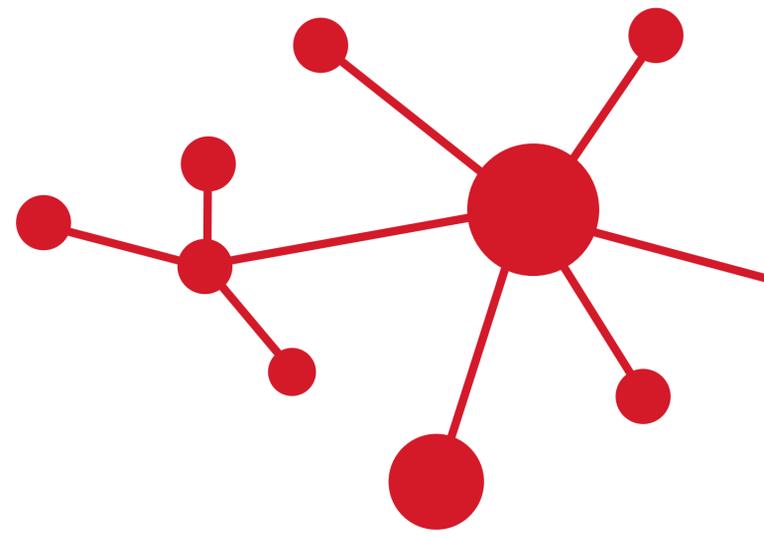


The Knowledge Project



Jim Dethmer:

Leading Above the Line

EPISODE #60

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Shane Parrish: On the show today is Jim Dethmer. Jim is the founding partner at the Conscious Leadership Group, and has worked as coach and advisor to over 150 CEOs and their teams on the conscious leadership. He's also the coauthor of *The 15 Commitments of Conscious Leadership*. I was first introduced to Jim at the recommendation of my friend Graham Duncan, and I was hooked right away. As you'll discover, Jim is full of practical advice on what you can do to be better versions of yourself. Better partners to the ones you love, better colleagues to those you work with, and better parents to your kids. We're going to deep-dive on cultivating self-awareness through pausing and reflecting, as well as understanding the role of feedback. We discuss how awareness needs to lead to acceptance and not self-criticism in order to change behavior. We talked about the victim mindset and how to get out of it. Getting out of fear-driven motivations like anger, guilt and shame, and moving to more powerful and sustainable motivations like love and play. I hope you enjoy this conversation as much as I did. Time to listen and learn.

Jim, I'm so excited to talk with you today about leadership.

Jim Dethmer: Me too, Shane. It's my favorite subject and I love to have conversation about it.

Shane: When I was looking for a place to start, I think the best place to start is about the line, a single black line and why that's the most important model for leadership. Can you explain that to us?

Jim: Sure. So when we work with individuals and teams and organizations, we're looking to start the conversation with a simple model, kind of a simple on-ramp that can be immediately applicable, like within 15 minutes of the conversation. So like any simple model or simple on-ramp, it's open to being oversimplified, and I totally get that. But the model itself is just this: there's a line, and at any moment in time—and we can talk about that—but at any moment in time, you're either above the line or below the line.

So when you're above the line, you're open, curious, and committed to learning. You're actually in a sense of trust, able to trust yourself, able to trust the environment, able to trust who you're ever in relationship with. Able to trust the universe, wherever you're placing your trust. When you're below the line, you're contracted, you're in a state of threat. So now you're closed, could be closed-minded, your literal body posture could be closed. Very often your heart is closed. You're defensive, and the big idea is you're attached to proving you're right.

So what we're simply saying is that the first key skill of conscious leaders is self-awareness that leads the pack, and the first act of self-awareness is can I locate myself in this now moment? Am I open or closed? Am I in a state of trust or a state of threat? Because we believe that ability to locate yourself really does start a powerful conversation inside of yourself and with anybody else you're doing this work with.

Shane: Let's dive into that for a second. When you were talking about above the line being open and curious and below being defensive, the natural translation in my head was sort of like outcome over ego.

Jim: Great, yes, beautiful translation.

Shane: What does it mean to be self-aware?

Jim: Well, in its most simple terms, it's the ability to accurately—and that needs to be in air quotes—accurately, or as accurately as possible, see yourself. Now of course, this has been in the parlance of leadership for a long time. The Center for Creative Leadership when they first brought out their 67 core competencies, self-awareness along with learning agility and communication and influence were the top four competencies that trumped all others. So in the world of leadership we've been talking about self-awareness, the ability to see oneself. So we're making it specific in, not just can I see my strengths? Can I see my weaknesses? Can I see my style? Can I see my thinking patterns? But in this moment, can I see the state of my consciousness? Can I see whether to your—I like your word—can I see whether I'm totally in service of outcomes, or am I contracted in egoic defensiveness? Can I see that?

Growing in self-awareness—in our experience, you know, there are three ways you can

grow in self-awareness. One is to become more self-reflective. Actually pause and bring almost like the lens of attention back at yourself, as though there was something outside of you looking back at you. And there are practices around how to do that. The other way to grow in self-awareness is to use some instrument. You know, you could use a technical instrument like the MMPI or a personality instrument. We love a tool called the enneagram because it's like a CAT scan in terms of self-awareness. And the third way to grow in self-awareness is to create an incredibly feedback-rich environment where the people around you, the most direct form of feedback, are giving you feedback.

So we talk to leaders all the time about, are they creating a feedback-rich environment? And of course, once you get that feedback is not just what people are saying to you, that you decide that you're going to live in an open-system mentality where you're constantly getting feedback, now you're on a rocket-ship ride of self-awareness.

Shane: Those things work in concert as well as individually I would imagine?

Jim: Absolutely, yeah. Very much so.

Shane: So can you walk me through a little bit about, I think I'm most interested in one and three. So one being, because those are the things you can sort of do without a tool or sort of like somebody else. You need feedback, you need people to give you feedback, but I mean in terms of pause and reflection, what does it mean to actually pause and reflect?

Jim: So in my experience most people live most of the time in kind of on automatic pilot. They're just in a trance, sleepwalking through life at the effect of their personality, and at the effect of their ego structure. We can talk about what ego is--is there really such a thing? How does it show up? So let's just keep it simple, at the affect of their personality. So the ability to become self-reflective is the cultivated skill to pause, quiet the mind a bit, and then turn attention back on itself, and this can be done so the quieting part—let's get there first.

So all the leaders that I work with, I don't work with anybody who won't have some sort of mindfulness practice. I think the research is pretty compelling about the efficacy of it at multiple levels. But to our point right now, the ability to still the mind, just slow it down a little bit so that I can create a bit of empty space—the mind's not going to get totally quiet,

unless you do your practice six hours a day for 20 years—but at least I can slow it down to where I can get quiet enough to ask a question. Like, here would be a self-reflective question I might ask a leader to ponder over the course of a week is—she or he is in their self-reflective time. Get still, and then ask yourself this question. What do I want? And then just notice what comes up, notice what comes up, and then as that begins to populate your consciousness, ask the question, what do I really want?

So this is getting still, noticing and populating the moment with a question or an inquiry. There are other ways to do it other than a question, but when people start, I like to start with something like that.

Shane: That makes a lot of sense. I'm curious as to other examples of sort of self-reflective questions you give people, and also are there context-specific ones, like I made a decision, or I had an interaction with a person. What sort of prompts would you offer to reflect on?

Jim: Sure. Let's go with I had an interaction with a person. So I have an interaction with a person. You and I could do this. We finish our interaction, and before we run off to our next thing, just get still for a minute, and then a question I might ask would be something like this. In stillness I might ask, was there any place where I got reactive in that conversation? Was there any place where I got self-protective? Was there any place where I got more interested in control and approval and survival, the three core wants of any ego structure—so was there any place I got more interested in control and approval and safety and security, then I was in learning?

If we have a deep, authentic conversation, and you go wherever you want to go, and you ask questions, there might be moments where fear will come up. It'll be the natural, normal response. So in reflection I might go back and say, where did fear come up? So, I worked with an investment team outside of London last week, and you know, they've checked most of the great boxes. They're really clear about their vision and their values, and they've got a very clear investment philosophy, and even an investment process. We were working on how to have world class conversations.

So in the midst of conversations we would just pause at times. Just literally pause. Too much sound, too much fury in most conversations. Pause, get still—I'm just talking about

one breath, and ask the questions. In this moment, am I genuinely open to creating a win-for-all outcome in this conversation? Or have I literally constricted such that the most important thing right now for me is defending my ego?

And in my experience, Shane, this, if you're willing to just practice, cultivate some self-awareness, this information becomes obvious fairly quickly. It shows up first in your body. You'll know in your body. There will be certain somatic signatures, and then it shows up in your thinking structures, and it shows up in your emotional state. So that would be—you brought up the bucket of in relationships or in conversations, what would be some of the questions? Those would be some. There would be many others that I might ask to help people grow in self-awareness.

Shane: Okay, what about...I want to—actually, before we go into the next sort of question on decisionmaking, what sort of prompts you could reflect on--what do you do with that information when you find it? Before we hopped on this call, I was just reflecting as you were talking about my interaction with somebody over email and how it was more curt than I would've liked, and do I reach out and apologize now? Or do I just let it go and acknowledge that it happened, and sort of move on and do something different probably next time? What do I do with that information once I have it?

Jim: Okay, great question. So we say that the first act of consciousness is awareness. So we're in that big bucket right now. The second act of consciousness, or the first question, is where am I? Am I above or below the line? The second question is an odd one that needs a little bit of exploration. The second question is, can I accept myself for being where I am? So, you finish that email, you pause and you say, where am I? And in our language you might notice, wow, I'm a little curt, I'm probably a little contracted, a little below the line, and you can explore what that's about for you.

Now the second question we'd ask you to pause and consider for just a moment is, can I accept myself for being reactive? So what we've discovered is that awareness needs to be followed by acceptance. Most of the people that I work with, most of the people that you talk to, and you and me, tend to be really driven people who want to optimize for success, who want to be the best we can possibly be. So when we start to really grow in self-awareness, what often follows a burst of insight, a burst of awareness, is self-criticism. Kind of, oh

crap, I shouldn't have contracted, I should be above that. You know, I was a little too curt, I shouldn't be curt. And in our experience, when you're already contracted—curtness comes from contraction as opposed to openness—and then you pile on with self-criticism or self-judgment, you actually contract further.

Now here's the deal. If, in a more contracted space you wrote an email talking about your curt response, the probability is very high that the outcome that you want wouldn't be achieved because there's a context, a bigger thing than the words in the email. There's a context you're speaking from, which is still somewhat contracted or fear-based. But if you pause and you say okay, today's Friday, and when I fired off that email, I was a little contracted, little below the line, so you can just, we just say there's some fear running in your system. We can explore that. And then you just say, could I just accept myself for being scared right now?

