

S01 - E55 - Rooted & Unwavering – April 4 - Hylke Faber & Don Johnson

Presenter 00:07

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 fauber, 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 00:48

Well, welcome to rooted and unwavering, where we help connect leaders more deeply to their innate potential. This is episode 55 I'm your host, Hylke Farber, and I'm here together with an old friend and colleague, Don Johnson, an executive coach, Team developer and author as well. Don, how are you today?

Don Johnson 01:12

Pilka, I am fantastic. Thank you. It's

Hylke Faber 01:16

a true pleasure and honor to sit with you, and I understand you are in Spain today. Is that right?

Don Johnson 01:21

That is correct. I'm in Mijas, which is between Marbella and Malaga.

Hylke Faber 01:28

Sounds like a beautiful place. That's a good it is nice. So, so we're going to have a conversation with with Don in a moment. And before we do that, I'd like to just talk a little bit about root and wavering, as we do at the beginning of every episode, to sit for a moment, why we talk about being rooted and unwavering? Why do we talk about what is it like to be connected, and why do we intentionally focus on that? So to me, this is not a static thing. This is a dynamic thing. It's like getting to know ourselves is like getting to know our best friend. And as we get to know our best friend, I find that I get to appreciate more and more of what that is. And it's not always what I think it is. It's actually something that surprises me. Sometimes it's much deeper. It's vaster, and it always, in the end, brings a sense of quality and peace in the sense of all right, okay, okayness and that brings to the fore. So how do we access that deeper wisdom, connectedness which, which I like to call connectedness quotient. So accessing our deeper wisdom, our connectedness quotient. And today, we'll learn from another leader about this in



this field, who's been working in this field and has dedicated his life to it from a very, very early age. Don Johnson is with us today. He was a monk in the beginning of his career, and then became a business leader. Has also become a writer and executive coach. He don't spiritual quest began as a college student back in 1972 that happens to be also the year I was born. I was smiling about that number, and that led into a 10 year ashram experience, during which time he was a close follower of Prem Rawat, formerly grown as Kuru Maharaj ji. In 1984 Dong resigned from his position as the president of robots organization, and soon joined a global leadership development firm where he'd worked as a consultant sales professional and vice president of sales. And then in 2006 he joined a boutique consulting company where Don and I met, where he provided coaching and leadership development to companies like YouTube, Google, Microsoft and Yahoo. He then, five years later, became the VP of Sales for insights learning and development, which is a global people development company and creator of the insights discovery profile. You know about the four college. You probably know it a union, union sake, based psychometric that he retired from corporate life in 2017 now has his own consulting practice where he does coaching, team building and leadership development. And he lives in Scotland, in a seaside village with his wife, two cats and a horse named Richie. I want to know more about this horse, Don and then he writes personal growth essays on medium.com. Plays golf, tennis and pickleball, and then his book was just published in 2024 it's called Living a conscious life, how to find peace, wholeness and freedom in a chaotic world. And I know DOM. Don As somebody who is deeply soulful, very kind, just a person that you feel like he puts a hand behind your heart just by sitting with him. Thank you Don for being with us today.

Don Johnson 05:15

Hylke, thank you for a very warm welcome and kind words. Thank you, pleasure, you

Hylke Faber 05:22

are welcome so Dom, tell us what you have learned in your life and leadership, about connectedness.

Don Johnson 05:32

Hylka, just you know my my learning, I think, started as you mentioned, as a young guy, where I was very curious about what's what's within me, other than my thoughts. I can see my thoughts, I can hear my thoughts, but I began to ponder the fact that somebody is listening or observing those thoughts. Because I'm real. I was realizing through different experiences that I'm not my thoughts, and that that kind of brought me into my monk, you know, ashram Yogi experience where I wanted to find connection to my inner self, to my higher self, to my spirit, you know, call it what you call it what you might and I began to appreciate the fact that there was a place of being centered, of being grounded, a place to help me be more aware of my thoughts, be more intentional about what I'm saying, what I'm doing. And that was my early experience of of what connectedness was. It was connected confining a deeper connection to myself, a connection that would enable me to be more alive, be more thoughtful, be more vibrant. And, you know, I practiced that for a long, long time, to develop a routine, a inner, you know, a self practices. I'm sure you're aware of, and I'm sure our listeners are very aware of, you know, the importance of nurturing oneself a restorative practice. And I think for leaders, one of the things that I've



