

S01 - E48 - Rooted & Unwavering - Hylke Faber & April Hernandez

Presenter 00:00

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 greatness also when we don't feel it. Join host Hylke 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 00:40

Welcome, welcome. Welcome to Ruth and wavering, where we talk with leaders from all walks of life about how do we stay connected to our innate potential. I'm your host, Hylke Faber, and I'm incredibly grateful today to be here with my guest. April Hernandez Castillo, April, how are you today? I'm fantastic. How are you? I am really well. I am so grateful to see you. I'm going to introduce you in a little bit more and have a conversation with you. But before we do that, I want to have all of us listeners gather in the intention of this podcast so we can listen from that place. This is episode 48 and we've been listening to 47 stories of leaders so far about what it takes to be connected to what's most important to us and as human beings and as leaders, we are being torn into all kinds of directions. Our time and attention gets pulled in different ways all the time, and it requires intention and a real commitment to stay focused on what's most important to us, and that's a very deep question, like, what are we? What are we here for? The question often leads me to presence and love and listening, stillness, compassion, curiosity. What are we at Essence, and how can we lead from that place? And to me, that is not something. That is our fallback position, our autopilot. It is our the place where we take a stand, because our fallback position tends to be our survival, ego, brain that wants to do things that have nothing to do with our best selves. So that's the conversation we have. So as you listen, I'd like you to sort of listen to this conversation as how can this help me? Take my seat, take my stand for what's most important to me as a leader, as a human being in all ways of life. So today we're here with April Hernandez Castillo. I met her first as a viewer of a movie that had me to tears called Freedom Writers, where April portrayed a Eva Benitas. Eva Benitas in this beautiful movie about what I recall were gangs in the Los Angeles area that somehow in school found a way, under the spirited guidance of a teacher, to see each other as human beings and come to the line basically of what united them. April has been in many shows as a very awarded and a wonderful actress, for example, in Showtimes, Nurse Jackie, Person of Interest, or 30 Rock Elementary Law and Order, SVU, the following and she received an SAG Award nomination for the Best Ensemble Cast in the hit show Dexter, and she also had a recurring role in New Amsterdam, a show about a hospital that was very values driven that I also loved. April now travels around United States to share her story of perseverance and survival, using



examples how the power of her voice has made her a courageous and I would add connected leader. She facilitates workshops for youth groups, student organizations, women events, school administrations, administrators in how to deal with the epidemic of intimate partner violence. She has founded a organization called parental voices matter, together with her business partner and husband, Zalo Castillo, and this is a workshop program created to ignite, educate and support parental communities. April does so many things I want to keep calling her Ava, even though her name is April, including she's written a book called embracing me, which is her story about resilience, forgiveness and overcoming adversity. I met. Uh, April, the second time after the movie on LinkedIn, I was again very, very struck by the authenticity, the openness and the courage being really sincere, really sincere, not shying away from anything. And then we started talking, and I found a co conspirator in this work of helping to bring out the best in us, even through pretty extreme adversity. So welcome, April, I'm so happy you're here. What

April Hernandez 05:36

an amazing welcome. I don't know if I'm deserving of it, but thank you. Thank you for all your work and what you

Hylke Faber 05:45

your voice and share has inspired and continues to inspire many people. Freedom Riders is a movie that I recommend to all my clients anytime. So thank you.

April Hernandez 05:55

Thank you. That's the that's the movie, that it's the gift that keeps on giving, which is always amazing, because I feel like the movie is really old, and I feel older when I have people say, Oh, I watched you when I was a kid, or I was in high school, and I'm like, Oh

06:12

my gosh, I feel so old. But then they're like, but you still look the same. And I'm like, well, thank

April Hernandez 06:17

you, darling. Thank you.

Hylke Faber 06:20

Yeah, that is true. That is true. So in your life and leadership, April, what have you learned about connectedness? Tell us about

April Hernandez 06:30

that I was thinking about, what we were what we were talking about, and what has kept me connected. I feel there are two things, three actually my faith, the ability to be transparent, and also the people I surround myself with. Those three things constantly keep me grounded. They keep my ego in check all of the time, because I'm an artist, I'm a creative, right? So we have to sometimes tap into that ego,