Scared is a natural, normal human response, and we teach all of our clients to actually pause and take one conscious breath, a deep breath down into the belly, which begins the process of changing your blood and brain chemistry. Because when you're below the line, there's a certain chemical cocktail that's working you that has upside, but also has real downside, and when I take a conscious breath, that starts to change. So you realize you're curt, you take a breath of acceptance--and by the way, self-awareness is easier to train in world class leaders than self-acceptance. Most of them have a superstitious belief that if they granted themselves a moment of self-acceptance, they'd lose their edge. That absent being constantly self-critical, self-evaluatory with a slightly negative spin, absent that, I'll lose my edge, and we find the opposite to be true. That the more I can do whatever it is I'm doing, from presence rather than reactivity—so send that email from presence rather than reactivity—the more is available to me to be my highest and best self in the moment.

So, first question, where am? Second question, can I accept myself for being where I am? Now—excuse me, now you come back into presence, and now you ask yourself, what do I really want to communicate when I respond to this email? Am I willing to be with this email from above the line? Now what that might look like is being authentically vulnerable, transparent. It might look like revealing what it was you were contracted about in the first place.

We say that candor is one of the key indicators that I'm above the line. When I'm above the line, I reveal and I don't conceal. Which—so you write this email and you say, I notice that the last email that I sent, I was curt, and when I tune into what that's about, I think it's because I was attached to an outcome, and I didn't think we were getting the outcome. So I just want to tell you that. And I want to see if we can have another conversation and see if we can create something that might be more of a win for all of us.

You don't know yet how you're going to communicate from above the line. You're just willing to shift the context of the conversation before you start dealing with the content.

Shane: I like that a lot. I think that's a powerful sort of means to walk through it. I want to come to one thing. We're like four layers deep, we're going to come back, I promise.

Jim: Okay. So you keep track.

Shane: I want to talk about acceptance, and one of the comments that you made that was interesting to me is that a lot of world class leaders have problems with self-acceptance because somehow they feel like they're driven by this...is it a chip on their shoulder? Am I understanding that correctly? What is sort of driving—what do they feel or perceive as driving them? And then what's actually driving them when you change the self-acceptance lens?

Jim: Okay, great question. So what's driving so many of them is down deep, way down deep, there is a belief that says it's not okay just the way it is. I'm not okay just the way I am. Now there can be many variations of how that shows up in a leader based on their personality structure, but down deep there's this sense that I'm not okay, it's not okay. Something needs to be different. Now with some people the age-old story might be something needs to be different in order for me to get the approval that I want from—fill in the blank. You know, a primary caregiver, my siblings, my family of origin, my original community, my first coach. Whoever it is, or myself. Something has to be different. Just the way I am isn't okay. That would be one form of this.

Another would be it's not okay just the way it is, and I'm not okay just the way I am, because I've got to even the score. Something was done to me, something happened, and there is a fuel in my belly that says I am going to overcome this. And if I pause for a moment and

take a break, I'll lose that fire in the belly that is driving me to overcome, and we can just keep exploring, keep exploring in finding these core beliefs that set, I believe, that were developed before we were six years old, that have driven us. And by the way—I say it to all the leaders that we work with—they've produced wonderful upsides. They've produced fantastic capacities for achievement and accomplishment and mastery. But whenever we've been driven primarily by the belief and the experience that something at the core is missing, that belief leaves a toxic residue.

When you get close to these leaders and they talk openly and honestly, when you're in a circle with six or eight or ten of them, which is where I spend most of my time, and we create an environment where people can feel safe and they start talking, they might say this fire in my belly has driven me to this incredible sense of accomplishment, which has been wonderful, but that same fire keeps me from being intimate and close with my significant other, or with my children. I can't sleep at night. Or what I would give—you know, when people get later in their development—what I would give, I would give all of my fame and all of my money to have peace.

So this is what I mean. The very thing that has created the consciousness, that has made this great contribution to themselves, to the world, is the very thing that keeps them from saying, could I give myself a moment of acceptance?

Now, you ask a question that I talk about with people all the time, which is if that doesn't motivate me, what's going to motivate me? In other words, if that goes away, then what?

Shane: It is fire, fire that I feel like is driving me.

Jim: Exactly. This have-to energy, this core fire. I say—I really do it simply. I say there are five things that can motivate us. The first thing that can motivate us is fear, guilt and shame. And by the way, fitting in there as well is anger and rage. And the question is, does fear, guilt, shame, anger, and rage motivate? Absolutely. I mean, you don't have to look very far to see that it motivates. The deal is that if you're self-aware at all, you know that eventually fear, guilt and shame and anger and rage leave a toxic residue.

Many of us have motivated our children with fear, guilt and shame, and “I would've thought better of you,” or “if you want something to be scared of I'll give you something to be

scared of.”

Shane: “I’m disappointed in you.”

Jim: “I’m disappointed in you.” And you know, as a parent you pause and you say, does it work? Well yeah, sure, especially depending on your kids’ personality and temperament, it’s going to work a little bit. You’ll get a short-term return, but eventually that’s going to leave a toxic residue, which is going to look like broken trust between you and your child.

So, once I start to move to another level of motivation, the next level is extrinsic reward. So does money, fame, perks, does it reward? Does it motivate? Sure. Absolutely. Does it leave a toxic residue? Yeah. If you’re motivating your teen solely by extrinsic reward, one of the things you know is you’ve got to keep increasing the capacity to keep feeding the consciousness that you’ve created. And it also creates people playing the zero-sum game, which creates tremendous win-lose consciousness, and all this kind of stuff.

Then the next level up is intrinsic reward. Now this is when I start to live from a sense of purpose, or calling. When all of a sudden, I start to discover what we call our zone of genius, or what it is that lights me up to do in the world, and this is when I start motivating people in my world with authentic appreciation. So these are intrinsic rewards, and they actually are the first level of motivation that doesn’t leave a toxic residue.

Then the next level above that—this is fascinating. The next one above that is play. All mammals are motivated by food, play and learning. So I say to leaders all the time, when work can start to feel like play—and this was misunderstood because there was a period when people would look at some of the classic startups of old like Google, you know, they’d go to their office in New York and they’d see a slide, or they’d see foosball tables or whatever, you know, and people would go, they’d misunderstand. They’d go, okay, I need to have play in the workplace.

Shane: Right.

Jim: And that’s not what play means at all. It’s a million miles from that. What it means is that when I’m coding, and it’s like a child at play. I love it. When I’m deal-making, I’m a child at play, which means there’s a low level of self-consciousness, there’s a high level of

learning, there is sustainable, rechargeable energy.

With my children, and I have seven grandchildren, when they're playing, you don't have to reinforce, motivate, they're in the game. But when we can start to live life as play...which I think we started playing as children, then we got really serious some place along the line, largely because of that fire in the belly, and then we're going to return to play at some point. And I say to leaders, the sooner you return to play the better. Then the highest form of motivation is love. I don't mean by that some touchy-feely thing. I mean the love of the thing. The love of the thing. I love landscaping. I love playing chess, I love doing analysis before investing. I love the thing itself.

So here's the deal, as you decrease, you'll never take it all away, but as you decrease being motivated by fear, guilt, shame, anger, rage, and by extrinsic reward, people need to find a new motivation source. Whether it's, I'm motivating myself, or you and I are a team, but the organizations, the teams of the future, they're motivated by intrinsic reward play.

You watch great professional sports teams, it looks to me, now what comes first, winning or what I'm about ready to say—but there seems to be a deep, profound alignment of purpose that's intrinsic, a commitment to have everybody on the team play in their zone of genius. What are they best at? We're going to figure that out and release and empower you to do that, then we're having fun. This is fun.

You hear great contributors, athletes, all the time say it's not fun anymore. Well, then what's going to motivate you if it's not fun? And they love the thing itself, and they love each other. Now again, not in a touchy-feely well, but in the way that Marines love each other. I think when people start to get motivated by that, an entire different sustainability and impact starts to occur. Does that make sense?

Shane: Yeah, I think it makes a lot of sense. How do we shift, like is it an awareness issue to shift from something like fear or guilt? Maybe you're staying in a friendship or a relationship out of fear or guilt. Is it awareness alone? Or is it replacement with sort of something higher up on that list that you mentioned. Like even extrinsic or intrinsic and then play and love. Are we shifting it? Are we just acknowledging it? How do you...walk me through that thinking a little.

Jim: Yeah, great. So again, it's always going to start with awareness. So one of the things I'd ask a leader is, I'd give them just these five options as a starting point, and I would say just get still, practice stillness, and then take whatever it is you're doing, and what we're doing right now, and just get curious. What's motivating you right now? Is it this fear, guilt, and shame? Is it extrinsic? Intrinsic? Play, love?

A lot of us are so motivated by wanting approval, to be liked, loved, valued, esteemed. We're motivated by wanting control. We want control of our world and we're motivated by wanting safety and security. Those all weave in in those first two. Fear, guilt, shame, and extrinsic reward. So what's motivating you? Get aware, self-awareness.

Now, on those early two motivations, the most extrinsic, and fear, guilt, shame, anger, rage, those are coming from a core of fear. Now again, when I work with leaders and I say can you feel the fear underneath it all? When I started coaching people 25, 30 years ago, that was a totally inane question. I might be able to feel my passion, or I could feel my anger, that was acceptable. Once in a while I could feel happiness or joy. But fear and sadness? Why in the world would I want to feel those? They're a complete waste of time. But underneath these incredibly driven, successful people, this is a funny way to say it, is a scared little five-year-old kid, or a nine-year-old little girl in there who is terrified.

So this is what I come back to. After awareness, can you give acceptance? The antidote to fear is not courage. The antidote to fear is acceptance. You know, I have these little grandchildren you know, and it's so fun having a second bite of the apple around caring for little ones, you know? I had two girls of my own, and then four stepsons who I was in their life when they were very young, and you know, I parented the best I could, just like everybody who's listening to this. Doing the best we can. But you know, to do it again 30, 40 years later is such a treat.

So you know, like when my kids would get trapped in their egoic structure you know, I parented a certain way, and now when I have these grandkids, it's so different because I'm not invested. My identity isn't tied to how they turn out. You know? If they have a tantrum in the frozen pea section of the supermarket, I don't take it as a reflection on me. If they're standing on the soccer field looking at daisies and not kicking the ball, I don't have to yell "kick the ball" because I'm afraid that people are going to think I'm a bad parent, or I'm

not going to get them a scholarship to play D1 soccer. I'm just a guy standing there loving my grandchildren. So when they get triggered, I'm in such a different place. When they get scared, I can say to them, oh golly, you're scared. Grandfather gets scared too. Let's just sit together for a minute and just breathe and be scared. Just be as scared as we are.

