

Managing your Emotions

SPEAKERS

Donna McGrath, Susan Heaton-Wright

00:00

Welcome to the superstar communicator podcast. Our aim is to ensure you speak and communicate with confidence, clarity, credibility, and impact, so that you present the best version of yourself in all business conversations. Welcome to our host, Susan Heaton-Wright.

Susan Heaton-Wright 00:19

Hello, everybody, thank you very much for tuning in today. I'm, you know, really, really grateful because I have on the other end of the internet, Donna McGrath, who works with lawyers to be fantastic leaders, but you will be able to tell me more about that. The reason why I've invited Donna is that she was very, very proactive in one of these last stream live streams. And I actively encourage anyone who is listening to leave a message or ask a question, because that helps in the conversation. But welcome, Donna.

Donna McGrath 01:02

Hi, Susan, thank you very much for having me.

Susan Heaton-Wright 01:05

So let let the audience know what you do, and why you're so awesome.

Donna McGrath 01:12

Okay, well, I don't know about being awesome. But what I do is I actually help in House lawyers, this lawyers that work for big organisations to raise their impact within that organisation. I've worked with general counsel's kind of legals, and individual lawyers as well and I can work with them on a range of issues, which I end up coaching them on are undertaken workshops with the teams are helping them really strategically, communicate better with their stakeholders, or build some kind of framework around that for them.

Susan Heaton-Wright 01:49

And one of the reasons why we're talking today is related to triggering, because that's one of the conversations we had. So can you explain a little bit about triggering, then I might add something to

Donna McGrath 02:05

Yeah, of course. And I know, we had a brief conversation about this before we started, Susan. So I think everybody will kind of have an idea of what triggering is, but in the context of what we're talking

about. Triggering actually, is an event or circumstances that give rise for you to respond emotionally, physically and even you start thinking differently about the situation and your position in the world, whereas it can actually be detrimental to how you engage with other people and be detrimental to your career, and can be detrimental to your health. So a trigger is something that actually triggers that response. And that is what a trigger, it's like a triggering event.

Susan Heaton-Wright 02:59

So I get triggered, whenever I hear Rhys mug speaking, I have this trigger that I use.

Donna McGrath 03:10

Yes. Okay. And what is that trigger?

Susan Heaton-Wright 03:14

That I want him to stop speaking because he's being so patronising.

Donna McGrath 03:19

Ah, that's interesting. So what I would always say to someone whenever they are being triggered, that usually the trigger is something external, which we said this has happened, and we usually say this has happened to me. Now, however, the actual way we respond, is the actual trigger. It's how we identify that particular event, for example, re smog speaking, and high we attribute that to what we believe that they're saying to us, and then what we believe our position is in response to that. So it all comes from any it belief system that we hold towards a certain behaviour that we see in others. So the good news with that is this is something that we can control.

Susan Heaton-Wright 04:21

Yes.

Donna McGrath 04:23

So yeah, we control that response. So whenever you feel patronised. My question back to you then Susan is: what was your very first memory of being patronised?

Susan Heaton-Wright 04:41

Oh, there are so many within my family, which I won't go into, of course. Yeah. The extended family who felt they were from a different background, that sort of thing. Yes.

Donna McGrath 04:55

And that's interesting because part part of triggering In terms of leadership if we think about in the workplace, because that's what we were talking about, if we have a particular belief system about what our position is, within that environment, and with that particular person, we then start to have certain expectations of a from what we expect from that person and from the environment that we're in. And particularly if we're talking about employee employer relationship, and leadership as a whole, historically, leadership used to be viewed very, very differently, but the world is changing right now, and the way that leadership has been measured, is no longer bottom line, aggressive outputs, outcome-focused in terms of financial, commercial results. Now, ESG is starting to play a massive part in