because that ego gives us the ability to do things and try things that maybe just normal April might not do or or have the courage to do or say, but I also believe the power to be transparent has been life changing for me. It it changes in how i i am on stage, when I'm delivering a keynote, whether I'm facilitating, I just feel like when you can come with all of the things, and not everybody's going to hear or know all about my life, but there is something that I'm not afraid to share at all, and I also realize that that's not easy for Many people, and in leadership, we have the ability to really speak into people's lives. We have the ability to look into someone who's working for us or doing the work and see the the potential of greatness that maybe they don't see. But sometimes, as leaders, I think there is a level of transparency that we should begin tapping into more. Once again, you're not exposing your whole entire self, but I think when you have people who are working for you and under you, they want to know that you are a human being, that you are experiencing life just like me. And I think the pandemic really showed that right this, the pandemic affected everyone. It didn't matter whether you were a billionaire Running Company. We all were looking for toilet paper. We were all trying to find toilet paper. We're like, oh, wow, look at this. Is what happened. Hi, the world was saying you are human as well. So I think those are the three elements that keep me connected,

Hylke Faber 09:02

beautiful. So you said so much, and you talked about speaking into people's lives, yes, and daring to be transparent about what's really going on, correct, right? So I have to ask you, what have you overcome in yourself to be transparent, and what did you need to be transparent about in your life and leadership?

April Hernandez 09:34

Well, I have a leadership role in being a mother, right? So I think sometimes we downplay the fact that when we become parents, that we're just parents, right? We're here to just get our kids from point A to point B. But when you understand that parenting is one of the most profound roles that you can play in your home, becomes your company, you are this. CEO of this company that you are trying to run the best possible the best possible way. I had a really hard time accepting motherhood. It wasn't something that ever came easy for me, and once I had my daughter, I experienced severe postpartum, almost to the point that led me to want to unalive myself and and so I walked into the bathroom, and I had a bottle of Percocets in my hand, and I just I did not want to wake up because of the depression that I was experiencing, and I knew that, hmm, this isn't good, and I need help. And so I had this moment of like, I have to get out the bathroom and I need to go to my therapist. And my therapist, when she sat me down, she says, you know, how are you feeling? Something that most people forget to ask a mother, especially a new mom. It's like, once the baby is born, we we no longer exist, right? It's like we forget about mother. And so I said, I'm not okay. And she says, Well, from now on, you have to be honest, as uncomfortable that make that may make someone else feel you have to say, I don't like motherhood, and until you get to the place where you're no longer saying that. And so I was like, oh, okay, are you sure she's like, Yeah, that's what you're experiencing, and you need freedom for that. So what better place to do it than I was in church, and I had a woman come and ask me about motherhood, and I just came out, and I was like, I hate it. God bless you. And she had no idea what to do, but that is when I



began to live in full transparency, and in my transparency is not to it's not going to always be comfortable for the other people that are on the receiving end, but it was my way to begin freeing myself of this shame of experiencing not feeling connected to my child. And eventually it got better and better. And then I was saying it less I was I didn't feel like I had this imposter syndrome anymore. I didn't feel like I had to live up to anyone's expectations of what mothers are supposed to be. I just stopped setting these false expectations for myself. And I was like, Okay, I've arrived. I'm here. I'm figuring it out. And that was the most, one of the most profound moments in my life. So that's how I lead. That's how I am with my children now. That's how I want them to be. When I need to ask for space, they never take it personally. They don't feel like Mommy doesn't love them. They understand, oh, when mommy has her space, she's able to become a be a better mother. Mm, mother

Hylke Faber 13:03

when you are not doing that, like when we are not being honest with ourselves, like when we phone it in, so to speak. Like I love being a mother, don't, or I love being part of this team, I don't I really enjoy this relationship. I don't right. I am very comfortable where we are as a world. I'm not right, like what happens when we tell ourselves these little lies that seem so understandable, because part of that as I relate that is I want to be loving being a mother. You know, I want to be loving being part of this team. I want to be optimistic about where the world's going or whatever is going on in my life, right? So what happens? What is your experience with when you are not honest with yourself? What happens?

April Hernandez 13:59

I am a mess. I'm a mess. I I'm short tempered. I don't feel fulfilled. I'm not operating at my optimal, best level as a woman, as a mom, as a wife, I am just not my best and and then from there, resentment grows, and then you begin to resent things that you never resented before, or you you are unable to handle the life's disappointments. Everything just becomes harder and harder to do.

