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Presenter: Sal Corbin, PhD

Topic: *De-Escalation & Conflict Transformation*

[00:00:00] **Michelle:** Today's presenter is Sal Corbin. Sal worked for 15 years in academia as a psychology professor before transitioning to nonprofit work. He has done workforce development training and program management as a training coordinator with the behavioral health system of Baltimore. He now facilitates bystander intervention, community safety, restorative justice, and trauma-informed care work.

[00:00:38] His vision is to help others build and maintain healthy relationships with conflict transformation as the primary focus. He holds degrees in clinical and educational psychology. Sal, the floor is yours.

[00:00:53] **Sal:** Thank you for that lovely introduction. I'm gonna jump right into it. De-escalation and conflict transformation.

[00:01:00] It's not a topic that I need to sell. Just turn on your news. For some of us just look around town and for many of us. Just look across the table. A lot of conflict that we talk about, the source of it is actually internal sometimes with family and friends. Having said that I'm not gonna approach this from a traditional perspective,

[00:01:23] I love acronyms. they make the steps of any process easier to remember, but I have found them not as helpful in the actual application when talking about conflict. Oftentimes it's very immediate. And unexpected. this will capture both immediate, short term and long term conflicting situations and how to deal with them.

[00:01:46] But my background's in psychology, so I really wanna talk about this from an interpersonal level, which means it's gonna come down to two things. What's going on with you? And what's going on with them. that's simplified and we'll get into it. in this presentation no acronyms. if you want information like that, you can ask for my contact information.

[00:02:07] I'd be more than happy to apply it. But in an hour, let's be real. We're not gonna be resolving world problems in an hour. But we can walk out of this time and space together with maybe a different perspective, maybe a new tool, maybe a different approach, or maybe just an understanding or compassion for the other.

[00:02:28] there's at least two parties involved, right? And if we're talking about ourselves, that's us. And the other person. Sometimes it's more than that. Sometimes it's groups in opposition. What I have found in my journey is that everybody wants to be heard, but we're not too good at listening.

[00:02:47] We're really good at delivering our message. That doesn't mean that it's always received the way we mean for it to be. We're not spending as much time creating that space to

hear the other side and there's always another side, nine times outta 10 is not gonna be in sync with yours, the other probably doesn't or didn't experience Your differences in the same way that you are. It might have been more or less intense for them emotionally. It might have been just another day for them and it was everything to you or vice versa. you might be looking for an apology or some type of reconciliation. That may never come. So there are things that I'd like to talk about today for us to empower ourselves in those exchanges.

[00:03:32] Next slide, please.

[00:03:34] Thank you. Now you'll have to click on this one, Mike? Yeah. To get all the bullets up. I apologize. There's like five of them. I'm not even gonna get into these. in the interest of time, but basically we wanna look at, well, what are the different, typical approaches, the styles for managing conflict.

[00:03:50] I really wanna spend time on number three. What are our own strengths in resolving these differences? And what are areas we need to improve? If I were to ask you, what do you bring to the table? Most of you probably be able to answer that, whether that's a soft tone staying calm direct communication or whatever your strength is, right?

[00:04:08] that's wonderful. We are all blessed with gifts that are meant to be given to others, right? However, we also know there are some areas that need improvement. Personally for me, that's impatient. I'm impatient, right? So I want immediate resolutions. I want immediate input. And what that means is that potentially I cut off people based on their pace.

[00:04:31] I do this for a living and I'll tell you, I'm a terrible interrupter in my personal conversations. Professionally, I'm great, but personally. I'll interrupt you in a minute. Why? 'cause I'm a fix it person and I got questions, Which means I'm trying to move into direct mode. And that often will be a barrier to communication, right?

[00:04:48] Because the other person, we either shut down or feel shut down by my intrusions. Definitely wanna talk about number four, let's learn how to shift. I'm gonna talk about that passionately. And also number five, creating a space. Next slide please. A couple quotes. Go ahead and click on all.

[00:05:05] Thank you so much. So, just to plant some seeds, just for food, for thought, right? So I know that we're very judgmental of others that irritate us and annoy us. There's things that they do that we just can't stand or get under our skin. I love this quote. You can't see it in them unless you have a little bit in you.

[00:05:24] the only thing I'm saying here is I'm not saying, oh, it's all about you and your fault. What I'm saying is your ability to identify faults and others comes from the ability often what to identify it in ourselves. I can't stand folks that are judgemental and hypocritical. Two of my pet peeves, and yet I.

[00:05:41] Find myself being judgmental all the time. I have to catch myself and stop it. what I'm trying to do is build space for compassion and acceptance for the other. I know we're

charging in there with our agenda. And for those of you saying, I don't have one. Yes you do. All of us have an agenda when we're in exchange with others

[00:06:00] Be subtle. It might be loud, it might be direct, it might be soft, but we got a reason why we're there and there's something that we're hoping to get out of it. So, yeah, second quote, never wrestle with the pig because you both get dirty, but the pig likes it. Now

[00:06:14] What do I mean by that folks? There are others out there. Hopefully not you, but they love a fight. They can't wait to stir up emotions. They can't. Wait to say no to your yes your red to your blue, up to your down. that's what their purpose is. I often call them the troublemakers or button pushers.

