



Join our free membership site, The Duke Humfrey's, and get access to full transcripts, past episodes, exclusive downloads and more.

You'll find it all at www.MBS.works/podcast

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

I'm a bit of a geek about models. I mean not the fashion ones so much, although I do love a well cut suit. But the ones that help us expand our understanding of what the world is, the models that reveal patterns and invite new possibilities. So I have some favorites. I mean the periodic table is such a brilliant structure, as are the various alternatives of the periodic table. So the periodic table is swearing, is hilarious, although definitely not suitable for work. And possibly now I think about it, only really understandable if you're British or maybe Australian. I love the Roman architect Vitruvius' three attributes for building. Should have strength and utility and beauty, because of course, those three attributes go far beyond just architecture. I also love that Vitruvius was the mentor character in the 2014, The Lego Movie, a great movie, even if you're not into Lego. And I love the alphabet, A through Z, or A through Z, if you insist.



[\(01:06\)](#):

It creates a structure that is enduring, and of course, endless possibilities come from the alphabet. So here's one I love. Edward Gorey's *The Gashlycrumb Tinies*. Don't know if you know this, it's the alphabet telling the tale of the demise of young children. Q is for Quentin, who [inaudible 00:01:28]. R is for rotor, consumed by a fire. It's honestly, it's funnier than it sounds. The good news is that not all alphabet books have grizzly endings.

[\(01:41\)](#):

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. Haesun Moon, PhD, is an academic, a communication scientist, a teacher, and a coach. She's also an author. Her new book is a wonderful addition to the world of coaching and it's called *Coaching A to Z: The Extraordinary Use of Ordinary Words*, which is just a great title. But I often ask start these podcasts by asking people what their story is. And it's always interesting to hear their first response because Haesun's isn't any of the labels that I've just given her in this introduction.

Haesun [\(02:26\)](#):

The first story that I would bring up about myself was, I'm a caregiver for my father. And now after he passed, it's now that story or identity is changing, which is very fulfilling to see.

MBS [\(02:38\)](#):

That identity is changing, but it also has roots. Here's what she learned from her mother.

Haesun [\(02:45\)](#):

The way that she cares. Actually, I never felt that she over cared, but just knowing that you're always in that container of safety and you're cared for and



cared about. And I think that's one of many memories of my first, my childhood actually. First memories come from that.

MBS ([03:05](#)):

If one early and deeply planted seed was around care, I suspect and one also was around language. When her family moved to Canada from Korea, Haesun was 16. She was dropped into another culture and didn't speak English at all. So obviously I wanted to ask someone who'd just written a book on the power of specific words. How on earth do you learn to communicate when you have no vocabulary?

Haesun ([03:35](#)):

Oh, it's so interesting, because I learned to communicate without using words. And I think some habits actually include, you just politely smile and nod. Right? And here's a story actually Michael. When I first walked into this music class, because music is a different set of language that I didn't have to speak English, but I knew how to speak music. So I walked into this music room, I was in grade 11, and this teacher set me aside and she said something in English. And it sounded like blah, blah blah, blah, blah. And she said, "Orchestra," at the end. And I'm like, I know that word. And I smiled and nod. It's like, uh huh, uh huh. And she's like, "Oh, okay, follow me." And I'm like, "Follow me? Okay, I follow you." So I follow her to this room and it was huge room and she just ushered me to this big gong. You know that big gong?

MBS ([04:27](#)):

Yeah, I love that.

Haesun ([04:28](#)):

What is this? And she just gave me this thing and said, "Play it." So I played it and she said, "Good." I don't know what is going on. Before I knew, what she actually asked me was, "Would you like to be part of orchestra?"



MBS ([04:43](#)):

Right.

Haesun ([04:44](#)):

And I said sure to that. And what actually happened was they actually had a big show coming up in two weeks, a Miss Saigon.

MBS ([04:53](#)):

Two weeks?

