

Celebrating International Mens Day with Dave Algeo

SPEAKERS

Intro, Susan Heaton-Wright, Dave Algeo

Intro 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

Hi, everybody, this is Susan Heaton-Wright, and I'm absolutely delighted to have Dave Algeo, on the other end, way up from away-man, from near New Castle in the Northeast, and we are going to be discussing International Men's Day, and how we can support men in our lives, and Dave does a huge amount of work around this. I wanted to read you some statistics about the reason why we should be supporting men's health and well being. 76% of suicides are men, 85% of homeless people are men, 70% of homicide victims are men, 40% of domestic abuse victims are men. Men are the majority of victims of violent crime, and on average men serve 64% longer in prison, and men on average, are 3.4 times more likely to be in prison than women, when both committed the same crime. Now, being a geographer, from Durham University, one of the first things I was told was, "look at the data and then see what's really going on". We're not going to do that today, they're statistics, I would be able to question some of those statistics. However, it sends a very powerful message. So Dave, welcome.

Dave Algeo 01:54

Thank you. Thanks. It's quite stark to hear those, isn't it in that sense, but I think one of the things that, when we were talking just before, was to sort of wait to view this as a celebration, isn't it of men, as well as it is of highlighting some of the challenges. So it's not to gloss over those, but it is to acknowledge that it's important to recognise that there's a lot of positives out there. And part of it is the fact that we're having this conversation in the first place, and that seems to be having a lot more of the conversations, you know, in terms of my work is coaching, midlife is particularly men around health, that includes physical health, weight loss, that kind of thing, but also the psychological health as well, you know, and I think so it's a big thing. But what what has changed? I found in my time in this sort of work is the awareness and the openness in that.

Susan Heaton-Wright 02:42

I mean, that's absolutely fantastic. And I would imagine that a lot of those statistics are as a result of mental health problems.

Dave Algeo 02:51

Yeah, it's, it's interesting, isn't it? I mean, I've my background, I guess, about being a being a bloke, I was a little lad, was a little odd, obviously, at one point, but I was a little I had grown up in a little pit village up in the Northeast. And I remember living through the miners strike, the closure of the steelworks up there. And the fact that it was very, you know, it was an enchilada, there were insular communities very well supported. And that was a really strong point about the communities, the community strength was really powerful. But there were very stereotypical rules as well, and we can we can debate obviously, there's a lot of not so good stuff that will come along with it. But what was what it meant was very a lot of clarity in those rules, and those communities, but what it meant as a young man growing up was kind of that the shift from that certainty of what rules were to break down of communities changes and things expectations as a book, what's likely to happen later, throwing a lot of us, I guess, into that, that that new world and that turmoil without necessarily the community cohesion that was there. And one thing we all need as human beings is support, connection and community. And I think that's one of the things where as a young lad, you know, growing up, one of the things that we're kind of conditioned to, as men in particular is to cover over those emotions of weakness, weakness side, you know, and and I think that's one of the big challenges and that's probably, you know, a big contributing factor to the challenges that you're talking about, you know, the the coping strategies become more aggressive and overt or inwards and close downs you know, and a neither a particularly healthy

Susan Heaton-Wright 04:33

No, and anger towards perhaps women.

Dave Algeo 04:42

I would, you know, I have not a great deal of understanding of that, but I would guess that contributes there's a lot of other things about those some of those stereotypical roles had that inbred as well which was really really toxic and unhealthy. So, you know, that's, that's a given, but I think it's a very complicated issue. And I guess one of the things I do like this here is that it's not a pity party for blokes at all. And I think many men that, the most men that I speak to when we have these conversations, recognise that and recognise the inequalities, and I think what it is, it's about understanding that some of those underlying root causes, they affect everybody, and it's a win win if we can, if we're going to make the world a better place and more open for everybody. If as men, we can connect bit more, we cope better, we can adapt our behaviour, we can support each other, we can receive support from love, you know, loving female, friends, family, all that kind of thing. And it can be a win win in that sense, you know?

Susan Heaton-Wright 05:36

Absolutely. You know, obviously, I in my family I've got, I've got a father who, sadly, is in a nursing home now, but my husband, and my son who's 22, you know, we support each other. And I like to hope that if they're worried about something, that they will be able to open up to me, and I will listen, and I will support. Even if it's listening, you feel cherished, don't you?