[00:06:33] Folks, you gotta avoid the button pushers at all costs. Now, sometimes that's not easy, especially if they're in family or on the same team. But some people are looking for conflict and often we get sucked right into it. As I've come to identify those persons in my world, I try to stay out of their path.

[00:06:51] I deal with them when I have to. I can be insane on my own. I don't need somebody else to put up that. we get sucked into other people's drama and insanity and mad. And differences and opinions so easily, but you own that. You control that.

[00:07:06] If you're on the phone with somebody that you're arguing with, do you realize you don't have to stay on the phone? You can hang that up with a number of different reasons. I, you know, Hey, I am sorry there's somebody at the door. Can I get back to you later? I have another meeting, getting ready to have dinner.

[00:07:20] There's all kinds of mechanisms that we have that are in our control to navigate differences with others that we don't often use. Next slide, please.

[00:07:30] Yeah. And I apologize for the delayed bullets. I didn't forewarn that. Thank you so much. So just some opening thoughts. This first one from Michael J. Fox, the actor. He says, with gratitude, optimism is sustainable and out of optimism, I want you to hear hope, right?

[00:07:44] So when, there's no hope, there's no life. What do I mean by this? Not all differences, not all conflicts are salvageable. sometimes you're just not gonna reconcile with people. Now what you can do is reconcile differently with different people in your life.

[00:08:00] What I was able to achieve with my father in his lifetime was a world away from what I was able to achieve with my mom. my dad and I ended up being best friends. My mom stayed the same until she passed, What I was able to do with her was shift my approach to how I interacted with her.

[00:08:16] When there is no hope for resolution or change in the relationship then people stop trying and usually the choices they embrace become even more unhealthy. if you have hope, stay in it. But some fights aren't worth fighting. I used to get caught up in road rage, you

know, driving in and outta traffic, changing lanes, you know, giving people you know, friendly finger gestures and other things.

[00:08:40] and I did that when I was a younger man for a long time. And then one day it just dawned on me, you know, why am I getting into with people on the road that I will never see again for the rest of my life? It's just not worth it. Why am I wrapped up in this? To have the last say, to say, I cut you off last.

[00:08:56] now we live in times where people take matters into their own hands. It's not just finger gestures that have been exchanged. It's guns and knives. It's crazy. the point there being that not every fight has to be fought. Choose your battles, folks. Choose them. if you can't choose it, try to massage it, try to avoid it.

[00:09:15] Try to change your approach. We're gonna talk about that a little later crises are opportunities for growth and reconcile. If this was an interactive workshop, and I were to ask you all, how would you describe conflict? 90% of you will come back with negative terms.

[00:09:27] It's annoying, irritating, frustrating. It's angering. Conflict typically doesn't feel good, but the flip of it, right, if you flip that script, crises are in differences, are opportunities for growth and reconciliation. I'll give you a personal example.

[00:09:41] When I'm. Sharing a mission of anything that I'm on, any campaign that I'm on. I don't mean that politically, I just mean, you know, some purpose in my life. You know what? I want the resistance in the room with me. Why? Because resistance is the most irritating group. opposing what you think, for whatever reason, sometimes good, sometimes not.

[00:10:01] The reason I want them in the room is because that's the opportunity for me to inform them in a way that they get. The passion of my message, I can't do it if they're not there. And if they're not there, it means we're probably standing on upsides with the river of the river with megaphones barking at each other, right?

[00:10:18] So I want them in the room so that I can possibly create a space for you to understand. It Doesn't mean you're gonna agree sign on or anything like that, but at least you can understand why this is important to me. And if. That is received in the right way. Maybe it'll become important to you. You'll find that most people want the same things.

[00:10:36] They just want to go about different ways of achieving it. We all wanna be safer in our communities, and for some people that's more guns than others. That's less like it's the how is where the differences are not the what. we need to. Start with the what, find the common ground first before we launch into our differences.

[00:10:53] But you all know we're showing up to the event already polarized, ready to take on the other side. Third, it says, ask yourself. And this is just for your internal voice, is it worth it? For you to have a different kind of relationship with this person. So remember I said choose your battles.

[00:11:08] I want you all to think of people that you're in conflict with come up with three or four if you have them, it could be your next door neighbor. It could be, your mom over dinner.

[00:11:16] is it worth it? For you to have a different kind of relationship with this person to enter into an exchange where you can be heard and they can be heard as well. that to me is one that I'm gonna put work into if it's worth it, but sometimes it's not.

[00:11:32] we get so wrapped up in that and cause more stress to ourselves, The second question is very important because it's the foundation of everything that I'm talking about here.

[00:11:41] Can I initiate that conversation or exchange? for those of you saying, well, I'm not gonna initiate it, well, you've already determined the outcome. So again, is it worth it for you? Can you initiate that exchange? Be humble. Humble doesn't mean you're giving in. Humble just means you're not charging in, with your pitchforks.

[00:11:59] So be humble, meaning there is another perspective and listen to it. And listen to it as you would want to be listened to. Let me repeat that. Listen to their perspective as you want your perspective. Listen to, that's what I see as failing in daily communication.

