

JW S04E08 Jill McPherson

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SPEAKERS

Jill McPherson, Pat Bolland

Pat Bolland 00:16

You know, it's more than ironic that in the workplace we don't talk about communication. Well, some people specialize in that area Jill McPherson was a teacher for 25 years. And she specializes in Non Violent Communication as a Peaceful Communication Strategist... Jill, a real pleasure to meet you.

Jill McPherson 01:11

Great, thanks for having me.

Pat Bolland 01:13

Jill, what is non violent communication?

Jill McPherson 01:17

Well, it's, I call it a school of thought that was founded by a gentleman named Marshall Rosenberg, who, who coined it the language of life it's an idea that when we use communication that helps us to make connection instead of disconnection, we can collectively help each other and support each other and getting our needs met, rather than fighting and sort of scrounging with a frame of scarcity. But instead with a frame of abundance,

Pat Bolland 01:47

okay. Or you mentioned something interesting, there, unmet need, what is an unmet need within the context of the workplace?

Jill McPherson 01:56

Yeah, so when we go to work, we all have tasks we need to complete. And if things aren't going the way we would like, we might have some painful emotion. And Marshall taught us that those painful emotions were like, like flags waving to say, look at this, there's an unmet need. And he provided in his book, nonviolent communication, a language of life, He provided a list of what he believed we are universal human needs. And so in the context of work, or home, or in a, you know, in any area of our life, we carry we are vulnerable to having unmet needs. And so but is in a specific example of in the

workplace, you know, there might be a scenario where you need autonomy, or you need trust, you have a need for independence. And another scenario, there might be a need for collaboration and clarity, there might be a need for challenge and stimulation. And so when we have these needs, we all have these collective needs, but at times, some need might not be being met. Depending on our personality. You know, some people, for instance, might really thrive with a group kind of scenario, and other people thrive more working independently, this is just one example, that could come up with the workplace. And so if our needs aren't being met, then there's there can be a lot of stress, anxiety, some sort of painful emotion will start showing itself. And often we ignore this and have a kind of a, you know, suck it up and, you know, carry on, we're supposed to ignore those emotions and just get the job done.

Pat Bolland 03:43

The thing is, Jill, typically, in a workplace, it's hierarchical, there is a boss.

Jill McPherson 03:51

Yes, yeah, for sure. That's very common in education in the workplace, that we have these levels of a position and the higher up you go, tend to be the more power you have over other people. And for the most part, because we don't really know anything else, we accept it as normal. And we don't, you know, think it could be any other way. But in until NVC training, I didn't know it in any other way to. Marshall talked about our societies as domination societies, where we create a certain language that keeps people in a position of power powerful, and the people with less power less powerful. So language is very unknowingly used for control. I mean, some people would be very aware of how they use their language to control a situation particularly if you're in sales, for example, but for the most part, we don't realize how a lot of the things we're saying or doing are creating you know, suffering for others and I cos have to somebody else for us to get our needs met. So domination societies often and higher. arco societies tend to have certain beliefs that we all kind of live by either unknowingly or knowingly, like for instance, demanding respect, respect, simply because of your position, there's a huge value of right and wrong. There's a tendency to blame. And, and a lot of victim mentality, like, you know, when my boss said that really hurt my feelings, using language to control using guilt and shame to disempower using generalizations about, say, a type of, you know, those people or that group or you know, an ethnic group, a lot lack of empathy. One thing we know in nonviolent communication is where there is a lot of rules, it tends to be an environment where there's less empathy, or there's abundance of empathy, rules are not required. And so domination, culture really educates us in ways to make violence not only acceptable, but in some cases, almost enjoyable.

Pat Bolland 05:59

Wow, okay. Let's paint a scenario that we can work with. For instance, if I have a bad boss, how do I deal with that bad boss to get them on a more, I guess, non violent or level playing field would be another way to put it, I suppose.

Jill McPherson 06:18

Right? Okay. So first of all, even that language, bad boss. So there we are in judgment. So if I can just give a little bit more explanation with nonviolent communication, Marshall had like four kind of critical, I'm going to call them steps. The one The first is observation. So he invited us to shift our minds out of judgment and into observation. So even saying a bad boss is, is judgment. So instead, we're going to

say things observation of like, when my boss continually expects, you know, schedules, meetings, you know, every Friday, you know, I feel so frustrated and you know, blah, blah, blah, right? So there's a frustration. So you're, you're sharing the observable thing about the boss, that is that you're not enjoying, and this reframe, to observation invites us to create some distance and space of like, I'm going to now observe my boss, like I'm watching a movie, rather than being in the movie. And just, and just creating that space is the first thing to kind of protect us. Because, you know, we've all heard that expression, don't take it personally. But nobody really teaches us how to not take it personally. So I guide people and helping them through the steps of what that means to not take it personally. And step number one, is to reframe the mind instead of saying your boss is your boss is bad, or, you know, he thinks or he's such a, you know, now we're going to disengage from that judgment, we're going to step back, and we're going to just observe, just tell me like you're watching a movie, what is it that your boss says or does? That creates these, you know, controls? And what are you feeling when he or she does this?