Hylke Faber 14:39

Tell, tell us about how that can you give an example of how that works? I find it very related, but I think it's very important for us to hear about that. Um,

April Hernandez 14:49

so for example, I my life as an actor has shifted because I'm. Mother of two girls. So when I first became an actor, it was all about me and my dreams. And now the dreams have had to, I've had to pivot in the way I go after my dreams. And sometimes Honestly, I really just feel, I feel like, ah, gosh, why do I have to give up so much? Or, or, or, why can I play this role? Because I know that if I play this role, number one, it'll take me away from my family, um, longer than what I want. Or, how would I feel if my daughter was to see these rules so, so now I'm thinking about things that I never had to think about before. So so it's, it's great in one aspect, because I'm like, You know what? It makes me more focused on what it is that I do want. But then again, I do feel like, gosh, I didn't have to be this way. I never had to think about these things. And then that's where the resentment has to come in. And if I'm not working as much as I want to as an actor, as a creative, then how can I fill my cup in other ways? How can I still



go after my dreams? Because I am the leader. I am a mentor to two beautiful young ladies, so I have to show them that, that no matter what, you should never stop pursuing your dreams. It just has to take a different route.

Hylke Faber 16:27

So if I were to ask you to synthesize that into like a little statement of like, the untruth I would tell myself is this, and therefore it leads me to resent that. What would you say? That is because I think that little equation might be helpful for the listeners too,

April Hernandez 16:46

right? Well, I have a couple of in my head. I when I don't, when I don't, pour into myself, it's hard for me to pour into others, right when it's what you know, and I think culturally as well, we are, we're always givers and givers and givers and givers and and that is something that you have to undo. So for whoever is watching, when you come from different culture and you're all about always drinking last or eating last, that can spill into how you work. Because once again, everyone else gets the best, but when I am not able to, you know, pour into my dreams just fully, like just so present without anything else, that's where definitely becomes dangerous, right? Like that whole saying you can't pour from an empty cup. And I think, I think women, we we try to balance being executives. And, you know, can we have it all? Is it possible to to be as present for your employees when you're dealing with your child who is suicidal, when you're dealing with your child who who hates you? Because all you do is at work? So now there it goes, that sacrifice that we find ourselves making of I can't be all that I want to be, because I'm losing my family, but then I'm everything to my family, and I'm losing myself professional, right, right? And I think more women as as much as we like to try to show that we can do it all. We really cannot. And I have yet to meet a woman who has it all. And if she's out there, please call me, because I want a lesson. I want you to see me, because I just go like, man, there's days where I am kicking ass, like, I'm like, Oh, I sent this email, I closed this deal. Boom, I'm working out. And then there are days where I just go like, Oh, I haven't done anything for myself in like, two weeks. Now I'm feeling angry. Now I'm not feeling not now I'm not feeling connected. Now I feel disconnected, not only to myself, but to everyone else,

Hylke Faber 19:20

right, right. So part of that is becoming really honest about, very honest, what is it that's really going on? Yes, so that I can address it,

April Hernandez 19:29

yes. So it's hard. It's hard because some people don't want to face themselves. Some, some of us don't want to face our past. They would. They don't want to face maybe, maybe a a boss who's treating us in a way because, you know, we're terrified to lose our jobs, so you're like, Well, I'd rather, I'd rather not say anything, right, right? I don't want to say anything to my kids because I don't want them, you know, I don't want to hurt their feelings. Like, now we're in a space now where we're scared to hurt our kids



feelings. And I hurt my kids feelings all the time. I'm like, I don't have time to be fake. I'm going to let you know what it is, and we can talk about it, but, but I realized that not a lot of people can operate

Hylke Faber 20:11

that way. So when you were when your therapist was asking you to be honest, right? And going back to this. I hate being a mother. How did that transition happen? Because you didn't stay there. So how did that change? What happened?

April Hernandez 20:33

It was that. It was that moment in church. It was hearing her. She gave me the permission. It was as if I needed permission, because I didn't. I didn't know of anyone who was experiencing this type of depression. And so the shame that comes with it, the embarrassment, all of those things that that you're just like, wow, I don't, I don't feel happy. I should be He, you know, I don't. I can't. I don't. I don't know how. I mean, I'm an actor, but I'm so bad at faking it. It's so It's so crazy at faking it in my real life. And I think once she gave me that permission to say, No, this is how you take your power back. This is how you begin gaining control. This is how you slowly begin connecting back to the old April. So it took an entire year for my hormones to actually go back and sort of feel like myself. But it was, it really started when she said, You can do this and you you have to do this if you want to survive, because there are times I'm sorry

Hylke Faber 21:43

I feel really the sense of I gave myself, I gave myself permission to be exactly where I was, and I was not stamping down what I was not like. I was not denying who I was not because that's a whole other layer of suffering. As opposed to saying this is where I am, and that indirectly, I'm hearing is a way to actually start dealing with what actually is going on in a program that I'm part of, we have this little saying is I and I am responsible for my own pain, for dealing with my own pain. So it's like when I deny it, there's also no way to deal with it, and so when I'm able to vocalize it, it gives me my power back, because it says it's okay. It's okay tell us about the value of sharing that with people around you, because I understand the admitting it to myself, saying, you know, I'm not feeling this, or I feel this. What is the power of sharing that, for example, with a woman in church or with your children or with your husband, or maybe with your colleagues on the on the set, or wherever you might be?