[00:12:18] So you think of a recent situation in which you experienced conflict, right? And provide a descriptive word. Remember I said that probably that descriptor is negative. Next slide, please. here are the rules of conflict, right?

[00:12:34] this is just a working definition for this time and space. I'm sure that there are others that are more lengthy and detailed and better, but for purposes of this time and space where one party perceives its interest as opposed or set back by another and the key word there being perceived.

[00:12:51] Conflict is about perception, right? this is why we have differences because it's not only in how we process things, how we think about things, how we approach things but it's also the perception of what just happened Maybe for them, they were just having a regular conversation with you, and for you, you were offended at everything that they said.

[00:13:14] observers could come watch that exchange and say, well, they were just talking to each other. While others would say, oh my gosh, He was so insulting. I can't believe the terms and labels that he used. So it is a matter of perception. And we're gonna talk about the emotional content of that in just a minute.

[00:13:30] But if it's about perception, then perceptions need to be heard in order to be resolved. Now our conflict can either be function or dysfunctional as a psycho battle if we healthy or unhealthy, or it can be resolved in healthy ways or unhealthy ways. But it's inevitable.

[00:13:45] It's gonna happen anywhere you go. We don't move forward or backwards as a people without it, and again, don't have to look far for it. In fact, conflict in the home sometimes is the most intense because the boundaries are less clear and people feel entitled to say or do things they wouldn't do in outside relationships.

[00:14:02] So it's inevitable. Human nature is flawed. We're not perfect beings. No we're flawed by nature. Being human is flawed, which means you're gonna make mistakes. You are not gonna get everything right, and I don't care what your practice is.

[00:14:13] Pick it. Relationships, parenting, money, health, keep going. we're not always gonna get those things right. If you accept the fact that you can get them wrong, then you gotta create a space for reconciliation, for redemption, for understanding for apologizing,

[00:14:30] Because I know the people that have hurt us. We want something from 'em. We want an apology. We want money. We want an understanding, we want acknowledgements. do we create that same space for the other side Misery loves company. when people are in conflict, they start rallying their troops for their side, right?

[00:14:46] they need to build up consensus that you have been raw. And so we start gossiping, we start sharing you know, you won't believe what's so and so said to me. And then number four is probably the most important thing on this slide. The only thing you have control over is you.

[00:15:00] that's why I don't spend time with acronyms and a whole bunch of other stuff, because at the end of the day, that's the only thing that you can control. That's the only thing that you can shift is how you show up. Trust me when I say it's not what you're saying it's how you're saying it.

[00:15:15] It's not what you're doing, it's how you're showing up. These are some conflict precursors, some mad things that contribute to con. And again very short list, right?

[00:15:24] But important ones, sometimes it's just down. It was reduced to personality. I'm sure all of you have been in a space let's say a happy hour or a cocktail party. And you've met somebody for the first time and you feel like you've known that person forever. like you grew up with them or something.

[00:15:40] It just flows. You got chemistry at cliques and what we also have met people you're not even five minutes in, you just don't like 'em. There's something that just doesn't work right. A lot of that's due to personality. That's how we're wired. That's how we show up. You know, I'm talkative.

[00:15:55] I'm lovable as I think I am. I'm impatient. I'm impulsive. Those are parts of my personality that show up in everything that I do. And some people really like that. And some people are like, ah, right. So personality miscommunication, that's what this space and time is talking about here. unclear messages, right?

[00:16:11] This is the most costly thing in work environments. actually, I would say personal and professional environments, unclear messages, and a lot of that is because we do not establish the boundaries. Boundaries need to be at work. And at home we don't have time to get into it today but a boundary is expected.

[00:16:30] It's an expectation you have for the function of that relationship. Boundaries only work if they are expressed, agreed to and enforced. Just 'cause you express a boundary doesn't mean the other person's gonna agree with it.

[00:16:42] they have to respect that. Right. And then it has to be enforced. So, you turn on the news. any war torn area of the world racial equity, any kind of ism ageism, sexism, anytime you see a group trying to fight for their rights yeah that's competition or access to resources, right?

[00:16:57] Whether, and when I say resource, I'm not talking about just material goods or money or wealth. I'm talking about identity. Worth, right? Like, you know, as a black man, I want to be acknowledged as a human being, That is like anybody else, but sometimes in the groups that we're in, especially if they're marginalized, we have to fight for the right to exist.

[00:17:16] you cannot escape the power dynamic. It's everywhere, right? And just think of power in this way. Think of how your language. And behavior changes depending on who enters the room.

[00:17:27] Shifts, right? If your mom enters the room, you're acting differently if your brother enters the room. If your best friend enters. Notice how the posture and language changes if your boss walks in the room. If for those of you who have believing in particular faith, if that faith leader walks in the room, all of that changes how we show up, right?

[00:17:46] So the power dynamic, whether it is intentional or unintentional, direct or indirect is always there. And this last one is so important folks, 'cause you can throw everything else that I've said out the window. If you do not acknowledge this last one, you gotta know what your triggers are. You gotta know where you've been, bruised, hurt, broken in your past that keeps coming up in the present.