Which of course is what Dan Siegel, who I think is fabulous about brain research in children and parenting and the whole-brain child and all of his work, that's of course what he is saying children most need in those moments. Now, I say all that to say, inside of each of us is a scared little kid. I get these leaders in circle, Shane, and after a day, day and a half of trusting each other, they're willing to start talking about that kid, and then the question is, can they give that one a little bit of acceptance? And that is not easy to do.

So until I can give a little bit of loving kindness, a little bit of acceptance to the scared, terrified parts of me, then it's not going to stop because my mind is going to believe the only way to succeed is to keep scaring the shit out of myself—unconsciously, this is mostly unconscious—keep scaring the shit out of myself, keep believing that I don't have enough approval yet, even though I've got any of the following things, including adulation, adoration, number of followers on Twitter, you know, trophies, I still don't have enough approval. I don't have enough control over my world, and I'm still not safe and secure enough.

So until that little one who's driving the show can experience some acceptance, they won't calm down. By the way, this is true of my grandchildren. When they're throwing temper tantrums, in my experience, the big adults can always overpower them. Your ego structure can always overpower the scared part of you, but I can get the kids to sit down, but they don't get still on the inside. And until they do that, they can't let go of their belief that they need to be motivated by that.

So that's why awareness comes first, what's motivating me? Acceptance comes second, and we can do tons of work on how to cultivate a little bit of acceptance. This is not hours, I'm talking about a couple of breaths. Then from there I can start to shift—this is one of our words—I can start to shift, just starting to motivate myself with intrinsic reward, play and love. But until I can cultivate awareness and acceptance, the shift moves required to be motivated by intrinsic rewards, play, and love aren't there. I won't trust them enough. I'll go back to what's made me successful up to this point.

Shane: That was really insightful. I do want to come back to kids. I just don't want to lose track with the thread and where we're at. So we're talking about sort of self-awareness, and we had three sort of concepts. One of which was pause and reflect, two was instruments, three was feedback. Just want to go back to pause and reflect for one second because we went down a rabbit hole in terms of talking about a conversation with a person and how to reflect on that. I want to also...super important to our audience is how do we reflect on a decision that we made within an organization? Maybe that decision worked out well, and maybe it didn't, but what are the prompts that we can sort of do for almost a guided reflection to go back and get better at making decisions?

Jim: Yeah, great question. So I've listened to a couple of your podcasts where I, my story was—I love the podcast—and you had people who were expert at asking that question in a way that I think most of your listeners are going to be served by it. I'm not expert at that, so I want to be clear. My expertise is how to become self-aware around the state of your consciousness. So again, I listened to a couple of podcasts where people had fabulous input about that. I was blown away by it.

Here are the kinds of questions I want to ask. From where did I make the decision? Did I make it from below the line or above the line? Okay? Another question. Did I make the decision from, I'm introducing a new model here, from victim, villain, or hero? Victim is, did I make the decision from feeling like I was at the effect of a person, circumstance or condition? Was I in a victim consciousness? Did I make it from villain, where I was making the decision from blame, judgment, criticism? Did I make the decision from hero? Which is, did I make it to rescue people? Did I make it to relieve, temporarily, their difficulty? Their upset? This is the famous Karpman triangle. It's not new to us, that almost all life is lived from the drama triangle of victim, villain, and hero. So in a—when we're thinking about our decisions. Did I make it from above or below? Did I make it from a consciousness of victimhood, villain, or hero?

Another question we would ask is did I allow all of my emotional intelligence to totally inform this decision? So we do a lot with leaders around the difference between IQ, EQ and BQ. IQ being the gray matter—the thinking capacities, all of that—EQ being emotional intelligence, and BQ, this new field that I think is coming online around body intelligence,

the wisdom of the body.

So one of the things we see when people make decisions, or have world class conversations is of course most of the people we're working with have a bias towards IQ, data, analysis-- which is fabulous, we're not in any way diminishing that. That needs to be developed, honed, beautiful. But we've discovered that unless people are equally valuing EQ, the best decisions don't get made. There's tremendous wisdom that comes from emotional intelligence.

We teach that there are five core emotions that are healthy, life-giving, natural, and those are anger, fear, sadness, joy, and creative energy. By the way, that creative energy is actually sexual energy. We don't call it that because of all of the obvious reasons. All these emotions actually occur in and on the body. Emotions are not thoughts, they are literally sensations in and on the body. Now that doesn't mean I don't have a thought. So I live in Chicago, I'm driving down the Kennedy Expressway, somebody cuts me off, I have a thought, you shouldn't do that. That thought charges an emotion, anger, but that emotion doesn't show up in my thinking pattern. It shows up as a set of sensations on my body, heat in my face, tension in the back of my neck radiating on my shoulders down to my fist. A pulsing in my—that's anger that happens in the chest and the neck and the face. Fear is in the belly. All of these things locate in the body.

Creative energy, which is an incredibly powerful tool, actually started out as sexual energy that starts in the body in the erogenous zones and then circulates all throughout the body, and quite frankly, it doesn't necessarily have anything to do with sex. A lot of people have sex without sexual energy. They have sex with anger, they have sex with fear, they have sex with sadness, but sexual energy is part of the key to being creative. It flows through the same pipe. So, one of the questions we would ask, going back to your original question is, were all of the emotions welcomed in the decision process? And did we get the wisdom of them? The wisdom of anger is that something isn't of service, and it's a boundary energy, you need to be able to say stop. The wisdom of sadness is that there's a loss here and we're not fully facing and feeling the loss. The wisdom of fear is that something's not being paid attention to.

So, I'm going a little deep on emotional intelligence, but that would be a category. Another question I would ask is, did we reveal everything we had to say about this? So we have

these 15 commitments, and the fourth commitment is about candor. And we find horrible decisions get made when people don't reveal their thoughts, their judgments, their opinions relevant data, facts, information, their feelings, their deepest wants and desires.

So what we find is that when trust is low in relationships, teams, and organizations, people start withholding, and when people withhold, decisions become far less effective, and they get muddied up. We call them sludge. So they get slower, and wrong decisions get made. So that would be another one. Did I say everything I had to say? We call it blurting, when we're teaching people how to have world class conversations and make decisions. We want to get all the relevant facts out on the table, and then we want to create a few minutes, depends on the depth of this decision, how long we have to make the decision, for everybody in the room to blurt, and to say everything they have to say, and there's a particular way we teach people to do that. So that'd be another question.

Another question we would ask is are there any integrity breaches that are touching or affecting this decision?

Shane: What does that mean?

Jim: Yeah, great. So integrity is many things, but one of it is...integrity is about my agreements. Am I impeccable around my agreements? So an agreement is anything I've said I will do, or anything I've said I won't do. Being impeccable is being clear about my agreements, keeping my agreements, and we see that people who really have high states of integrity keep about 90% of their agreements. Renegotiating agreements I've made before they get broken, and when I break agreements, cleaning them up.

So here's what we've discovered. A lot of decisions get made where people don't acknowledge that they're making this decision on top of a broken agreement. Wait a minute, if we go back under here, we actually have an agreement here that we didn't keep, or somebody made an agreement with us they didn't keep. So if I don't get back into integrity around my broken agreements, or my unclear agreements—this investment team I worked with, one of the things we worked on was how to make clear agreements. Teams waste so much time not making clear agreements. It's like we make an agreement and then you and I are in a conversation, well, I thought we were going to talk at eight in the morning. You say,

I thought we were talking at 7:45. I thought you were calling me? I thought I was calling you? I thought I was supposed to get you that report by 5:00. No, it was 2:00. I thought the scope was this. And absent these incredibly clear, what we call impeccable agreements, teams waste unbelievable amounts of time. So I'd want to bring that question up.

Then I would just keep going with these kinds of questions that are about the state of consciousness in which the decision was made. Well, there would be a whole set of questions here. I don't know whether that's useful to you and what you're thinking around this compared to the other people I listen to on your podcast, but that's the way we'd teach teams.

Shane: Oh yeah, this is fascinating. I'm so happy to geek out on this stuff. There's a couple rabbit holes here, but before we go back up to the top, I want to talk about...how do we make clear commitments to each other? What is it you encourage people to do beyond sort of basics and specifics? What does it mean to make a clear commitment? What are examples of ways that we unconsciously make unclear commitments? And what does a clear commitment look like in those situations?

Jim: Okay, great. So first I want to use a different word, because commitment is a technical term for us. I want to use with you the term agreement.

Shane: Yeah, sorry.

Jim: An agreement is between two or more people, although by the way, you can make agreements with yourself. When we start working with leaders, we discover they're not making clear agreements with themselves, and they're out of integrity with themselves, right? So you know, one of the agreements that I have with myself in the month of March is that I'm going to do a certain number of high intensity interval trainings per week, and I'm going to do a certain amount of strength and balance and training, and I'm going to meditate a certain amount each day and so on and so forth. These are all agreements that I've made with myself.

So we can make agreements with ourselves, we can make them with each other. You and I had an agreement. We're going to have a conversation at 8:00 a.m. Central time. We had an agreement. An agreement, first and foremost, to be clear about your agreements.

It's between people, and it's anything I say I will do, or anything I say I won't do. So an agreement could be, we're going to talk at 8:00 in the morning. You asked me at the beginning of this, are there anything that's off limits? And I said no. But let's imagine I had said, yeah, you know, me as a grandfather is off limits. We would've made an agreement, and it would've been clear you couldn't ask me about that. So, an agreement between two or more people—anything I've said I will do or won't do.

Now, I'll give you one big idea. One of the keys to agreements is they need to be incredibly clear. Every agreement needs to have a who is going to do what by when. And agreements that don't have a who and a what and a when are sloppy, and we all have a million of these. It can be as simple as you walk in the door and your partner or your significant other says, "Hey, I thought we made an agreement to leave for that party at 7:00?" And you go, "Oh, golly, I didn't think we were going to leave for the party at 7:00. I thought we were going to meet here at the house and get ready for the party at 7:00. Or you know, I don't think it really matters whether we leave at 7:00. They don't care about that." And all of a sudden, you're in drama with your intimate partner because you don't have a clear agreement about who's going to do what by when.

Shane: I think yeah, another good example that we've all probably experienced is the meeting we've been at where something is decided, but nobody knows who's doing what. We just sort of leave the room.

