A person with long hair

Description automatically generated with low confidence

Staying Strong During

Challenging Times

September 26, 2021

Well hello Friends! I hope you guys had an amazing week.

Before we dive into today’s episode, I just want to say thank you so much for joining today. Whether you’re a first-time listener or you’ve been with me since the beginning, I want to say welcome and I’m SO GLAD you’re here.

Today we’re going to talk about something we all deal with from time to time, which is how to stay strong during challenging times.

Like most people, I know a thing or two about this. And I wanted to talk about this today because it gets right to the heart of what my business is all about. And my own struggles in this area – coping with personal catastrophes – is really the biggest reason I started this business.

So, let’s start there on my WHY. Then we’ll get into the meat of this episode.

For me this business started as a natural outgrowth of the leadership and mentoring I’ve done over the years. I’ve been lucky enough to lead many teams and people and I’ve loved every second of it.

Over the years, people I’ve led in the past – sometimes from a few decades ago – would regularly reach out to me for advice or to bounce ideas around.

And I’ve always really loved that.

So, it was a natural next step for me to figure out a way to do that on a more broad-based scale. But I didn’t want to do the regular career coach thing where we just talk about resumes and job search and getting promoted and stuff. I mean, that’s important and I help my clients with those things too. But the REAL purpose of this business is to help people understand that true and lasting success comes from the inside out.

Here’s what I mean by that.

In 2018, I discovered an approach to coaching that’s based on cognitive behavioral therapy.

If you don’t know, CBT is a type of mental health treatment that helps people find and change underlying thought patterns that have a negative influence on behavior and emotions. It focuses on changing the automatic negative thoughts that can contribute to or worsen emotional challenges and have a negative influence on mood. Through this approach, thoughts are found, challenged, and replaced with more objective, realistic – or dare I say…POSITIVE – thoughts.

So, you might be thinking…what does a mental health coaching approach have to do with my career?

And the answer is **EVERYTHING**.

After nearly 3o years in corporate America where I climbed the ladder from entry level to multi-six figure a year income earner, I’ve seen and experienced a lot. I’ve struggled with and achieved a lot.

And what I know for sure is that the things people struggle with in their career is about something much deeper than “how” to do something.

Sure, sometimes we need to skill up and learn something new but that’s kind of easy, right?

The truth is the thing we struggle with the most in our career is **how to effectively handle the challenges careers throw our way.**

Here are just a few.

Ever been caught in a tough political situation at work?

Ever felt undermined by a colleague or boss?

Ever felt like you don’t fit in?

Ever been laid off?

Ever gotten a poor performance review?

Ever had difficult relationships with peers or maybe a BOSS?

Those are just a few of the delightful little lessons that get tossed our way on a regular basis.

And there’s a lot more where that came from.

Now, think about how those things REALLY AFFECT YOU.

How they make you doubt yourself.

How they make you wonder if you’re up to the task.

How you worry about whether you’ll lose your job.

Or find a new one that’s as good, if you just lost yours.

This happens NOT because of the challenge we experienced. It happens because of what we THINK about the challenge that happen to us.

Or more specifically, what we make the challenges mean.

Because for many of us, we make the job loss mean we’re a failure or that we’ll never be hired again.

We make the toxic politics mean that we’re not valued.

We make the passive aggressive comment at the meeting mean we’re not effective in our job.

And when we think things like this over and over and over again, what do you think happens?

We start to BELIEVE it.

And then what do we do?

We hold ourselves back.

We play small.

We settle for a career that’s less than what we want.

And just think for a minute about what that means.

You stop striving to live up to your fullest potential and you just give in.

You start going through the motions instead of giving it your best.

You settle for a job that maybe feels SAFE but isn’t what you want.

And that’s probably going to cause even more emotional distress like…

Frustration.

Anger.

Loss of self confidence.

And then think how THAT affects how you show up in the rest of your life.

Think how it impacts your family when you’re feeling those negative things.

Think about the impact on your friends and relationships.

Think about the impact on your self-care. Because many times we over drink or overeat to cope.

So, I took the things I learned in this CBT coaching certification and combined that with a certification in positive psychology along with course-based studies in neuroscience and I developed a concept I call **Inner Leadership.**

And THAT is what I teach in my business.

Because my observation is that you can find endless business books on Leadership.

But it’s mostly about how to be a good leader to others. Or the qualities we hope to find in the leaders above us.

And don’t get me wrong, those things are important.

But we don’t spend enough time talking about how to be a great leader to ourself.

Because the things we’re challenged with in our careers happen ***to*** us.

Most of the time we don’t cause them.

And we can’t solve them by looking to others.

Sure, if we have a strong leader or a helpful mentor, we can get some guidance.

But the truth is YOU are the one experiencing the challenge.

And YOU are the only one who can practice the self-command and channel the inner strength, the resilience, the grit and determination that it’s going to take to survive those storms.

And not just survive but to THRIVE despite the storm. Or maybe even because of it.

Because the storms happen to deliver lessons.

To build character.

To help us learn and become more of who we were meant to be.

So earlier I promised to share a little bit about staying strong when your life is in turmoil as I think it’s a great illustration of the imperfect lives we all live and the choices we make and how important it is to stay CLEAR about why we’re making those choices. And if necessary, adjust where we need to so we make a different choice.

So let me share a little bit about my own journey with this. And the difference this approach to Inner Leadership made in my own life and career.

And this will be news for most people who know me because there’s only a handful of people I’ve confided in over the years. Most have no insight into what’s actually gone on.

As I said, I built a corporate career from the ground up. From entry level to multiple six figures a year. But what most people don’t know is that while I absolutely loved what I did and enjoyed the people and the work and all of it, for much of my career – most of it in fact – I was dealing with some pretty significant challenges on the home front.