Pat Bolland 08:06

So it's not so much a function of trying to change the boss, as it is with dealing with whatever actions that they do, including working on Fridays? Right? In the afternoon, right?

Jill McPherson 08:20

Yes, and absolutely. Because if we were trying to change the boss, then that would be violent, in nonviolent communication, right. So our goal is actually to release any need to control anybody else. Because this is about self empowerment. And the good news is, though, when we change and shift ourselves, our world changes around us. And people are very influenced by us, just like you can imagine, if you if there is a challenging boss, it changes the whole tone of the office, a new boss comes in. And that's completely different. Now that can the tone of the office changes. So as we change, no matter what position we are at the workplace, we can have a very positive or very, you know, painful or negative experience on the whole work environment. So when we step back and start walking, witnessing the boss like a movie, before we can go any where my first step, even actually, before that would be really taking time for self empathy. Can you take care of your needs first?

Pat Bolland 09:26

whoa, whoa, Jill. So then you're saying before you do the observation, you take a step back and look at yourself?

Jill McPherson 09:34

Yes, because the thing about feelings is they're a trigger for us to let to let us know there's an unmet need. And the problem is because we haven't been trained to do that. Our reflex mode, our default setting for most people, is, you know, I'm annoyed. I'm agitated. Okay, we look outward. Who do we blame? Well, it's the boss. It's the boss who is making us work late on a Friday. It's his fault that I'm upset, or it's her fault that I'm upset. And instead, when we have on painful emotion, it's taking that deep breath and going, Okay, what need of mine is not being met. And my experience is, oh, you know, I've been doing this for eight years now, it's still can be quite challenging for me to sort of self empathize. So I find safe people to share what's going on for me so that they can just reflect back. Okay, so, you know, this is what I'm hearing you say, so that I can figure out, Okay, what's really going

on for me. And it's sort of like, without getting into too many more details than that. I just give the analogy of it's like, if you've been wounded, before, you know, there's some, there's something else in the somebody else that's wounded, like they always say, if you're in the airplane, to always put your mask on first, before you help your child. So the same idea, you need to get grounded and clear sort of your lens, click Get get a clearer perspective. Before, if you want to free yourself of this agitation that you believe is the cause that the boss is the cause. But actually, the boss and the meeting Friday meeting is actually a trigger, not the cause.

Pat Bolland 11:11

So we go through the self assessment, we do the observation about whether the boss is doing this intentionally or not, I suppose or something along those lines, then

Jill McPherson 11:21

what? Okay, yeah, so we're not even, I mean, we're not even gonna go there yet, we're just gonna notice the boss and not take it personally with the step back is not taking it personally. And then that there's self care, then the next once you're kind of in that grounded self care, you're taking care of your needs. Now you can start to get compassionately curious, over what need is the boss not getting met by using this strategy. So Marshall would always say that, we're always in a position of using strategies to get needs met. So this Friday meeting is a strategy for the boss, you know, for the boss to meet a need. And so what need is this boss trying to get met. And so having that compassionate curiosity, again, helps us to cut the cord and disconnect a bit more in this not taking it personally, instead of just labeling somebody who's you know, not very thoughtful or selfish, or what other words that judgment words that come up. So you can stay angry at your boss and blame them, or you can discover what's true for you, and what you might empathize is happening for them.

Pat Bolland 12:29

So you're self aware, you've observed the boss, it sounds, to me is almost as though you're trying to build a compassion for the boss, you know, the boss has a report due on Monday. And that's why he always has, you know, meetings on Fridays.

Jill McPherson 12:44

Exactly. It's empathy and compassion that frees ourselves from, from conflict. So conflict only happens at the level of strategy. So for instance, boss wants to have a Friday afternoon meeting, I don't. And so now we're fighting over strategy. And you've conflict in the world, whether we're talking about a personal relationship, a work relationship, or a political war is all about people trying to meet their needs through a strategy. And we only only war can happen or conflicts. And using those words, in a generalization can only happen at the level of strategy, when we disengage from like deciding who's right and who's wrong, and who's strategy is going to win. And we get curious over what need is this strategy, trying to get met for the person who's enforcing it. Now, if we meet them at the level of need, so you kind of alluded to a guest there with like, maybe the Friday afternoon meeting is because there's something due Monday, and that has to be in or else, you know, the money's not going to come? You know, there can be you know, so there's a need for certainty, for predictability, for clarity for you know, so I need this meeting to before we leave to know, every you know, everything's in place that needs to happen for Monday. And meanwhile, you know, I, I could once I can empathize with that and connect to

the need, and I can share my need. And once we've heard each other's needs, it's incredible how the strategy will show itself, where we don't have to now fight over Friday meeting or no Friday meeting. Instead, we can say here, here's my need, I have a need for some independence, I have some need for trust. And this constant checking in every Friday is making me feel like you don't think I'm competent. And so I have a need for competency and, and we share what's really happening for us. And then oh, and suddenly, strategies will start to show that will meet both people's needs.