Jim: It's so true. So when we watch world-class teams, not only do they make clear agreements, who's going to do what by when, they capture all their agreements. We're huge fans of a technology like Asana, like I love Asana Group because first of all, they've built their entire technology I think in a commitment to a certain kind of consciousness, and then they—in my experience—developed an elegant, simple way for individuals, teams and organizations to track all of their agreements. So if it's done masterfully, drama minimizes. We're not wasting time on these agreements.

So now, clear agreements, who's going to do what by when. Now here's the next one, and I'll give you this one. This one is huge in organizations. We say only make agreements that you have a whole-body yes to. That's a funny term. It basically means check throughout your whole body. Check your head, check your heart, check your gut. Check your whole

system. Do you really have a yes to making this agreement? So what happens in most organizations is, we don't create an environment where when people are asked to make an agreement, they get to really check. Or instead of checking, people don't go, I didn't really check, I just kind of gave the corporate nod. Like somebody asked, so I said okay, and then they actually think underneath, they think don't worry, they don't write down, they're not going to check anyway. I just want to get out of the damn meeting and go do something. So now I'm making agreements I don't really want to make.

Well, when you make agreements you don't really want to make, a couple of things are going to happen. One, you won't do it, or you'll really struggle to do it because you didn't want to do it in the first place, or you'll do a crummy job. You'll be passive-aggressive. It'll show up late, it'll be done half assed. So in our world, we want to teach teams to make agreements where everybody gets to check and see, do I really have a yes to this?

Now, if I don't have a yes to it, then I might say to you, Shane, I don't have a yes to having our call at 8:00 in the morning. I might want to renegotiate the who, the what or the when. I might say wow, if we could do it at 7:30, that would be a lot better for me, instead of just nodding my head. Or I might say I don't like the what. We're recording this on Zoom and Zoom's sketchy for me. Can we just do a phone call? I get clear, so you trust, you can trust that if I make an agreement with you, I'm in. I'm in. Now, we teach leaders that they also need to know how to use command and controls as a viable style. They need to know when to issue edicts instead of agreements, that's true. But when you're really asking for a bilateral agreement, you want people to totally buy in, and then next write it down. Just write down your agreements. And then keep your agreements.

We say to people all the time, it's unbelievable how many leaders I work with, and I say show me the agreements you're currently working with and why. Then I say are you lined up? Are you in integrity with yourself to keep the agreements? And when we first start working with leaders—years ago we did a bit of measurement around this, and we saw that most people in organizations keep somewhere between 40 and 60% of their agreements. Well, can you see where that would be a massive problem?

Shane: Oh yeah, that's going to cause a whole bunch of like, you're going to be problem-solving all day, there's a lot of friction involved in that, a lot of drama I would imagine.

Jim: Yes. So I get really serious with myself around—you know Tom Peters said a long time ago, there's no such thing as a small breach of integrity. To me, broken agreements are breach of integrity. By the way, it doesn't matter if I say to Debbie, my partner, I say I'll pick up a gallon of milk on the way home, and if I don't pick up a gallon of milk on the way home, that's an integrity breach. It's not a whoops. Which leads me to the next piece, which is whenever I break agreements, I go to the person with whom I broke the agreement, and I say, let's imagine that I was late for this call, I show up 15 minutes late. I would begin by saying, Shane, before we get going, I want to cover that I'm out of integrity with you. I made an agreement to be on the call at 8:00, and I wasn't there. So I want to take responsibility for that, and I want to see if I need to do anything to clean that up with you.

By the way, notice in doing that, I'm not making excuses or justifying. I'm not explaining. I'm just taking responsibility, because that act of taking responsibility is the commodity of trust. So that would be some of the stuff I'd say about agreements. By the way, I want to speak just for a minute, that my mentor in this was Gay Hendrix, Dr. Gay Hendrix, and his wife, partner, and co-facilitator of life Katie Hendrix, and he's the one who taught me about being impeccable around agreements and it transformed my life.

Shane: What sort of agreements do people have, that are maybe unstated in their direct personal relationships with their partner or spouse, that cause friction in that relationship that are maybe unsurfaced and you're unaware of?

Jim: Yeah, great. Well here's the deal. Most people in their intimate relationship, they haven't gotten conscious around this, have all kinds of unstated agreements. So you know you're coming home from a party that you went to and all of a sudden it gets icy cold in the car, right? Then one partner turns to the other and said, "What's wrong?" "Well, you talked a long time to so and so, and it looked like you were flirting, and it looked like you were touching the person inappropriately on their arm." Boom, now we're off to the races, right? Well we say all the time that all drama in relationships, personal and professional, is caused by unaligned commitments—that's that word commitment, we're not headed in the same direction—or unclear and unkept agreements.

So like in coupleness, one of the things that we say is, you ought to get really clear about what your agreements are about how you're going to be involved with people outside of

your coupleness. It could be as simple as, are we going to be monogamous or are we going to be polyamorous? Are we going to have an open relationship or are we going to have a closed relationship? Is it okay for me to have—to flirt? Is flirting okay, or is flirting not okay? Unless we get clear about all these agreements, they're just going to keep recirculating in drama.

We say that unless you get aligned on your commitments—a commitment would be I commit to be candid in our relationship. So notice, that doesn't have a who, what, and a by when. A commitment is more a moon launch. My north star is that I'm going to reveal and not conceal in this relationship. I'm not going to hide and manipulate information, my thoughts, feelings or judgements. I'm going to be transparent, authentic, and reveal. Well can you see that in an intimate relationship, if one partner holds that view, and the other partner goes, "Nah, not so much. I'm going to reveal as much as I need to reveal in order to maintain what I want to maintain." Well, we say that that unaligned commitment will cause constant, recurring drama, because it'll show up around money, it'll show up around sex, it'll show up around the in-laws, it'll show up around the children. It'll show up around free time. It'll show up around the credit cards.

It'll show up every place, and people will think that the issue is the in-laws. You didn't tell me that your parents were coming. But the issue is not the in-laws. The issue is that we are not aligned in how transparent and candid we want to be with each other. So unaligned commitments, and then unclear and unkept agreements, are the source of most drama in most intimate relationships. And by the way, you brought it up in the personal life, it's absolutely true in the workplace as well. People aren't aligned in what their commitments are. What are we really up to here and how are we going to be, behave, believe with each other, and then we have sloppy agreements.

So, sometimes people say, what do I do? What does our company, the Conscious Leadership Group, do? In the most simplest terms, we help leaders, teams, and organizations minimize drama. Because drama is deeply entertaining—by the way, it's addictive—but it's a massive waste of time.

Shane: Just one question that came up as we were talking about relationships, since you deal with a number of people that are sort of learning to become self-aware, I would imagine...

my hypothesis would be part of that would be I'm in an unhealthy relationship with my partner or spouse.

Jim: Absolutely.

Shane: So what do you do if you realize that?

Jim: Okay. So again, I'm going to say, let's say I conclude that I'm in an unhealthy relationship. Again, after awareness comes acceptance. A breath of, like the Buddhists say, that's just the suchness of it. Today is Friday, and my experience of my relationship, it's unhealthy. Okay, so now I'm present to that reality, and I say that because most people are unwilling to fully face what's going on in much of their life. Fully face it. They turn away from it. They partially glance at it, and one thing they're not willing to fully face is the condition of their intimate relationship, and they don't fully face it for lots of reasons.

One, they think, if I fully face it, that's going to create a ton of mess, and right now my prioritization is my work, or my prioritization is my friends, or my prioritization is taking care of my sick mother. I do not want to open up Pandora's box about the health of our relationship.

Shane: Or I don't want to hurt the other person, right?

Jim: There you go, that was going to be the next one.

Shane: Oh yeah.

Jim: I don't want to fully face what's going on, because I don't want to hurt my partner. Now, I'll just pause there for a second. If we were really talking honestly here, I would say, let's just say that that's true. You really do care about this person and you don't want to hurt them. So I'll grant that. Let's be with that for a minute. But for many, many people, especially who are in what you said is an unhealthy relationship, what they really don't want to do is live with the effect and the consequences of when their partner gets hurt.

So a typical thing would be, you know, some person in the relationship is unfaithful, and let's say they broke an agreement. Not all relationships have fidelity as part of an agreement, but let's say they did. So somebody's unfaithful, and now they realize uh-oh, this is a

problem, because now I've got a secret, and you know like they say in the recovery groups, you're only as sick as your secrets, and that's true about a relationship as well. If I'm really committed to closeness, and now I've got a major secret, it's probably going to be a barrier to closeness. So then when we start coaching, and I say, got any secrets in your intimate relationship? Yeah, I got this one.

Then we start talking about, what do you want to do with that? And we start laying out the options. One option is to become authentic and reveal. I don't necessarily always say that's the solution. I'd want to have a whole lot of conversation. But when we get down to having that very short conversation—it's not a long conversation, it's pretty short—hey, I made an agreement with you to only be intimate with you and I broke that agreement, and I take responsibility for that. Most people don't want to see the look on the other person's face, because if they care about them at all, if they haven't hardened their heart—which by the way, often they've already hardened their heart, so they actually don't care that much—but if they still care, they don't want to see that hurt, that pain. They don't want to see that anguish. But they even more don't want to live with what's coming back their way. “How dare you? I knew you weren't trustworthy. This explains everything.”

So often times when we say it's because we care, and by the way, that's totally legitimate, often what's really true is we want to keep controlling the other person, and we don't want them to see us for who we are because we don't trust that we're going to be okay if they have their reaction. I've sat with countless couples, for example, when they've had that conversation. I've been the third party in the room, and I say to the person who broke the agreement, who wants to return to a genuinely close relationship, that they believe they cannot get to as long as they have a secret. I've sat there when they've said that 30-second thing, it's never longer than that, there might be more details that come out later—and then what I say to them is, “Now you have to stay here in presence, and be with your partner while they feel all their feelings, while they express all that they have to express, while they experience their hurt, their betrayal, their mistrust, because there's no possibility for rebuilding a relationship unless you can be authentic, and you can be present to your partner while they have their experience.”

So, I mean, I wouldn't cut it deep with you here, and that's not true with everybody, but

that's the kind of thing that needs to happen in an intimate relationship when agreements have been broken.

Shane: I imagine that would be a really difficult conversation for both, obviously, both people to have.

Jim: It's incredibly difficult, painful, messy. It's why people avoid it. But what's true is if I really want to have an authentic relationship where we practice being revealed and candid—by the way in my judgment, you can't have a truly intimate relationship, and I don't just mean sexually--intimate, close relationship without being authentic. It's not possible. You can have a buddy, you can have some fun, you can have a playmate, you can have somebody who to co-parent with. You can have somebody to have a social representation in your community with, but if what you really want is closeness, candor and closeness go hand in hand. So I can only be as close as I'm willing to be revealed.

