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MBS ([00:00](#)):

It has taken me an hour to find this quote and it doesn't exactly say what I thought it would say, but you know what, I'm going to read it anyway. I know all about sunk cost, but I'm just going to read this because I think I can make it work. It's from Albert Schweitzer, who is the winner of the 1952 Nobel Peace Prize. He won that prize for his work with lepers and victims of sleeping sickness in Central Africa. And in this quote, he talks about the power of small and obscure deeds. And he says that these were far more powerful than those more public acts that receive acclaim. The public acts, he says, and this is the metaphor I had half remembered were like the foam on the waves of the deep ocean. Now I know the temptation is to linger on the wisdom and the power of the idea of small and obscure deeds and we'll come back to that another time I'm sure.



MBS ([00:56](#)):

But I'm going to steal his metaphor and nudge it over into the world of leadership. Because in leadership, what's trendy comes and goes, it ebbs and it flows. There's always a guru and a model and language and a lens for the moment. But I'm always curious when I think about leadership, what just foam on the waves and what about leadership is the [inaudible 00:01:24] currents of the deep ocean. Welcome to 2 Pages with MBS, the podcast where brilliant people read the best two pages from a favorite book. A book that has moved them, a book that has shaped them. There's a podcast I listen to all the time. It's one I've been a guest on four times, and quite frankly, I've actually stolen guests from this podcast to invite them onto my podcast. And it is Coaching for Leaders hosted by Dave Stachowiak.

MBS ([01:55](#)):

And this podcast is the engine and the portal for his Coaching for Leaders Academy, which helps managers and executives and business owners develop leadership excellence. Now Dave is someone who I think, just to carry on my metaphor here, is a masterful surfer of the waves. He knows the foam, he knows the waves, but he also knows the deep ocean. But it's taken him a while to get there because Dave was able to get a really good job right out of school and started management early on but I'm not sure he totally rose to the challenge.

Dave ([02:31](#)):

I told myself a story that I was doing fine early on, as a lot of us do but when I look back, I realize I was a mediocre manager starting off. And I was fortunate to land a job with Dale Carnegie.



MBS ([02:47](#)):

And even if you've never read the books or attended the many many workshops and trainings, you probably heard of Dale Carnegie, How to Win Friends & Influence People. At the very least you're probably being influenced by their work through people around you who have heard of his stuff.

Dave ([03:04](#)):

That book, that job and the career that came out of it changed my life in so many wonderful ways because I learned the importance of relationships over my inclination previously which was to try to be the smartest person in the room and to be right and all of those things that really are insignificant compared to the importance of relationships.

MBS ([03:30](#)):

So after winning friends and influencing people for 15 years at Carnegie, Dave moved on to put what he'd learned there to work in building his own tribe starting with his podcast. So I was curious to know just how his podcast had shaped him through the years.

Dave ([03:48](#)):

Wow. So it's been more than 10 years now. And so it's been a long journey. I think I'm a really slow learner Michael, you know how like you're supposed to put on your resume I'm a quick learner, I really feel like I tack the other way. But when I get something, I get it. And the thing that I got at some point along the way is, I read the book by Eric Ries and I'm blanking on the title.

MBS ([04:18](#)):

The Lean-



Dave ([04:19](#)):

The Lean Startup. The Lean Startup, that's it. It's all I needed, was lean. And I read that book years ago and I realized that I was doing myself a disservice in my life and in my career of trying to have everything figured out in advance and not just starting with something. And when I started the podcast it was a hobby, this never intended to be a full-time career. It was going to be part of my portfolio to be a professor someday, that was the initial goal. I only had two hours a week to work on it. And so I had to make it a minimum viable product as Eric Ries would call it. And I focused on just three things early on, like if I could just do these three things at a minimum, that that would be something that would be useful to me, but it would also be useful to someone else listening.

Dave ([05:16](#)):

And if I did that, that that would be great. And that practice and that blessing it turns out, of only having two hours a week to do it, got me started to do something imperfect. And I learned by doing something imperfect, that actually that's better than having something planned out and figured out four years. The software people have figured this out for a while, but I hadn't. And that for me is a game changer now on how I do almost everything. I do things small, I do test them, I make small shifts consistently, and that's totally different than how I handled my career prior to that.