Pat Bolland 14:43

Yeah, so I guess the end stage is talking about it.

Jill McPherson 14:48

Yes, yes. And here's the thing. We, unfortunately and as a teacher, I can say this in institutional education. We have not educated our children. When to how to hear the other person's pain or discomfort or you know, something that's bothering them without taking it personally. So we often get triggered by someone else's pain. So if you're my boss, and I come to you and say, you know, I'm really struggling with these Friday meetings, you will likely hear me saying there's something wrong with you, you're a bad boss, because you have Friday meetings. And now you're defensive. And now you're going to argue why these Friday meetings are required unnecessary. And I you know, and I'm the boss, and you know, the buck stops here. And instead of getting curious over what, why is it that I'm struggling with this Friday meetings and what, what needs not working for me, and then being able to, once you hear me, then being able to share, you know, what's happening for you. One of the tips that I've often thought of that Marshall Rosenberg said is, nobody can hear you until they have felt heard. But we spend a lot of time using loud voices, and, and, quote, unquote, violence strategies to get heard, when the first step we always need to do if we want to be heard, is hear the other. Yeah.

Pat Bolland 16:14

But that can be a one way street, not to throw a fly in the ointment, because you may be listening, and you may have empathy for your boss, but your boss might not have any empathy for you. Right?

Jill McPherson 16:26

And so the great news is, is that when we try these strategies, and it does, it does require, you know, personal growth, I, you know, I had my, my cousin reach out to me after the last podcast I was on and she said, I loved it. She said, But Joe, I'm guessing you had to do some personal work in order to be able to speak this non violent language? And I said, Absolutely, I had a lot of paradigms to declutter a lot of painful cultural beliefs to declutter, and one is that, you know, there's a lot of people stuck in jobs that they're very, not enjoying, but they have a belief that this is just the way it is that a boss is to inflict pain. And that's sort of like their privilege of power. And if you don't like it, well, you try to be the boss, and then you get to do that. And, you know, so if you try these strategies, and you find, you're still not making connection, then your feelings are guiding you and telling you that this may not be where you can be a best of service in your life. You know, so is this if you're, if you're dying for independence, and trust, and even some leadership, and your boss is not able to provide that, then where do you need to go to meet that need and stop? You know, you know, banging your head against the same wall hoping for different results? Yeah,

Pat Bolland 17:45

you've gone back to the self empathy. You've gone back to, you know, if I don't like what I'm doing, assess myself, and move to something different.

Jill McPherson 17:54

Right ... And that could be it, but be open to you know, I've had a wise spiritual teacher that always said to me, you know, what are your feelings trying to tell you? And I remember, before I met him, he would my thought I sought him out, because I thought he was going to help me to not be mad to not be sad, around things, stress in the workplace or otherwise. And he invited me instead to stop, you know, trying to shut up the emotion, I'm supposed to stop and listen, he would say what is your anger trying to tell you? And, and unfortunately, we tend to be raised in Domination cultures where emotion is shamed, is discredited. You know, I was recently in conversation with a with a lawyer who teaches law and she said, you know, in, in the law, world, emotion is considered the enemy. Because only logic and reason can reside in law. So, and which is tragic for me, because I think of how more effective our legal system would be if a motion could be incorporated. emotion and compassion could be incorporated into our judicial system. So unfortunately, because we don't know how to, we haven't been trained on how to handle or support our own emotions, other people's emotions, it can be challenging, and people would rather just say, no emotions here.

Pat Bolland 19:17

Easier said than done. Jill McPherson. She's a Peaceful Communication Strategist. Oh, you know, Jill, I should have asked you how do people get in touch with you?

Jill McPherson 19:27

Well, first of all, before I tell you that I want to just share a quick little testimonial here from my previous business client, who just sent me these words and wanted to share that he'd had a difficult situation he's at works in the financial services, in a difficult situation with a business partner, the relationship broke down. It was between him and a family friend, which we know there's lots of businesses out there that involve family members, and the management in the business broke down. And that I was able to help him with he called vent sessions, but I'm going to call them empathy session. John's role playing and acting out as a objective third party to build and strengthen communication skills and emotionally to navigate future difficult situations. So if anybody listening is interested in some support around their workplace scenario, then they can get a hold of me at Jill mcpherson.com. That's Jill and N MC p h e r s o n.com. I also do video reels on social media. So you can follow me on Tik Tok, Instagram, Facebook. I have some previous TV shows on my YouTube channel as well, that when I was doing some TV shows, but otherwise, following my middle reels on social media, I give communication tips not only for the work environment, but for home and personal romantic relationships as well.

Pat Bolland 20:51

Good, Thanks again, Jill.

Jill McPherson 20:52

Thank you.