leadership as the world moves on, and the socio economic environment in which within which we work in moves on. The fact that we're all on social media, right now, the world is becoming very purposeful. And people are so purposeful, or go off on a bit of a tangent that they're so polarised. But that's a different that's a different conversation. But taking that back to the workplace, and understanding the triggering event, if you are an employee, and you believe that it's your employer's obligation to take care of your psychological safety, which is a new thing, that's 10 years, and the leader doesn't believe that that's their responsibility and thinks you're an individual, your grown adult, sort of like yourself. And if there's a mismatch of expectations there that can be triggering for the employee And equally, that can be really triggering for the leader. So I think one of the big things, it's really, really important to manage your triggers is to really get a clear, unrealistic view. And you have to be really wise to understand this, because what we talked about wisdom as a really important is to understand the new environment within which leadership's are operating in line, and what the expectation is from a workforce. And I'm not talking about your workforce, I'm talking about globally, what are workforces looking for, and if you're not living up to that expectation of them, you are going to walk into a triggering event. So the first key thing is become aware of the environment that you're working in, and how the world is shifting around that. Number one, manage your own expectations of what you believe what your job is, when it comes to these things.

Susan Heaton-Wright 08:09

Now I've had, I've already had a message from Valentina, thank you. Hi, Valentina. And please feel free to ask questions. Valentina says "being patronised sends me off the roof!" I feel the same!

Donna McGrath 08:26

Yeah, yeah. And that you volunteered, I would really, really ask you, in those circumstances, to really sit back and think you're seeing someone's behaviour, but you're not necessarily seeing their intentions. There's a great quote from Stephen Covey, and he and I carry this around with me since I started my personal development journey, and he says, "we tend to judge other people's behaviour, but we judge ourselves by our intention", which, if you think about it is in itself causes a lot of conflict, because if we're only looking at someone's behaviour, and not understanding their intention, then we'll be taking, like a really small part of what they're actually about. So my question back to Valentina is okay, they might come off as patronising, but do they really mean to be patronising? Probably not? Do they know any better? And my question back to you is, how does it help you feeling frustrated with someone like that? How does that help you? So this is like the self coaching that I do with my clients. And then sometimes they're back is that really happened me? No.

Susan Heaton-Wright 09:15

That's so interesting. I hope that was useful Valentina, and I'm I think I get the impression Donna that we are both very much in favour of self leadership. And, you know, if I meant choice and my triggers, I have post traumatic shock disorder. Fortunately, I have it managed. Now one of the things that I have had to do is that I have to be careful about what I watch, there are certain films, for example. I remember going to see assassins, so you know, sometime piece and not the end, they all of the cast, move their guns, and they faced the audience and pointed the guns. I was triggered big time. But I know that there are certain situations that I manage, so that I'm not going to have nightmares for the

next few weeks as a result of that. So what are your tips there? Valentina says it doesn't help her. I don't know if you can see her comments.

Donna McGrath 11:12

I can't see her comments. I think I think she's responding to my thing. I said, does it? Does it help you? And she's like, No, it doesn't. Oh, okay. So there you go. It doesn't help you. Okay.

Susan Heaton-Wright 11:26

So let's think about how we could manage these situations rather like me not watching. Yeah.

Donna McGrath 11:32

So I do think that there is a couple of what I call mind hacks that you can have in the moment. But I'll move on to them. Fundamentally, I think the really important thing for us is to become, aware of our triggers. You know, for example, Valentina that people who are who come off as patronising that can actually trigger you. If you know that in advance and you can start to detect within yourself when you're being triggered, that is so key. So what I would always say is reflect back on to times where you have felt triggered, and this is a question that I do, and so basically, I have a tool in the MN House lawyers leadership programme, which is a programme I run, which helps people like reframe, so the first thing I get them to do is reflect back on to the event record as much as they can. The thoughts, the actual sentences that are going through your head, that were going through your head, record, the emotions, that comes up from that. Also kind of settle into what physical things are happening in your body, because some people's hands might get sweaty, they're breathing like a cello, the heart might break. Some people might even respond no later, he responds, and she comes read across her neck. Just become aware of those things, and also start thinking of how you're like behaving in response, and you've come a little bit clipped in your responses. Are you edgy? Are you shifting around in your seat? So if you reflect back, and record those, and you keep doing that, you started to become aware of when you're triggered, because you're actually triggered? Way before you realise you're triggered. And all you realise when a trigger happening, you can catch them. So that is something that I work with people on. So the short term mind hack in the moment is this. If it's possible, ask for a break in the conversation. If it's a conversation, or if it's for example, watching Reese Mogg. Just don't watch him watch Susan. Just leave the situation. You're well within your right to leave an uncomfortable event. Realise that that's okay, that's okay to leave. Or if you want to be a little really polite about it. Just say you know, I'm just gonna go and have a glass of water. Just need a bathroom break. And whenever you tick that brick, there's a couple of things that you can do. You can actually go for a walk, move your body around because if we don't move, then we get stuck. And what we need to do is move those chemicals around. And I've been I was told about this Wonder Woman pose last year by Amy Cuddy Siamese, if you know who I'm talking about Amy Cuddy. And she says put your hands on your hips, particularly only for women, because that raises the testosterone in your body, which goes to your brain. Is that not right?