Haesun ([04:54](#)):

It's two weeks. And the person who actually was doing the gong was like, he got sick or something. So they had to find a replacement quick. I didn't know what was going on. If I knew in two weeks I was in front of hundreds of audience with this big... This is not just any gong. It's a Miss Saigon gong.

MBS ([05:14](#)):

It's a Miss Sai-gong. Exactly.

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

Exactly. Oh, I remember the struggles and also things that are found in those translations, and those were very... Those are surprised, but also joyful too.

MBS ([05:33](#)):

So it's amazing actually because if you arrive in Canada speaking Korean, but not speaking English, you're needing to learn how to communicate. And some of that is smiling and nodding, but some of is finding words. And now in many ways, words feel like the business that you're in.

Haesun ([05:56](#)):

Yes.



MBS ([05:57](#)):

I'm wondering when you realized the power of language.

Haesun ([06:05](#)):

I think growing up in Korea, we have four really distinct seasons, almost like each season lasts for three months. So it's very special and...

MBS ([06:17](#)):

Click, we're into winter. Click, we're into spring. Click, we're into summer.

Haesun ([06:21](#)):

And it's just beautiful. And especially wintertime. I remember walking with my mom one day and I was really small, and it was really cold. So I was like shivering. I'm like, "Oh mom, it's so cold." And she just said, "If you keep thinking it's cold, it's going to get colder." So you actually keep saying it's not that bad and it's actually going to be okay. So I was really young and I'm thinking that's interesting. And these memories came back as I was now studying communication because coming here at that age, it's not like I learned this language by... I wasn't exposed to it. So the way that I had to learn is by studying the word where, what's the story of this word? What's the story of this word? And knowing the backstory of these words that I learned, it was fascinating.

([07:09](#)):

So when I actually look at some words, I know your story and I think knowing the words and how to use them, and I think there are a lot of philosophers who actually point to that too that, it's not that words contain meanings, but it's in how we use them that actually creates meanings. And I think I've seen that happen in my relationships with my dad, with my mom, with my siblings too. And especially when I am sitting down with my client and how one word can actually make a huge difference in how they actually see things, right?



MBS ([07:44](#)):

Because one of the reasons we know each other is that we are both coaches and we write about coaching and we write about the language of coaching. My book is about some very specific questions that I think are powerful. Your book, Coaching A to Z, A to Z, depending on where you're reading it I guess, is about 26 particularly powerful words that you think have a resonance and a depth in coaching. How do you, and ironically, I'm struggling to find the words to ask you a question about the words. But I want to ask, what's your guess around how you use language differently or see language differently as a tool in the conversations that you have with people?

Haesun ([08:38](#)):

The way that I use it differently depends on the context, especially when I am with my client. I think using language starts with actually listening to specific language. So the words such as... Some people actually ask me, "Is coaching advocacy?" And that's a big question, I don't know. But then I know the story of the word advocacy, right? I know the word. It means to add voice. That's what it literally means, right? But then the question becomes, whose voice do you add? Are you just adding a voice to their story so that their story will actually gain a voice, their voice? Or are we adding our story? So when I sit with my clients, I think about instead of actually adding my words to it, I listen to the words that they seem to really care about. And I simply just use that language. And we call that preserving the language of the client.

MBS ([08:38](#)):

Love that.

Haesun ([09:38](#)):

Especially when it seems to be pointing to what they want, what they care about, and what's important to them. And sure enough, they respond to that. And I think that's such a powerful way of just being present with another



person, listening in their logic, like the words as in logos. We actually listen. We are staying in that space of their logic, and the space becomes dialogic. So I think that's how I actually use it.

MBS ([10:06](#)):

That's fabulous. Oh my goodness, there's so much good stuff there. I'm remembering some probably 15 years ago, speaking at a coaching conference in Sweden I think, and actually having going to a class and having somebody talk about the power of staying in there, staying with the words that the client is using and the power of hearing and using the same words they're using, rather than going, is my slight variation. The words, it's one of the acts of kind of powerful listening. But my goodness, I love how you said staying in their logic and connecting logos, the Greek word for word, and logic, which is like, it's about the words. So you're kind of honoring the ecosystem that they create in their language by staying within that ecosystem.