observed is leaders that have a restorative practice are able to rebound quicker, recover faster, find their way through difficult situations and times, because they understand that working in hyper drive or overdrive just it just leads to burnout. And so how do you not burn out? I mean, I was in corporate America for a long time, and there were times that I just completely fried, even though I had this inner practice. There were, there were, there were times when that inner practice seemed to get swept aside. And there were times when, when that inner practice in my centeredness got swept away that I don't think I behaved in the way that that I would like that. I think a leader really ought to behave, you know, and there were some hard lessons learned, so

Hylke Faber 08:29

I want to touch into those in a moment. Yeah, I'm very curious, Don because you sort of said, Oh, and then I became in I became aware that I'm not my thoughts, and I got into this Ashram experience. That's a pretty big leap to make for a human being. It strikes me. So how did you become aware? Do you have any recollection? I know that's a little while ago, but have you have any recollection of how do you make that how did you make that transition?

Don Johnson 09:02

Yeah, you know for I'll just say for me that you know it may not be this way for everyone you know, for me, the practice of meditation, of what I would call connecting into the subtle energy you know that's within us through breath practices or through other techniques. There's many ways I think, to get inside the house, right? So when I found myself quieting down and getting very, very, very quiet, is where I experienced real stillness. And in that stillness, the Stillness that I got, the more clear it became to me that thoughts, ideas were just like passing they're like clouds passing by me. And you know, it's easy to say that, because in those moments of deep quietness, you I could experience that. Then the trick is. How do you bring that into real life, you know, into grinding away and doing all the stuff that we do? Because, frankly, it that that's quiet experience often just evaporates. Yes, yes, and now we're left with what? Well, you're left with, well, what are the qualities of that experience? And that's over time, that's what I began to realize that that I think, I don't know if this is absolute fact, but I think I started to realize that the qualities of that inner experience were qualities like, as you said, or, you know, you mentioned the word kindness earlier. Kindness, warmth, support, nurturing, connection, the the, the the it's almost like, if you spend time with something, that thing you spend time with rubs off on you. And I think that's what, over time, helped me, is that the more I rub this cool, you know, like, almost like, there's a little magic genie inside, or something, and I'm rubbing this little magic genie, and there's something, there's something beautiful that comes from it, some something nurturing, something restorative. But the more I did that, I'm like, okay, so I think if we pay attention, we realize that those, those kinds of qualities are attractive to others. They help create connection. And when we you know, when we lose our way, I think we we can often do or say things that we'd probably like to take back later, because we slip from our more conscious self into our kind of habits, and some of those habits may not always serve us well. We get, you know, our personality comes through, and then, you know, if we have a very driven personality and we're under stress, well, we might get snappy, we might get short, we might get dismissive, we might get too demanding. And, you know, so we all have our comfortable shoes that we



wear, and sometimes those comfortable shoes cannot can go from being a strength to being a liability, know what? I mean, yeah,

Hylke Faber 12:29

it resonates in many of the personality traits that you described I have. So yeah, I got that music me too, man. I mean, I got those. You know, people that work close with me will tell you your My husband will tell you that yes, yes, yes, yes. So tell us about an experience that you had because you talked about falling back. And it's interesting, in your bio, you wrote something about retiring from the corporate grind, and I heard you say the word grind. So it seems to be some word in your existence, in your wiring, that's that's there somewhere. So tell us a little bit about maybe an experience of how you became disconnected and what you learned through it.