Susan Heaton-Wright 15:08

No, it isn't. Okay. I'm not quite sure why testosterone has been included in this.

Donna McGrath 15:15

Yeah, that's what I was told. But I have spent quite a lot of time

Susan Heaton-Wright 15:19

I've got her book, I've seen her speak, I've looked at her research, and it was really, if you have very, very close body language, according to her research, which has been disputed, you create more cortisol and stress hormones in that and you don't feel as confident. But if you go into this very open body language head up, yes, you know, there is this, the the Superwoman thing, but you should never use that in front of your clients. You know, this is a thing people say this, and they don't,

Donna McGrath 16:00

Well I personally don't think, personally, I wouldn't have a problem with that. Yeah. Because of the kind of relationship that I have.

Susan Heaton-Wright 16:07

But you know, if you were, say, with the legal client, you like this, they might perceive that as being aggressive, but it's all about creating more endorphins, which are confident chemicals, and from that, so if you go for a walk, and you adopt the power pose, or have a walk, so you're secreting endorphins to balance the contact, then you're going to feel better and in a different state of mind,

Donna McGrath 16:40

That also does create testosterone in your body as well. So what that does it and because what testosterone does, is it actually helps to calm your emotional response, and starts to slow down your emotional response, which allows, the cortisol to come down as well, because as you know, Susan, the cortisol goes into our prefrontal lobe and starts to shut down parts of our body that we don't need, because they're going to our F flight. So rather than getting to tactical,

Susan Heaton-Wright 17:23

doesn't talk about testosterone. So

Donna McGrath 17:27

she's a friend of mine. We have had that conversation. Yeah. So

Susan Heaton-Wright 17:34

yeah, it's not in a book research. So no, recent thing.

Donna McGrath 17:40

Yeah, we were on an event last year together. Anyway, long story short, that power poles can actually help you and I think that that's the practical advice. Sounds doesn't matter makes you feel better, and makes you feel better. But as Susan said, Read your environment. And if you don't think it's a good thing to do in front of people just take that break and go away and do that, as Susan said, also go for a bit of a walk. And the other thing, which I always ask my clients to do, is to breathe. Because when we breathe consciously, we again start to slow on our heart. If we feel like our hearts beating a lot faster, we can feel like we're going into panic, even though it might feel like you're having an anxiety attack or anything a major, but it can just keep you like kind of like raised, like, like that sort of you're sorry, I'm

living with my hands here. I was like you're kind of up there and your shortness of breath, and that isn't helping you. So taking deeper breaths, and you can even do that in the moment without leaving as well. And the key here is when you're conscious breathing, breathing through your nose and hold the breath for one second and breathe out longer than you've breathe in for because that slows your heart down, and it triggers your parasympathetic nervous system, which to be clear reminded, because some, whenever some people that I know are triggered, they get foggy in the mind, and they can't think straight. So also, if you find that there is an event that is constantly triggering you, and you have to be in that event, for work purposes, or that you if you don't expose yourself to that that could impact your life in a serious way. I would say go for CBT or cognitive behavioural. Yeah, yeah, well therapy, because that isn't something like someone like me like a coach can do as qualified to help you with, because that's something that's more long term, and it's really, really key that you know where to go and get the right help as well. So those are the main hacks that you can do in the moment. But long term, I would say, become more aware of what triggers you. And then ask yourself this question: What am I telling myself? Or what am I believing about myself? This person or this situation, which is not helping me, and write those down? Because as soon as you get those out of here, and onto a page, or somewhere else, do you blog about it? Raise your profile with it as well, why not? I did. And then you start to look at things differently.