MBS ([05:53](#)):

What did you have to let go of to be able to move into this rapid iteration, minimum viable product mindset?

Dave ([06:03](#)):

Well, a bit of perfectionism for sure and also a lot of years of graduate school and learning that, because I was taught as so many of us are in our higher education system that, A is good, A- is okay and anything else is, for those-



MBS ([06:24](#)):

Disappointment to you, your family, your teacher, your heritage, your lineage, you're letting everybody down.

Dave ([06:31](#)):

Right, especially like high achieving folks like you, I think I could put you and I both in this category of who did a lot of school of like, okay, I had to unlearn a lot at and undo some amazing blessings that came out of my education. I'm so grateful for it. But that part I really had to unlearn. Like, no it's actually not a good thing to hit As every time. Because either you're missing tons of opportunity or you're not challenging yourself enough and that for sure I've had to unlearn.

MBS ([06:59](#)):

Yeah. Having been doing a podcast that's focused on management and leadership for 10 years, as you've grown and changed as a leader and a manager, do you feel that the concept of leadership and management is also changing?

Dave ([07:17](#)):

I think we like to think it's changing a lot, but I think in reality, the core principles of leadership and management haven't changed that much. And as I look back on *How to Win Friends & Influence People*, coming back to it for this episode, and read through the book, I think this book was written almost a hundred years ago, how much has not changed about human behavior. And interestingly I see, because I read a lot of books as you do and interview a lot of folks, I see echoes of Carnegie and Stephen Covey and so many of these folks who have been for decades and decades, we've been reading their work, in so many places.



Dave ([08:03](#)):

And our language has changed, the context has changed, but I think the core, I always think of leadership and management, I love John Cotter's distinction of them of, management is handling complexity, leadership's answering the question of change and then people are sort of like overlapped between those. And I don't think that's changed very much in the last decade or two. The world has changed around us, but those core skills at their heart, still similar.

MBS ([08:35](#)):

I often talk about my work being old wine in new bottles. I don't really feel like I'm inventing a new discipline, I'm just trying to articulate it in a way that might be resonant to a modern ear or give it language that might give people a way of picking it up in a way that hadn't been able to pick it up or use it before. Because I do think the basics are often pretty much the same, it's like, focus on the work that matters, focus on the people that matter.

Dave ([09:05](#)):

Yeah, indeed. I had a conversation recently with Muriel Wilkins who hosts the coaching real leaders podcast on HBR and-

MBS ([09:13](#)):

That's right, and she's been a guest on this podcast as well.

Dave ([09:17](#)):

Oh good, good. So we decided to put together an episode of, what are we hearing right now on the trends going on from leaders. And as we put together the list, it was really striking to me of how the list could have looked like a list from 10 years ago. Or 20 years ago, the one difference was DE&I in a good way, I think that's much more present on so many leaders' minds in a much better way than it was 10 or 15 years ago.



MBS ([09:43](#)):

Exactly, agreed.

Dave ([09:45](#)):

But outside of that, so many of the other principles were so similar. We keep coming back to handling these core questions of human relations that Carnegie challenged us with a hundred years ago.

MBS ([09:59](#)):

Dave, how do you keep yourself fresh and engaged and growing in the work that you do and I'll tell you the thing behind the question. So I did a podcast for years called The Great Work Podcast and it was basically trying to interview people who write books and show up and then talk about their books on their show. And after a while I found myself treading water a little bit because I felt like a bunch of these books were saying pretty similar stuff plus or minus five percent of other similar books that I read about theirs. They're like, okay, I went with a slightly different take on the Southwest Airline story, but it's still the same basic principles.

MBS ([10:43](#)):

And I felt myself getting stuck in a rut and bored and actually not doing the conversation a great service because I wasn't showing up in the same way. And knowing that there are some timeless principles around management and leadership and strategy or stuff that you cover in your wonderful podcast, how do you stay engaged in this thinking, when you're like, I'm just talking to this person about their similar take on it that I've had at least a hundred conversations about before?



Dave ([11:22](#)):

The biggest thing is I talk to the people listening. And the game changer for me Michael, because I did struggle with this early on, the first four or five years of the show. What you just described, was also my story. Back and forth some days, high motivation, low motivation, but it felt a little more repetitive at the beginning. And what changed was when we started the academy and I started having real time conversations with leaders who were listening to the show, putting into practice what they were learning, and then coming back and saying, "Hey, here's what I'm still struggling with. Here's what's not working. Here's what I heard on that episode and I tried and was either great or didn't work or was insufficient." And that for me has been huge because it wasn't the intention at all when I started our academy, for that to be R&D for me.