[00:18:09] Those are unresolved conflicts, unresolved trauma, unresolved things that have happened to you that still show up. And if you've not visited it through coaching or counseling it's just gonna sit there and probably get worse. But think about it. You can do all the prep that you want to manage exchanges, and as soon as that person brings up that thing, that word, that label, that experience, you go ballistic.

[00:18:36] You go right out the window with all the content, all the information, and now you're operating from emotions. And emotions unfortunately don't have nice structure to them or categories or acronyms that can filter their delivery

[00:18:51] Feelings. And if I'm in my feelings, I'm gonna say and do things that are very destructive, right? And probably not care about the outcome in that moment. So know your

triggers, because otherwise all the practice can go out the window, know what's gonna happen when your mom or dad brings up, you know, that time that you got a half or whatever

[00:19:09] Know what your triggers are so that you can either avoid them in the exchange or remember to stay calm once you hear them. Next slide, please. Okay, so what are the outcomes of transformation? And let me just, I never really define transformation. You've probably heard conflict management, conflict resolution one times conflict negotiation.

[00:19:29] Transformation means The attempted resolution of that exchange, of that difference, in a way that minimizes, the likelihood of recurrence, right? For so you're trying to resolve in a way that it doesn't come back, or if it does come back, doesn't come back as bad or strong as worse as it did.

[00:19:47] The first time. That's what transformation is about. Okay, so what are we hoping to get out of this? agreement without being disagreeable. I call this acceptance now acceptance. Sometimes when I say, you should accept their position, people hear that as agreement.

[00:20:02] That's not what it says. Acceptance is. Hey. I get that is where you are with this particular issue, based on your past, your journey that brings you here right now. That's acceptance. Acceptance. Here's an acceptance statement. Ah, I get it. I hear that. I, yeah. if I've been through what you've been through, I probably feel that way too.

[00:20:23] It's accepting that's where they are without agreeing to it. don't confuse those. But a lot of times you might remember that the agree to disagree movement came out in the nineties. That was like the big thing, you know, everybody was saying, oh, disagree to disagree.

[00:20:36] The problem with that's great for immediate. A conflict resolution. It doesn't solve anything. You agree to disagree. You walk away just as salty as you were before, and the next time you get together, guess what? So how about agreeing without being disagreeable, which means you're not holding onto something because that resentment, that's the stuff that hurts people.

[00:20:56] Anything that you're holding onto right now? Anger, resentment, rejection, insecurity, whatever. That's just a bomb waiting to go off If you've left it unattended or unresolved, it's just waiting to come back out and we'll show up in the next exchange. Right? So you gotta move past that in some way.

[00:21:14] that's why I say gain a new perspective, because if you just. Holding on to what you know then you're gonna show up that way over and over again. one of the saddest things I've dealt with in counseling is people that have been hurt in their past. as a result, they build up these really high protective walls to protect themselves from being hurt again.

[00:21:32] Does it work? Absolutely it works. The more walls and the higher they are, the more protected you become. But with all those walls, it makes it difficult for anybody to get.

Through to you, so you then deny yourself the very intimacy that you probably crave to begin with, and I mean intimacy in terms of whatever that relationship has to offer.

[00:21:51] Stronger relationships, that's a no-brainer learning, right? So every time I have a difference with somebody, and I usually think that I'm right however it's resolved, whether I came out wrong or whatever, like it's an opportunity for me to self-reflect and be like, oh, okay. How can I do that different or better?

[00:22:06] And when we do intervention, right? Intervention is wonderful because intervention doesn't have a guaranteed outcome. So I might come to say to you, Hey, I think you need to talk to somebody. And you might take that a hundred different ways, but I can tell by your reaction whether or not that was an effective way to communicate that.

[00:22:23] And I can say, Ooh, Sal, maybe you should have used these words instead of that, maybe that person, maybe you should just let them talk and he doesn't say anything. It's a wonderful way to learn about yourself. And then at the end, we wanna maximize what we're trying to get out of that exchange.

[00:22:37] So if there's something we're working on together everybody can express. Their feelings in a safe way. Safe doesn't mean no harm could come to you. Safe just means there's no redirect. no punishment. no isolation for expressing yourself. Okay, next slide.

[00:22:54] Okay. These are typical conflict responses. there's no right or wrong to these. Don't jump into these like, well, that's terrible. It's a shark. Who wants the shark? Now there's a time to be all of these.

[00:23:04] A shark basically. Says my way or the highway. It's immediate. It's direct, it's loud. That's a shark Notice if I said that for real I probably got immediate results, meaning everybody probably took a step back. Like some of you defensively, like, Hey, who are you talking to?

[00:23:20] Some of you might've been fearful, some of you might've been like you know? Okay, take that all. You don't talk to me like that. did it quiet the room? Absolutely. The shark gets immediate results and there's a time to be a shark. Look, if I'm having a heart attack, I want a whole bunch of sharks around me.

[00:23:36] I don't want a whole bunch of people trying to figure out what to do. Jump in there and say, you seen me getting ready? Get hit by a bus. Now grab me. that's not time for conversation. Sharks do that and if. The decision making process has gone on too long. It's time for somebody to take lead and say, here's what we're gonna do.

