

# Rooted & Unwavering - Podcast 01 with Toni Townes-Whitley

## **SPEAKERS**

Toni Townes-Whitley, Hylke Faber

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Welcome to rooted and unwavering a podcast and radio show which features leaders from all walks of life in conversations about courageous connectedness. How do we stay connected to our best selves, especially when we are challenged? What becomes possible when we truly stay committed to our own and others rightness also when we don't feel it, join hosts Silca Faber, transformational coach, facilitator, and award winning author of taming your crocodiles and his guests as they explore leadership greatness in today's episode of rooted and unwavering.

**Hylke Faber** 00:50

Well, thank you so much for that introduction. Welcome, everyone, to the first episode of rooted and unwavering. We are broadcasting live with Business Radio x from the max six Tempe studio in Arizona, and I am here today. I'm the host Hoka fibrin here today with my good friend, mentor, Kochi and everything else. Tony Townes Whitley to kick off this series. Good morning, Tony, how are you today?

01:21

I'm great. Thank you so much welcome.

**Hylke Faber** 01:23

It's amazing to be with you today. And it's amazing to sit here in the presence of this topic of connectedness. This this series of podcasts is about a practice of connectedness, how do we connect to our our best selves. And the inspiration for this podcast series is that we may through listening and speaking, connect more deep what deeply to what is true about us and what we want to bring to the to the, to the Ford to the front, you know, that's what we want to do. So that's what this is about. I am very grateful that you're here today. Tony, what is what is your intention today for being in this podcast?

**Toni** 02:06

Well, I think about the titling, of rooted and unwavering and it's sort of the outcomes of connectedness about being deeply planted. And yet, and sort of unmovable in many ways in terms of feeling steadfast and connected to your own thoughts, your own ambitions, your own sort of philosophy, but also this



idea of connectedness as a language, a language with others, there's the external way to connect to things, to people to ideas to scenarios, that builds empathy. And it builds a way of engaging in a world that needs to better engage, that needs to better engage across very different perspectives of life, different experiences, different identities. My hope is that we really hone in on this conversation around connectedness, as a form of communication, as a form a new definition of empathy. And again, an empathy that's needed now more than ever.

**Hylke Faber 03:12**

That's beautiful. Tony, as I was reflecting this morning, and thinking about being with you today, I was thinking about how to best describe you and I met you back in 2015. One word that came up was always at the forefront, always helping to invite people forward into their best. It's interesting when I work with teams still at Microsoft, where you were the president for us regulated industries for quite a while. People always sort of perk up when I say Tony Townes Whitley, sometimes I ask people think about a person you admire, and how would they approach situation often your name comes up just out of the blue? How would totally do this? And I'm not saying this to flatter you because I don't really believe in flattery, but that's the sense of you bring something about the integration of many worlds into a moment, which brings things come alive and people that people yearn for. And I sense you do that. Bringing people bringing people helping bring bring people alive? Your background is amazing. illustrious. So there's a few highlights I'll do. You're currently serving. I understand on eight boards. You also have eight grandkids is that right at the moment?

04:29

For part 211 board program kit. That's exactly

**Hylke Faber 04:33**

right. Right. One board per kid or one kit per board. One of those boards is the NASDAQ. You taught in Gabon at some point for the US Peace Corps for three years. Yeah, you're still supporting them. At Microsoft, you were about many things bring this connectedness to everything our planet, our colors, the topics of society, all into focus being as Speaker for black and other minorities, you could say, you've got many awards also in the process. And I have to look at my piece of paper because there's so many, I just want to just share them because this is like quite a list for a person that I would see as quite an unconventional yet very impactful leader like fortunes Most Powerful Women wants to watch women in technology leadership, Black Enterprise, top executive, and some others. And then in 2020, you were awarded the prestigious federal 100, industry Eagle award. You worked at Unisys, at CGI, where you were the president. You move things you move things, and there's so many things you do in life, you I think you have five kids, and a lovely husband, John, who I once had the privilege of meeting quite quite a few times. So I'm so glad to be here with you and to learn with you about connectedness.

05:57

Well, thank you, first of all, you know, anytime you hear someone talk about yourself, you're always wondering, can I meet her like she sounds, I'd love to have coffee with her. Because it's, of course, never quite how, you know, you see quite yourself, but it is, it has been a wonderful journey. hilker in terms of, and maybe not as linear as many in terms of landing in technology, but coming from the field of economics, working in public sector and private sector, being able to converge sectors and, and



constructs and really focusing on this intersection of where technology has impact on and should only be designed towards the movement of society and social issues. And, and so there's sort of an intellectual connectedness that I've been able to experience by watching by being at the intersection of different times in this history of our of the United States in our world, working in 140 countries, has given me an opportunity to understand the breadth of the work that we call ourselves doing on behalf of society. But it's also been a challenging time to realize that the Tony, you see now has gone through many seasons. And so this conversation of connectedness is, in fact seasonal. And so I can say to you right now, I'm feeling as connected as I've ever felt to who I am, what I represent my legacy, as well as quite frankly, what's needed going forward, what Tony needs to navigate going forward. So it's great to be here with you.