Haesun ([10:56](#)):

Yes. Yes.

MBS ([10:58](#)):

I feel like by finishing with the saying, "staying with the dialogue", you've set us up beautifully for me to ask you, tell me about the book you're going to read from.

Haesun ([11:08](#)):

Oh, this book. That book that you mentioned about Dialogue by William Isaacs. Actually, I met that book about 15 years ago when I was doing my master's. And that book, I was reading, I'm like, "Oh my goodness, what is this?" And I'm reading, and this is incredible. It's like this is completely new way of looking at working with people, actually having a dialogue. And he talks about the difference between dialogue, discussion, and diagnosis. And especially when he



talked about this difference of dialogues and discussions, that actually became my basis for the thesis and everything that followed. And I followed the trail of actually his work. And he was basing his work, William Isaacs, he was basing his work on David Bohm, who actually is a physicist.

MBS ([12:00](#)):

Exactly. Just like, how does that... People are just so annoying. They're like, "You know what? I'm a world famous theoretical physicist who's also writing a world defining book on what it means to communicate and have conversations."

Haesun ([12:14](#)):

Exactly.

MBS ([12:15](#)):

Save some of the trophies for the rest of us. Come on man.

Haesun ([12:21](#)):

His life story is brilliant because he is not just a physicist, he is like the physicist that you read about in textbooks. And while he was working with Albert Einstein, you know that name right?

MBS ([12:32](#)):

I've heard of him, yeah.

Haesun ([12:33](#)):

Yes. And actually Einstein called him, "Oh, my spiritual son", or something really significant. And it's as that kind of physicist. And now he paid attention to the quantum-ness of human interactions. And I'm thinking, "This guy is crazy." And he actually has written manuscripts that... This is actually published after he actually died of heart attack at the back of taxi somewhere in London or something like that. And this got published and when I found it, this is not



something that I actually was looking for. I remember about 10 years ago I was actually at our local bookstore. I love this bookstore by the way. If you're in Toronto, please visit Caversham. I love that book sellers, right?

MBS ([13:16](#)):

That's right, yeah.

Haesun ([13:16](#)):

And I'm just browsing through and I saw this book by David Bohm and the title is, On Dialogue. So I had to just go right into it. And this book is really about communicating dialogue, the macro to micro. And this really impacted me since then. My work, the way that I understand how actually our work works.

MBS ([13:44](#)):

Yes.

Haesun ([13:44](#)):

So that's why I chose this.

MBS ([13:46](#)):

I love that. And how did you come to choose the two pages? Because it's one thing to pick the book, it's another thing to then choose and narrow down the two pages you're going to read from.

Haesun ([13:57](#)):

Oh, I reread this book and it's so funny, Michael, there are some parts that I didn't even notice before, rereading it. It's like, what is this? I didn't even know that was in the book. And I just chose these two pages that I thought, there are about seven different candidates. But then I chose these two because I think it's really fitting on many different levels of our conversation. Yeah.



MBS ([14:21](#)):

Yeah. Well this is going to be wonderful. I think before we hit record, I was saying, look, this is the book I have known of, because like you, I remember coming across William Isaacs' book Dialogue and just going, "Oh my goodness, this is one of those significant tectonic shift books for me." I'm thinking it's such a deepening of an understanding of what it means to hold a container for a powerful conversation. So I've heard of this book, but I've never read it myself, so this is going to be brand new for me. So Haesun Moon reading David Bohm's book, On Dialogue. Over to you.

Haesun ([14:57](#)):

Thank you. It's from page 32, and the section is called A New Culture.