Don Johnson 13:14

Yeah, yeah. Don't get me wrong. I mean, I, I think there's times when the experience of being in the corporate world is absolutely rich and full and amazing. I've had many, many of those. And there's also been times when I experienced kind of the the high pressure, the politics, the backstabbing, the all that stuff to that, to me, is kind of the grind, right? And there were, there were moments, but, you know, in terms of being disconnected, you know, my I think we get disconnected all the time, in in big ways and in little ways. You know, in little ways I think, I think it's my experiences. I'm always on this journey to come back home, to come back to the Oasis, to come back to the battery charger recharge, so that I can go out and, do, you know, do whatever I do, or do whatever you do. And as far as a disconnected experience, you know, I found myself in a in this, in this leadership development company that you mentioned early on, when I became a VP of sales, I went from being a salesperson one day to a VP of sales, like overnight, running a \$20 million business with 20 or 30 people reporting to me through various managers, right? And you know, it was, it should have never really happened that way, in a sense. And my boss, because there was a merger and an acquisition, he was, he was swamped. He wanted to help, but he had so many plates spinning in the air that he could only kind of keep his own plate spinning so. Yeah, I felt quite isolated and quite quite pressured for a number of years. And I think I lost my footing a little bit there. I think I lost my center. I was going through some personal transitions with my marriage and so at the same time as well. So what the way that showed up for me was poor decisions, Rush Decisions, decisions perhaps not thought through well enough, responding to pressure without being grounded. So being more reactionary and even through it all, I mean, I did relatively well on the outside, but if you looked at me on the inside, I was way over my head. Hylka, I was, I was not performing at the way that I think a quality leader ought to show up. I don't think, I don't think I really showed up with a sense of creating a shared vision with my team, or a place where, maybe, you know, created it. I was trying to create an environment where people would learn, grow, succeed. I'm not quite sure I was as successful as I could have been,

Hylke Faber 16:39

because instead of that, your mind was taken where.



Don Johnson 16:42

Yeah, my mind was taken on. Instead of being more thoughtful, being more deliberate, I was playing. I was almost doing whack a mole, trying to hit the keep trying to keep everything going, trying to make sure that I didn't do something wrong. Instead of focusing on kind of inside out, I was more looking at kind of, how can I respond to the outside first, you know, and yeah, yeah. It got a little messy.

Hylke Faber 17:25

So how did you notice? How did you become aware that something inside and outside was not congruent?

Don Johnson 17:33

Yeah, I felt, I didn't feel I didn't feel confident. I didn't feel, I didn't feel a sense of I was leading with my heart, even though I swore that I wasn't going to get trapped in all the games that were getting played around me. I did so I felt, I felt out of sync, you know, with myself. It was difficult. It was really, it was I felt uncomfortable. A lot of the time.

Hylke Faber 18:17

I'm thinking, Don like the here is this person who, from 1972 was sitting in ashrams doing this, like rubbing the genie and being aware of stillness and compassion and peace and this beautiful being, and then suddenly there's this like persona that is just acting out. Yeah, and and you talked about the discomfort. So what do you do with that discomfort?

Don Johnson 18:48

What did I do with the discomfort it took? It took some years. Whoop, hold on. The hell's going on here?
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Hylke Faber 19:04

can hear you. Well, hold

Don Johnson 19:05

on. I just lost, I lost my screen. Hylke, oh, okay, okay. One second, I can still see you, and it's okay. It's all right. Let's see what happened there. There you go. I'll be back. We can see you. Okay, hold on. A second.

Hylke Faber 19:23

We can see you, all

Don Johnson 19:26

right. There we go. There you go. Are we okay? Yes, I

Hylke Faber 19:30



can see you, well. So,

Don Johnson 19:31

so your question was, like, what happened, right? Yeah,

Hylke Faber 19:36

like, how did you work with that? Like, you noticed the discomfort, and then, and then