Dave ([12:18](#)):

And yet that's been one of the biggest benefits that's come out of it is, I hear in real time what works and what doesn't and so for me, it is a regular practice of, let me see if I can answer to the best of my ability in this moment something that I think people need, because it's what I'm hearing every day from the people we're working with and go find the author, the expert, whoever that would have an answer to that question or at least a start, and then people coming back and saying, "Okay, that was great and now I need this."

Dave ([12:49](#)):

I think of my work now as an intersection between the academy like the aggregate academy, like higher education, the researchers and the practitioners of facilitating that conversation of how do I help to get that wisdom, that knowledge to the people who have done the great, like Liz Wiseman, for example, who you've had on the show recently. The amazing research that she's done and to get that in the minds of today's leader who's out doing the work,



that for me is super exciting. And I cannot wait to have conversations now most of the time because I'm helping people solve a problem.

MBS ([13:28](#)):

Yeah. It's not you exploring an idea, it's you being of service to the people that you support.

Dave ([13:34](#)):

Yes. Yes. And the other thing that I do, I think differently than a lot of other podcasters is I decide in advance what the conversation's going to be about from a person's book or work.

MBS ([13:48](#)):

I love that.

Dave ([13:48](#)):

And I zero in on, and it's interesting us talking about your show 2 Pages, that is Coaching for Leaders, essentially. Is me deciding, okay, here are two or three or four pages of a person's book or their work or speaking engagement they did. And like, wow, that's the message people need and zeroing in on that extensively.

MBS ([14:08](#)):

I love that. Yeah. The purpose of this show, it's design is to just disrupt people going through the usual talking points of a conversation which honestly, they're a bit bored by and I get bored by. I'm like, I need to have you come into your work and your life through a side door that you didn't even know was there. And a different type of conversation unfolds from that and that's helpful for me because it also keeps me on my toes. I don't know what you're going to read in terms of the two pages so it keeps me more interested and it just creates this disruption to the usual chat.



Dave ([14:54](#)):

I think that's one of the things that has helped this show get traction over the years, both yours and mine in that people say I'm a good interviewer and I'm always grateful for that kind comment, I'm a good interviewer, but I'm not a great interviewer. What's different though, I think the real value, the work I've done in advance.

MBS ([15:17](#)):

Exactly [crosstalk 00:15:19] being a good interviewer. Like you've actually got an opinion and you're showing up with direction and a journey to take people on.

Dave ([15:26](#)):

Exactly. And I've done it through the lens of thinking about our academy members and our listeners of like, what am I hearing right now? And then spending four or five hours thinking about a person's work and what are we going to zero in on? And just starting there, framing it there, is so different than what most interviewers are doing, that people walk away and like, 'Oh, that was really useful. I can use this immediately today at work.'

MBS ([15:48](#)):

So tell me about *How to Win Friends & Influence People*, why have you chosen this book for us?

Dave ([15:55](#)):

Well, I worked for Dale Carnegie for 15 years. And so I live and breathe this book and I intentionally chose it because it's done so much for me in helping upgrade my operating system for working with people. And one of the best things I ever got to do in my career Michael, and it'll probably be on my top five, as long as I live, was getting to teach the Dale Carnegie Course and taking this book and the principles of it. But of course, Carnegie was brilliant at adult learning before



anyone else was doing it. Of working with adults who were in business and in organizations, of helping them to really apply it.

Dave ([16:34](#)):

And I saw the transformation happen again and again, night after night, because I would teach evening classes a lot. Of people who would walk in with a chip on their shoulder or their boss said, "Hey, you got to go take this class." And would walk out eight weeks later, 12 weeks later and literally had changed the way they showed up in the workplace. And in some cases had amazing career transformations. And it's something that Carnegie has done that I've never seen any other training company do in a way that was really life changing for so many people. And I saw the power so many times that as I got into Carnegie, I even got into the book more and more over the years and now years out of Carnegie, I'm still going back and referencing the book almost every day because the principles are so timeless.