([15:07](#)):

A Society is a link of relationships that are set by people in order to work and live together. Rules, laws, institutions, and various things. It is done by thinking and agreeing that we are going to have them, and then we do it. And behind that is a culture which is shared meaning. Even to say that we want to set up a government, people must agree to a common meaning of what kind of government they want, what's good government, what's right and so on. Different cultures will produce different functions of government. And if some people don't agree, then we have political struggle. And when it goes further, it breaks down into civil war. I am saying society is based on shared meanings which constitute the culture. If we don't share coherent meaning, we do not make much of a society. And at present, the society at large has a very incoherent set of meanings.

([16:04](#)):

In fact, this set of shared meanings is so incoherent that it is a hard to say that they have any real meaning at all. There is a certain amount of significance, but it is very limited. The culture in general is incoherent and we will thus spring with us into the group or microcosm or microculture, a corresponding inherence. And



if all the meetings can come in together, however, we may be able to work toward coherence as a result of this process. We may naturally and easily drop a lot of our meanings, but we don't have to begin by accepting or rejecting them. The important thing is that we will never come to truth unless the overall meaning is coherent, and all the meanings of the past and the present are together. And we first have to apprehend them and just let them be.

[\(17:03\)](#):

And this will bring about a certain order. If we can work this through, we will then have a coherent meaning in the group, and hence the beginning of a new kind of culture, a culture of a kind, which as far as I can tell, has never really existed. If it ever did, it must have been long time ago, maybe in some groups in the primitive stone age conditions. And I'm saying that a genuine culture could arise in which opinions and assumptions are not defended incoherently.

[\(17:34\)](#):

And that kind of culture is necessary for the society to work and ultimately for the society to survive. Such a group might be the germ or the microcosm of the larger culture, which would then spread in many ways, not only by creating new groups, but also by people communicating the notion of what it means. Also, one can see that it is possible that this spirit of the dialogue can work even in smaller groups or one-on-one, or within the individual. If the individual can hold all the meanings together in his own mind, he has the attitude of the dialogue. He could carry that out and perhaps communicate it both verbally and non-verbally to other people. While in principle, this could spread. Many people are interested in dialogue now. We find it growing. The time seems to be ripe for this notion. And it could perhaps spread in many different areas.

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

I think that something like this is necessary for society to function properly and for society to survive, otherwise it will all fall apart. This shared meaning is really the cement that holds society together. And you could say that the present



society has some very poor quality cement. If you make a building with a very low quality cement, it cracks and falls apart. We really need the right cement, the right glue, and that is shared meaning.

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

Thank you Haesun. What's the call to action you hear in that passage?

Haesun ([19:14](#)):

Oh, this entire coaching conversation thing is held together by a shared meaning. And I think whether it's coaching conversational or not, if you think about your own conversation with people, we're always seeking for that shared meaning or building that shared meaning. In communication science, we call it calibration. So as you're listening and as people are listening into this, you hear Michael say, "Hmm, mm-hmm", to let me know that he's listening.

MBS ([19:46](#)):

Right.

Haesun ([19:47](#)):

And in face to face conversations, we do not. Actually, research shows that when we are meeting with somebody actually face to face, more than 80% of the times, that agreement actually happens visibly, not audibly. Which is incredible, because right now we do a lot of audible cues because we know that people are listening and not watching us.

MBS ([19:47](#)):

Right. Right.

Haesun ([20:08](#)):

So you do, "Right, right", to let me know that you're listening, so that we can actually... How does it function, so I can continue talking. But if I hear you say,



"Huh", then it will cue me to, it cause me, it will cue me to kind of stop and say, "So". And I might actually explain something again, or I might actually ask you a question about it because you just, "Huh?"

([20:28](#)):

Instead of like, "Uh huh."

MBS ([20:29](#)):

I signaled not, "Right, right", but "Hmm?" And who knows what "right" means. It's like right isn't always a new insight for me, or "huh" as in I have no idea what you're talking about right now.

Haesun ([20:41](#)):

Right. Right.

MBS ([20:41](#)):

It could be either of those.

