is a the core message of the book comes from a quote from Victor Frankel, who you know was a psychiatrist who survived four concentration camps and came out a better person. And in one of the things he said was that between every stimulus and response, there's a space. So stimulus, it's in in this case, what's coming at you. It might be a project is crashing, it might be an opportunity. A difficult conversation, et cetera, then how do you respond? What do you think? What do you say? What do you do? How do you lead? And what he says is between every stimulus and response, there's a space. And in that space is where we find our freedom. And so I think the main thing for us is no matter what it is that's being thrown at us, how do we stay steady and create a space for ourselves? And the book, Real Time Leadership, one talks about how you can create that space. But also, okay, now I've created the space. Now what? How do I now step into peak performance at whatever it is and function? And that's when we came up with these four buckets of what we call real-time leadership, which there's an acronym of M-O-V-E. So is to be mindfully alert,

mindful, as we think of meditating, but alert like an athlete. O is to be an options generator for any stimulus that's being thrown at you to have four pathways forward. Then V is your vantage point to really validate your vantage point, see who disagrees with you, et cetera. Then E is how to engage and affect change. And the kind of primary concepts are: so if you're going to be mindfully alert, okay, as a leader, mindfully alert to what? And so then we came up with the idea of the three dimensions of leadership, which is what you need to do, you know, managing the external demands on you. Yeah. Who you need to be. And one question is like, who do I want to be right now? And then how you need to relate in order to lead. So that's the three dimensions of leadership. Then I'll just do and O. And then O is what's your stance moving forward? So in tennis, if something comes to your forehand, you have one stance for that. Yes. Comes backhand. One stance for that. And so we think of like how what stances do you need to take for the things that are thrown at you? So one stance, there's four of them. The first one you probably know, which is sort of lean in. Yes. Okay. So something comes at you, either a sudden opportunity, something's crashing, whatever. And can you lean in, which is to sort of roll up your sleeves and take action? But then there's lean back, which is something is thrown at you. And instead of jumping in and taking action, you lean back and go for the data. And be rational and make inquiries. Okay. Look at the overview. Okay. So then something's thrown at you. And your other option is to lean with, which is nurture and caring, or if we're talking about at scale, culture. So all of these, it's like whether it's a difficult conversation or merger and acquisition, how can you be thinking about do I lean in and take actions, lean back, due diligence, lean with, caring and culture? And then the last one is the really tough one. Which is your capacity to say to yourself, don't lean. Like something is thrown at you and I do not have to catch it. I don't have to change my stance. I don't need to do anything. And the best large scale example of that is Dreyfus in Barbarians at the Gate. There's a one sentence that has just stayed with me forever. There was a challenge coming towards him. Challenge. And he said to himself, This is a battle I cannot afford to win. And so he was able to say, like, no, I don't need to prove myself. I don't need to do anything with power. I can't afford to win this battle. And then for us, so let's say you're giving a talk somewhere, you're leading your team and someone makes a snide remark or something insulting. Do you have the capacity to not get activated and not lean in or lean back or lean with, but just be and be able to make a space for yourself? So those are kind of the Four stances. The fourth stance, one way it's different from all the others is the others are all things you're doing. I'm being action-oriented. I'm thinking, I'm caring. And this one, it's you just do nothing, but it opens you up to receptive learning. So, like when I sort of did nothing and said, if there's a life lesson for me right now, what is it? The thought came to me. Yeah. I had thought, okay, I won this now. What do I need to do? How do I need to think? Who should I connect to? That's all. things I would have thought out, but wouldn't have given me the space for something to catch up with me. Those are the three dimensions of leadership in the four stances.

Tony Martignetti | 37:40

What stays with me is that a pause is not the same thing as hesitation. We sometimes imagine strong leaders as people who always have an immediate answer. But there is strength in resisting the urge to react before we've really understood what's happening. A moment of curiosity can change the question we're asking, and the options we believe are available. Carol's ideas also connect back to Kathy and Mark. Sustainable ambition asks us to choose our priorities with care. Heart based leadership asks us to recognize the humanity of people around us. Real time leadership gives us a way to act on both of those commitments when the stakes are high. It's in those ordinary, pressured moments that our values become visible.

Carol Kauffman | 38:32

I've been very fortunate and I've also taken advantage of all the opportunities that have come my way. But a lot of opportunities have been given to me that weren't given to other people. Why does Thinkers 50 know me or whatever? I'm labeled as one of the top eight coaches in the world. And that's happened a couple of times now. But there's a thousand coaches as good as me. It just so happens that they know me. Therefore, I got that accolade when I'm a good coach, not the best coach in the world for God's sakes. But Marshall Goldsmith knew me. He actually observed me coaching someone and then he decides I'm the best coach. Best thing since sliced bread. But I was there. So my motto, my motto of life, started out with dating, but my motto of life is I'm not in control of my destiny. So I'm not in control of that I started the institute or this or that or the other. But I was and I am in control of my probabilities. So I can just keep. putting myself in situations where something good can happen that will positively impact me or not. And so I'm in charge of my probabilities. And that's what led so that was like a big aha for me at one point. And if anybody's listening who's dating, it's very helpful. What I decided was the but okay, like listen, I want to find somebody. And so I decided that what I would do to increase my probabilities was I would Do something twice a week to meet someone. And so at the end of the week, success was, did I do my two things? Yeah. Not did I meet someone? And so at the end of the week, when other people would be depressed or upset with themselves because they didn't meet anyone, it's like, well, I increase my probabilities. So I'm I'm successful for what I have done. Yeah. And I think it's the same thing as we think about building our practices. Is how do you just you want to build a bigger practice? What can you do to be in charge of your probabilities and open up options. And none of us are in control of our destinies. Life is good, life is less good. We're not in charge of that. We're only in charge of expanding what's possible.

Tony Martignetti | 40:41

As I reflect on these three conversations, I'm struck by how much leadership happens beneath the surface. We see the goals and the outcomes, but we don't always see the inner work that makes them possible. Kathy reminds us that ambition needs to be guided by what matters, not simply by what we can achieve. Mark shows us how profoundly people can change when they are met with care, encouragement, and high expectations. And Carol reminds us that even in difficult moments, we can practice choosing our response instead of surrendering to our first reaction. What connects them for me is a different understanding of strength. Strength isn't always pushing harder. Sometimes it's knowing when to change pace. It isn't always having the answer. Sometimes it's making someone feel safe enough to find their own. And it isn't always reacting quickly. Sometimes it's creating the space to see what is really needed. This is the twelfth and final special episode in the series, and I want to take a moment to thank you for gathering with us throughout this journey. We've heard so many different stories, but again and again we've returned to the same possibility. The moments that shaped us can also change how we show up for others. That's what I hope you'll carry forward from these 12 campfires. So here's the question I'd like to leave you with. When the next difficult decision arrives, or the next opportunity asks more of you, what would it look like to lead in a way that is not only effective, but sustainable, generous, and intentional? Because perhaps the greatest measure of leadership isn't only what we accomplish. It's what becomes possible for other people because of how we chose to lead. Thank you for gathering with us around the virtual campfire. If this final special episode sparked a new perspective, share it with someone who could use a reminder that leadership begins with people. You can revisit all 12 special episodes and explore our guests' original conversations through the show notes at TonyMspeaks.com. This podcast is proudly produced by It All Works. Until next time, keep your fire burning.