Shane: Right.

Jim: The thing here is unless you really, really know me and I have the guts to reveal myself, I can never trust that you really love me, because if you knew, in my mind I'm thinking if you knew this about me, then you wouldn't love me. So how can I ever experience full love and acceptance unless I'm fully revealed? It's always going to be in question.

Now this is the mess. This is why when I start working with couples at the very beginning and they're thinking about coupling, even getting together in a relationship, one of the things I do is, I just go through what are you really committed to? What do you want? Let's make sure you're aligned and committed on that.

Again, this is a lot of the stuff that I learned from Gay and Katie Hendrix when we apprenticed with them. They wrote a fabulous book called *Conscious Loving* that is all about this stuff that transformed my relationship with Debbie, and it's transformed countless relationships. By the way, the same stuff is true on a team or in the business environment. What are we committed to? How real and authentic do we want to be?

Shane: I'm gonna have to add, check out that book. I want to go one level up in the rabbit hole that we had gone down here. You talked about victim, villain, and hero, and I want

to explore the victim mindset just a little bit. Is that akin to like, a passive mindset where you feel like life is happening to you and you're out of control of it and these things keep... you don't take responsibility for anything. You sort of don't see your role in things?

Jim: That's exactly what it is. It is living from the belief, it's not always a conscious belief, that life is happening to me. So I'm at the effect of people, circumstances and conditions. So you know, I'm in Chicago, it's sunny today, but it's 35 degrees or so in March. So there are people when I walk around the city and talk to people who says you know, "God, the weather is so cold, when is spring coming? I know it's officially spring, but when is it really going to be spring?"

Well in that moment they're reflecting victim consciousness. They're at the effect of the weather. So what I'm saying is my happiness, my effectiveness, my joy is contingent upon people, circumstances, or conditions. So if the weather's nice, I'm happy. If the weather's bad, I'm unhappy. If my intimate partner treats me kindly, remembers that it's my birthday, gives me a gift, kisses me appropriately, appreciates me deeply, I'm happy. If they don't, I'm unhappy. If the deal goes through, if the investment pans out, if we win the game, I'm happy. So now in psychological terms, we've moved the locus of control outside of ourselves, and we're living in victim consciousness. By the way, we say that this is where a vast majority of people live, the vast majority of time, because—I want to say something, Shane, when I'm living in victim consciousness, it doesn't necessarily mean that I'm having a bad day.

In other words, imagine that it's 80 degrees and sunny in Chicago in late March. Now you walk around town and people go, "I am having a fantastic day. It's gorgeous, it's sunny, and I played 18 holes of golf and shot two over pars. It's the best I've had in springtime in my lifetime, and my kid got into an Ivy League school." Well, they're happy, but causation is still outside of them.

Shane: Right.

Jim: So now it's just going to be, I'm a victim of people, circumstances, and conditions. When I move from victim consciousness, which happens below the line, to above the line, I move into what we call creator consciousness, and creator consciousness is basically this. I choose, and it's an active, conscious choice. I choose to be responsible for my experience.

In other words, the weather doesn't upset me. I upset myself because I'm attached to beliefs about the weather. Like, I believe it should be sunny and 80, not 34 and cloudy. I'm the source of my belief, I'm attached to being right about my belief, and when the world doesn't cooperate with my constructs about how it ought to be, I upset myself.

So you know, when this really gets going, you start to see that nobody upsets you, upset yourself. Nobody angers you, saddens you, makes you happy, you do that to yourself. Because it's literally because of the cognitive, mental, and emotive emotional structure. Your thoughts about the world are creating your experience of the world.

So when people move from victim to creator, they start taking 100% responsibility for having their experience.

Shane: But how do we do that? Like intellectually, I think I understand everything you just said. And if you asked me a question I could sort of repeat that, but putting that into a day-to-day practice where you're giving up this sort of desire for an outcome, or you're letting these things sort of dictate your happiness, it's much harder, it requires a ton of consciousness. Maybe more energy than what we have.

Jim: Yeah, I actually don't—my experience is it doesn't take more energy, because I think living in a victim consciousness requires massive amounts of energy.

Shane: Okay.

Jim: When we start to live in creator consciousness, it actually is energy-replenishing because in cooperation with life I'm no longer resisting what life is bringing. It takes an unbelievable amount of energy to resist reality.

Shane: I agree, yeah, totally.

Jim: So—

Shane: In the energy, I guess in the context I was bringing it up is, you need the energy in the moment to sort of, within that split second, it might save you a ton of energy later, but you need to find it in that moment to be conscious of your thinking, accept your thinking, and then to shift your thinking.

Jim: Yes, I agree with you. Actually, when you're in victim consciousness, we now know that there's a chemical cocktail, adrenaline and norepinephrine and cortisol, which is running through your body. And that cocktail gives an energy surge. So many people are unwilling to move from victim consciousness to creator consciousness because they're addicted to the chemical cocktail and its results. So at that level of energy I totally agree with you. If I start to live as creator, I'm going to give up my attachment to living in a constantly adrenalized state. That's a big deal. So in my experience, it's not that people even don't know how to change from victim to creator, it's usually that they're unwilling.

But having said that, let's say that you and I are talking. We're out, we're buddies, we're out having a beer together. You're telling me about some issue in your life. You're telling me about something that you're complaining about in life, and let's say in the personal life, you're complaining about a personal relationship, something that's happening in your personal relationship. You're not getting the amount of appreciation and respect that you want.

Okay, so I say great, super, tell me about it. You tell me about it, and then at the end I would say to you, "Well, let me just ask you, are you in victim consciousness? Do you feel like this is happening to you? Or are you in creator? Do you feel like this is happening by you?" And if you're like most of us, you know, you'd take a sip of your beer and you'd say, "This is happening to me. My intimate partner doesn't get it. They don't get what a great job I'm doing, how hard I'm trying, all the contribution I'm making, all the things I gave up to be in this relationship. All the things, they don't get it. So it's happening to me, right?"

Shane: Then you start keeping score, and—

Jim: And now you're in the downward death spiral of a relationship. It's two people below the line in victim, villain, or hero. By the way, they move all over that triangle. One day you're the victim and your partner's the villain, and the next day you're trying to rescue your partner from their bad feelings, you're on hero, and we're just running around on the victim triangle, and we're keeping score. Okay. Now if I were talking, it's just you and me, it's not your partner, but I'm talking to you and I say, "I get it man, you make sense to me. You're triggered and reactive, makes total sense to me. Are you willing to shift? Are you willing to stop blaming your partner for being the cause of your experience, and are you

willing to start taking responsibility for being the creator of your experience?”

Now that is not a small question. That is a radical question. And many people will say, “Well, I’ll shift if she’ll shift.”

Shane: Right, of course.

Jim: Or something like that, or what if I shifted, it gets messy? All that kind of stuff. But let’s say we’re having that beer and you’re willing to shift, okay? Then here’s what we’d say. We would ask you to create a recipe, and we do this with teams, organizations, individuals all the time. We would say, create a recipe for us. And I would say to you, Shane, if I wanted to have the exact same relationship with my intimate partner that you do with yours, where you’re underappreciated, undervalued, not respected, how would I need to show up to create that? What would I need to do? What would I need to not do? What would I need to say and not say? What would I have to believe and not believe? How would I have to see them? How would I have to see me?

And in a manner of moments, if you’re willing to start taking responsibility and seeing that you’re the creator of your experience, you would be able to write out the recipe for me for how to create that experience. I was working with a team in a company the other day, and like so many teams, they were in complete overwhelm, and they were in the victim, villain, hero triangle, and they were overwhelmed because of scarcity of resources, they were overwhelmed because of the competitive advantage that they were losing. They were overwhelmed because they had some product design flaws. Blah-blah-blah-blah-blah. They were in overwhelm. And of course they had been doing this work for a while.

So I said are you above or below the line? They said we’re below the line. Great, would you be willing to take responsibility for overwhelming yourselves? Notice the change in language, we’re not being overwhelmed by something out there. We are overwhelming ourselves. So it’s great, we were in a room with big white boards, and I said teach it, imagine that there’s a new startup that’s coming in the world and they come to you and they say, “We want to live in constant overwhelm too.” If you could teach us, what do you have to do to live in overwhelm? And they laughed, they got up and they started writing all over the walls how you’d have to see reality to live in constant overwhelm, because in my experience being

overwhelmed is actually optional, and it's useful in the short run, but very destructive in the long run. It gives initial energy bursts, but not long term sustainability.

So they were starting to take responsibility for being the creator of their experience. So you ask practically, what do you do? Well, first you locate yourself as in victimhood, then you take responsibility for putting yourself there, then you check and see am I willing to shift? Then you create the recipe for how you've created the situation just the way it is, and lastly, in the very creation of the recipe, you've given the prescription for how to change it.

Let's go back to my illustration with an intimate relationship. You're complaining about not being appreciated and respected enough, and you know, when I say teach the recipe, teach the class how to do this, one of the questions I'd ask is I'd say, "Let me ask you this, do you give a lot of articulated appreciation to your significant other? Are you giving as much appreciation as you'd like to get back?" And you look at me and you go, "No. I'm not going to appreciate her until she appreciates me." Okay, then you'd write that down, you'd go here's a formula for having a relationship where we don't have enough appreciation and respect, don't give appreciation to my partner. So I'd say great, if you're really willing to change this, just go home and do the opposite.

Next I'd say to you, you're still committed to thinking that you're valuable if your partner likes you. I want you to move the locus of control inside yourself and generate your own sense of value from the inside, and here are three things to do that. So now you start to change, and I guarantee you as you start to change, you create a totally different context in your intimate relationship, with a much greater possibility of having appreciation and respect be a cornerstone of your relationship because you chose to shift from victim consciousness to creator consciousness. Does that make sense?

Shane: Oh, it totally makes sense. I think that's great advice. Shifting gears just a little bit here, going back to—you had brought up EQ and BQ, and I'm curious as to how we develop, hone, augment, accelerate, our sort of EQ and tell me a little bit about BQ, but more in terms of like EQ. What is it that we can do to consciously improve or be aware of where we're at? And what is it we can do to develop that in a way that's going to bring us closer to other people to have more meaningful relationships? To be more empathetic towards them and more sensitive to maybe the context in which they're operating?

Jim: Okay, beautiful. So I'll just give you some steps. Step number one, decide if you're willing to develop your emotional intelligence. That's not a trick question. Most people that we're interfacing with and you're interfacing with have a serious question about the validity of feelings and emotions. And let's for now say that's the same thing. So the first question I ask you is, do you want to? And let's say you've lived enough life that you go, or you've read enough of the research that says that EQ trumps IQ long-term, so you go yes, I'm really willing. Great.