Haesun ([20:42](#)):

So then we really strive to actually create a shared meaning. So I am checking in with you about that, what you just did. What does that mean? Why are you doing that? So we exchanged that effort back and forth in conversations. And this becomes really interesting when you're sitting down with your client too. But when you're sitting with your family, there are a lot of gaps that we actually fill in because we think that we know. So we believe, what I heard you say is this, instead of actually really paying attention to what you actually said. The gap between what I heard and what you said, it's sometimes larger in relationships that we are so familiar with.

MBS ([21:23](#)):

Exactly, because we get so assumptive and presumptive around... We think we know what's going on.



[\(21:33\)](#):

David Bohm wrote that book, what, 25 or 30 years ago? And doesn't feel like the cement has got any stronger since he wrote that. It feels like the cement has got weaker. Can this calibration only happen kind of conversation by conversation like person by person? Or is it somehow scalable? Because at the moment you've got everywhere around the world, it's not just America, or that America seems to be the loudest version of this. You've got two sides that don't understand, that have very little shared meaning. How can we create shared meaning at a more societal level? Or do we just have to do a person by person, conversation by conversation?

Haesun [\(22:19\)](#):

And that's a big question I think. So one example of microcosm is when you actually look at your relationships, most immediate relationships, and there are some shared meetings or shared practices. And when I think about workplaces, and some workplaces that are lacking shared meetings, they struggle. It falls apart because when they say respect, I thought it was this, but then it's, you meant that. So I think in lieu of the shared meeting, things actually fall apart. I see that all the time. And I think also when I work with some workplaces, they really focus on, "Let's change our culture." And that's really difficult, because we cannot change culture if it's understood as shared meaning. But what we can do is we can actually change those micro conversations. Because to me, culture is nothing more than accumulation of micro conversations. And once you accumulate enough of those micro conversations, it becomes your family culture, it becomes your work culture.

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

It becomes maybe larger culture when you have those micro conversations accumulated. And it's really interesting to think that way because what are some of those things on a macro level now? I'll give a quick example of that. So when we hear this big term these days about DEI, diversity, equity, inclusion. By the



way, I love those acronyms. People try with like, I-D-E-A. They put accountability in it, becomes IDEA. Or my favorite, is when they put justice in it so that it spells out justice, inclusion, diversity. I don't know what order, but it actually spells out Jedi, J-E-D-I. I love it.

MBS ([24:04](#)):

Not just equity, diversity, inclusion.

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

Yes, exactly.

MBS ([24:07](#)):

Yeah, Jedi. Yeah.

Haesun ([24:08](#)):

I love that. And then the big question is, sure, we can throw words around like that, but what do we actually mean by diversity?

MBS ([24:08](#)):

Exactly.

Haesun ([24:15](#)):

So I'll give the huge example right here and make this statement that might sound kind of weird. For me, diversity also has this backstory to it. I love this word. So if you invite diversity to a party, they're going to always come with their partner. And their partner's name is norm. It's a diversion.

MBS ([24:36](#)):

Love it. Norm is an actual name as well, and being [inaudible 00:24:41], an abstract ideal. So that's great.



Haesun ([24:42](#)):

So diversity always brings the partner, named norm.

MBS ([24:42](#)):

Yes.

Haesun ([24:46](#)):

And they show up together because for you to be a diversion, you need a norm. And if we talk about diversity too, in my mind, I feel like we are shifting norms around. But as long as we do that, the same thing perpetuates. So do we have to call it diversity? Can we call it something else? Because it's about, can we language it differently? So that in the world of social construction, I found this very fitting word, that is multiplicity. And if you invite multiplicity to your party, they come in multiples.

MBS ([25:20](#)):

Right. Exactly. They arrive in a gang. Yeah.