Dave Algeo 06:04

Yeah. Oh, yeah, there's a power in that. And I think this is where it's worth really noting that it shows itself differently. And I am going to generalise between men and women here, but and we're all different, you know, in terms of that, but, it does show itself differently in terms of how we open up how we may or may

not ask for help, how we connect. And I think this is one of the challenges is that as we start to raise this awareness, it really is important to reach out, to ask for help, to respond if somebody says, are you okay? And then checks in again, that we kind of check in with ourselves and go "maybe I'm not maybe I can reach out to do that". But it will look different. You know, we're not necessarily going to be as articulate with our emotions as perhaps women are, because that there is that difference in the way we connect and build relationships in life.

Susan Heaton-Wright 06:57

So how as a woman, and you know if there's anybody watching now, if you want to write questions for Dave, that would be brilliant, how as I, as a woman, could I support the men in my life? And, you know, acquaintances as well?

Dave Algeo 07:15

That is a big question, I don't think we've hit the nail on the head. For me, it's still a work, it's still a question that I'm trying to answer for myself, but also in the work I do, because it is it is a challenge. And I think one of the things is that awareness, it shows up differently, you know, one of the things that in terms of connections, men tend to have sort of wider networks, but shallower connections, which brings with it the benefit of having more different and diverse kinds of connections, people, if we have a problem, there's likely gonna be somebody in that network to fix it or help us out. But we don't necessarily have that depth of connection, or it doesn't, you know, it's a lot fewer, whereas women tend to have fewer connections, but a lot deeper, and that's very protective. Because, you know, in terms of talking to each other, sharing emotional experiences and sharing challenges, that's something that perhaps the typical bloke, and I'm kind of categorising myself in that, really find that challenge and to do so understanding that is one thing. Then not expecting it to show up or expecting it to be expressed the same way, and, and perhaps taking the pressure off yourself. You know, what am I doing wrong? He's not opening up to me or that kind of thing, because that's just not generally how many of us do it, you know. But that said, too, I often like the word nudge, keep nudging, keep asking, keep checking in and nudging in different ways. And, you know, you get to know your friends and family in ways because that in itself is a protective factor. You know, if you talk about just going to the doctor, you know, I'm conditioned to sort of save up five things before I go and bother.

Susan Heaton-Wright 08:58

I think all are now.

Dave Algeo 09:01

Yeah, we're kind of getting away from it. But I think that conditioning makes us feel like sometimes we do need that loving nudge of like, have you made that appointment? Do you think you should see the doctor about that? And then check, you know, keep that and it might sound a bit silly, but that's where having loved ones around the man or a man or a young, adolescent boy, whatever, is a real protection, and perhaps it can feel like you're banging your head off a brick wall. But actually, it does help and it makes a difference, even if you don't see it as overtly, do you not I mean.

Susan Heaton-Wright 09:31

I think that for many women and hearing you I absolutely get what you're saying. We are worried that we will be accused of nagging.

Dave Algeo 09:41

Yeah. Yeah. I think actually, I did. I had a talk this morning, similar kind of thing where somebody said that exactly the exact same thing. And I think that is a perception and perhaps a risk in some sense that it can be labelled, but nevertheless, it's still really important it's caring, out that I think the nudge is a better way to reframe it for ourselves. And don't get me wrong, but it will apply to whatever labels but that loving nudge, that caring nudge is, is so important. You do not mean that. So the challenge is if we start to label it as nagging, I'm just nagging him again or whatever, do we may do less of it? Do not I mean, so?

Susan Heaton-Wright 10:24

Yeah, absolutely. That's really useful to know that. And what about for men that are living on their own, maybe they have split with their, the rest of their family. And for whatever reason, they might have been kicked out of the family home, or they might be isolated, because they're a young person, and don't live at home anymore? Do you have any tips there to support those individuals?