And I share this because I know many of you have your own version of this. Whether it’s a child that’s having some issues. Or an aging parent. Or the health of a loved one.

So, I’m hoping that my sharing this can help you in some way by sharing just a bit about what I went through and how this coaching approach changed literally…all of that.

For most of the past two decades, I had a person in my life who was struggling.

They were dealing with some mental health challenges that would flare up periodically and which led to occasional substance abuse.

And it was scary.

And honestly, during those times it was kind of like something you might see on a Lifetime movie.

Except it was real.

So basically, as I climbed the corporate ladder and my career took off, this person’s life was crumbling at that same rate.

And because of my involvement with this person, in many ways, so was mine. At least during the points when this person was in crisis.

Because when you care about someone, whether they’re a friend or a family member of a partner or whatever, and they’re struggling with issues you feel out of your depth to handle – it is truly terrifying.

You feel like you’re completely alone.

And kind of drowning in this scary world you don’t understand and dealing with issues you have no idea how to deal with.

And when you’re someone like me who feels confident in their ability to deal with hard things, it’s natural to think you can help. That you can figure out a way to help them change things.

So, for most of my career, I dealt with it by compartmentalizing.

I kept my two worlds separate.

On the one hand, there was the world I had at work.

Where I loved what I did and the people that I worked with and felt proud of the things we accomplished.

And then there was the world I had after work.

Where I never knew what new catastrophe might happen that I had no control of. What new problem might crop up that I had no idea how to deal with.

I learned how to live in these two separate worlds. And life was DOABLE when I could keep them apart.

But you know, you can’t really keep the two worlds apart.

What happens in our life affects our job and what happens in our job affects our life.

Why?

Because both are happening to US.

WE are the common denominator.

Don’t get me wrong, at least half of the time, life was good in both places.

These catastrophes happened in bursts.

In between bursts, life was calm. Sometimes even good.

But as anyone who’s dealt with someone that’s struggling with something challenge will tell you, you’re always kind of waiting for the other shoe to drop.

Is it safe to go on the business trip? Or will I have to fly back early to deal with something?

Will I be able to get through the all-day meeting and be present? Or am I going to get a scary phone call?

I can’t tell you how many times I’ve had people waiting outside my office for a meeting, while I was on the phone talking to the police.

How many times, I’ve had to fly back early from a business or personal trip.

How many times I’ve researched doctors and tried to get the person into therapy.

And even worse, when I did confide in people because I needed some emotional support, how many of them judged ME and then backed away.

And as you can imagine, the stress this placed on me was enormous.

Financial stress.

Emotional stress.

Relationship stress.

And sure…I wasn’t married to this person. I could’ve just cut them off.

But for me I struggled with the morality of that. I just kept thinking that I could figure out the right help that could solve the problem.

But it took a toll for sure.

When I was going through those times, I was not at my best. I was…

Distracted.

Worried.

Scared.

Angry.

All the things.

And in my personal life, I lived on pins and needles.

My own self-care and personal fulfillment were way at the back of the line.

And all that mattered was doing my best at work. It was my life line.

And also doing my best to deal with whatever this person was going to do next. And to try to get them help if I could.

And then everything changed.

I got exposed to a podcast that was talking about this approach to CBT-based coaching.

And as I started to do the self coaching work that it taught, I realized that I had been operating with a faulty assumption.

It’s fine to want to help someone.

But you can’t make them, will them or negotiate them into letting me help them.

And while I’d always known that intellectually, I didn’t really BELIEVE it.

I felt I was healthy and capable and so it was my DUTY to help.

But suddenly I realized that this was something totally out of my control.

And I gave myself permission to let go.

And even more, to not feel badly about that.

I wished them well and promised to be there to support if and when THEY chose to do something about their situation. But I was not going to be there for the next catastrophe.

They would have to manage it on their own, just as they created it on their own.

It wasn’t easy. But I did it.

And the important thing really is the lessons I’ve learned from going through this.

I learned to view this person with compassion rather than anger.

And to recognize that while my own actions were well meaning, they probably didn’t help. That despite all my efforts to change the person, it didn’t work. All it did was distract from and sometimes diminish my own life.

And so, what I want you to know is, whether you’re struggling with situations that are happening at work or things going on in your personal life or maybe just the ongoing effects of what we’re all dealing with this this Covid thing, this approach to Inner Leadership is the answer.

I teach this inside Next Level, my monthly membership. Doors are opening on October 1st. So, if you want to join, go to thepurposefulcareer.com/nextlevel and join the mailing list.

It’s just $49 a month.

That’s it.

And you can cancel anytime. And I know for me, with memberships I always hesitate to join because I think it’ll be a hassle to cancel.

And I can promise you, it won’t. You can cancel anytime by pressing one button. And you’ll never be billed again. Join for one month or stay for five years. It’s your choice.

Inner Leadership will teach you an approach to any problem you have.

Any challenge you face.

Any new goal you want to accomplish.

In it, I teach you how to self-coach using this CBT-based approach and you’ll do it on a daily basis.

And then, each month, we’ll study a topic to help you be at your best in your career or life.

We talk about things like self-confidence.

Productivity.

Procrastination.

Boundaries.

Difficult Relationships.

Goal Setting.

And so much more.

What I want you to know is that nothing is going to make the challenges stop.

Our life is always a mix of challenges and good times.

That’s the human experience.

And when you are on the corporate track or have a side hustle, you add a layer to the mix that can create even more challenges.

The answer is not to minimize your life to reduce the challenges.

The answer is to learn an approach to staying strong and focused when they arise. And to use the lessons they deliver to make you even BETTER going forward.

The answer, is Inner Leadership.