Then the first thing I'd say is before you can become emotionally intelligent, you have to be emotionally literate. And emotionally literate is just the ability to know what you're feeling in any moment, and name it, which sounds so simple. It's something we should be teaching our kids when they're three, four, five, six years old, because actually our kids come hardwired to know how to do this, and then we have to teach them not to do it. They come with tremendous emotional intelligence, and then in order to socialize them we teach them not to do that.

But the first thing is can at any moment, can I just pause and ask myself, what am I feeling right now?

Shane: Right.

Jim: Okay, good. So if I pause right now and I go, what feeling is here right now? I go there's joy and excitement, there's peace, and there's fear. That's what I'm feeling. If I say to you, what are you feeling? I'm not sure you want to play this game with me here, but is there a feeling here right now for you and what is it?

Shane: Overwhelmed, happy, and sad. Do those even go together? I don't know.

Jim: They do, they're beautiful. Well here's what you find out about feelings is, it's never a question of whether they go together, they just occur.

Shane: Right.

Jim:have feelings. Now if I were coaching you, I'd say overwhelmed is actually not an emotional state, it's an intellectual state, or it's an energetic state. Happy, and was the other one sad? Happy and sad are emotional. Now, I learned this years ago when I first got in

marital therapy many, many, many years ago, I was in marital therapy, and the therapist said, “Jim, what are you feeling?” And I said something like “I feel that she’s wrong.” You know? I’ve said this to people in the business where, “What are you feeling?” “Well, I feel like he’s an asshole.” Okay, that’s not a feeling. Any time “I feel” isn’t followed by an emotional state, like the five we use, sad, angry, scared, joy or creative energy, if it’s followed by a thought, it’s not a feeling.

This is why I say the first thing you have to learn is emotional literacy. So, can I pause at any moment, take a breath and name my feelings?

Shane: Right.

Jim: Then next, can I feel my feelings? Naming a feeling is different than feeling your feelings. Feelings are actually energy, that’s all they are. They’re a set of sensations that are occurring on and in the body. And research—I first read this from Jill Bolte Taylor in *Stroke of Insight*, that great TED talk and then the follow-on book, the Harvard brain researcher—who said that feelings last less than 90 seconds, and that’s true. In my experience that actually often last far less than that. If I don’t feed the feeling with more thoughts, if I just tune into the body, the energy will go out of the body in less than 90 seconds.

Shane: Is that why you sort of advise to just take a deep breath and feel in that moment? Just be there with that feeling?

Jim: That’s exactly right. So am I willing to just feel the feeling? Even big feelings like, my older brother just died, just transitioned out of this reality a couple of weeks ago. So as I’m letting grief move through my body, there will be times when I’ll be sitting, and a wave of sadness will show up, and what that feels like is kind of a weight in the center of my chest, a weight in the center of my chest, and I can feel pressure coming to the front of my face, and it’s not long before some wetness starts to fall out of my eyes, some tears.

Now, I could deny that, shove it down, real men don’t feel sad. I could do any of that. But all I do is I just, first of all, I have gratitude for that, because to me that just is my love for my brother, it’s just our connection. So if I don’t do anything with it, if I just let my heart feel heavy, if I just let tears fall out of my eyes, it goes through in less than 90 seconds. Now in a big case like that where you’re grieving the loss of a loved one, there might be waves

of feelings that will come through, but each of those waves, if you learn to do this, will last less than 90 seconds. Then there will be a trough where there's peace, equanimity. And then the next wave will come through. And that's true with anger, and it's true with fear.

So emotional intelligence is the ability to know what I'm feeling in any moment, and have a receptive relationship with the feeling, so it goes through my body. It doesn't get stuck. See, because if the feeling gets stuck, which is what happens with most people, it ultimately calcifies and turns into a mood. So anger that isn't felt and released in less than 90 seconds, that calcifies in the body and turns into bitterness and resentment and hatred.

So over the years I've coached a few professional athletes, and golfers are a great place to experience this. So let's say that the golfer hits a shot, and it doesn't go where he had visualized it going. And one of the first things I teach them if they want to play conscious golf, and I'm not arguing that this is the best way to create peak performance, but it's something to be considered. If they want to do this, the first thing they would do is they would notice the flight of the ball, it's headed out of bounds, and then they would notice that a feeling comes into their body. Let's say anger, whoosh, and it comes like a white hot flash into their body.

Now there are many views in this and sports psychology. One of the things that I see as a possibility is I don't resist the anger. I let it come into my body. Now I learn to express it, to let it flow out of my body in ways that are friendly to me, and friendly to the environment. If I'm on national TV, I might want to let that anger move out of my body in one way, if it's me and my buddies playing, you know, I might let it move out another way. But I don't resist it.

Shane: Right.

Jim: Really, the first thing I do is let it all flow out of my body. Again, in less than ten seconds, then I come back to presence, and what I teach is having done that I begin to walk, and part of my walking is to come back into presence. My pre-shot routine begins the moment I put my club in the bag and start walking to the next shot. My pre-shot routine begins then because I'm coming back into presence, I'm centering myself. By the way, this equally needs to be done if I stick it 18 inches from the hole. I need to let that joy, that excitement

go through my body because if I don't learn how to let those vibrations of energy move through my body, with breath, movement, and sound, they'll affect my next shot.

By the way, the same thing is true if I'm investing. If I get too high, if I get too low, if I don't let the emotions flow, then I will be open to all sorts of cognitive biases. So, emotional intelligence. Can I know what I'm feeling? Can I move it through my body, and then last, can I pause and get the wisdom of the emotion? In other words, we're mammals, we have these limbic brains, these emotions have incredible intelligence. So once the emotion has moved through my body, one of the things we teach people to do is pause and ask, what is that emotion here to show me, to teach me? To invite me to face? To become aware of? To learn from?

Now that whole process is individual emotional intelligence, greatly skinned down. Emotional empathy, which you brought up, is, I can only be as empathic, or compassionate with another as I can be with myself. I say this to parents all the time. If you're not comfortable feeling your sadness, your broken heartedness, you're not going to allow your children to feel theirs.

So when they don't get invited to the dance, when they miss the game-winning field goal, when they get shunned by their peer group, and they come home and they're sad, instead of being with them in their sadness, which again, all the best work on conscious parenting says be with them first in their sadness, instead of doing that, you're going to say stuff like this, "Oh honey, that happens to everybody, you'll get over it, you'll make the next shot. There's a better group of friends anyway." And because you're not comfortable just being with your sadness, you have no capacity to be with your child's sadness, or their anger, or their sexual energy. A lot of people are uncomfortable with their sexual energy, so they start denying and repressing and suppressing their sexual energy, and when it starts to show up in their kids, they shut it down in a heartbeat. So it's the same in the workplace. I can only experience emotional empathy and emotional compassion, and being emotionally connected to people to the degree that I can be with my own emotion.

Now, once I can do that, then the next part of emotional intelligence is I can feel what you're feeling. I tune into it—and emotions are just another data set. This is what I tell hard-edged investors who are interested in data sets. It's just another data set. And if you

want to make the best decisions, you want all of the data available.

So when you're with your analyst, you want to know what they're feeling, and one of the big problems I think that's existing so many times in the investment world, we want people to have conviction. But so much of this conviction is occurring at an egoic state from below the line. Now what I mean by that is in order to get the PM to believe that my research is viable and to pull the trigger, I've been told I have to have conviction. But what I end up doing is denying contrary opinions. I deny my instinct, my gut, I don't bring forward all relevant information. I think that conviction below the line looks very different than conviction above the line. Conviction above the line says, wow, I say to people, I ought to be able to tell you all the reasons I want to make this investment, and I ought to be able to tell you all the reasons I think it's a bad idea. I ought to be able to tell you all the reasons I'm excited, and I ought to be able to tell you all the things I get a little nervous, apprehensive, scared about. And given all of that, and by the way, we haven't talked about these, you know I'd want to bring my body intelligence into this as well.

After we've talked about all that, I want to be able to look you in the eye and say I want to make the investment. Now that is not some stomping my feet, pounding my hand conviction. It is a quiet, grounded, conviction that comes because I have faced, felt, and dealt with all the data sets. That's what I want. So that's what emotional intelligence is to me, a basic primer on it. Does that give you what you want around that?

Shane: Yeah, I think that's amazing. I really appreciate you going into such detail on that. I want to come back to self-awareness and get into, now remember we were talking about those three things, pause, reflect, instrument. I want to talk about feedback a little bit, and then I want to sort of get into parenting a little bit, in terms of what we can do as parents. So walk me through feedback in terms of self-awareness. How can I use feedback? How can I set feedback up? How can I get people to give me feedback so I can become more self-aware?

Jim: Yeah, great question. So one of the questions I work with leaders on, we work with teams on all the time, is how feedback-rich is the environment? And again, a lot of times I'll talk to leaders, you know the higher up they go in their trajectory, it's not uncommon at all that they tell me they're getting less and less feedback. Makes sense, based on power

dynamics and structures and fear and all of that, makes total sense. But when they first start talking to me, they want to talk from victim. They want to say that they're at the effect of the environment that's giving them less feedback, and I say, would you be willing to take responsibility for being the creator of your reality? In other words, you're getting as much feedback as you're committed to getting, so stop blaming anybody around you. Then I say, would you be willing to create a feedback-rich environment? And that's a real serious exploration, we really want to play with that. And let's say the person says yes, I want to create a feedback-rich environment. Good.

Then the next thing I would say to them is, let's identify your feedback filters. So a feedback filter is anything that completes this sentence. In order for me to value your feedback, I would need you to blank. So when I ask this, usually they might say "Well, in order for me to value your feedback, I need you to be a subject matter expert. In order for me to value your feedback, I need you to give it to me in a certain way at a certain time. I need factual data supporting it. I'd like feedback early in the mornings before noon. In order for me to be open to your feedback, I'd know that you have my best interest in mind. In order for me to be open to your feedback..." and they just start identifying all their feedback filters, and making them conscious. And basically, I always want to make sure they have one in there that they often skip over or wait until the last, and it's this, "I would be open to your feedback if I agreed with it."

Because all those others are really a cover for that, and the deal is, the more feedback filters, unconscious ones, that we have in life, the less feedback we're open to. So what I work with leaders around is becoming conscious of their feedback filters, and deciding thoughtfully which ones they want to have. Now this is a deep and meaningful conversation. It creates a very, very powerful sense of self-awareness. So I'll stop there on that and let me keep moving.