[00:23:53] Let's move on. Teddy bear the exact opposite, right? This is giving in, so remember I said choose your battles. Here you go. it really doesn't matter if you're going left or right. Why are you engaged in some conflict over that? are you mad because they chose a less attractive street to drive?

[00:24:10] I mean, come on. That's cool. You drive, or let's go your way. Teddy bears are really wonderful also for short term resolution, but both the shark and the teddy bear aren't good for long term. Because they don't resolve The issue that is maybe plaguing that relationship or that exchange, but for immediate reconciliation.

[00:24:28] Yeah. Choose your battles. The turtle with is withdrawing. I do this when I sense the de-escalation. Okay, let me repeat that. 'cause I might've, sounded right. When I sense the escalation, I withdraw. So if we're getting into it, I might say, I'm sorry, I didn't wanna start a fight.

[00:24:44] Let's start over. Why don't you go first? Withdrawing is not giving in. It's just saying you go first. Let's take a different. Path. Let's take a step back. That's a wonderful mediator for de-escalation. Fox is the compromise. That's, where you negotiate things. I'll give some, you give some.

[00:25:02] We both win. We both lose something. That's basically where the world works and the wolf the collaborator that's win-win for everybody. A lot of people mistake the wolf 'cause Wolf is a. Predator, right? And they say, well, why would you pick a predator for collaboration? I'm not talking about their hunting.

[00:25:17] I'm talking about their pack. The pack is a collaborative unit. Every member has a role. Everybody has equal value. If the lead couple has pups, those pups are immediately adopted by the rest of the family. So there are no orphans if either of the parents get killed or something like that.

[00:25:36] It's just a beautiful, collaboration. The win-win for everybody is the hardest to come by. It's the easiest to say. Hardest to navigate. Next slide, please. Okay, so what are our goals in de-escalating? when we are getting into it with somebody or watching others get into it with each other, there's probably some dehumanizing going on.

[00:25:55] We start to see the person as less than, or we have colorful titles for them which we won't mention in this space. You know, but I notice when I'm in a rush. Everybody else becomes an idiot that's driving in front of me. Not because they are they're probably driving safely and admiring the scenery.

[00:26:14] I'm like, oh, get out the way, idiot. You know, kinda thing. rehumanizing takes place with our conflict. We start to devalue them. One of the ways to de-escalate is to re, you know, we all want the same thing here. we can get along, right? We can do better than this kind of thing. remind people of their humanity.

[00:26:29] Sometimes that works by itself, sometimes not all the time We wanna shift the energy. So if, remember I said if I get into with you, I might withdraw, I might do that turtle thing and step back and say, you know, I'm sorry I jumped at you with the agenda. how's your day?

[00:26:43] How are you doing today? Right? So shift the energy, create a d. For the exchange rather than just coming at people or them coming at you. Create space for potential conflict transformation. This is what I do when I'm resolving conflict with others and also with me. I'll say, you know what, let's take a walk.

[00:26:59] tell me more about, how I can help you So what you're doing is you're creating a different space. So the person can be heard if all they're doing is barking and shouting and they're on a megaphone, Hey man, come on over here and tell me more about that. You know, I wanna learn more.

[00:27:13] I want to learn more. It's not acceptance. It's exactly what it says. I want to learn, which means I want to hear more. But now, instead of them barking it at everybody, they are saying it to one person. Think about that in your personal exchanges. And I say personal, I mean personal and professional.

[00:27:31] Can you create it? Sometimes I'll say, let's take a walk. Sometimes I'll say, you want some water or coffee? Sometimes I'll say, I was getting ready to go outside, get some fresh air. You want to come with me, right? I mean, there's all kinds of different ways you can, invite somebody into a different space to be heard.

[00:27:45] And then number four, lead with your heart. This is important folks, What I'm trying to say is this, I got this from a conference I was at. They had an indigenous plenary, and the guy that was on the plenary up there, and he says, you know.

[00:27:57] I just think I was a tough guy 'cause I could kick other people's behinds, right? but my elders taught me that a great warrior leads with their heart first. Love first, right? Meaning that they lead with good will.

[00:28:08] Good intentions first before they fight, right? So they try the heart method first. Hey, you know, I want this. I want this to work out for everybody. Or you just going in there, you know, guns a blazing, What's your intention? Remember that question at the very beginning.

[00:28:23] What are you leading with? When you approach people you have differences with is it a soft approach? Is it a hard approach? Are you needing them to be wrong? Are you trying to direct them to rightness? Are you wanting to have the last word? What's your agenda? Soften that blow if you wanna be heard.

[00:28:40] And them also to communicate, but start with your heart first. Okay? Next slide. Alright. So remember I said in the beginning, this all comes down to what's going on with you. That is your agenda. What is it that you want, what do they want? Are you trying to win this exchange, Are you trying to look better than the other person? Some of us set up the fight and we all do it. Let me give you a great example of this. I want you all to think of the one person that gets under your skin, right?