April Hernandez 23:00

Oh, it's, it's been profound, especially when I'm on stage speaking. And you know this, as a speaker, you We command, right? If you know what you're doing, um, we command the stage for an hour. People are there to receive something. They want to be moved. They want to be impacted, and especially when you're working with the youth, they know if you are full of ish, if you know what I'm talking about. Um, I'm gonna keep it clean. Um, they know if you are not real. They know if you care, if you don't care, they know, um, just on how you speak and how you present yourself on stage. And I think even you know, I love when I get to actually speak to adults, sometimes they're the tougher crowd, because adults think that they have it all figured out.



Hylke Faber 23:54

And I think what you're actually giving to me is the permission to not have it all figured out. Oh no, right? And so when you give yourself permission and saying, I'm not feeling this today, right, you're speaking into your indirectly, giving people the nudge that your therapist gave you. It's like, it's okay be exactly where you are, yeah, but really, be there,

April Hernandez 24:20

yeah, like, be there. Like, like, I'll be on stage. And I'm like, Man, I'm, I'm a hot ass mess and, and for some reason, I always get a laugh out of it. But it's like, wow. You know, she looks like she has it all together. She has this, these credentials, movies and all this. But I'm like, Yeah, but, but I'm figuring out life, just like you all, I'm just not afraid to say it. I'm not afraid to to make fun of myself. I'm not afraid to show you the pain that I've been experienced, because in order for you to understand my purpose, you have to understand the pain that I've experienced. Mm.

Hylke Faber 25:00

For you to understand my purpose, you have to understand the pain that I have experienced. Yes, I'm going to stay with that sentence for a second, yes, to even make it a self reflective statement thing, for me to understand my own purpose, I have to understand my own pain. Tell us, April, why is this true for you? Can you tell us more? Can you unpack that a little bit more for us? Tell us about your pain and tell us about your purpose. So

April Hernandez 25:29

even with the the my pain and becoming a mother wasn't necessarily the postpartum the real pain came from, Will I ever be a good mother? Because I had a tumultuous relationship with my own mother. So that's where the real pain comes from, this, this underlying fear that I would repeat the cycle of being emotionally unavailable to my children, because that's how my mother operated. Mm, well, I operate in silence because that's how my mother operated. Those were her abuse tactics as I was a child, where she would remove herself and hide herself, and then I would see and witness my mother suffering in silence, the trauma of silence. Would I repeat all of that? Do I have the ability to to give when my mom just gave me just enough. That's where the real pain came from. But now that I have been able to identify that, I understand that pain very clearly, now I have chosen to be the complete opposite of my mom, while still I mean, I'm my mother's daughter, right? I'm her twin. I'm still tough, I'm still sarcastic, I give tough love, but I do it in a way that I wish I had it so now I'm operating with intention and purpose of what I want my daughters to walk away with that. Hey, I'm not the mom who's going to stand and make like I'm just, I'm just not I'm not like a cookie cutter. I'm just not that. But I'm the mom who will never miss a game. My mom never went to any of my games. I'm I'm the mom that will constantly celebrate you. My mom never celebrated me. So now my purpose is so clear, I've been able to to break all of those cycles. But when you're breaking cycles, it's never pretty.

Hylke Faber 28:00



So tell us about that, because you make it sound like, well, not quite, but you could hear it as like, Okay, so now I moved through this, and now I'm doing this. That was about that, yeah, because it's like, I'm going from this place of pain and suffering, yeah, as a child, and I realized I did want to repeat that. How did you move through that April?