Haesun ([25:22](#)):

Yes. And I think also the idea of there's multiple legitimacy. Now, that is way more precise to define as a society than diversity. And that's in a way my attempt to really sort of look at how do we define it? Can we make a little bit more precise? So that's one example. Whole COVID, we talked about this distancing. And I still cringe when say, "Oh, social distancing." It's like, that is so... It's not precise. What a loose way of using words. Because what we actually meant by that is physical distancing. Now when you start calling it physical distancing, it changes the meaning altogether.

MBS ([26:04](#)):

It does.



Haesun ([26:05](#)):

So those are some examples of macro level languaging differently.

MBS ([26:09](#)):

Haesun, I want to pick up on one of those words you're using, which is multiple legitimacy. Did I get that right?

Haesun ([26:09](#)):

Mm-hmm.

MBS ([26:20](#)):

Yeah. And I want to try and connect that to the challenge of creating shared meaning. So cultures, one of the shorthand ways of defining culture is the way we do things around here.

Haesun ([26:36](#)):

That's so true.

MBS ([26:38](#)):

And well, I think what you are teaching me is that might not be sufficient, because it's also the way we understand what we do things around here. It's what's the shared meaning of what we do around here as to what matters and what doesn't matter. So it's not just the actions, but it's how we interpret those actions and how we collectively understand those actions about what's okay and what's not okay. I have a presumption around what multiple legitimacy means. And part of that presumption is, so if you have multiple legitimacy, I have my truth, you have your truth. They're both truths. They coexist. How do you create shared meaning when you have different truths?



Haesun ([27:26](#)):

Oh, that's such a wonderful question. My goodness, Michael. So, by the way, the term multiple legitimacy is something that I learned from Kenneth Gergen, who's kind of like the father of social construction. And he really, he's so passionate about this government not really getting to multiple legitimacy. Why can't we honor that? And for me, last year something happened on Facebook. I posted something on... I was just complaining because I was going to travel, COVID still happening, and there's anti-vaccine, and this and that. And I was so frustrated. So I posted something which I really shouldn't do, but I posted on Facebook with a mild irritation about people who are not getting vaccinated. I didn't think anything of it. Actually, I didn't know that there are a few of my very close friends who didn't get vaccinated for different reasons. And they then responded to my post.

[\(28:26\)](#):

Now, that moment happened for me. I'm like, "Oh my gosh, what do I do? Do I delete the post? What do I do?" And initially I thought, "Wow, why did I even start this?" But at the same time, I actually wanted to know what the reasoning might be. So I reached out to my friends and I say, "Hey, you know what? I love you. I think I know you. I want to know about why you think that. I don't agree with you. Can we chat?" And I actually reached out to a few people with different topics, not just the vaccine, but also different political decisions that are being made. And I actually reached out to people who had completely different opinion than mine. And I actually prefaced the conversation by saying, "I really want to learn about your stance and I really want to hear why that's important to you."

[\(29:15\)](#):

And after about 20 minutes of conversation, we came to the same conclusion that, you know what? I get vaccinated because I am afraid. She doesn't get vaccinated because she's afraid. Now we have a shared meaning of, we are actually all afraid. And then we could actually agree on that. And then actual



action of it, it's something that we choose maybe differently. But I think at the core of it, we were able to actually converse and dialogue. And because of that dialogue, my relationship with them is actually stronger. And that's one example that I can give you, that we always strive to come to this consensus and consensus is really no one's opinion. How are we there? To hear, not rehearsing what we want to say, but can we actually hear what the other person has to say? And I think that's one way that I experimented with my own resistance, maybe.

MBS ([30:21](#)):

Haesun, how do you learn to not defend your position? Because I have so much status and self identity and baggage that is entangled in my position. One of my great mantras I think is stay curious a little bit longer, rush to action and advice giving a little bit more slowly. And I think that's a really helpful call to way of showing up in the world. And that's fine when it works. And there are sometimes where I'm like, "Yeah, but you don't understand. I'm not curious. I need to absolutely prove my righteousness and my rightness and my truth." In some of these more contested conversations, how do you stay soft and open and curious, rather than closed and hard and defensive?