MBS ([17:20](#)):

I want to find out the two pages you've selected for us because knowing that this is such an influential book, my guess is you had to have some dilemma around which pages you chose to read for us. But if I can be nosy, why did you stop working with Dale Carnegie knowing that it was a top five career experience for you?

Dave ([17:42](#)):

Coaching for Leaders became too big is the big answer to that question?

MBS ([17:47](#)):

What a perfect answer.



Dave ([17:49](#)):

And so at some point I had to make a choice and then it turned out right about the time that I was needing to make that choice, we were having a major client transition within Carnegie of an account I'd worked with for years and they decided to move on and do other things. And I was like, this is the time that's just naturally meant for me to depart.

MBS ([18:13](#)):

It's so great when a side hustle becomes a main hustle.

Dave ([18:18](#)):

Yeah. Yeah.

MBS ([18:19](#)):

It doesn't happen that often, but it is the perfect transition, which is like, oh, this little project I had, it's somehow grown to become big enough to sustain me. So you can just step graciously from one great experience to the next great experience.

Dave ([18:31](#)):

Yeah. It ended up being a non-event when it actually happened because the transition had happened over years, but there was absolutely a period, a couple years before that, where Coaching for Leaders had gotten big enough that I had to make the decision. Am I going to put a lot more time and resources in this with the intention that it becomes my full-time thing, or am I going to make a very conscious decision to not, and keep this as a hobby because at some point, you appreciate this as an entrepreneur Michael, you have to turn it into a business if you are going to serve people well. I was so excited to be able to do that, but it was a really conscious decision to do that. And it turned out to be one that worked out beautifully.



MBS ([19:21](#)):

Which two pages did you choose from the book?

Dave ([19:25](#)):

Carnegie has 30 principles that he teaches in *How to Win Friends & Influence People*. And the principle of all of them that I think captures the heart of what Carnegie teaches is, it's listed as principle eight in the book, try honestly to see things from the other person's point of view. And it's interesting you asking which pages I chose because I did struggle a bit over which ones to choose and I remembered the words of one of my mentors when I first got working at Carnegie, he said the brilliance of Carnegie's writing and storytelling is you could literally open the book to any page and read two pages, was literally what they told me at the start. You could read two pages and you could get something that you could use in your life day.

MBS ([20:18](#)):

I love that. Well, it has been a long time since I read this book, we talked about this before I hit record, but now I'm thinking, have I actually even read this book or is this one of those books where you're like, you don't even need to read it because it's so infused into the world now. And that the principles just keep showing up in different ways, owned by different people who may not even be aware of their Carnegie origins. But Dave, over to you reading principle eight from Dale Carnegie's book, *How to Win Friends & Influence People*.

Dave ([20:58](#)):

Seeing things through another person's eyes may ease tensions when personal problems become overwhelming. Elizabeth Novak of New south Wales, Australia, was six weeks late with her car payment. "On a Friday," she reported, "I received a nasty phone call from the man who was handling my account, informing me that if I did not come up with \$122 by Monday morning, I could



anticipate further action from the company." I had no way of raising the money over the weekend, so when I received phone call first thing on Monday morning, I expected the worst. Instead of becoming upset, I looked at the situation from his point of view. I apologized most sincerely for causing him so much inconvenience and remarked that I must be his most troublesome customer as this was not the first time I was behind in my payments. His tone of voice changed immediately and he reassured me that I was far from being one of his really troublesome customers.

Dave ([21:53](#)):

He went on to tell me several examples of how rude his customers sometimes were, how they lied to him and often tried to avoid talking to him at all. I said nothing. I listened and let him pour out his troubles to me. Then without suggestion from me, he said it didn't matter if I couldn't pay all the money immediately, it would be all right if I paid him \$20 by the end of the month and made up the balance, whenever it was convenient for me to do so. Tomorrow, before asking anyone to put out a fire, or buy your product, or contribute to your favorite charity, why not pause and close your eyes and try to think of the whole thing from another person's point of view.

Dave ([22:33](#)):

Ask yourself, why should he or she want to do it. True, this will take time, but it will avoid making enemies and will get better results. And with less friction and less shoe leather. If as a result of reading this book, you get only one thing, an increased tendency to think always in terms of the other person's point of view and see things from that person's angle as well as your own, if you only get that one thing from this book, it may easily prove to be one of the stepping stones of your career. The principle is, try honestly to see things from the other person's point of view.