Susan Heaton-Wright 20:56

So what happens if you are, you are trying your best to manage a situation, but this is still continuing that in fact, the other person, the Reese Mogg, of your office, is still the delivery, and in fact, the intention is patronising you, or

Donna McGrath 21:18

you don't you don't know that until you have a conversation. So I would say do the reframe first for you have a conversation, because you need to come in to that conversation with curiosity, understanding, kindness, and wisdom. And in order to have that you can't come in emotionally, how to manage your emotion, get yourself in a good state, and the reason why I say to you is to ask yourself the question, "What am I believing about the situation? That isn't helping me" you write that down, because that actually probably isn't what's actually going on? And then challenge yourself and say, well, what could be the truth? Or what could I tell myself, which is more helpful. And what you might find is that you might say, actually, I have never sat down and spoke to this person, and made them aware, because again, go back to the very start, despite awareness is about the environment that you're in, and the people that are around you, but also, you're equally as responsible, as they are, to make them aware of something that does trigger you, because they won't know. So my advice would be, and if you feel safe, obviously, after you've done that reframe, to have that conversation directly with them, I will always, always coach people to have that direct conversation but if you don't feel safe, have the conversation with someone who you feel safe with, who can have a conversation with that particular person to make them aware. Now, this isn't going to judgement, you're we're not going and we're not telling them that they need to change who they are. We're just making them aware. So then the gift is in them to make a decision on how they take that and how they bring that into their presentation style.

Susan Heaton-Wright 23:15

So with regards to starting to manage that and having a conversation, do you think that it's, it is a value to see if other people are being triggered? Because you can quite often tell by watching other people if there's a similar response, and therefore you can have a conversation.

Donna McGrath 23:37

I think that's quite dangerous, very dangerous. Because, again, you're you can read other people, but if you come into a conversation directly with someone said, Oh, and I've observed other people, and you haven't had a conversation with those people?

Susan Heaton-Wright 23:56

Oh, no, no, no, what I meant was that you conversation with them with with your colleagues.

Donna McGrath 24:01

Oh I see what you mean. Yes, yes, it would be good. Yeah. Some of it good idea. Just even just to self check yourself to say is it just me? Yeah. Is it just me are? Do you find that a problem, but if if you are someone who is going around and asking you need to be very careful about by how you engage on that, because what you don't want to do and a conversation is load other people's emotions into your conversation because that takes that actually takes a lot of credibility away from you as an individual speaking up, and not credibility, but it takes a lot of power away from you to be able to say to check up respond. "I just need to let you know that I know it's probably not your intention, but that come across a little bit those words and be very specific, those words were quite patronising. I don't know whether it's the tone or the words. Can I just ask you what you're thinking when you say in those things?" So we're not going in and saying that he is patronising, because that is unfair. We've just pointed out something in particular that made you feel like that, and then you can ask the question, can I just ask what your thinking is around that? And he might equally say, "Well, I'm really annoying, because that's going on, and now you're getting to the truth" Yes. And obviously, you have to create an environment of rapport, so you can't come in hostile. And Susan, I know you talked earlier on to me about tonality is like so important. So in order to change your tonality, you kind of need to change your heart and your mind towards the situation, because if you're coming in thinking, you're just patronising towards me, that is not going to help that conversation, and you're not going to get out of it, what you need is a waste of your energy. So you really need to do that reframing think, Okay, what's going on with that person, be curious, and go in and have that conversation? Because there might be something going on for that person. As long as you understand that, guess what might happen? You might think, no, they're just really passionate about that. So guess what, the next time you listen to them, you're not thinking they're patronising me for a second, he's just really passionate,

Susan Heaton-Wright 26:32

He really cares. He really wants he really believes in this particular project. Absolutely, you know, there are so many situations that I've come across when you're when I've been the leader, leading particular projects within the music industry. And, you know, with with due respect to musicians, some people misunderstand their intentions, that they are literally passionate about the music and being the very best they can be, but it can come across Oh, there being a deeper

Donna McGrath 27:10

I had that and church and Sunday, I sing in a band. I had that and someone sent me you're just being a diva. And I said, No, I just want to get right.