**Hylke Faber** 07:42

That's amazing. Beautiful. So you talked a little bit about how life has is not linear. And how you feel more connected now than you may have ever felt. Can you tell us a little bit about your your journey and discovering about the different parts of connectedness and connecting with with your spirit? Like what has how, what have you learned learning along the way?

08:06

Yeah, I mean, I think, as I mentioned, first, this construct of a seasonality, that in every life season, there are things that can be more creative, to being connected and a little more diluted, depending on where you are. You mentioned my familial structure. I remember early in my career as a new mom being in the workforce as an African American woman, having a sense of proving and maybe needing to prove even more given the constructs, systemic sort of constructs around her and the expectations that were improperly set for my performance. I felt slightly disconnected from Tony and more connected to kind of proving an external set of algorithms or external set of constructs proving to my parents that their investments in the had the right return, proving sort of to the historical African American legacy have twice as being twice as good, always having to double down and, and be the very, very, very top and also quite frankly, to a new family coming in were not the distractions, the delight of raising children of building family was also a sense of losing myself in them where their their day was my day. And so my connectedness which was very high, particularly at different stages of my children's development, I started to lose myself in the midst of that and had to sort of recover. So that was a season and there are many seasons throughout a career and throughout a lifetime. And I think one of the ways to make connectedness more of a practice to be intentional and understanding and grounding yourself. In what season Do you find yourself? What are the what are the things that are distracting you Do from connectedness or maybe dilutive? And what's a creative? As much as children could take me away from connectedness with myself, I did learn how to connect to a human, another human, in a way I didn't know possible that exists as a parent. So it's a unique skill set. But it had sort of an offset in terms of who's Tony, what does she What brings me joy, I had to about halfway through my career held about about maybe 12 years ago, before meeting, you get to a point where I had to separate and decouple who I am, from what I do, I had to learn that lesson that who I am, and what I do, are absolutely in two different categories. And while they draw from each other, I never want them in the same in the same column. It's very destructive. And it's very damaging. And it's just quite frankly, not true to ourselves. But as you know, Microsoft, and quite frankly, the whole ticket tech industry, in almost any industry, and in corporate in the corporate world, it is very easy to lose sight of who you are, from what you do.



Absolutely. I think it's seasonal, I think we need to know the season we're in. And we need to know how to connect not only to people, but even to ideas, and to scenarios. Because connectedness to something outside of yourself, really puts you in relationship to the universe, and a much more humble position, a much more open position and much more listening. And empathic empathetic position, which is the best way to live. I think.

**Hylke Faber 11:37**

I love that I so many houses, I was thinking about what you were saying the creative and the dilutive part. And how every experience actually has value, the monk part in me and I have that part. It's like, Oh, I'm just going to meditate and go to the monastery and be one with God, and I am so happy and pleased will go away. Yeah. And I remember a coach once asking me when I was about to go into the monastery for good. So what are you running away from now? No. And what I love about your story is that you've not been running away, you'd like you've been so engaged, and have had the wherewithal to make this distinction between what you do, and and who you are to help you stay rooted in that. So I can't help it ask. The dues I talked about a little bit but and the dues are, you could say mirrors into what we are, right? There are expressions of what we are. And I love this frame that you use, like if I don't go into the world, I might lose an opportunity for humility. And no, that's true for me, I'm doing this, this radio thing, but you for the first time in my life, I was a little nervous when we got started to be honest, you know, and, and that's a part of what you do, which brings again, humility into what we are. Because in then we discovered a grace that keeps going and then the love that comes online. So can you think talk a bit more about what it is that you are?

**13:10**

Yeah, I've learned a lot of that being able to even have that discussion from youth, okay, if I can say, because I've heard you speak about yourself, in terms that you know, I come from a family of nouns. I come from a soldier, and a doctor, and a pilot and a teacher. And there was great sense of who they were by those nouns. And of course, that influence but I was never a noun in my family. I had such a desire to be a noun I made up nouns just to fit in at the table, but I really was not a noun. And so I would see myself define myself as verb. Like how I move how I engage how and then I became a little bit more adverb, right? I started to describe the verb like Well, how was it you I want to be transparent and I want to be intentional and so I've let go of being a noun. Maybe that's been a 58 year journey that let go being a noun. Actually had to let go being a verb that's about 20 year journey and now adverb is working for me, I'm okay with how, how things move and flow and access and engage I, I believe that I've heard you speak in terms of the how and the adverbs, and it's given me a little more license to discover those adverbs. So when I think of Tony, you and I talked about a little bit of a sort of a statement of self a narrative and I at that point, I talked about six words I talked about loving, fiercely. I talked about living fearlessly. And I talked about learning, forgiveness I needed