28:29

I'm still moving through it,

Hylke Faber 28:33

yeah. So what helps you with that

28:40

therapy? I just, I was with my therapist at the beginning of the year, I did, like, about up until April, because I just was like, my gosh, there are still so many things. You know, my mother passed away seven years ago, and I'm still grieving, that grieving will never go away. It just goes it just goes into stages. I look at my mom, and I look at her, not from a mother daughter perspective, but from woman to woman, and I go, Wow, no one ever advocated for my mom. No, I try my best to see her through eyes of compassion and empathy, which is how many leaders should operate. Because every employee, or everyone who's working under you or for you, they all have. They all come. They all come with their lives. They all come with pieces of brokenness, and they're trying to do their very best. And as leaders, we you have the power to have impact either negative or positive,

Hylke Faber 29:55

and we're going to take a break in a moment. Going to interrupt you for a sec, for a second, we're going to take a break in a moment. And I'm so struck by the power of what you're saying in I continuously work through this and also what I'm inferring from this is, as a leader, it helps to be aware that the people that we are with are most likely moving through it, whatever it is also, and if they're not, they're probably in denial. So our call is to be transparent and compassionate. So we're going to take a short break after the break, April, I want to hear more about how you've moved towards compassion with your mom and how you work from that place. How do you live from that place today? So see you after the break. You've been listening to Ruth and unwavering, our lovely, tremendous guest today is April Hernandez, wonderful actress, speaker and warrior of the heart. Thank you for listening.

31:11

You are listening to rooted and unwavering presented by growth Leaders Network, the leadership team and culture development company. If you would like to learn more about working on connectedness for yourself, your team or organization, please contact growth leaders network on LinkedIn, and now back to the show.

Hylke Faber 31:37



Welcome back to this conversation with April Castillo Hernandez about how do we lead with compassion, with transparency, and how do we go from our pain to our purpose? So April, say more about how did you How do you develop compassion for your mom and for everyone around you. And how do you lead from that place? How do you do it?

32:09

I believe every human being wants to be seen and heard. We really do. That's why, when we receive a raise for the work that we do, that means that someone is seen, and they understand that we bring value to the company and to everyone that works around us, but also, wow, they see something in me that maybe I know it's there, but I don't really see it. And with my mother, I saw all of the dreams that never came to fruition. I saw a woman who died in brokenness. And when I remove my my need for a mother, so I so I put those in buckets. I allow myself I know who, who, who needs to come to the stage per se, right? We're going to use that words. I know when I need to be nice to the child in myself. I know when I need to allow the teenager to rebel. And I know about now me as a woman, that there are some things that I will have to live with. Being a mother and not having a mother is one of the

Hylke Faber 33:48

Thank you, loneliest Journeys you can be on,

33:57

and yet profound at The same time, it's it's, it's tragedy and beauty at the same time. It's, you know, my I had my daughter, which I gave life, and yet my mom lost her life, and those two things. It just, it's, it's a it's, it's like a Shakespeare movie. It is. It's all of these things, all of these crescendos and colors and all of these things where you're trying to figure out, wow, how, how do I do this life without the person who sort of gave me my identity, and now I have to create one still operating in many pockets of my life, of wanting her, and still operate with compassion, not only for her, but for myself, because I think we're great at like giving compassion and empathy for everyone else who will become. To ourselves, I'm very hard on myself, so it's like, no, just chill like you're figuring this out, and your kids are okay, like they love you. They tell me all the time that I'm a good mom, but still, I have that thing in my mind, like, Oh, am I? Am I good enough? Because that's my mom, she always made me feel like, no matter what I did, I was never good enough, no matter how much I did, when Freedom Writers and all the things that you can do, getting married and finally in love, my life, leaving an abusive relationship, not repeating the cycle, um, it just was never good enough. So compassion and empathy constantly are how I have to live my life. So

Hylke Faber 35:47

let's say your mom was listening today. And who knows, like how that all works, right? But let's say she was listening today. Let's say that energy is listening today, right? On whatever shape that takes, whether it's your mom, whether it's somebody like your mom, and there's many people like that. What would you want to say to them today? What we can say to your



36:18

mother? Wow, this is like deep

36:31

you were always worth it. You were always you. You were worth healing. You were worth it. You were loved. You deserve to be loved and to love yourself. My mom did not love herself. She couldn't love herself for the things that she experienced in her life. It was it was too hard, it was too hard to love to be vulnerable. So can you imagine me becoming an actor, very in touch with my emotions. I was the complete opposite of her. I was always very too much for her. Yeah. I think I would say, you know, I would say those things to her, yeah, I don't, I don't, I don't think, and she probably would have been like that, right?

Hylke Faber 37:31

But some, some something, something in us can hear that, yeah, I don't. Something in US can hear that. You could hear it. You could hear it,

37:40

yeah, I think she would have heard it, but it's just, you know, I mean, when you've experienced pain and trauma, the way our parents did back in the day, it's they're such a they come from such a different generation than we, and even more so now with how young people operate, it would have been intense for her. She never, she never used to like to walk into a church because she was like, I know that it's just too much, but I just thought, no, you think that you're not deserving of God's love and you are.