So, let's say I decide okay, what do I really want my commitment to be? Now we're back to that word around commitment. Well I've worked with leaders, especially some young people at the beginning of their career, who've gotten to the point where they say this, "I want feedback given any way, any time, by anybody. I want feedback-rich environment." Now, I always help them differentiate between receiving feedback and agreeing with feedback. I

just want to get a feedback-rich environment.

Now, for most people that's too open of an aperture, but I want them to clarify what is their aperture is about, how much feedback they want in life. Okay, so I want to get clear about that.

Then, a real simple thing is, ask for feedback.

Shane: Right.

Jim: So you know, a real simple thing is, you give a presentation to the investment committee. At the end of it—just if you have time in the meeting, great. If not, go to everybody afterwards—and say, I just gave a presentation, would you give me a number between one and ten? Ten being I absolutely killed it, hit it out of the park, it was exquisite. One being it was torturous, a complete bust. You know, with most investment professionals you're not going to get any tens, a rare nine, hardly ever do you get a one or a two.

Shane: Right.

Jim: Sevens—so you might, say, take seven out of the mix just for now. Give me a number. Any number less than ten, I don't just say give me a number, I say tell me one thing I could do to improve. Now here's a real key to creating a feedback-rich environment. I would say this, Shane, give me a number between one and ten, anything less than a ten, so let's say you give me an eight. I say anything less than a ten, tell me one thing I could do to improve, and Shane, don't worry about being right about your feedback, don't worry about being constructive, don't worry even about it being actionable. In fact, I say this at the beginning of creating a feedback-rich environment, if you don't have anything, make something up, because I want to get the pipeline flowing. And anything greater than a one, tell me one thing I did well I should keep doing.

Well golly, if I want feedback, there you go. Go home to your intimate partner and say, "Hey, when we order a glass of wine tonight, could you tell me three things I could do better as a father, and one thing you think I'm doing well." Send an email to your siblings, or get your siblings on a phone call and say, "Hey, this is going to sound really funny, and I'd like you to think about it and maybe see if you can give me feedback, what's one thing

I could do to be a better brother?” So create a feedback-rich environment.

Now I’ll give you one more thing, I’ve got loads on this one, but I’ll give you one more thing. When you get feedback—now, this is advanced, okay? But people who really want to be high-speed transformational learners.

Shane: Right.

Jim: When they get feedback, they do not ask the question, is it true?

Shane: Okay.

Jim: They ask the question, how is it true?

Shane: What has to exist in that person’s mind for this feedback to be true?

Jim: Nope. How is their feedback about me true about me?

Shane: Hm, okay.

Jim: Right? Right. Obviously we could talk about their projections, because all feedback is projection. This is what we teach teams. Which—parentheses, anytime I give you feedback, let’s say I say to you, “You know, I found you quite self-absorbed and self-centered.” In the world of psychology, that’s projection, and the one thing we can know is that I probably am self-centered, self-absorbed. You know, in 12-steps, they have such a great way of saying this stuff. They just say if you spot it, you got it.

Shane: Right.

Jim: Which is a fabulous learning tool. If everything you’re complaining about, really complaining about, in people in your world, if you were willing to eat the projection and see how the things you’re complaining about about other people are true about you, you would increase your learning agility exponentially. But most people want to keep making it about the other person. So let’s pause for a second. So you give me feedback and you say, “Jim, I don’t think throughout the podcast you really got present enough.” Let’s say that was your feedback. And I go, first of all I say, “Thank you.” And then I go, “How is it true about me that I wasn’t present?” Then I go, “Well, one thing I can see is I noticed the rate

of my speech, it was very fast. I notice that I've been sitting forward almost the whole time. I notice that I've been excited and playful, I like doing this with you. So throughout this time I haven't gotten still very often, and backed up and taken a breath and dropped in. Thank you."

Your wife says to you, "You know, I don't think you're spending enough time with the kids." Instead of going "Well, you don't spend enough time with them. Or, "You don't know how busy I am, or you don't appreciate me." What are you going to learn from that? Zero.

Shane: Right.

Jim: Instead, you might say, "Thank you." You also by the way might say "Ouch." And then you say, "I'm going to go have a cup of coffee with myself, and I'm going to look at how that's true about me." Well, what you'll often discover is you can't find a way of how it's true about you. By the way, if you want to be a really high-speed learner, you can either go back to that person, or you can go to three other people and you can say, "You know, my wife gave me feedback that I wasn't spending quality time with my kids, that every time I was with them I was looking at my device or I was distracted, and I get defensive and told her all the reasons that wasn't true. So you'd go to two of your buddies and you say, "You've been with me with my kids. Can you tell me how it's true that I'm not spending quality time with my kids? I'm not looking for you to defend me and tell me why my wife's wrong. I'm asking you to tell me how it's true."

Shane: Right.

Jim: Well, can you just see, if you wanted to create—

Shane: That's so much more powerful.

Jim: If you wanted to create a feedback-rich learning environment, goodness gracious, let alone, this gets supercharged when we do it in a relationship. In your intimate relationship, if you decide we're both going to be open to feedback, and we're both going to ask how it's true, not is it true, and we're both going to be curious from above the line, we hold the possibility of creating an unbelievable relationship. And in the organizational world, I say to people all the time, if you create feedback-rich environments like we're talking about

here, you can let go of most formal feedback tools. You don't need to do a semiannual or annual feedback things, which you know, still gets rated as one of the things most people hate the most. Because you've created such a feedback-rich environment.

Shane: Right.

Jim: So that's, that's something I really want to stand for in this world of becoming a high-speed curious learner is, what does it look like to create a feedback-rich environment?

Shane: Yeah, I think that's super important, and I think it's something we don't consciously think about a lot, right? Like how do we get better feedback? How do we acquire better information about ourselves and our impact on other people and our knowledge of ourself?

Jim: Yes, absolutely, so get more incoming feedback, and then I would come back to, if you want to really, really grow in self-awareness, eat your projections. Which means, anything you're complaining about out there, take it in and see how it's true about you. Now that's graduate school stuff, but when people do that, their whole life changes.

Shane: Yeah, okay. Well I don't think we have enough time to dive into that part of it. We'll have to do Part Two maybe next year to get that for sure, because I definitely do want to have that conversation with you. I want to get to parenting before we sort of wrap up here. I know you have a time stop soon. Tell me how we can use the stuff we talked about today to be better parents. You had six kids, that must've been crazy.

Jim: Well it actually wasn't that crazy because I have two daughters, they're ten years apart. So think about that. And then I ended a marriage and started a new relationship, and Debbie, my wife, had four sons. So if she were here, you could talk to her about the craziness of raising four boys all within five years of each other. But when I joined that constellation, the youngest of the kids was probably 10 or 11 or 12. Now, you could still say it's a little crazy because we're blending a family, which is a master skill in consciousness, or not. Talk about drama. And, you know, I'm deeply committed to my sons and loving them. So yes, but not as crazy as it sounds.

Okay, so all of this, every bit of this applies to parenting. So just go back to where we started. The line. So one of the questions I ask parents all the time, you know that interchange you

just had with your 16-year-old? Were you above the line or below the line? Because if you're below the line, the possibility of having a meaningful conversation that produces tangible, lasting results is very slim. Furthermore, if you're below the line when you're interacting with your 16-year-old, because they just got a traffic ticket, or got busted for marijuana or whatever, there's a real probability your kid is going to go below the line too.

So now you've just got two reactive, contracted, scared people trying to prove they're right.

Shane: Right.

Jim: Well, that's where most parenting occurs from when we're triggered. And by the way, it's the same thing, are you...when you're working with your 18-month-old who only eats two dietary things, and you're not willing to give them that in the restaurant, and they're throwing a temper tantrum, are you interacting with your child from below the line or above the line? And again, I'll circle back to it. Let's say I'm in a restaurant and my kid's throwing a temper tantrum. And I'm interacting with my kid. Most parents, this is natural and normal, are not really interacting with their child, with their child at the center of their consciousness. They're interacting with their child with themselves at the center of their consciousness, and their embarrassment. So my anger at my child is largely fueled by my embarrassment that I'm outsourcing my sense of approval and okayness to strangers surrounding me at Chuck-E-Cheese. Probably wouldn't happen at Chuck-E-Cheese, but you know, at a restaurant.

Shane: This goes back to your grandparent comment earlier, where it's almost easier to be a grandparent than it is to be a parent.

Jim: Absolutely. So you know, if you think about conscious parenting, one of the primers that I give parents is most parents think that their children came here to learn, for the parent to teach them how to be a human. Well, there's a lot of truth to that, and that's a lot of what our job is. But I'd say it's equally, if not more true, that our children came here to teach us. So for example, these little children in my life, all of them are under seven years old, and some babies and stuff, whenever they show up in the world, I have a talk with them, when they're little infants, write them a note that says thank you for coming here to teach me. Thank you for coming here to remind me who I am that I've forgotten. And I

believe that if we make that contract with our children, they will teach us all the way along.

So, these kids come hardwired to know emotional intelligence. They feel feelings, they're in their bodies, they express the feelings, their anger comes out if their diaper's wet, their anger comes out if their tummies...if they start to feel the falling sensation, their fear comes out, their sadness comes out, and every time they did that, if you said would you teach me again how to reconnect with my body and have an authentic experience of the life force of emotion, would you teach me that?

Or, let's go back. You know, when you're sitting with your 16-year-old who just got busted for marijuana, and you say, before I get over there in your business, which I'm going to do, because that's part of what I think my responsibility is, I just want you to know that this whole situation is a gift for me because I really stake my reputation on being a good parent and having you be an A student and a star athlete and not do anything, and you've cooperated fantastically for these first 16 years, and now you're giving me a test. You're giving me a test of whether or not I'm going to see you as an extension of me, and whether I'm going to get my validation from how you perform, or whether I'm going to source that inside myself, so thank you.

Furthermore, you're giving me a chance to face what I went through when I was 16 years old, because you know, I was breaking all kinds of rules and I didn't have a parent who loved me enough to step in, so I'm going to face that, and I'm going to step in with you. Or, you know, I had a parent who was so damn controlling they smothered me, so I'm going to face all that and be with you. So premise number one, your kids have come here to teach you as much as you're supposed to teach them. And by the way, if you buy into that, that changes the whole game. Then ask yourself, am I parenting from above or below the line? Am I treating my kids as victims? This happens all the time. I can't tell you how many parents see their kids as victims. The villain is the coach who isn't giving their kid enough playing time.

Shane: Oh yeah.