Dave Algeo 10:50

Yeah, now, that's where, I mean, my personal experience, because I sort of spent a few years alone etc. Those things, particularly things like Christmas Eve can be one of those challenging times. But also, in my sort of experience, as a police officer kind of experienced a number of sort of experiences, I guess, with that. It's very challenging for the person themselves. Because if you're feeling isolated and down, one of the things that men can be prone to is acting more impulsively, perhaps taking more alcohol on board and acting a bit more impulsively out of that. So that is where constant reminder if there's anybody that's in that position is to recognise that the the isolation itself and that alcohol mix can sometimes be a real challenge is, again, just reach out to have that conversation. Just send a text to somebody, even if you don't know what to say, just say, "Look, I don't know what to say but", And it doesn't matter what you say, just, I often say don't worry about what you're gonna see, it just says something, even if it sounds rubbish. And just reach out and help and persist, because one of the other things with blogs, particularly as you know, be down the pub once "worked so hard I've had a rubbish day I'm feeling this" and the other says "ah me too, today's been rubbish. You see the football?" and we kind of divert. So again, the blokes on blokes, there's also as well, being aware of some of the cues and signs, and it might be overly humour, not covering up with humour. It might be you know, that kind of comment that we do, we are tempted to sort of minimise and move on from. So there's that but also I guess, for loving relations, male or female, is just to check in check in as frequently often the odd texter little voicemail via Facebook Messenger, I do that, you know, from time to time with people. And just check in and ask and ask again. It's that nudge, and again I guess, but just checking, particularly around times, like, significant times, like whether it's Christmas, birthdays, for children, that kind of thing, and all those periods of time. And it needn't be the the spouse or the separator person, because obviously, I know these can be quite destructive, tricky. Yeah, just checking in is a key part. I have a particular story, which was a happy ending, because there was one Christmas Eve where I was called to a response of somebody who rang up saying "I've taken an overdose". And was it was a single parent separated parent, feeling really low, because at first Christmas separated, and the thing that's made him ring the police was his daughter rang and said, "Dad, I can't wait, I want to see on Christmas Day". And it was at that moment that he said, "I realised what I'd

done". And that it's those moments that can just make up a turning point. And thankfully, you know, the intervention was soon enough and what have you. But it just shows you know what that was from the daughter. But what about from a med, from a friend from a loved one from a relative? You know, we sometimes feel like we don't want to bother people.

Susan Heaton-Wright 13:50

Absolutely right, aren't you? And yet, it's so easy to send a text or put a little voicemail message on, as you said, on Messenger or WhatsApp. And hearing the human voice could make a real difference couldn't it.

Dave Algeo 14:05

It does. I mean, if you look at some of the campaigns that are around around mental health in general, there is a lot that mentioned about that, that that just checking in how much of a turning point that one caring conversation could be. Reminding them that they're human, and that they matter to somebody. Because there's a lot around the research of that that aspect, you know, self harm, suicide, that kind of thing. It's that that care and intervention, and that one moment can just turn the table dramatically.

Susan Heaton-Wright 14:37

And isn't it really interesting because on a couple of occasions, friends of mine who have separated and divorced and they've been in the situation just before Christmas, that they're not with the kids. They actually reached out to me and said, you know you're doing anything can I come round? Whereas men might not do that.

Dave Algeo 15:01

And I think that that's that's one key difference, and perhaps in some of them that, I remember for a few few years, being invited to people's Christmas dinner, caring, loving friends, good friend, brilliant friends, they are now. And my instinct was to say, "I don't want to intrude, I don't want to be on that", you know, and to wallow in my own kind of place, I guess my own misery, I suppose. But it's the instinct that I guess we're conditioned, and this is where I think it is important to recognise this, this conditioning for many of us as blokes is it doesn't start as a bloke start as a boy. You know that tough, tough up, boys don't cry. I remember being a kid in burn hawk trying to, you know, be accepted by the kids getting picked on, running the house, and my dad swiftly turned me around telling me shoulders and push them out the door saying "go back and fight them, you do not back down" and getting into a fight that I didn't want and, you know, I'm a kid not a bloke, and realising that you don't show weakness and as boys, that we have a tendency to police ourselves in that as well as young boys, you know, there is that tendency to police, the emotions we share and don't share what's right and wrong within our groups. So that kind of carry through from young age to adulthood. So that that's that showing of weakness, that not showing of weakness, but not admitting is is a really strong, strong drive for many of us. And that's where that nudging, that love and nudging, that checking in is such an important thing, because we can be our own worst enemies in that sense, you know?

Susan Heaton-Wright 16:35

Now, we've talked a little bit about alcohol, how that might mask loneliness and depression. What else have you found working with with mainly middle aged men, that happened?

Dave Algeo 16:50

Yeah. A lot of things around that. Silence is it goes hand in hand a lot of it but silence and just closing down closing off, withdrawn. "Alcoholism is a medication", I'm using the air quotes, because it's not obviously and it's not. But it is, it is used something to block out time, to numb emotions, and to feel just relief for a while. drugs can be an issue, medication, drugs, but work is also something else as well, you know, work working hard working long burying yourself in work can be feel, it because it's got a productive aspect to it, hasn't it? It could even have a payoff in a career.

Susan Heaton-Wright 17:31

You feel valued? Yeah. Yeah. Your company, don't you?

Dave Algeo 17:35

Yeah. And I'm not saying we don't you know, that may not be a thankful part of the mix of helping you get through a tough time. But it's also how is it masking? Is it helped? Is it sort of avoidance for dealing with some of the underlying issues rather than, you know, actually helping you as build you rebuild a life, for example, after a separation or something like that?