Hylke Faber 38:24

You know, you thought you were not deserving of God's love, and yet you are. Yeah, so it's a simple truth that people

38:33

but it's really complicated for many people, and I don't necessarily, it doesn't necessarily mean a physical church. I'm talking about just coming into the presence. Yeah, that's a whole you talk about healing, you know, or just sitting with yourself and really being quiet. It's so hard for so many of us to be and sit and just be quiet because our thoughts are too loud, yeah,

Hylke Faber 39:05

coming into the presence, coming into the presence that a church can help with that, and anything can help with that. I think therapist helped you with that when she's therapy

39:18

or whatever, being in nature, right? Being in nature is Pro I mean, it's profound, it's majestic. It makes you feel this small. It makes you realize that man, life can be okay. Life, there's a possibility that it could



do, it could turn out okay for me. You know, I'm just, I have to be willing to think it and believe in and say, like, Man, I'm deserving. I'm deserving of that. Yeah,

Hylke Faber 39:46

I want us to really sit with that for a second, because I think that that very profound, simple, profound and simple realization is the key to so much. Because it's saying I'm willing to be with me because I'm worthy to be loved, and so are you right? And you don't have to prove it, nothing's wrong with you. You may have done things that I didn't like, or you didn't like, or you may have done things that are harmful, and I may have done things that are that were harmful. We probably did. We're human beings and and at the same time, that's okay. That's we are loved. We are loved. That's the most important thing.

40:37

If I feel loved, if I feel safe, if I feel I can bring value, and I know that there are so many different types of leadership, right and how people lead, some are very grounded, and I feel like I can come to my boss and share with him anything. And then there are some are that are very just, Vision driven, mission driven, quotas numbers, right? But I don't, I don't know if that's not the world we're living in anymore. We are, we are coming into a place where now you're having more and more people understand. My mental health matters more than this paycheck.

Hylke Faber 41:26

Amen, my mental health pays more than my paycheck. Is more important than

41:32

my pay. It's at this point, especially because of COVID, my people were like, Oh, I can. I can actually like, I can do a job and I don't have to feel like I'm losing my life. So, so now, how do we find that balance? Obviously, you can't just there. You cannot lead with emotion. But that doesn't mean that you you can't have emotions,

Hylke Faber 41:59

right? It's all welcome. It's all welcome. It's all welcome. Yeah,

42:04

you know, you can't make an emotional decision if you're leading a company, but you also have to, I mean, look at, look at, I was just having a conversation with someone yesterday. Look at Mark Zuckerberg. He's had a tremendous like this change, this physical change. Now he actually looks cool. Now he looks approachable. Now he's in Jiu Jitsu. He's hanging out with Dana White at the UFC his hair, he looks like the the young guys in high schools now, um, he's wearing baggy clothes. Something happened to him where he probably realized, like so many people, hate me. I can't I can't operate like this anymore. Look at Jeff Bezos, how he started, right when you see those videos of him doing Amazon and in the, in his, in his, oh my gosh. What is that? It's parking garage. Now he's bald. He looks like a playboy. He has a Latina, white, you know, like something has shifted where I can't seem



so untouchable. I want people to work hard for me. I cannot seem like I don't have an emotion, because people are going to just they're not going to give me their all. We're all humans, and we should not forget that.

Hylke Faber 43:28

So in your work and in your life, I sense that's what you give people, the freedom to like, the freedom to be with themselves, the freedom to be honest, the freedom to be honest with each other, yes, the freedom to be approachable, the freedom to be human, to feel to be themselves. So there was this scene in the Freedom Writers, and I've never forgot, forgotten it, and it's the scene where there's the line and Hilary swanks playing. The teacher asks each person to come to the line. Have you ever seen somebody get killed? Have you ever been involved in violence? Have you ever been without fool? Have you and at some point, the whole class, all the rivaling gangs start to stand on the same line. And I remember at that point in the movie, I was on the floor in my apartment in New York City crying. So tell us about in your life and leadership. How are you bringing people to the line. How are you helping people to bring come people to the line? How do you do that? Because that sense, that's what you do.