**14:58**

I believe they were all connected. I think when I think of myself, I think that I've come out of a family and an experience where there was so much love in access, so much support in Access. And I don't mean financial support, but I mean, the literal soul building support of generational prayer and intention towards this one kid. And all of my siblings have the same experience. That the verse that says, To whom much is given much is required was my mantra, it was prayed over me every day still prayed



over me every day of my life. And so there's always been a sense that you have to love fiercely. There's a fierceness in that and, and that means if I'm at Microsoft, I love fiercely that means what I'm at home I love fiercely, that love has an engine around it, that travels no matter what the challenge is, even when someone doesn't love me, it's still fierce. I mean, the kids know, they can't stand me all the time, from time to time, they're sick of me, loving fiercely, nothing. It allows you to live without fear, the more you can love fiercely. And that's the equation I've seen is that I've been able to become my hope that when I think about Tony, I think about a warrior, a generation award because you know, you'd met my mom, she was a warrior as well, my grandmother, a warrior. And so we're generational female warriors, but a warrior against fear. Fear and shame are such unproductive emotions, that drain and I have become faster in identifying, rooting out, addressing and being transparent in this issue of fear, fear in a workplace fear in a home environment, fear, but bilateral relationship, fear and self. And so this idea of loving, still loving fiercely in every situation living, which allows me to live fearless. And when I say fearless, doesn't mean that, you know, there's not a situation where I might cringe or look around or be physically uncomfortable, but fundamentally living and entering space and relationship without fear as as a wait. And then learning forgiveness because I think it is the highest of human emotion and capability. And I actually believe it's not human to forgive, I believe it's divine to forgive. And you open yourself up to the Divine, with the one act of forgiveness, because it is it runs against human culture. So I measure myself on love and fearlessness, by how forgiving if, if I can't reach that level, then I haven't come into engagement with that power source that gives forgiveness. For me that is my my Christian faith that provides the source of forgiveness, but it is not possible on my own. So that's been my frame to kind of explain a little bit of how Tony lives. I've, I've I've walked away from nouns and I'm super, you know, I have a 12 step program on noun people now that that need to find a noun help the working past that. So that's kind of where where I am. But Hilke I did. I gave license to that in our time working together, where you were so free to describe yourself in adverbs in ways that you are versus nouns. So I have to thank you for that publicly.

#### **Hylke Faber 18:25**

But thank you for sharing with us, Tony so beautifully. And I'd like to thank my teachers. I speak to a coach. She's in her mid 80s. Now her name is Janelle Reynolds. Every Saturday morning at 8:30am. And I've done that for 20 years. And the question she always asks me, somewhere in the conversation is she asks, Is that a love thought? Or is it a fear thought? And just her asking usually means

19:02

you know the answer,

#### **Hylke Faber 19:05**

which is why we call it the crocodile also to make it a little bit more manageable be a bit more forgiving about it. You could say, like, okay, yeah, of course, it's part of human nature that we have that part and I love your description of yourself. I just want to echo that back to you. Because I think it's such a powerful mantra to help us to call us force to call us into being rooted and unwavering into what we are and who we are. Like loving fiercely, living fearlessly and learning forgiveness. I want you to I want to sync with you about that. Like I just like to jump to the end of that equation. Because to me, that is the hardest one That's the hardest. That's probably the hardest one, starting with forgiveness of myself. So, how can you describe maybe some of your trials and tribulations if you wouldn't mind? With



forgiveness? Yeah. I can only imagine, given how you were born, where you were born, what you were born into the world we live in. I don't want to fill in the blanks. But yeah, as they say, in Yorkshire, eBay. Gum?

20:37

Oh, my goodness. You know, I, I am not divorced of and I can't divorce myself. In answering the question from, as you said, who I am, where I was raised, you know, the family I was raised in, raised in sort of a civil rights public servant family that really has had the mantra for all of my life and many generations back that they were going to believe in. And let hope be an active verb, to let hope be a transformational construct, not not to throw away. So with tangible hope, and a belief system and a faith system, that they could make a difference in changing the world around them. I mean, I actually believe that from from the womb on was that I was part of a system that needed redirection, that I would have to work harder than those around me. And that there, there was a time to cry in the soup over that and a time to get up and get on with it. And that trust me, the latter was was was much more urgent and prevalent in a raised by service, civil rights activists. And so we had these conversations at the table that as a young child about what the expectation of moving forward how to handle being, you know, the only person in your class that looked like you, the only then we always had this sort of intersection of gender and race. So trying to understand what it meant to be a woman in a non female area to be African American in a majority white setting how to live overseas as I was raised in Berlin, in Austria, in different parts of Europe, in the military setting. And I have to say, the military environment gave me the same set of individuals, we kept seeing every couple of years, a sense of safety, to try some things. And to forgive. I think forgiveness started with acknowledging that the people around me had a very, very different set of expectations of me that were just based on how I looked. And that is sort of in your face every day. And it's a way of compartmentalizing, so you can still get things done, but you're constantly forgiving. I mean, some people use the words micro aggression, I call it sort of continuous forgiveness. It's a, it's a continuity pattern, because I do it today is people react to me and say things and indicate their own biases and their own ignorance and their own judgments and their own assumptions. I just sort of do micro forgiveness all the time. It's like, oh, they clearly don't are the presumptions that are made because of either how I speak what I look like, where I live, what I drive all of that. So it's sort of a continuity pattern of, it's not like one day you get up and learn how to forgive people. I've had a lot of practice, because it's it's a daily when I was in school, and does this short story hook. I think you've heard this before. But you know, when you're a military family, you're moving I moved every year for 11 years before I graduated from high school, so that much change and, and in different places all over the US in Europe. I remember oftentimes, in the military, they would lose your records, your academic records, so they would not or they would be very late in transmission. So you arrive at a school. And my brother said we would arrive and they would put us immediately in remedial classes. Well, we don't have your records. So we're going to put your remedial class and it was a constant pattern, or can we come home and we tell my mom and she'd be at the school the next morning, you know, meeting the principal to indicate as you know her as you've known her Hilco with the power of the warrior. Why would my children be in remedial classes? Well, man, we didn't get their records. Well, why wouldn't you put them in the gifted classes? Until you could figure it out? And let them fall to the regular class. If they weren't able, why would you assume the remedial she would shift the script on them so quickly that we just got used to. It was a challenge that she would offer but we would have to be forgiving those same teachers daily that assumed the worst assume that or the lowest