Susan Heaton-Wright 17:58

Just one question that comes to mind. And this is possibly slightly off off piste. Occasionally, there are men who completely abandon their children. And that breaks my heart for the children involved because of poverty as a result of that, but also not having a relationship with their kids. What's your thought about that? And how might we, as society support them? A bit better to see the light? Yeah.

Dave Algeo 18:31

Yeah, it's something I don't have a massive amount of expert. Well, I don't have a lot of expertise in much, I guess, but certainly not a lot of knowledge other than in some cases, I could potentially see it being a corporate strategy in itself, you know, that complete withdrawal, that separation from the thing that matters most to you. And this is me just kind of assuming here speculating, I'm just going to shut it off, I'd rather not feel it and not experience it and not have any contact. But as you said, there's responsibilities commitments, and I think the officer so the answer is, I don't particularly know and that's a but I think we have, it's very clear that you know, children need loving parents, and both both aspects of that, and that that father influence is really important role for emotional development. And as a, I think one of the thing with boys growing up as well is a a figure that potentially is able to counter the, that perception of a strong silent fighting aggressive type male if we can kind of if we can find that in your father or somebody that's meaningful a relationship then that can be really really influential for young boys because we are trying to help them round out emotionally understand that emotions are not a weakness are not a bad thing and that but communicating and in a way that's more positive for them. And rather than shutting it out feeling shame, or being aggressive or all of the above, you know, so I think it's important but in terms of what society can do, I guess we do what we're doing now and do what other people are doing is just keep talking about raising awareness. And if me as a middle lifer, father to three and a young seven year old girl, other people who are who have fathers can just recognise that perhaps what the baggage we brought from our upbringing, which is part of it today, that was the day you know, I'm not going to, yes, perhaps try to offer something slightly different or a lot different, in some cases, show where human apologise

when we're grumpy or bad tempered, express emotions, which show how we can do it. And if we can do that as a parent, then I think that's, we could that's how we can each individually influence the world, I guess, going forward.

Susan Heaton-Wright 20:50

Now men play can play a huge role in children's upbringing, you know, whether they are helping with the football the the children's football club or going into schools or being teachers or volunteers, and yet, there's a huge problem now, isn't there with, with people worried about men being involved with young children even though they are checked and everything? And society's missing out.

Dave Algeo 21:23

Yeah. And I think I mean, again, I think the this part of that fear of, you know, why would a man potentially be wanting to be teaching young kids, which, which is, you know, when you won't actually see it, it sounds ridiculous, but perhaps it's these biases we have from wherever. Right, just role models of from all, you know, from all areas and communities and stuff, but you know, men as well to show up in those areas can be really popular young kids, I said before, for the same reason, you know, if we can have young, sorry, men within the primary schools showing that actually, you know, he's somebody who is caring, empathetic, and is a man, not aggressive, you know, showing up when they're struggling and helping boys and girls call, you know, see a different role model like that can only be powerful kindness, you know.

Susan Heaton-Wright 22:15

So if there are any many, any men listening, perhaps you could volunteer to give a little speech at a primary school, about your job, or the fact that you love fencing or walking or something? I'm sure that it would be greatly received by the primary school, and would add huge value to the children, wouldn't it?

Dave Algeo 22:39

Oh, absolutely. Yeah, I think you're right. I think it's that broaden horizons, and the, the, just the rounding out of the emotional growth for boys and girls, you know, just generally, it's really healthy to see. See the different opportunities and options and, and the different views and perspectives, you know?

Susan Heaton-Wright 22:59

Absolutely. And there are going to be homes where there is only a mother as the parent and so for those children in particular, seeing a an adult male and and seeing his perspective is hugely valuable. And then we'll break some of those stereotypes.

Dave Algeo 23:20

Yeah, yeah, hopefully, I think I think that's the point of it, isn't it to sort of, first of all, I guess, to step on open our own little we're, you know, Leadership isn't just about leaving the head of a company. It's just personal leadership and just being taken up position in a role and men you know, we have that role we can step up, there's a lot that, you know, is that we can do better in lots of areas. But we can also step up as a block on apologetic and say, look, I've got a lot to offer as me, you know.

Susan Heaton-Wright 23:48

Yes. So before we finish, I always ask my guests for three top tips. Now this is three top tips about how we can support our men and then we will finish off by celebrating men. For International Men's Day, man - away, sir! Still got that mug.