MBS ([23:13](#)):

Wonderful. And I appreciate the nod to Australia there, so thanks for that.

Dave ([23:19](#)):

Of course.

MBS ([23:19](#)):

And also the nod to a time when it's like a car payment was 120 bucks for the month.

Dave ([23:24](#)):

I know, wouldn't that be great. There are some things that don't quite transfer after a hundred years but the principles are the same.

MBS ([23:31](#)):

Indeed. What's the deep truth in this principle for you, Dave?

Dave ([23:37](#)):

Stop, pause, take a moment to think and to get out of our own head. And it is so hard to do in daily life when an employee's having a tough day, when a customer's irate, when you've just had the toughest situations you're dealing with, to take 10 or 15 seconds and to think, how is this other person approaching the situation?" And yet when we can discipline ourselves to do that, in those tough moments, when we feel our blood pressure rising, when we feel our anger coming up, the remarkable difference that it makes is tremendous. And I've heard that story that Carnegie told in that book literally thousands of times. Not the same story of course, but when people applied this in the courses and in coaching, of having this remarkable revelation, although it's really not remarkable when you think about it, but like approaching the conversation of how's the other person probably coming to it from this.



MBS ([24:53](#)):

Do you have a story where this principle has made a shift for you?

Dave ([25:00](#)):

I think the podcast is like a great example of this. And it goes back to what I mentioned a bit ago. The show was good for the first three or four years, it was consistent, it was decent. But it wasn't getting a ton of traction. When it got traction is when I started talking to people and I don't mean the guests, I mean the listeners and I would read emails and I would hear about problems. And then what I would do is start to think through, okay when I hear this same situation, two or three times, that's the next episode that I need to air, is to answer that question. And if you go back and look at all the numbers, that's when the show really started to get traction, was when I made that shift to, this isn't about me deciding who's... In fact, Liz Wiseman said it on your show a month ago or so, that tendency for us to all look at the world through an n-of-1. My experience defines the experience for everyone and I'm going to just go with what I am comfortable with.

MBS ([26:11](#)):

My truth is the universal truth. My right is the universal right.

Dave ([26:16](#)):

And I still fall into that trap, but I've gotten better at that of now I listen to what does the audience need and that dictates what's next. And that's when the show really started getting traction.

MBS ([26:32](#)):

There's some part of the world that's listening to this Dave, and going, yeah that's all well and good, that's nice but the world, our countries, America most vividly, is a pretty divided country at the moment, a country where the ability to



actually see the point of view of another person, another perspective, feels further away that rather than closer. Just wondering if this is an indulgence that only a few of us get to have, or maybe the harder question is, how do we, knowing that there's algorithmic forces against us now helping us create empathy, how do we make this principle something that we can operate by when things are moving around us, that we don't even notice, don't even see.

Dave ([27:32](#)):

Yeah. I had Amanda Ripley on the show recently who wrote this beautiful book called High Conflict and looking at conflict and just all the complexities that go with it. And one of the things she points out in the book is that we all think we're more polarized than we actually are. When you look at the research of Democrats, Republicans, whatever binary poll, you want to do that lens through and we see it so vividly in the algorithm, as you mentioned. Facebook, social media, all of the things that have caused us to polarize so much more blatantly that aren't even necessarily reflecting actual truth, but we see it and so it feels real, and it becomes real. And I don't have an answer to the algorithm question.

Dave ([28:29](#)):

I think that is the struggle of our time, yeah this is like a huge, huge problem, it affects every aspect of our society. What I do know is I can do better one on one. The holidays are coming up as we're recording this, one of the guests who was on our show a while back said, "Every time you have a holiday get together, there's always that crazy uncle that shows up and has that belief that's totally different than..." And of course, as he pointed out, sometimes we're the crazy uncle too for everyone else. But he had this wonderful invitation for us, of rather than starting the fight, is to ask the question, when did you first come to that conclusion, not because we're trying to say we agree or to legitimize the position necessarily, but just from a place of understanding.



Dave ([29:48](#)):

And to me that's Carnegie 101, is, can I, as an individual, in spite of the algorithm, in spite of the news, in spite of everything I see online, still make the choice consciously to look at things from the other person's perspective and say, when did you come to this conclusion and to listen. And when we can do that one on one, it's easier to do it inside the organization and with teams and in coaching and in all the things that managers and leaders do, but it starts with one person, like everything.