capability assumed that we weren't. And it was the same type of thing all the way through high school. I remember my college professor saying, you know, there's only a few women in this economics department and I so understand, if you will, if you feel more comfortable in like sociology, nothing wrong with that field. But it was an interesting presumption that I wouldn't feel comfortable then, if you're going to do economics, maybe we need to focus on urban economics. Well, why urban? I never lived in an urban area. I was like, What are you talking about? Maybe you can help.

25:32

You know, I've used humor, I've used distraction, diversion, sometimes some education, when, when people assumed I wasn't the most senior person in the room, I think, you know, Elka, for many years, I traveled with and worked close to a Chief of Staff of East German background, who was a dear friend of ours. And it took her about three to four months to figure out that when we traveled class for Microsoft, when we had meetings, people assumed she was my boss every time. And she didn't even pick up on it at first. And then when she did, and we were very intentional about, she got so intentional about it, then it became almost a way of her, you know, introduces my boss, this is the lady who is in a year, but she was, God bless her, I won't say her name. But she was just in her loving way. She wanted to make sure she was educating everyone that I was the most senior person in the room. And by golly, don't you dare disrespect her and so, but I had to even help her forgive those around us. Because you can get so distracted in trying to define who you are and, and combat those negative assumptions about those low margin, those lowest marginalized view of yourself, being marginalized by big companies, by individuals by scenarios pulled over by the police. Watching my brothers go through what they've gone through watching my husband and my son's preparing my children to understand that they're going to have to have switching skills and coding skills and ways to operate in an environment, that it doesn't matter what degree they're carrying, or what they're driving or what they may even have the bank, they will be viewed a certain way, upfront, and I need them to be alive and to get home alive before I can intervene. So do what you need to do to stay alive. Those are real conversations that happen, those are real things that occur. And even having conversations about, you know, I had a colleague on one of my boards who said, Look, I, Tony, I understand that the events of the last few years, but I just think we're going way too far to talk about things like systemic injustice, systemic racism, he said, we've come so far, we really need new words. And I had a choice there to educate, to ignore, to forgive, to hold that as I like to say, I'm never going to talk to this guy get all kinds of choices. But those choices build up to forgiveness when you can, you can start with and assume positive intent. It's the gift of my parents, and particularly my mom that she assumed positive intent, always you had to prove to her that you had negative intent. The minute you improve, impressed upon or you had negative intent, you were in a different category. And we knew how to set boundaries quickly and to protect and educate and maybe move you completely out of the scene. But the first assumption was positive intent. That is, to me the first step of forgiveness is when you love people fiercely. You can assume positive intent. You can operate without fear, what's the worst thing can happen? I was wrong. And maybe the person really is a jerk. Okay, well, those are going to happen a few of those. But the majority of people do not surprise you, they actually have no idea how limited they are in their thoughts and how offensive they can be in their language. And the same is true of me, by the way, how can I be again, remiss to not say, while I've been practicing forgiveness, I also have invited people around me to forgive me in a very routine fashion. I've been very upfront with people that



the human condition kind of sucks. We are awful, conceited, narcissistic, we really are. I mean, just think about the how much we focus on ourselves.