[00:29:10] As soon as you see 'em, you're irritated, right? This person enters the room and you'll start having a conversation with here they come. I, and they know they owe me some money and they're gonna walk right on by. Like, they don't even, whatever you are thinking about this person, you know, oh, she thinks she's cute.

[00:29:24] Now who is that conversation with? It's not with the other person. 'cause they haven't even said anything yet. You have started that fight in your mind. And you all know about the self-fulfilling profit, you're setting it up for failure, right? That's what I call setting up the fight, right?

[00:29:41] Try to get a different voice that's playing in your head. When you see that person, open it up a little bit, right? Because that voice is usually the antagonist for our behaviors. we talked about the importance of emotions and centering. Knowing your triggers don't get sucked into the emotional void.

[00:29:56] That's gonna be a very different conversation. The way we offer offsetting that is centering. Centering is reminding yourself of that calm peaceful self to do that work, To have that exchange. some people do that through breathing. Some people look at a painting.

[00:30:11] Some people think of their grandmother, I don't care what the technique is, whatever works for you. Meditation. find a way to center yourself so that when you are triggered, you don't get sucked into the emotion of the exchange. Next slide.

[00:30:24] what's going on with them? Well, folks, I get that there are people out there that are persistent in their delivery and close to my mom. My mom never gave up any of your secrets. She was always right.

[00:30:36] She was persistent about you being wrong. And she took that to the grave, right? She never changed. And you know, there are those out there. I grant I give you that.

[00:30:47] trying to figure out the other without inviting in that space to share. That's kind of on you folks. There are all kinds of reasons why people are showing up that way, for me, first I want to understand if I can create that space to understand that before I jump into why are they that way?

[00:31:04] We all have good and bad days. on a good day, I'm gonna be your best friend. I'm gonna treat you to lunch, I'm gonna give you a hug, On a bad day, don't talk to me. don't expect more than a one word response. I'm on the go. All of us are like that, right?

[00:31:18] We all have our light side and our shadow, In relationships, it's important to know both sides, I might think I'm a fun date, but if you're late, I'm gonna be salty. people need to know all of that information to have informed exchanges with you.

[00:31:32] But if you are in conflict with another. You gotta understand their history. How did they get there? Did they wake up, you know, and the kids were sick and the husband's leaving 'em and they couldn't get their documentation and they don't have any money. if you

wanna know their history about why they're in that place, or having that position you gotta what?

[00:31:50] You gotta be willing to listen, You gotta be willing to listen to what's going on with them before you jump into judgment. Empathize with them. Try to put yourself in their shoes. If I woke up and the kids were sick and my wife was trying to leave me and I had no money, yeah, I'd be a little salty too at the world, right?

[00:32:07] I wouldn't be walking around with a big smile on my face. Like, this is wonderful. Right? So, I mean, and I'm exaggerating, but I'm saying you. You wanna understand why they are that way or showing up that way, you gotta get into their world to see it from their perspective.

[00:32:21] A lot of people remember I talked about, remember that Michael J. Fox thing with hope? Yeah there's possibility from that, but some people don't have hope. They're discouraged, they're distraught. They're done. And they're like, I don't like this system anymore. And that's how they're showing up.

[00:32:37] And here you are just like, Hey, they got attitude. Well, yeah, rightfully so. Try to empathize, see from their perspective, remain objective and don't take it personal. Those are bullets. I just gotta be completely transparent with you. I don't do well myself either. And some of you're probably really good at it.

[00:32:55] Remaining objective I learned as a trained mediator. outside of that practice, I not only do I not remain objective, a lot of times I take it personally. You come at me with an attitude, I'm like, oh, who you talking to? I get caught up in that just like you sometimes.

[00:33:11] as much as you can hold onto your objectivity, don't take it personal because a lot of times the person you're in conflict with, it's not about you. Sometimes it's definitely about you, but other times it might be the system or their history, or what this particular exchange has taught them before.

[00:33:26] People that don't trust have probably been hurt a lot by people and their per their trust has been violated by another. And now here you pop up, and you're expecting the person to trust you, but that's not the space that they're in. I wanna understand that space and meet 'em where they are, and then go from there.

[00:33:42] Alright, next slide. Lemme wrap this up. Just some helpful hints. Be quiet and listening. You've heard me say that before. Ask questions to understand. I call this enrolling them in their own recovery. sometimes in counseling they say empowering the client. help me help you.

[00:33:58] Tell me what's going on. Give me what you got so that I can work with it. I don't wanna assume this is what we do in support work in particular as we assume the need and then we operate from that without asking. You assume they're hungry, so you give 'em a meal, but did you ask. Are you hungry or that they like the food that you bought 'em?

[00:34:15] Enroll them in their own recovery, especially if you want them to leave empowered. Take accountability, whether that's through action steps, offering a plan that might work. Here's something that worked for me, Offer something to them rather than just talking to them, right?

[00:34:31] thank them after they fix it. Or you fix it. Next slide, please. Now I just wanna highlight this for a moment, folks. I know some of you think that you're good listeners. I do too. And guess what? Personally, I suck at it. I'm just being fully transparent. Why? Because I'm impatient. So I just jump right on in there.