Don Johnson 19:42

Hylke, I scraped and scrambled. I, you know, all I did is I woke up each morning I said, I'm just going to try to do my best. I know what, you know. I know what needs to happen, so to speak. And, you know, and it did. I mean it. I would just chip away. I would chip. Away. I still. I mean, I practice meditation, I did as much as I did as much practice as I could. But honestly, it was I felt like the the environment that I was in and this, and the the level of ability that I had at that time as a leader, I was I was I? How could I say this? I was doing my best in a situation that required more of me at that time than I think I had my skills and abilities. In order to be in that environment at that point in my career, I probably needed a step in between those two roles, individual contributor, VP of sales, in order to, yeah, in order to grow and flourish. You know, in a, how would you say it in a in a way that was beneficial, not only to me, but to the organization? You know,

Hylke Faber 21:11

I think it's so wonderful to hear, Don it's what I'm hearing is that, in a way, you weren't kind to yourself by accepting that promotion, by getting into that role. And I think that's something that in our current conditioning, we're so wired to want to go fast. I know I done that so many times, yeah, and then it's so sits. It's like listening within. It's like, what is what is it that this tree is ready to do and bear fruit. What fruits it like? What is the tree able to do, as opposed to hang all kinds of stuff or that's not quite ready for it yet. That's not kind and then, and then that overstress sense, that overstress state, we start to fall back into unconscious survival patterns.

Don Johnson 21:57

Absolutely, that's what it was I was. I was in survival mode? Yeah, you know. And I think we both know the difference when you when you're operating from survival mode is is one set of behaviors and attitudes and mindset, and when you operate from a when you're free and clear and connected, you operate in a whole different way. Yeah, you know, you're there to be of service. You're there to help others. You're there to create a safe environment. You're there to coach and mentor and and you know you're, you lose yourself and, and we see, we see the bigger picture. We see and we help others. You know, we're, we're a servant leader. Is what we become, yeah,

Hylke Faber 22:50

you mentioned this sense of leading with your heart. You said I wasn't leading from my heart. So then tell us about an experience where you felt you were leading from your heart. You were really leading



from your heart, integrated what? What would you say was an experience like that, and what was it like?

Don Johnson 23:11

I think you know when I when I look at leading from my heart these days, as a leader, I feel my purpose is connected to my behavior, so to speak, meaning I say, you know, as a leader, what I what I wake up and want to do with my life is, how can I take my my experiences, and frame them in such a way that they could be of value to others, that they could be of service to others? And do it without attachment, do it without expectation, simply do the right thing. Lead with warmth. Lead with kindness. Like, you know, I go back to the work of Amy Cuddy, from you may be familiar with a great article she wrote about, you know, do do leaders? Should they be? Should they have warmth or competence? Which first, you know, she did a lots of research on. It was a beautiful piece, right? And yes, we want leaders to be confident, competent. But it was that emphasis on the warmth part that really struck me. And I you know, and I hope, my my hope is that I bring that to to the work that I do in my in my organization, now, with my with my clients and with the people that work with me. So it's a whole different feeling for me, because I feel I do feel connected, and I feel inspired, and those are words that I wouldn't be using in that previous example. I really wouldn't Yes, yes,

Hylke Faber 24:59

yeah. Yeah. So Don What do you do? Because you talked also about it being a daily practice. So what do you do? Are with falling back?

Don Johnson 25:13

I mean, the restorative practice, yeah,

Hylke Faber 25:15

yeah. So, so what happens when you, like today, you're you're in this more flow state, you have more of this sense of bleeding from the heart. And so what do you do when you fall back these days?

Don Johnson 25:25

Yeah, when I fall out of it? You mean, yeah, yeah. I mean, I What happens these days? I would say, is I finding that success is catching myself a little bit sooner, when I'm off when I get off track. Success would also be, or, you know, recovery, would be simply being able to own my own stuff and say, I'll take ownership for for what I just did or what I just said, much less interested in being defensive and and I think it's because when, when we pay attention to what's around us and what's within us, we just notice more. Because any in order for anything to change, I've got to pay attention. I've got to notice it. So if, if I'm able to notice when I'm losing my way, it usually comes a lot sooner these days, and so my recovery time is quicker so I can get back on track. And I think the other thing that helps is learning to be very forgiving of oneself, something that I didn't do or in my earlier days. Like you said, you're, you know, maybe you're a type. I don't know if you're a type, a personality or not, but I know, like I'm wired to to do, do, do things, to get stuff done and so, but I'm what I've learned is that, yeah, I can that's all,