29:23

You know, we can talk about the Ukraine, we could talk about Sudan, we, I'm telling you, I get in traffic and somebody cuts me off and you would think it was the worst day God created. Let me tell you how quickly we get into our vacuum. So giving people space to forgive you. Giving people space by using apology and not just personal apology, but apology for circumstance, by humbling yourself by using the language of forgiveness is a way of connecting to people in ways that are generally startling to them. When you offer person, the space to forgive you because with that, you've relieved them of the burden of their distress. And so learning how to do that with not without jeopardizing a sense of self, without becoming a people pleaser, or overly accommodating for the wrong reason, but to basically help people forgive you by giving them space to do that, helping them with the words being intentional about it. So that's how I've been sort of practicing this idea of forgiveness. But it stems from a desire to connect. You can't just say the words that your heart and the desire to connect to others is one of the greatest gifts that you can give, and who doesn't want to feel connected to I don't care what mental health condition is out there, I have yet to meet a human that did not, at some point, in some way respond to someone's authentic desire to connect. It's

**Hylke Faber** 31:02

so beautiful, Tony, forgiveness starts with assuming positive intent. I love that. Let's take a short break. And then after the break, let's explore a little bit more about how tapping into forgiveness helps us to even connect more deeply to ourselves. So thank you so much. And I'll see you in a little bit. Okay.

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**Hylke Faber** 31:52

Thank you, for listening, everyone, I see beautiful comments also coming in where people are picking up on this idea of how important forgiveness is to connect to ourselves. I know for myself, when I don't forgive, I'm actually not able to connect to my heart anymore, like Koch is somewhere out there whose mind is going left, left for it and right. And it's it's, it's messy. I no longer here, I'm disconnect from myself. Refusing to, to hold on is what I taught was taught also, like, refusing to hold on to these things that are not true. And what you say is, no, I assume positive intent. That's your mom taught you that your family taught you that. And then there is connecting with people. Also, who may stay in the not so nice behavior for a little while, or maybe for for a long time. So how do you practice connectedness with yourself? With maybe what you can see underneath the rubble in them? Yeah, even in that, that is something I'm very curious about. I'm thinking about a quote by Michelangelo, who was once asked, How do you make this beautiful statue of David in Florence in Firenza. And he said, You know, I saw an angel in the stone and a cough to set it free. On angel in the stone and carve to set it free. And I think of that a lot. For for myself, for myself and for others when especially when I'm confused like Calico,





where's your angel? We're connect back to your angel. So I'm curious. Tony, how do you like work with forgiveness? positive intent? When the stuff around you just keep shaking?

33:49

Yeah. And is it can be very negative and toxic. I mean, let's be I'm gonna keep this really practical, because I don't want us to get so

33:57

you know, so esoteric that people can't tangibly sort of hear the sort of the applied connectedness here there. You have to be intentional in this. So you know, he you mentioned that when you are not forgiving yourself, you're not present. I mean, how powerful is that? When we're not forgiving ourselves for anything that we're holding on to it. It's like a block or some kind of hurdle that doesn't allow everything to flow. We don't have our full energy. We don't have our full sort of sense of self. We're generally a little bit fearful, we're a bit more anxious. All of that is happening when we've got these big. I think the the key thing for me is that forgiveness does not mean erasing a slate. I think people sometimes the holding on is about but but then things happen or I'm still dealing in a difficult situation or I haven't let go of this myself because I do feel this need to, to kind of learn from My misstep or or almost sort of punish myself for whatever I've done or. And I think this idea that forgiveness means everything is clean and clear. And I'm not ready for that for this person for the scene for this for myself even. I allow you know, we used to talk about ugly meetings at Microsoft, remember I, when I got to Microsoft, I thought the meetings were so perfect, they ended up with this beautiful PowerPoint and six bulleted items. And we were going to like solve world peace in 47 minutes, and everybody walked it. Now we all knew there was nothing real about that. But we all felt like it was a pretty meeting. And then the next thing that I looked to institute, there was ugly meetings, that it's it's in the ugliness of the meeting where you don't finish it exactly. It's not perfect, people are actually angry with each other and disagreeing in the middle of the meeting set up on I am, and in their various little ways of doing it passively aggressively, we just do it aggressively and openly. Let's just go there. Let's have some debate. Let's acknowledge we're not going to get the whole problem solved, and probably gonna have to do it maybe 16 different iterations, this idea of an uglier meeting, I brought it home to sort of ugly family meetings, like does every family meeting need to end and some beautiful prayer and raw. That's just not how humans are. And forgiveness does not mean that those slate is clear, it does not mean that all things are clean and pristine. It's simply opening the aperture, it's simply opening up to allow love to flow in. It doesn't mean the love is flowing. It doesn't mean that all things, it just simply says I'm going to pause and make a conscious choice to allow myself to see something more than the problem at hand. So I think, you know, look, I love every sport, I played almost every sport my parents were my dad was my coach, my brothers were coaches, one of the sports I loved and almost every sport, my dad had the same coaching, I need you to learn the sport off the ball. So if it's in soccer, I don't want you to watch the ball, I need you to watch what's happening off the ball. I learned how to play soccer and became a pretty good soccer player. Not because just because of physical acumen, because I was okay, I was sort of average, above average, what took the game over the top was looking at the field and not watching the ball. Now, I would argue that in relationship to ourselves and others and connected this, we tend to all have this first thought on whatever the stress stressor is the thing that was said the activity that happened the improper this, and that's the ball, we're all focused there. And So forgiveness is about letting you know what's going on with that ball. But if you think about