[00:34:50] this is what true active listening looks like. The first one is that you look like you're listening. How many of us have conversations while we're checking our phone or staring out the window. We're not even looking at the person Allow them to fully share without interruption That's my biggest mistake. Just jumping in there with all kinds of questions and redirects. Let 'em finish and once they finish or pause, say, is there anything else you wanted to share? Thank 'em for sharing. And then reflect to make sure you understood that correct. I'm gonna guess that most of us don't do that in our regular exchanges.

[00:35:23] Some of us, right? And I'm sure there are professionals in this audience that probably do this all the time professionally. Soon as I take out my professional hat, I'm yucking it up just like everybody else. But this is what true, active listening is about. Next slide. Other techniques.

[00:35:39] How can I show up to support you better or different? That's my favorite question to ask anybody anytime. Coworker, family, friend, whatever. I ask my daughter, she's a grown woman How can I show up? as your father, different or better for you? Would you like to speak to my supervisor?

[00:35:54] If you can't handle it, pass it on to a colleague or somebody above you. What do you suggest that's enrolling them in their own recovery? you seem angry. Let's start over. That's that pause. That's that withdrawal. Next slide. This is just repeating things we said before with gratitude, optimism that is hope is sustainable.

[00:36:12] Something to work towards that these differences are opportunity for growth and reconciliation. Most important self-reflection, right? How can I do this different? if somebody's not listening to you, maybe need to change your delivery. then ask yourself again, is it worth it for you to have this exchange?

[00:36:28] If it's not, then keep attending to it. Stop getting sucked into it. It's not a battle you need to engage in. And number two, so important, can I initiate? Be humble and listen. Next slide. There you go. All righty. How'd we do? Erica? Michelle, thank you all for allowing me to share thank you for sharing this space with me.

[00:36:52] And if you have any questions in the chat or other, just let me know. I'm here.

[00:36:58] **Amy:** Thanks all. We have a few questions. And anyone else has questions, feel free to just throw those into the chat We'd be happy to ask So Sal, in recovery housing we often experience nimby, so not in my backyard folks.

[00:37:09] How would you recommend that we approach someone who is angry or completely opposed to a recovery housing program going into their neighborhood, using some of the techniques that you've just taught us about?

[00:37:21] **Sal:** For me, First I wanna understand their story, right?

[00:37:23] I gotta know where they came from and what they've experienced before me. A lot of times in support work, they're operating off that history, Whether the environment or the house or the process just didn't work for them. It was unappealing. It was sometimes even traumatizing,

[00:37:37] So first, understand how they got there. Be clear. In how you offer your program or delivery. invite them into what works or doesn't work for them and ask them what could be done differently. That is not an acceptance or agreement on your part. So you don't appreciate a 10 o'clock curfew.

[00:37:55] That's not something you wanna do. What would you suggest? And then they'll respond and then you can either meet that need, Well, you know, I need 10 30. Okay, we can accommodate that. We have a policy for people that work late travel or commuting. Or I'm really sorry that we can't provide that.

[00:38:11] You know, part of this is learning how to say no too, right? Like, and no, isn't slam the door in their face. I'm sorry. That isn't something we can provide. Our rules and policies are at 10 o'clock. You have to be in, we get that doesn't work for everybody. That's not something I can change.

[00:38:28] I get your frustration. But that's just the way we do things here If you go down the street to St. Matthew's, they have a program. There is no curfew. I don't know if that helps you, but yeah. There you go.

[00:38:40] **Amy:** All right. Thank you. How about situations where you've been wrong about something?

[00:38:46] Let's say you're the owner operator of a recovery house, you know that you were wrong in the way that you worked with a client or one of your staff members. What's a good way to approach that and maintain your role as the leader of the group there.

[00:39:01] **Sal:** Yeah, I, feel like most people hold on and harbor their hurt in a way that takes away from the exchange. this is what I call the heart to heart there are situations where sometimes I have to say something like this,

[00:39:18] I see we're not gonna get anywhere with this, but I am concerned and this is how this has affected me. I was really hurt by that event. I don't think that I'm gonna get better unless I have somebody to talk to about I'm making this up. And I can't seem to get that way with you.

[00:39:37] But how does that resonate with you? When I do relationship coaching, I have a four step formula. So what's the observation? to me, my experience is that you're not listening, and that makes me feel unimportant to you. That's number two. So this is what I observed, this is what I feel, and the story I'm telling myself is that you don't care, right?

[00:39:56] That you don't care if we resolve this or not. But how does that land with you, right? So you gotta say what's happening based on your selfish experience. This is how that makes me feel. This is the story that I'm telling myself. And what do you think about that? How does that land with you? Because remember, this exchange is about two or more.

[00:40:20] It's not just you. And we make it all about us. I'll give you a quick example of this. If I were to ask everybody who identify one or more people that they've been hurt by your hands, would skyrocket with stories. If I said, how many of you have hurt somebody? you would have that story too, but your hand wouldn't shoot up to share it.

[00:40:35] It'd probably be like, huh? Yeah, done that. So we are on both sides. Be sensitive to the other.

[00:40:40] **Amy:** Have you ever encountered a conflict that did not get resolved? If so, what was the outcome?