MBS ([30:27](#)):

When I think about this Dave, what I notice in myself is how often I want to run away from these moments. I sat at a conference and they did this big collective exercise, a group of 300 of us had to do something within 45 minutes. And it started off nicely enough, but it quickly deteriorated and became Lord of the flies kind of thing. It was just horrible. And I basically left before the end because I couldn't sit with the discomfort of it all. And then I was intrigued at my own, cowardice is too strong a word, but I was definitely running away from something there. I'm wondering, what have you learned about being able to stay present to discomfort?

Dave ([31:29](#)):

Well, sometimes just to do what I just did, which is to stop and just listen for what happens next. The thing that I've learned as I think back on the last several years of things that have seemed uncomfortable, and the most apparent ones are interviewing people that I never imagined I'd be talking to and prepping interviews with really big name people, is just doing it more. Taking the time to put myself in those situations and to feel the discomfort and like that book from years ago said, *Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway* by Susan Jeffers, I love the up book. That has made it less scary. And then just listening and showing up and seeing.



Dave ([32:38](#)):

The other thing is, I try not to put too much pressure on myself Michael, and this is easier said than done, but on my better days, walking away from something, like you just described, like going to a conference [inaudible 00:32:52] if I added nothing of value in this moment, and maybe even took something away from the value because of my lack of ability to engage, participate, not show up in the way I'd want to. What can I do upon reflection that could be learned from this. That I would do better next time that I might teach others to do. I've sort of up to this weird place that like, when something really weird or strange or awful happens to me, I do think in the back of my head, well, at least there's probably some inspiration here for an episode someday.

MBS ([33:35](#)):

Right, exactly. Everything's material.

Dave ([33:35](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. So there's that piece of just trying to let go and not get too caught up, I try to take my work really seriously, but I try not to take myself very seriously. Nobody's life is going to be materially different if they listen to my podcast or not. For me to remember that, remind myself of that. But like how can I just iterate in small ways of coming away from a situation? I have no idea if I'm answering your question or not, but that's just what's coming up for me when you ask.

MBS ([34:14](#)):

What I like about what you're saying Dave, is what it is being kind to yourself around those moments of failure or struggle or difficulty or where you fail to live up to some version of yourself that you hold as ideal. But if you don't stop and go, well, that was interesting, how curious. How do I learn from my failure? Then



you're missing the opportunity because actually it's in that moment to pause and go, what am I taking from this? What would I do to differently next time? What does this tell me about who I am and what my capacity is. Those all become interesting questions and if I think about this conference, I'm more likely to be able to sit next time and watch the whole thing unravel and just go, look, this is important for me to be present to this because watching this struggle, and this is like 300 people, but we were pretty homogeneous in terms of a way of seeing the world.

MBS ([35:22](#)):

This wasn't Fox News versus some lefty green group, it was all of us who were there around where we want a better world. We had a simple but difficult task and we weren't collectively able to achieve it. We had 45 minutes in that, you have to make one recommendation to this 10 year old girl about one thing that we collectively could do to make this world more environmentally better. And we just failed to do that. It just turned into a whole bunch of people grabbing the microphone going, no, listen to me, this is what I think we should be doing, and I was just like, oh man.

Dave ([35:59](#)):

Interesting.

MBS ([36:02](#)):

It was hard to watch, but interesting for me to go, actually I didn't watch it. I didn't sit through it. And actually it would've been useful to sit with the discomfort of that.

Dave ([36:17](#)):

Yeah, perhaps. It makes me think of two things, what you just said. One of them goes back to something I think I said earlier, I really feel like a slow learner on so many things and one of my friends, John Cochran interviewed me for an article



he was doing years ago on how to make a great first impression. And he called me up and I said, "Well, it's funny you called me because I really think of myself as a person who mostly doesn't make a good first impression in a lot of situations." And so we talked about that and I tend to do better work when I've reflected on something. The irony of me having worked at Carnegie and thinking on your feet and all those things that Carnegie teaches but for me, I do better if I've thought about something coming out of a situation, like how can I iterate for the next time?