relationship with ourselves, we are much more than our last worst do. We really are? Aren't we much more that aren't most people and all people more than the last inappropriate thing they said to someone who were the worst thing that happened on there. So the question is, can you look off the ball? Can you see the field can I see the field of Hilda and forgiveness is opening the aperture to see the field doesn't mean the ball is gone the ball still on the field. But boy, I need to understand the strikers and the midfielders and the defenders and how the game is flowing. Not just where the ball is. Because if I look and understand the field, you learn where the ball is going to go. You learn where it came from, you learn why they're kicking it, who's kicking it. But you don't have to focus on that. And that is the gift you give others and yourself is to to acknowledge all the things that you are focused on when you haven't forgiven one moment, or one word or one thing or one season of your life, that you are more than that. And people are more than their worst moment. They're more than that. And I think that's what gives us the opportunity to connect to another part. My parents goal in their life. As children not have great means financial means but the military allowed us to travel. And one of the greatest gifts they gave us hilchot was the ability to travel to different cultures. They took us to high tea in Germany and Berlin. No longer children where they're like Mom, no one is wearing later Hosen in here, but us like this is totally ridiculous to have little black children and later housing and it in Berlin. And she was like we would take you everywhere. And we will introduce you to anyone and I dare you to not find something that you can't find in common with every person you meet something. It left in us this goal that we could connect to anyone. And even people who say the worst vile things about humans that do some of the worst vile thing. There is something in the field that I can find beyond the ball. Does that make sense?

### **Hylke Faber 39:53**

I love that metaphor. And so when you're thinking about going from the focus on the ball The moment to the field. And I love the examples you're using here. What happens in Tony? Like, what do you what do you say to yourself? What do you do with yourself to make that switch? You remind yourself like, oh, wait, there's the field. Remember the field? How does that happen within you?

### **40:20**

I have to first breathe a bit, it usually takes a pretty deep exhale, because you have to pause because the synergy the energy all goes to the ball, right? I mean, if you join in a game, what happens? You don't run away from the ball. You like the ball? Yeah, right. That's what we do. We go to the ball. And so and I'm competitive, and I'm not I mean, I absolutely want to understand that problem. I want to dissect it, I want to go there I want. And so I have to pause First, there's a pause. And there's a bit of a breathing moment that says, Okay, pull back, I physically find myself doing that sometimes you'll see me in a meeting, just lean back in my chair, like I'm doing right now, just to give myself a broader peripheral, because I'm looking here at the screen. But I can see my whole office right here, I can see the window, right in Milan. And I practicing peripheral vision physically, to remind my mind to practice intellectual peripheral vision, right, intellectually. And then I have to remind myself, and I always pray when I meet people, or I'm in a situation I'm constantly praying, Lord, give me nuggets to remember, bring put treasures in my heart that will come back to remind me of this individual. So if I am absolutely irritated with Hulk, I mean, he has just ripped it with me. I'm now pulling back to say, what else do I know about Hulk I remember that moment when we walked that little hill together, and you taught my daughter how to do a little bit of climbing with us. And when I fell, and you pause when I fell on that hill,



or when we drove and I got so lost, trying to find some portal, port city or whatever. And instead of berating me, you just, you just rode with me in a sort of a sitting Shiva like fashion, because I had no idea what I was doing. Remember that? Remember, when you brought the wonderful hot, hot liquid to me when I was feeling a little under the way that this is the peripheral that says, here's the field of health? There's the moment of health and then I'm irritated by Yeah. But there's a field of health and you got to pause, lean back, mentally start to say, is there more to this equation than what I see? Now that's great with a friend. Now think of it when I'm talking. We're negotiating big political choices, or, you know, from gun control to, you know, to right to life or right to, when you're in the middle of a big corporate negotiation. When you don't trust the person to your left, and that person tried to marginalize you, you're still looking for, what can I hear in their statements? What can I see in their effect? What can I perceive and discern, that allows me to connect to something bigger than their really awful moment that's in front of me, it doesn't mean you forgive the moment completely, it doesn't mean you don't see the moment the balls on the field, you simply look for more information to fill out the rest of that masterpiece. That that painting, and when you have that, you just pause it, you don't even have to act on it. Just the effect of it will soften your words I find myself not even aware of the fact that I'm relaxing my shoulders physically. I'm softening my words. I'm no longer distracted by the heat of the moment. And I'm able to connect back with that individual. And it surprises people particularly when they want to be angry, and they want to fight. They want to battle it. And you come back like that they actually is very disarming. They're all in what I need you to note. No, wait, come back, come back. Tony, I need you to come back in the way I need you to be so that I can be who I want to be. It's a it's a phenomenal, you could probably weaponize it if you were really good at it. I'm not that good at it. But my hope is that, that we don't weaponize it that we just we learn connectedness through conflict. Because it's one thing to be connected when all things are going well. It's another thing to be connected when we deeply disagree. When we are deeply hurt, when there's brokenness, when we are deeply insecure when anxiety has written when we are distracted. Now what does connectedness connectedness look like? And that's what I focus on. So I

### **Hylke Faber 44:35**

love that. So let's think about connecting in conflict for a moment. I love this and people I see people writing about this this idea of peripheral vision and sitting back and I resonate with the the the pause maybe the inner prayer, the what's good about this person this authoring that happens, it changes the energy in ourselves and the room. And yet the other person may be saying something to me or be driving towards the conclusion of a meeting that I'm absolutely not agreeing with. So how do you work with those moments?