[00:40:47] **Sal:** Sure. I mean, look. we're trying to create the best outcome, for everybody.

[00:40:53] Is that always doable? No. 'cause we're human beings, right? you know how this works. all this wonderful stuff that we've just talked about only works that the person wants. To be on the other side of the table. That's why I tried to build compassion for the other side, 'cause I want them at the table.

[00:41:08] If they don't wanna be there, how are you gonna resolve that? The only thing you can resolve is you, that's what I had to do with my mom. There was no, she's gonna come at the table and we're gonna have a healthy conversation. It was gonna be her way or the highway. So I shifted how I showed up because I didn't want us to always be at odds.

[00:41:26] I would come, I would be quiet. I would listen. I would agree with everything she said, even if I didn't agree with it. And then I would leave. I had no voice in that, but I at least got to have a peaceful time with my mom whenever I went over to see her, because I don't wanna go over there fighting all the time.

[00:41:40] So I had to shift me. But did that maximize us? So we were best for. Friends like I was able to achieve with my dad. No. So you have to have realistic expectations. how far you can get one person is not what you will get with another. And some are not. They'll never be

resolved. But then you gotta learn the power of letting go so that doesn't drag you through the dirt or mud for the rest of your life.

[00:42:00] Thank you. That's an excellent question.

[00:42:02] **Amy:** All right, I think we've got time for one more question here. in recovery housing, we are asking our residents to be accountable, right? We're trying to hold them accountable and have them be accountable. Any suggestions or thoughts around how important it is for an operator or an owner of a recovery house?

[00:42:19] Keeping that same expectation for their staff and themselves?

[00:42:24] **Sal:** can you read the question again?

[00:42:26] **Amy:** Sure. I think I'll kind of just break it down. The question is like a lot of times in a recovery house, we, the expectation is that the folks, the clients living the recovery house have to be accountable, but also important to make sure that the leaders and the staff of that recovery house are also holding themselves accountable.

[00:42:45] What are your thoughts

[00:42:45] **Sal:** first of all, if you are delivering a message that you're not honoring yourself, you have to do by example. If you're not set in the stage for that, meaning if you're not held accountable, you can't hold them accountable. They're gonna see that they're not children they're gonna know the difference.

[00:42:59] Number two the methods, the processes, the procedures, the boundaries. Are those effectively expressed? Are they posted somewhere? Are they reviewed in a way that everybody's on the same page with it and understands what accountability means? Remember those boundaries for whatever accountability enforcement, understanding that applies to everybody.

[00:43:21] But what did we say expressed, agreed to and enforced, and that agreed to is an important one because. Just 'cause you say, here are the rules, doesn't mean people are gonna abide by them. And you need to know where that difference is. 'cause that's where you're gonna have the problems as much as possible.

[00:43:37] Yep. Thank you Erica for that. how are you gonna deliver something you don't know or don't have? Right. That's where damage gets passed on intergenerationally when families work environments, whatever. Right. Just the same sin gets passed on. Thank you, sir.

[00:43:52] **Amy:** whatever starts at the top trickles down to the bottom.

[00:43:54] if you've got a healthy culture up there and you've got accountability and resolving conflicts, it trickles down through.

[00:44:02] **Sal:** This is so important because a lot of leaders of organizations talk down to the staff, this is what we need to do. Whether it's change the climate or change procedure but then they don't do it themselves.

[00:44:14] I had a wonderful boss in a previous job who embrace. Just the value of training. And so, but not only did he train himself, he was in trainings all the time but that was reflected from the top bottom. So we wasn't just saying to his staff, you all need to get trained. He was part of that process as well.

[00:44:32] We need to think about that in terms of our expectations for others. Are we holding it down like that as well? we want people to be honest with us we value and need honesty are we as honest, we want trust? Are we trustworthy?

[00:44:44] It's an excellent point. Thank you, Amy.

[00:44:47] **Amy:** Yes. We wanna just thank you for doing the webinar for us today. There's in the chat, you'll have some time to read it, I'm sure after you finish. But there's some great compliments. Thank you. Very informative. Definitely took a lot away from this.

[00:44:59] I always ask myself if I wanna be right or be happy. Thank you for sharing that. Great presentation. We'll be implementing some of the things that you've taught, a lot of really great things in there. We really appreciate everyone's time today in joining us for the webinar.

[00:45:13] I'm gonna drop a link in the chat too. This webinar will be published to our website once we have the transcripts and we have to run those through hrsa. So once we get that approval, we're starting our webinar series again, we'll have our next webinar the same time next month.

[00:45:28] Sal, any parting thoughts that you wanna add just before we kind of close out here?

[00:45:33] **Sal:** Lead with your heart. Do what you can with what you have, wherever you are, and try to maximize it. It's gonna be different for any event but do your part show up in a way that you can be heard and be sensitive to listening to theirs.

[00:45:47] Thank you so much.

[00:45:49] **Amy:** All right. Thank you Sal, and thank you to everyone that joined us today. I did drop a link in the chat for our learning management system if you're interested we appreciate getting to spend some time with you. Have a great day everyone.