44:51

Absolutely. I'll give you a great example of the line. I was in Iowa about a week. And a half ago, speaking, and I was speaking on domestic violence. I was sharing my story of being a survivor, just really quick. I was in an abusive relationship from the age of 16 to 19 and a half. He almost ended my life, and then I almost ended up taking my own life. I made a decision to leave, and I've been on a trajectory of just healing, and I found my husband, and it was great. That's a whole other it wasn't that easy, but so I'm on the stage and I'm speaking, and I never assume that anyone really understands abuse, I just go and say, This is my perspective. These are the things I experience, and maybe these are the things that you've never really saw before. So let me, let me, let me just say the things that feel harsh on stage, because that's just what dv is. It's very harsh. So I'm not going to make it cute, but I was also saying, on the flip side of abuse, there is success, because too often we hear of the victim, but we never hear of successful stories, right? We wonder, is it possible to be successful? Absolutely. I'm an actor, I'm an author, I'm a speaker, I have a husband, I have kids, so it is possible, and I love myself. Amen. Okay? And I got off stage, there was a woman that came to me and a Latina woman, and she said, I have never seen someone like you share their story. I've been working in DV for 22 years, and I've never shared my story any hers. So the line was that she saw someone that looks like her, that brown. Oh, wow, I'm connected to her, just just off of that. Wow. Look at her last name, Hernandez Castillo. You don't get any more Latina than that. But look at a woman who DV intimate partner violence almost took her life. And look at how she's using her voice. And she was like trembling talking to me, and she goes, I've never shared my story. And I was like, girl, you have to share your story. Mm, you have to. How are you? How are you listening and helping people, women, for 22 years, but you've never honored your story. When we don't share our story, we don't heal from it. Whatever we don't reveal. We will not heal from Right, right, right, right. And that was the line, beautiful. We came together without even knowing. And now she was like, I'm going to share it. And I was like, yes, you you have to.



Hylke Faber 48:04

So what happens in the sharing? Because you do this as a keynote speaker, you do this as a mother, I presume you do this as a spouse. I presume you do this as a friend, as an actress on the set. You you do this right now, so tell us. Why is that so important? Because I can imagine some people thinking, Yeah, okay, but I've written it in my journal, and that's enough. What do you say about what is the power of sharing with each other? What happens?

48:45

Oh, my gosh, freedom, freedom, freedom. In a way, I love journal journaling, but it also still feels very safe, very no one needs to know. It's still mine, right? Like I can still hide in it. Yes, I'm releasing it and I get it. Everybody's in a different stage of healing, of of coming to themselves, but there is, there's a reason why. There's power in words. When you actually give, give your pain a name, no, I was violated. I was sexually molested, not. Oh, I was, you know, touched. No, I was sexually this, or I was hit with this. Or, you know, my mom, when you put it, when you put it into words, you give it a form, and then when you give it a form, then you just release it, and there's freedom that comes from it. Had my met, had my therapist, you know, if she didn't tell me, you have the permission to go and say this, I would have still, you know, maybe what if I would have. I to commit suicide again, or what if I would have stayed? I would have died. I would have spiritually died and not been able to fully function. So when words are powerful,

Hylke Faber 50:16

I'm I'm taking this in April. This, this sense of using your voice, oh, to liberate. I'm a bit of a monk type, so I meditate and process and go in and in my work, of course, I share a lot too, and I do notice in myself a tendency to want to hold back. And the reason is that I am concerned about how it will impact other people. So tell me about, tell us about, how do you work through that? Because I could imagine you're sharing these stories about the abusive relationship you had with an ex partner. You're telling the story about the abuse you got from your mother. How do you saying it very bluntly square that with respect for your mother and for that other person while you're healing. I want to know about that, because I need to hear about this. I

51:22

think what I'm sharing with my mom, I always set the stage, and I say what you are about to hear, I give a disclaimer, what you about to hear is not, I'm not bashing my mother. I am. I want her voice to be heard. I want her to know that now her daughter is advocating for her, and whenever I speak, I feel like I'm speaking for my mom and saying all the things that I know that she probably would have wanted to say. So you might hear some things that might sound harsh, but it really isn't, but, but you can't sugar coat when you've experienced trauma. You there's some things that we have to say, but you also obviously have to know your audience and and when to say it. I mean, that's, that's just all the art of speaking. But I think when you come from a sincere place and from a place of healing, so everything I'm going through, I've, I've worked on, I'm not on stage, like, Oh, hey. But, you know, like, right? And I am very aware too, of my power n of my words and I never hear I never want to trigger someone



because of my ego. I want them to be impacted by my words and have them look inward and then say, You know what? There's some work that I have to do that's real power.

Hylke Faber 52:55

Yes, yes. So I hear you say about I speak to advocate, yes to advocate, also for my abusers, yes, because what I want is, I want their true voice to be heard, and I'm filling in what I understand about that, which is by being able to name what they are Not even though they may have done it by able to name, but I am still doing even though I'm not that I'm able to help to let that stuff go and say that may have been, but that's not who we are. We do that, but that's not who we are. And what I'm hearing you do is I'm not shying away from naming what we do, because if I shy away from it, it still continues.