### **45:18**

Yeah. So the question is sort of how do you call it like, you can get yourself prepared for this moment, but you still have to operate in the moment. And I think you've you and I have worked together enough, hopefully, you've probably seen that I have a number of different ways that I try to defuse situations so that I can return to connectedness, I acknowledge that connect that there will be breaks in connecting this let's not set an unrealistic expectation. There are breaks, people can break connect in this there can be very real sort of subversive attempts to attack individuals or to create conflict. That said, I start with, for me, if I'm assuming positive intent, and I'm fairly broad, and I've got the peripheral vision, I often use mirroring where I let the person hear how they sound to me. And I use words, that this is what



I hear you saying, and this is how I actually respond to what you're saying. When you're really honest, it's amazing what honestly does true authentic communication can restore connectedness, because many individuals have no idea how they actually sound to the other, but they are absolutely convinced in their point of view or their position, I have no idea I have no idea how it is received. So I give the if someone's not open to hearing how they're received, I then sometimes will use humor, and sort of force them to see it by not fool mimicry. Because you have to be careful if you mimic people. I remember a joke, a gentleman I worked with, who used to constantly restate my my my conclusions on every call. Every time Tony, Tony is trying to say, let me summarize, let me give you Tony's view, Tony, let me help you with this. And you know, that assistance was so irritating and marginalizing, I had tried everything that I knew of. And finally, I just quite frankly, I did it for him at a very large meeting, I'd let me now summarize for you. And he almost had a total meltdown in the meet, and we just really couldn't quite pull himself together. Because he had never experienced what it feels like to be summarized by someone. Now, I'm not saying that was the right choice, because I have I have you have, you could make some some big errors there. But I had tried a lot of other interim steps. And I finally just sort of gave him a moment to experience my feeling on his side. And, and he didn't like it. And we talked about it afterwards. And I said, Why don't you like it? And I made him sort of tell me and I said, Guess what? Those are the same reasons. I don't like it. And you do it all the time. Here's, here's a moment. So I've seen this is I know this isn't just a conversation about conflict resolution. But I do think that connectedness through conflict suggests that not only are we intentional about how we calm ourselves down, see the see the larger perspective, find hopeful and positive points of connection. But one of the strongest things you can do for connectedness is to know how to set boundaries. I have never seen I've been at my best in connectedness, when I knew how to set boundaries, meaning when I don't see positive intent, how to set the boundary, because you cannot create connectedness that's going to drive emotional harm for either party. And so sometimes there's strength and knowing how to set the boundary that allows you that freedom to go where it goes, knowing that you will be able to set a boundary were unnecessary. And I've had to set those boundaries no you have there are boundaries that have to be set to guard your heart to guard others to stop people from falling. That's what boundaries are for and and I'm a big believer in boundary setting.

**Hylke Faber 49:09**

So a no is a very strong way to connect to somebody. Absolutely. No,

49:16

very clear and unexplained. No, right. Not just the no but maybe a no with context. Sometimes when a note when it's you're physically maybe being challenged or something, the immediate No, and it doesn't require context, but if you want the relationship to have any future, but it can't operate the way it is at that time. There's a no with context. It's the fat no, the thick, no, the round No.

**Hylke Faber 49:40**

Right, right, and the authenticity in it. I love how you're being able to share this pesky very practical connectedness tools of saying, okay, I can play it back to you without saying, Hey, I'm gonna give you some feedback. No, no, no, it's because this is already with an agenda of Changing. Yes. And what I'm also hearing you say is give people the time to find their own way, including walking away if you need to be right, including if you need to be there's this freedom to do that which I'm hearing and I'm hearing,



you're using mirroring. I'm using I'm hearing you using humor, patients, and also a great deal of clarity, a great deal of clarity. So we're getting towards unfortunately, that the final part of this conversation because I could talk to you for hours about this, I like you to think I like us to think a little bit about the world we live in today. The world we live in today, and being a leader in an organization today, I don't care whether you're just starting fresh out of school, or whether you're the CEO of some fortune 500. Company, I don't care who you are, because we're all leaders, right? I can imagine people listening, thinking, yes, yes, yes. But where do I start? Where do I start to be more connected? to myself and to others? Where do I start? What would you say?