that's all fine, but I've got to compliment that with being grounded and being patient and being much less hard on myself. So the less hard I am on myself as a leader, what I found is the less hard I am on everybody else on my team, on people that I work with, and life becomes more pleasant, becomes a lot more fun, because I'm not having to deal with drama, and drama is exhausting. So, you know, the more I just think that's the lesson. You know, when you say, what about you know, how do I fall back? I just try to, you know, find my inner self in various ways and calm down. What I

Hylke Faber 28:05

noticed you don't do is you don't beat up on yourself for having gotten out of touch with your inner self like You're like you are. You're not doing that. You're, you're you're practicing the sense of kindness, self forgiveness, staying with yourself, and I appreciate that we're going to take a short break in just a moment after the break, I'd like to hone in a little bit more about this willingness to be with whatever's happening within you, like that, that sort of when things are not going well. So how do you deal with that? Like, just when the the screen froze, like you, I saw you recover, like, super fast. Like, how do you do that? And what goes on in your mind and what you have to step through to actually do that? Because I one of the things I've noticed working with myself and leaders, we become conscious, and then that becomes a performance, like, now, I have to be always, there's even something called above the line. I have to always be above the line. I feel bad

Don Johnson 29:07

about myself, right? Oh, my God, I went below the line. Yes, yeah, I'm good and bad again.

Hylke Faber 29:12

So, so it's, it's like, how do you work with this? So Don maybe brief, brief, brief insight on this for this, before we take a break. What is one element, one thing that helps you to be kinder with yourself,

Don Johnson 29:32

the acceptance that we're not perfect and that's okay. It's okay to not know. It's okay to not be perfect. It's okay to not have all the answers.

Hylke Faber 29:46

It's okay not to be perfect and not know all the answers. Thank you so much, Don we have been talking with Don Johnson, executive coach and writer about of this, of this beautiful new book. Came out in 2024 living a conscious life, how to find peace, wholeness and freedom in a chaotic world, world, one of the things that I'm taking away from this conversation already is how to be kinder, how to be kinder, and this not being a sense of weakness, but a sign of of strength and and wholeness, as you write about in the title of this beautiful book. So we're going to take a break. See you after the break, you've been listening to rooted and unwavering.

Speaker 1 30:37



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 31:02

So back to root and unwavering. I'm here with Don Johnson, executive coach, writer. My name is Hylke Fauci. We're talking about how to stay connected and using kindness as an important tool. So Don, what does happen with you when you are in a moment like, oh, it happened, I did it, yeah,

Don Johnson 31:30

don't freak out, you know, like, it's okay, it'll work out. It's not a big deal. It's not life or death, you know, it's this too shall pass. I, you know, I think, I think when I was younger, baby, you know, we put, I put a lot of pressure on myself. I think life was defined by what you do and what you have. And I think as we mature, we realize that life is not so much about that life is more about your being. And when you get the inside, you know, fired up correctly, the outside seems to take care of itself very, very well. So, you know, I think I've shifted a little bit from what's really like, understanding what's really important. I don't have to, I don't have to, what do I have to prove? What do I have to prove anymore? You know, I've I achieved certain things. It was great. But I realized, after you have those things, wait a minute, what's really happiness? I've had great cars, I've had great houses, I've had great relations, you know, all these various things, but it's a big but is, but what really brings fulfillment and what really brings contentment to any of us in our lives? And I think that's a question that we all, you know, ponder, what do I what's really important to me? And you know, and I pondered this as a leader, too. And you know, I knew that, yes, there were targets to achieve, and quotas and revenue targets and budgets and all that. But even during that time, when I was, you know, kind of losing my way, I knew underneath it all that there were people that were showing up for work every day, and at least I could try my best to create an environment where they felt safe, they felt connected, they felt inspired, they They felt they had an opportunity to learn and grow, you know, so I did my best on that, but I think, I think we just have to realize that, you know, it's about connecting to who we really are, and If we understand more about who we really are, we'll be we'll be more patient with ourselves, because we're little, well, we're little kids that grew up, and here we are. We're in adult bodies, doing adult jobs. But you know we're, we're spirit, you know we're not? You know we're, we're we're, we're all beautiful beings. It's just that sometimes we lose our way. I think we have to just accept that and just say, I'm going to give that person a break, because instead of coming down hard, so hard, making an assumption about why that happened, or what, you know, what I'm going to get curious first, that's helped me a lot,