Jim: Parent steps into the role of hero. Or the kid is a victim at the effect of their teacher who doesn't understand their learning differences, so the parent steps into the role of hero,

and every time we do that, we're treating our kids as disempowered victims, and they'll learn that. So again, you can parent from that victim, villain, hero triangle, and it creates all kinds of backlash. So all of this applies to parenting.

How candid are you with your kids? How much do you reveal? How authentic are you? Or do you just put up a shield? There's all kinds of stuff here. Do you live in a state of appreciation with your children? Do you give them that old coaching thing. Do you give them five to one appreciation to constructive criticism? There's so much here about...in fact, that's one of the next books we're going to write, is conscious parenting and conscious partnering.

Shane: Yeah, I think there's a whole world this applies outside. It applies to all aspects of your life, right? And it's so important to, those are the most important things. Often we don't realize they're the most important until it's too late, right?

Jim: That's true.

Shane: We're 70 or 80 and all of a sudden we want more time with our kids. We wanted to invest more in our relationship, and letting that hindsight of other people because your foresight is super powerful, but then it's a matter of like what do we do with that information? How can I be a better spouse? What inspires me to do that? And how can I be a better spouse or partner in a way that my partner recognizes and appreciates, not necessarily in a way that I necessarily want to give. So that we're communicating in sort of the same language, and it's the same for kids, right? If you have multiple kids, the way that you communicate with each kid might be different, and the way that they receive that information has to be sort of optimal for them in order to get the message across, or to learn from them, or to sort of have that dynamic with them. And I think that we're just, we're so busy in day-to-day lives that we rarely step outside of ourselves and understand that now is the time that we need to be investing in this. Because there's no metaphorical window when we're 80 that we can just go up to and solve these relationship problems that we're creating right now.

Jim: I'm saying yes to everything you're saying.

Shane: Just before we get off, you mentioned sort of the blended family thing, and I know

we have quite a few listeners out there with blended families. What are some of the lessons that you learned as a parent in a blended family situation?

Jim: Yeah, great. A couple simple ones that helped us, we've got a fabulous blended family, and it really is, it's fabulous. A couple things, number one, we made the decision to prioritize our relationship over our relationship with our children.

Shane: What does that mean?

Jim: Well, the deal in a blended family is Debbie has a biological connection with her boys. That is her offspring, that is her life force, and when the shit hits the fan, when it gets conflictual, when her kids are in conflict with my kids, when I'm in conflict with her kids, the natural tendency, and I totally get this, and by the way, it's a legitimate choice, I'm just telling you what we did—the natural tendency is to prioritize the parent's connection with the child.

Shane: Right.

Jim: In our experience, that creates long-term problems, because those kids in a blended family are going to want to know, my daughters are going to want to know that Debbie hasn't taken primacy over them. They're going to be terrified of that. But if I give them primacy over her, it's going to create a whole downstream set of consequences. So we decided we were going to prioritize our closeness first, and we did all kinds of things around that, around the amount of time we spent together, and being each other's allies and things like that. That was a game change, and I've seen lots of other couples do this, and they didn't do that, and it might be one of the reasons that the statistics on second-marriage divorces are so much higher than first-marriage divorces because now there's not the primacy of that relationship, and all the stress of blended families blows the marriage apart, or blows the intimate relationship apart. So that was one thing we did.

Then the other thing we did, and this is fairly common, but we really were good about this, is Debbie has primary relationship and decisionmaking rights with her children. I serve as support to that system. Now, if there's something that the kids are doing that's affecting me, I'm going to talk to Debbie about that first. Doesn't mean I'm not going to talk to her kids, but I'm going to talk to Debbie first to make sure we're aligned, and then we'll talk

to the kids together. Now there's a whole lot more around this, but that's another one. She has primary decisionmaking responsibility with her children. My job is to support her.

Shane: How does that not end up in a situation where different kids have different rules?

Jim: Different kids have different rules?

Shane: Yeah.

Jim: Oh, I wish we had time because I would say what's wrong with that?

Shane: No, okay, that's a great sort of question, yeah. So it sounds okay if your daughter came up and said, "You know, one of her kids did the same thing as I did, and the punishments were completely different." Or the consequences, I don't want use the word punishments, but the consequences were different.

Jim: This would be a whole conversation on parenting. One of my views would be that part of being a conscious parent is to be so present and so tuned in that you know that your six-year-old needs an earlier bed time than his five-year-old sister.

Shane: Right.

Jim: Now the six-year-old's going to say wah-wah-wah. Now you can react to that from below the line, or you can come from above the line. You can say, "Listen, I know that pisses you off. I know you hate that. So if you want to beat a bag for a minute, let your anger out, that's great, I'll just sit here and witness and be with you, that's perfect, and at the end of the day when I tune in to you, I think your sleep needs are different, so we're going to have different bedtimes."

By the way, that's just one tiny little illustration. I think that can be illustrated over and over and over again. By the way, that doesn't mean that there aren't family rules, and we can have a family rule that you can have your room be a pigsty if you want, but everybody cleans up the common space.

Shane: Right.

Jim: So I would question the belief that we need to have the same consequences and

expected agreements. By the way, parenting is all about making clean agreements with your children. Most parents don't make agreements with their kids, they give them edicts, and that creates a rebellion. I talk about how to make clean agreements with your kids around things like room cleaning, bedtime and homework and stuff like that. We're going to make clear agreements with our children, and those agreements can be different.

Shane: Keep going with the other sort of lessons with blended families, and we'll follow up in part two of this.

Jim: So lesson number one, we prioritize our relationship. Lesson number two, the primary parent had decision rights, and the secondary parent was an advisor, consultant, and stood as a unified field in the decisionmaking that went on. Another one I would say is, have a long time horizon, because when families blend, depending on how you blend, there's so many different ways to blend now. There's almost always a tumultuous adjustment period. I tell parents, count on it. Here's what's going to happen. Your kids' job, and your stepchildren's job is to test you. It's going to get messy.

So have a long time horizon, and understand that when you decide to end your first marriage and take your kids into a second marriage, or a second intimate relationship, part of what you're choosing is a tumultuous period of time. So that's another one. And another big one, which again, we can go into intensely is, how we as...me as an individual, me and Debbie, and me as a system choose to relate to the former spouses and the co-parents out there is critically important. Because there's a whole energy field here, and they're all part of the energy field.

The degree to which we can—and it's not totally up to us, because other people are involved—the degree to which we can relate to the co-parents and the former partners from above the line, which is not easy to do because usually we're ending the relationship for a reason, which usually carries some toxic residue, but the degree to which we can relate to them from above the line is a great, great enhancement to our blended family.

You know, what's her name, it'll come to me, who did Conscious Uncoupling, Gwyneth Paltrow and Goop and all that. It came back up because I just saw something, I think it was in the New York Times.

Shane: Esther Perel, wasn't it?

Jim: Was it Esther Perel who came up with the idea of Conscious Uncoupling?

Shane: I don't know. I know she's talked about it before in terms of like, I remember reading an article a few weeks ago that she wrote on sort of a couple that was breaking up, and one of them was feeling guilty because he had had an affair, but he didn't want to be in the marriage anymore, and he had moved on, but he was really feeling guilty about his spouse, so part of the conscious uncoupling was like he was acknowledging that he was feeling guilty, and then that was okay.

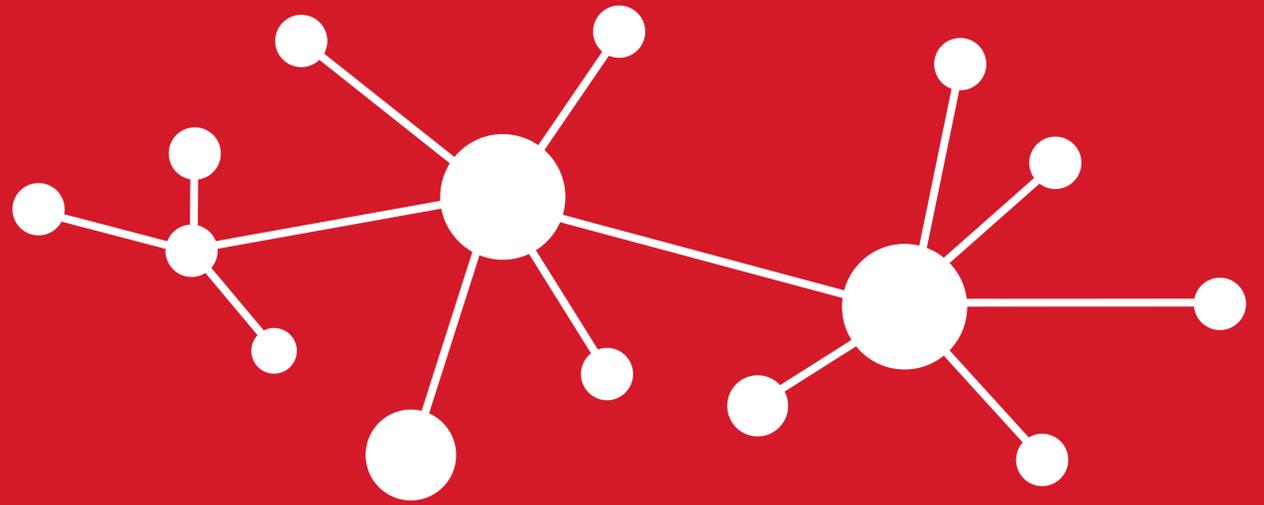
Jim: That's fabulous. Yeah, I love Esther's work, it's unbelievable. And Gwyneth came up with this idea of Conscious Uncoupling. I think she got it from somebody back in the 70s or something, Gay and Katie Hendrix, and she got a ton of crap for it. This was years ago. But, I want to say, you fast forward to this weird thing in social media—I don't really do, but I hear—she gets a lot of crap for her ex-husband comes on honeymoon with her and her new husband and the kids. Now, we can all see why that...we can make up a story of why that's absurd, but it's the ultimate experience of, if you want to minimize the drama in the lives of those children, be conscious about your relationship with your ex-partner and their parent.

Shane: Right.

Jim: And now the last thing I'd say about that is, prioritize your kids' wellbeing. So prioritize your relationship with your spouse, prioritize your kids' wellbeing. It's so easy to want to trash the other person, so on and so forth, and all it does is leave a destructive wasteland in your kids' consciousness and soul. So those are some of the lessons we learn, and I think there are lots more.

Shane: Jim, that was amazing. This whole conversation was mind blowing, so we will follow up for Part Two. I really appreciate you taking the time today, and I think we covered a lot of ground, and there's a lot of detail. I'm so pleased with how this turned out.

Jim: Oh, you're so welcome, and it's great fun for me, Shane. I really enjoy the collaboration of playing together. Great fun.



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