51:10

I think we all I think I think we have to start with self. I think you have to give yourself the gift of baseline, the gift of knowing where you are, what season Am I in? Where am I to ask yourself those questions. We talk about the five why questions and how you can get to the root of something this sort of five questions, but it starts with self. What as I'm starting into a new opportunity, a new career position, a new job, a new a new country, maybe I'm relocating. What's bringing me joy? What is that source of joy for me? How authentic? Am I being with those around me? Like, am I do I feel like I'm holding back? am I covering? Am I feeling like I can bring all of me? Who? Who are the people that are in my very inner? Who I feel safe with? And why do they all kind of look and sound like me? Or do I have a diversity and safety? Like what? Who is that group? What is it? What are my triggers? You know, knowing your triggers? When do I feel smallest? When do I feel large? When do I feel appreciated and loved when these are questions we can ask to baseline AR so it's because they change over time. It's there's no answer that stays the same for 25 years, that changes every season. So as you start in, you can do your own inventory of where you are a journal it, keep a log of it, you know, I am not a journaler because I'm not honest, in my communication, I'm always fearful that someone's going to read my journal. So I write things that that I assume people want to hear. So I don't I'm not honest, I'm not an honest journaler. So I've stopped journaling, because I say things like I love all of my children one out of every once in a while I'm sick of all of them. And so I it whatever it is that you can write or communicate in an honest fashion, I just have inner circle friends that I can be super real with and say really hard things to, and they keep it real with me. So whether it's an inner circle or journal or something, get that baseline of where you are, I think that's the first step in connectedness is connected connection to self. I know it's part of every emotional intelligence framework is this idea of self aware. And it's amazing how many people lack that. And they try to connect, and they have no idea that they're, how they're coming off, or even what they're looking to gain out of that connection. So I think we can all do the work on where we are, and where and what direction then I always do in typical corporate fashion, it's not enough to just do the metric, you got to put a directional arrow. So where am I leaning towards, I'm feeling really at peace with this circle of friends, but I feel like I've got to expand, or I've got a contract, I gotta bring the circle in. Or I feel like I'm in a new environment. And I'm stretching with new information and I know that's a trigger for me to feel insecure in a broader environment. So what will happen is when I feel insecure, I'll do these five things, know yourself enough to start to build that inventory of where you are. Once you've done that I always think it's great to start with the current relationships you have that are the strongest and look at what's what's working well when do I connect the best you know, we're all in a fixed culture I need to fix these parts of me but how could you've heard me say this you can spend just as much time exploiting what you do well is fixing what you screw up. Enough both directions work I mean, it's not like it's all about things it what is it you



do well, that makes people feel safe. Ask your closest people. Where's that connection? So I will start with self. I would go to the next safe circle, a very connected and close inner circle and let them tell you what it is to be in your circle, let me just interview them. I talked to my inner circle about once a month, there are, there's times where their data after on it right away, I was not happy with what they shared with me in terms of what it was to be my friend. So you have to be mature about it, you got to be able to receive what they share with you. And then I would choose one or two stretch points. A person that like you a scenario, you're uncomfortable with just one or two. And practice intentionally, I'm going to make a connection here, I'm going to think about my connectedness in this environment, where I know it's going to stretch me, it's going to stretch me be be purposeful, in building some friction, and some challenge in your model, if not Hilke I worry in today's world, it is so easy to create an echo chamber, where you listen to news that you agree with. You sit around people you agree with you create a world that you agree with. And it is completely disconnected from the rest of the world. But you can live there comfortably.

**Hylke Faber 56:08**

I love that. So one way I love it kind of the image comes it's like rubbing the mud of each other, rubbing the mud off each other. That's basically what I love that connection. So thank you so much, Tony. We are getting towards the end of it maybe part like one parting phrase that you want to say to close our conversation today one parting phrase that one that comes to you. I'm sitting prayerfully with you like what is that one parting phrase that you'd like to share? As we close this conversation today?

56:40

I would say practice connectedness as a new love language, practice connectedness as a new love language to allow you to connect to the world around you

**Hylke Faber 56:51**

practice connectedness as a new love language. Thank you, Tony, thank you for being an example. Also today in this conversation, I can't thank you enough. If you've listened, I hope you heard something today that helps you connect more deeply to yourself. And in others assuming positive intent with that peripheral vision that that Tony talked about and the round nose. Know that we will have live conversations. Following this podcast once a month. You can go on LinkedIn and find us at rooted and unwavering community conversations. Those be on zoom so you can just talk and we can actually talk to each other live. And our next podcast will be in a month with Zoya Litvin, the founder of the Ukrainian NGO us Victoria, who manages currently hundreds of 1000s of students teaching them in on bomb shelters and everywhere in the world. And this is a remarkable young woman to also learn from about courageous connectedness. Thank you, Tony, thank you for listening. You've been listening to rooted and unwavering where we help leaders connect more deeply to their innate potential. And I'm your host Elka Farber. See you next time.

58:17

Thank you for joining us in today's episode of rooted and unwavering leadership conversations about courageous connectedness presented by the leadership development company, growth Leaders Network. To learn more, subscribe to this podcast, connect with growth Leaders Network and helper Faber on LinkedIn or read Hillcrest award winning book taming your crocodiles. They'll pick a moment



and appreciate something that is great about you. Celebrate the gift that you are and enjoy connecting more deeply to your best self today. See you next time on rooted and unwavering