Haesun ([31:17](#)):

Oh, I don't know. Michael, I'm an arrogant academic. What do you expect? Of course. I have no idea. Teach me if you find out.

MBS ([31:27](#)):

Oh okay, well that's good to know. Well I do have a theory which is, this is not the solution, but it might be some small part of a solution, which is, our body leads our brain. So if you know what your physical stance of open soft curiosity is, if you want to be in that stands, put your body in that stance and then your brain will go, "Okay, we're in open soft curiosity mode. So how do I stay here?" And likewise, if you know what you are kind of defensive mode looks like and you're like, "How do I stay out of that physically?" I just know kind of softening



my stomach and opening my hands up, just makes me a better able to be curious.

Haesun ([32:15](#)):

That's such a great practice.

MBS ([32:17](#)):

Yeah.

Haesun ([32:17](#)):

Yeah. And for me, it's so funny, Michael, I am so sarcastic. So when I actually find myself in that defense mode, my sarcasm just comes right out. And it's almost like, let me hear you also... I'm so curious how you could be so stupid. I mean that sarcasm comes out. So for me it's more managing that and genuinely, am I genuinely curious? And that's my first check. So actually that's the hardest part for me, to be there and simply am I willing to be actually surprised?

MBS ([32:53](#)):

That's nice.

Haesun ([32:54](#)):

So I think for me, I always look for that surprise. One example I can give you is, I had to be on a phone call with somebody, this professor that I just could not agree with. I'm like, "What are you talking about? Do some studying." Right? So that arrogance comes out. And it was done over, it was translated, it was another language that he spoke and I didn't speak.

([33:16](#)):

So it was done over the phone. And there was a translator right beside me, sitting down with me. And she knows how irritated I am. So then I was like, "Oh, the call." And then I took out my notebook and I just said, "You know what? I



need to just settle myself and talk to myself about this." And then I wrote in my notebook on the top of the page. I said, "What does he say that he cares about?" I wrote that, I underlined it, and I looked at my translator. I said, "This is what I'm going to focus on." And that conversation went completely differently. And I think it's because I had that intention of, I am just going to listen to what you say that you care about and I'm going to actually amplify that.

MBS ([33:16](#)):

Nice.

Haesun ([34:03](#)):

And you know what Michael, after that call, I actually got to really like him. Interesting eh?

MBS ([34:08](#)):

Yeah, that's interesting. That's great. With the work you've done as an academic and in writing your book, what's been the most surprising shift for you in terms of how you show up in the world in conversation?

Haesun ([34:26](#)):

The book A to Z? Thank you for saying Z, because that's how I say it too. And in the book I actually introduced this very simple idea of a quadrant. And this quadrant, that it just come out of nowhere. It's actually based on years of research and listening to thousands of hours of conversations that people have. And this came up as one day, actually it was found in translation actually, because I was teaching in China. And this student came up to me and asked, "So what is it that we're supposed to do in coaching?" I'm like, "Well..." And I'm trying to find words and I couldn't find words, which I am very familiar with in my experience of being here. So I can communicate in graphics, music, in different ways. So I just found myself drawing this on the whiteboard. I drew this horizontal line.



[\(35:14\)](#):

It's like, so here's a timeline. They understand simple words. And here's a timeline. Left to right is your past to future. And they're like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah. We get it." You see how the shared meaning continues on in our short conversation. And then I said, "Also, your client will tell you the story of what they want and what they don't want, and that's the vertical line that's intersecting the horizontal line." So now we have a quadrant. People are telling you what they want in their future. We call it proofer future. And we also hear stories about what they really loved from their past, called resource for past. Also, three times more likely that they actually tell us about, this area we call trouble past. Things that they don't really work out in the past. And then also their dreaded future, and those below the line, three times more likely really.