53:46

And it contains you. It controls you. It keeps you from, you know, just being grounded and connected and being able to just stand, if I can stand in your shit, right? Like, like, stand in it. Don't stay too long, because eventually it smells. But if you are able to just stand in it and then own it, right? And I told one of my friends, I'm like, you have to face it. You have to feel it, and then you have to free it. I used a different word, but I'm going to keep it clean,

Hylke Faber 54:28

but still works with three apps, face it, yeah, face feel it

54:31

and free it. You gotta face it, face finally, face it, face it. Look at it. Look at it in all ways. And that takes years, that could take a day, that can take years. Face it right, feeling it so facing it is ownership. This is how we become transparent. I gotta own it. What responsibility? Unless you were a child or but I'm talking about as an adult, eventually, how can I. Work through this so it doesn't control me anymore, then you gotta feel it, meaning feeling allows you to embrace it. You feel it. You feel you know I'm I'm angry. I'm angry that my whole entire life changed because I had a child and I knew I'm angry. I feel bamboozled. I feel this. I feel that, okay, now you have to free it. That takes probably the longest.

Hylke Faber 55:32

And how do you free it?

April Hernandez 55:40

You free it by working on it as much as you can, that whenever someone triggers you, you begin saying, No, I'm not going to give you that power, cuz typically I would probably tell you off and but no, I'm not going to do that anymore, because you don't have power, and I'm not going to allow you to treat me or make me feel that way. That's how you begin to free it. You free it by surrounding yourself with with new people. You free it by reading books. You free it by saying, I no longer allow my past to to defy or or to deny me of living the life that I want. I know that past is there, but I'm choosing now that I'm going to live this way for the rest of my life. I have my non negotiables. I have the things that I don't I



don't allow in my space that are going to bring me back to that place. Um, that's how you free it? You free it through therapy, through your faith, you free it through exercise, through all of these things that are going to make you a better human being, a better employee, a better leader. You have to get to a place where you can free and let me tell you, for for those in leadership, your words can impact those who are who are working so hard for you. So if you see your employee and they're having a hard time, just by you saying, Hey, are you okay? I noticed lately. I noticed lately that you know, and how can I get you to a better place? How can, how can I, how can we work this project? How can we work these things? Because I noticed. I noticed some things. Instead of saying you didn't meet the quarter, you're fine. No, what if you actually just took a moment? And it can happen with everyone. No, especially if you're, you know, growing a huge company. But for those who that you see it, you're like, hey, you see that person. Oh my gosh, it, you know, like, I want to work even harder. April,

Hylke Faber 57:54

we're getting towards the very last few minutes and flew by. So I'm going to ask you to tell us one thing that you would say to a person who is in that bathroom moment, whether it's at work, whether it's in their relationship, whether it's in their pursuing their passion, that moment of like, I can't do this. What do you want to say to them?

58:23

Oh, my God, that's so unfair. Okay.

58:38

It will be okay. It will be okay. I know it doesn't feel like it right now, but you will smile again, you will love again, you will heal. And it will be okay. We'll be okay. It will be okay.

Hylke Faber 59:04

Thank you so so much. April, I am taking so much away from this conversation. Face it, feel it free. It stand in your shit and not too long, because we'll be smelly.

59:23

I love that. Yes,

Hylke Faber 59:25

the freedom, the real thing that is going to stay with me for the rest of my life. Here is this, the power of using our voice to name what we are not going to do anymore. Mm, and being able to name our trauma as a way to advocate for ourselves and for our abusers that were also abused, and saying, No, we are not doing this anymore, and not just putting this into a journal, but actually being able to talk about it because. Because that takes us out of the pattern. April, it's been a tremendous honor to sit with you. Thank you so much for sharing so much wisdom, so much heartfelt pain and purposefulness, and introducing us to this field of freeing is a daily practice, daily. Thank you so much for being with us. April. Thank you so you've been listening to rooted and unwavering we've been talking to April and



Andre Castillo, keynote speaker, actress, I would say, healer, person that leads group towards their power by using their voice, by facing feeling and freeing in this podcast series, if you like it, you can subscribe to us on Spotify and Apple and wherever you get your podcast, you can re watch this, and if you like this podcast, there will be another one again, live in about a week or two. I your host, Hylke Faber, you've been listening to Ruth and wavering, where we help leaders connect more deeply to their innate potential. Thank you and see you next time.

Presenter 1:01:27

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