Dave Algeo 24:17

You still get it? Great. Love it. Yeah, three top tips. Well, I guess it goes back to what we've seen is to be aware that it doesn't show up the same way. So if it feels like you're not making a difference or not getting through, don't give up. Think about a caring, compassionate nudge. And, you know, avoid labelling it the nag because the novel couldn't obviously put you off but also turn it into something else when you care. And just to nudge and check in and for that, for all of us as blokes is you know, for ourselves is to check in with ourselves but also for each other is not to, not is to be aware when we're having conversations for the codes that we use, when we are part I'm not having a great deal struggling because we may not say, "Look, I am really struggling here", but we may use codes like that's been a crap deal or it's been you know. So you know, the codes of humour can be the code. So just to be aware of that, and then check in and check in again that net caring check. So I think they're my three.

Susan Heaton-Wright 25:18

I wonder if it lets go down to the pub and get drunk. It's probably not one of them.

Dave Algeo 25:25

Now, yes, I think, let's be right. It's the medium, the context where conversation can ordinal is what counts. So I have had many a conversation with some really good close mates over a couple of beers down the pub. But what it hasn't been is we're out on the lash, we'll get hammered, because that's a totally different dynamic. But having a one on one conversation where you talk about lots of things, potentially can give you the opportunity. Now, I'm not saying if alcohol is a problem, then that's the thing, but going for a walk, you know, the number of times I went for a walk. Isn't that an interesting one? Because I think it's the same with all of us, but kids is a good example. You know, yes. First, my rosy motto, but nothing nothing. But sitting in the back of the car, where I'm looking forward, and she's just looking out the window, and asked her the stuff she comes out with. And I think walking side by side is another one because we're not in each other's faces, but there's a connection, there's a common task, a common bond. And I think that's the way I often used to joke that, you know, men open up after a few beers or a fight, do you not I mean, and it's a tongue in cheek comment. But there's something about shared, shared challenge, shared code, maybe a football thing, I'm not into football myself, but that seems to be a bit of a chord for connection as well, talking about. So what is it that we can you know, where can we connect, and it is really, really important for us all as blokes, if we start breaking up in a relationship with some players to reconnect in a deep way with the friendships, and that might just be a quiet walk.

Susan Heaton-Wright 27:00

Really, really good points, and really good tips for us all to try to support our men. So before we finish, this is actually a celebration, International International Men's Day. So can you share some reasons why men are so awesome?

Dave Algeo 27:24

Absolutely. How long have you got? Well, let's be right. There's a there's, there's a strength, there's a quiet strength, too many of us. And when we do connect the connections can be so unbelievably enriching. I work with a lot of people, particularly in some of those careers, where maybe more male dominance of prison officers, for example, and they're hard nut to crack as in to get through the surface, once you get through. It's amazing because there is a richness below the surface, and occasionally have come through after a couple of beers. But ideally, it's about coming out, but what you get is from for many, and you know, you get the odd thing about men being you can't trust men is something other but you know, most men that I know, are decent, trustworthy, loyal, strong, determined, quietly saw, self sacrificing and a lot of ways, and we'll dig out for you that will do the work for you. And I think that is that is what we're about, do you know what I mean, for many of us, so I think that's what we're celebrating the stuff that perhaps doesn't get above the surface from any of us, you know?

Susan Heaton-Wright 28:30

Yeah. And that sounds like many of my male friends, my dad, my brother, my husband, my son, and and other acquaintances, members of the PSA, which was why we met, there are people there as well that, you know, if you needed some help, they would be there.

Dave Algeo 28:53

Absolutely, and I think that that's all we need from each other, isn't it?

Susan Heaton-Wright 28:57

Absolutely. So let's celebrate International Men's Day, which is on the 19th of November. Dave, it's been absolutely brilliant speaking to you today, is there anything you'd like to share with the audience? How they could get in contact with you what you do to help people?

Dave Algeo 29:16

Yeah, thank you. It's been lovely. It's been a great conversation and a privilege to really get the chance to share share some thoughts so thank you. I obviously I caught around midlife reshape so I work in the health sphere with with midlife men and women but you know, obviously a lot of men in terms of getting the health right, but I have a podcast called "The Restless mid-lifer", and that is aimed at really the kind of conversations we're having here exploring different aspects of health, things to consider actions to take. So if anybody wants to check that out, you can search for restless midlife in your podcast feed of choice or drop me a line at dave@restlessmidlife.com.

Susan Heaton-Wright 29:52

For those people that are listening, I will make sure that this is in the podcast notes, all of that stuff. Thank you so much, David, it's been brilliant catching up with you again. And good luck with all of the amazing work you're doing.

Dave Algeo 30:12

Thank you. Thanks for the chance to chat. It's been great to catch up, Susan.

Susan Heaton-Wright 30:15

Thank you. Bye bye.

Intro 30:19

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