[\(36:06\)](#):

So then in coaching we have this intentional also of listening focus. We listen to not only prefer future and resourceful past, but then how did you cope with. You asked that question in your book too. How did you manage through all that crap? And then people talk about their resource for past and how we actually shift that conversation. And in the book, I introduce 26 very, very simple words. Letter J is just. It's just just. And then these are ordinary words that it just passes you right by. But if you are studying with a transcript, you see what that word does. It's not about or use this word, but just really paying attention to what it does. When you actually ask people what do you want, versus, so what might that say about what you want? It's a completely different question by just inserting this one word might.

[\(37:03\)](#):

It's the mighty might we call it. Or when people say, "Oh, I don't know", versus, "I don't know yet." Hello, it's a completely different thing. The little word "yet". So I find myself actually listening very differently to people when they speak about their life stories. I just pick out on one or two very simple words. When people say, "Oh, I want more clarity in my life." I don't pick up on words like "clarity". I



pick up on words like "more". So I say, "So you say more clarity. So what's already clear for you?" Right? So that becomes such an uplifting language game. And I think that's a huge difference that I've actually noticed.

MBS ([37:47](#)):

Well, what I take from that Haesun is, you talking about shared meaning and importance of precision in that shared meaning. And so often concepts we talk about, like clarity, it's like what even is that? It's an abstract idea. And with your emphasis on things like with modifiers to concepts like justice, or might, or yet, those are the doorways to find nuance in the bigger concepts.

Haesun ([38:21](#)):

And it opens up so many possibilities. And the way that I actually see coaching is simple act of curating. And it's very different from narrating. We don't just get our clients to narrate their story, but we are actively curating it.

MBS ([38:34](#)):

That's great.

Haesun ([38:35](#)):

Right?

MBS ([38:37](#)):

So this has been such a lovely conversation. I knew it would be.

Haesun ([38:39](#)):

Oh my goodness.

MBS ([38:40](#)):

I have a final question. What needs to be said that hasn't yet been said between you and me in this conversation?



Haesun ([38:48](#)):

That's a very good question. I think conversation. The word conversation actually literally meant in 14th century, the place you live. Your address actually. So I believe that changing conversation, micro conversation actually can change where you live. And we live on that map of that quadrant that I talked about. That's the map that we live in. And can we find our way to what gives us that sense of purpose, that joy, that uplifting, so that we can really keep our conversational space dialogic and relational?

MBS ([39:33](#)):

Beautiful.

Haesun ([39:33](#)):

So that's my wonderment, that people can do it starting right now.

MBS ([39:46](#)):

Did you know advocacy meant to add voice? I didn't. I love that. I think it's fantastic. Because, means that I hadn't also realized that curiosity is a form of advocacy. Because curiosity is in part being willing to ask a question and then being quiet and listen to the answer to call forth someone's voice, to listen in a way that they can hear that you're listening. And I know that sounds paradoxical, but those small, "Mm-hmm" and "Ahas", or how you signal understanding and how you calibrate and how you create shared meaning. I feel honestly like we could all do with creating some shared meaning. So perhaps you and I could be advocates for that.

([40:35](#)):

Thank you for listening. It's always a pleasure to have you as part of this podcast. I've got a couple of other interviews that you might like to check out if you enjoyed this one with Haesun. Seeking Deep Connection with Kevin Ashton is lovely. And How to Keep Curiosity Alive with Martin Reeves. Martin's a



businessman and academic, and this is a really kind of rigorous conversation around curiosity.

[\(41:00\)](#):

For more on Haesun's work and her book in particular, Coaching A to Z. So A-T-O-Z, or coachingatoz.com is the url. I'm sure you will find it. Hey, thank you for listening. Thank you for being part of this community. Thank you for passing me interview on. If you really liked it, sending it to somebody perhaps in the coaching community saying, "Hey, you should listen to this." That would be amazing. And if you're so moved to give a ranking, that's really helpful. Us podcast hosts are always trying to get people to notice our podcast, to grow our audience. And one of the ways that we gain credibility is by kind people like you giving us some stars and writing some nice notes on the reviews. You're awesome and you're doing great.