Dave ([37:10](#)):

And then the other thing that made me think of is, how do I then set up the environment because I find myself in the position now professionally of, I'm not the person with answers, but I'm the person who is creating the framework of an environment where people show up and making that a safe place. And what can I do to iterate that makes this a better place to show up where people are able to then engage and solve problems. And so I'm often looking at it through that too, of whether it's me or someone else like, oh, this didn't work, what can I do better next time to make this a safer place where people would show up and feel like they could move forward.

MBS ([37:53](#)):

Let me use that as a way of asking about the Coaching for Leaders Academy, how do you feel that is structured and how does it unfold in a way that offers people a different way to engage with this whole idea of leadership?

Dave ([38:11](#)):

It's totally different than I think what people are used to when they come into a leadership development program. And in fact, I need to warn people in advance when they apply. They mostly get this, but once in a while, someone doesn't, is, there's a ton of structure, but there's almost no traditional curriculum. People are used to coming into a program and saying, "Okay, on week two, we're going



to talk about feedback. And on week four, we're going to talk about delegation." And I tell folks when we start, "We're going to talk about all those things, I just don't know when." Because the framework of this is, let's create a vision of where we all want to go individually for two to three years in our careers as leaders and then we're doing problem solving along the way.

Dave ([38:55](#)):

And so people bring problems to the conversations that they're dealing with in real time, all of the contextual stuff comes up. All of the delegation, writing a vision, being more coach-like. Your name comes up every day in my life Michael, I can't tell you how many times the coaching habit comes up in these conversations, because everyone's read it in our academy. But it's in the context of a real situation because I think we learn best when we're struggling with something. Not because it's week four and it says we have to talk about delegation on week four.

MBS ([39:31](#)):

I love that.

Dave ([39:32](#)):

And so that's what's different about it, is there's a ton of structure, but there's no curriculum. The curriculum is the real situations everyone's dealing with, because people have plenty of problems without me creating case studies. And the real problems are better because we don't have simple answers but then we get six or seven people together who all have had different levels of experience and different organizations and industries and that ends up surfacing, not the answer, but the next step, which is what mostly people need.

MBS ([40:08](#)):

That's such a wonderful, essential insight which is we learn best when we're struggling with something. How do you keep stepping out to the edge so that



you are still struggling with something. Because one of the things that happens for me, and I'm going to guess for you as well, is actually you get pretty good at stuff and also when you hit a certain type of period in your life, you've set up structures, which is like most of what I do, I don't struggle in because I've eliminated all the struggle stuff and I've filled my plate with the stuff where I have competence or even mastery. So I'm curious to know how you find struggle so that you can keep learning.

Dave ([40:57](#)):

I picked up guitar earlier this year and I've-

MBS ([41:02](#)):

I should like play you a chord or two on my ukulele.

Dave ([41:05](#)):

Oh, you have your guitar right there, nice.

MBS ([41:07](#)):

It's a ukulele.

Dave ([41:08](#)):

Oh, that's right, you play you ukulele, I forgot. I have played in quotation marks guitar for 20 something years and taken a couple lessons here and there, but never practiced consistently. And in the middle of quarantine and all that earlier this year in February I said, I'm going to start practicing every day, five minutes, 10 minutes. And really go through the learning and the struggle of starting with guitar anew. And it's painful.

MBS ([41:41](#)):

Oh, so painful.



Dave ([41:41](#)):

I mean it's literally painful on your fingers. And then it's psychologically painful because you'll go days and you do the same thing and you know, like you trust, like you take the courses and now we've got the apps and all I'm like, I know this is the right thing, I know I'm focusing on the right thing, I see people play guitar in the world, so I know it's possible but I'm not seeing it myself. And I might go weeks practicing something and I feel like I'm getting worse.

MBS ([42:12](#)):

I know what you mean.

Dave ([42:12](#)):

And then like the other thing is like, especially like in the spring, when I was trying to focus on chords, is what was interesting is like one of the learning moments that I noticed was there's a point in starting to play guitar, and I'm sure this is true for any stringed instrument, where you're just trying to like play the right chord and I noticed that all of a sudden there came a day when I was about to strum, I placed my fingers on the cord and about to strum the strings and I would know that it was going to be wrong. And I would still strum, strangely. Like my brain would like still go through the hand motions, but I knew before the sound reached my ears, that it was going to be wrong. And I was like, that's really interesting.