Susan Heaton-Wright 27:17

Yeah. And, you know, when you reframe it in that way, yeah, people begin to understand I mean, I talk about, I do a workshop on manager fear, and one of the things I discuss is an 18 page contract that I had to sign with Jesse Norman, the you know, various artists I looked after, when I was a student, 18 page, including do not look Miss Norman in the eyes, that sort of thing. And, you know, and she was managing her fear and her environment, but I saw her perform, you know, it was extraordinary, then afterwards, talk to every single fan for two hours. Yeah. And that was why she had that 18 page contract, not because she was a deverand demanding.

Donna McGrath 28:15

Yeah. That's what it normally is, whenever we look at leadership, and I'm gonna just probably leave you with three words. No longer is leadership about being directive, about even empathy, that word is so overused, and does my hand sorry, whoever's listening, and who is an empathy coach, seriously, change the word. It's understanding and understanding other people, and I read loads of self help books, the best self help book that I read, is the Bible, this stuff, this, can I swear the shit has been spoken about written about 2000 years ago? Why do you need to have to read it and regurgitate it, whether you're a Christian or not gonna read Psalms, and the talks about understanding, discernment and wisdom. And we don't talk enough about being having wisdom. And Susan, it's not those old grey man sitting in the corner who's got cobwebs grown on them. It's about actually sitting back and actually really taken stock of the environment that you're in the people that are around you understanding usually people if they behave in a particular way, they probably don't mean, and if they do, it's coming from fear.

Susan Heaton-Wright 29:43

Can you think that you're I mean, you know, one of those things, is reflecting, being quiet, not being the loudest person in the room. And you and I know that in the world that we live in and the way that many people push forward, particularly leadership, you've got to speak like a leader, but in fact, this is bigger than that.

Donna McGrath 30:06

Maths is so much bigger than that. And like the some of the best leaders that I've experienced in the organisations that I've worked in, are not the people at the top. The best leaders that I've seen in organisations are people in teams that are actually leading teams, who the leader, the actual leader, recognises that that person stuff that skill. Yeah, and the best leaders as in the people at the top realise what they're not good at, and then give it to somebody else. Yeah.

Susan Heaton-Wright 30:40

Brilliant, and great way to nearly finish. But I want to check to see if there are any questions or comments from anybody there. Valentina. Have you got another comment? Because it'd be lovely if you got a question or anybody else. So is there anything else you'd like to add before we finished on,

Donna McGrath 31:04

I would just say, when you look at the subject matter, here, your triggers are yours, they're not other people's, you have got the power within you, to overcome them if you start to see you, as someone in this world that can make change. And if that's where you're thinking, you are your own leader. And I just want to leave on that.

Susan Heaton-Wright 31:30

Great way to finish. Thank you so much, Don, this has been such an interesting conversation. And for those people that didn't watch live, obviously, you'll be able to see it, we repurpose it as a video that will go on YouTube. And also as a as a podcast, so that that will be available as a podcast as well, which is brilliant. So it means to say that we're getting to more people. How can people contact you, Donna?

Donna McGrath 32:06

So I'm here on LinkedIn, I am the lawyer's coach, just type in the lawyers coach on LinkedIn, and I will pop up. And I just want to say thank you as well, for inviting me on, I know, I only come off because I was like Valentina just typing away and just trying to contribute. And so thank you for giving me the opportunity to contribute.

Susan Heaton-Wright 32:30

That's all right. So until next time, this is Susan Heaton-Wright, from superstar communicator. And oh, just shout out from Maria cannot thank you very much. I'm really pleased you enjoyed that. So thank you very much for tuning in today. Until next time, this is the superstar communicator.

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