Dave ([43:00](#)):

That I start to see my mistakes and I know I'm about to make a mistake and yet I still do it. And I thought about that and then our conversations about leadership in our academy sessions, and I thought how often that comes up. Where someone says, I knew this was the wrong thing and I still did it. And they see that as a mistake. And it is, but I've also now learned anew-



MBS ([43:27](#)):

It's also progress.

Dave ([43:30](#)):

Yes. I've learned anew this year, like seeing that in real time, the mistake, is one of the most important parts of the learning process.

MBS ([43:39](#)):

Right. It's that move from unconsciously incompetent to consciously competent. You're like, "Oh, now I'm seeing the idiocy. All right, that's good. Maybe I can work on that." I love that. Maybe you and I need to get together and put a band together about people who can't play stringed instrument.

Dave ([44:00](#)):

And that's also where a lot of times we stop. Not only is this hard, but now I see myself screwing up so much on anything, leadership, guitar, whatever. Insert parenting, insert down here. And so that has helped me to recognize when I see that to be even more encouraging than I was before.

MBS ([44:32](#)):

There's been a wonderful conversation, which I'm not at all surprised by. Actually, let me ask you this as my final question because this is the question I most typically ask right at the end, what needs to be said that hasn't yet been said in this conversation between us?

Dave ([44:51](#)):

I just read your book, How to Begin.

MBS ([44:54](#)):

Oh, good.



Dave ([44:56](#)):

And you talk about this show in your book and you talk about your learning journey of being a podcast host and what you're doing differently. And what having interviewed you now, half a dozen times over the years, and you've interviewed me a couple of times, what's different about this conversation, and also the conversations I listened to previously on this show from a month or two ago, Liz Wiseman and Juliet Funt. What's different about you is the space and the quiet. And I'm used to you jumping in more and being much more like driving conversation, like in a wonderful, beautiful, energetic way, but it's a different experience this time around and it's very much an alignment with what you wrote in the book.

Dave ([45:56](#)):

Of, I'm going to step back more, I'm going to be really the thoughtful question asker that I know I can be. And I just, one, I want to acknowledge that. And then secondly, I want to thank you for being so open in that book about some of your own struggles and the CEO transition, all the things you talk about in the book, because for those who know you and your work, what a wonder window into seeing your journey and your learning and you continuing to grow. And so, all that to say thank you.

MBS ([46:42](#)):

Let me just pick up one small but really powerful thing that Dave talked about, to learn something, you need to make mistakes, but the first step forward isn't to not making mistakes, it's to knowing that you're about to make a mistake. I think of it as the first glimpse of mastery, even though mastery itself is not yet available. It's moving from, I realized I made a mistake after I made it, to I can see I'm about to make a mistake, even if I can't yet correct for it. It's just a reminder again, that the courage to be incompetent is how you create the waft and weave of mastery. I think it's why Dave, after well over 500 episodes as a



podcast host, still embodies this sense of meticulous preparation, a curious mind, and sitting in the position of the student rather than the teacher.

MBS ([47:40](#)):

If you love my conversation with Dave and I certainly did, two other recommendations and I'm recommending them because first of all, they're two wonderful people, but also because they have been interviewed by Dave as well. So you might want to go and check out Dave's podcast and his conversation with these two folks. First is Liz Wiseman, Liz is a hero of mine. Her book *Multipliers* is a classic for sure and she has a fairly new book out called *Impact Players* as well. And the other is my Juliet Funt, who is so smart on how to be productive, how to have boundaries. And we recorded that podcast in celebration of a new book that she has out in the world.

MBS ([48:21](#)):

If you're after more of Dave and you should be, you want to check out coachingforleaders.com that gives you access to his podcast, it gives you details about his academy and everything else you might possibly want about Dave Stachowiak. Thank you for listening, thank you for the reviews, thank you for passing the episode on. If I'm asking for one thing, it's probably that, which is, think of somebody who'd like to listen to this and suggest it to them. There are a bazillion podcasts, we're all competing for your attention. I heard somebody say, you can only have seven podcasts that are your favorites, and I'm hoping this is your favorite podcast. And I'm hoping it will be other people's favorite podcast as well. So if you think of somebody and go, this could be a favorite podcast for them, please do pass the recommendation on. Thank you. You're awesome. You're doing great.