Hylke Faber 34:51

beautiful beings that just lost their way. Sometimes I like that being less hard on ourselves and each other. Right, just remembering that what I'm thinking about, Don is, so you've, you've had this career, pretty high profile career, and now you are towards the later decades of life. You could say, very correct. Fair to say, 1972 college, we're not at the beginning of life, Don right. We're still later decades.



So, so what would you say to a person who is in these middle decades that maybe in the situation that you were in, feeling in over their heads, yeah, and, and at the same time, having this longing for contentment and peace, and at the same time, you know, having to make food, put, put food on the table, and having kids to go to go to college, all this stuff that that we get to deal with in this world. Yeah, having some ambition like so, what would you say to a person like that? Yeah,

Don Johnson 36:13

do all that. You know that's important stuff. And you know, if I had to replay at hylka Back in those days when I was losing my way, if I had a coach at that time, a real mentor, I just think that would have made a huge difference in my life. So, you know, when I have people that you just described, you know, reach out to me for coaching, I look at them, and I go, wow. Do you realize how brilliant you actually are, that you're that you're doing something that not everybody does. And I just, I look at them, I go, Wow, you are. You are so on the right track, man. You know to have the, you know, have the sense of doing that, of realizing that you may not be able to do this all yourself. So maybe it's not so maybe it's a coach. Another thing that I've like, for example, like, you know, I found this later in life, I found men's groups or the mankind project or things like that. I didn't know about that stuff back when I was 40, you know, I didn't know about it. I just didn't I thought, Oh, my God, if I had a group of peers, of colleagues, of friends, that I could speak openly to, just like completely self disclose. Well, that would have been

Hylke Faber 37:49

helpful. Yes, uh huh.

Don Johnson 37:51

That would have been really a good thing to do. So for those people, I say, yeah, if, if you can come up with a environment that works for you, that could give you a chance to speak about things, if you're a speaker, some people don't like to speak. I get it, but, but if you're the kind of person that sort of processes a little bit out loud that might be helpful. Yes,

Hylke Faber 38:28

that resonates with me. Donna, that sense of sitting with each other. Yeah, I've noticed in my own life that that's, I mean, very helpful, very helpful.

Don Johnson 38:38

Yeah, I mean, hylka, like, when you know, when you know, I joined, excellent, and then you know you joined, we would sit in circle A lot, yeah, as colleagues, as peers, and you know, that was that we were fortunate that we were able to do that at work. And that was part of, kind of our practice. But that was that was very restorative for me to find like minded spirits and and people to I think we keep, you know, I think people decided, you know, I kept a lot inside. I kept a lot, and I don't think I quite knew the struggles that I was going through, I don't think I had a safe place to air them, you know, because, you



know, we generally don't, we don't air things unless we feel safe. So where, I think the question is, where would somebody listening feel safe? What would feel safe

Hylke Faber 39:39

for you. What would feel safe? Yeah,

Don Johnson 39:43

maybe seek that out. Ponder that.

Hylke Faber 39:47

I'm so struck by this Dom, because I'm I'm thinking, here's this guy, you know, who's been a monk, who has all this practice, who knows all this meditation, and he still loses himself at times, you know, in your third. His 40s still happened, and he still had a need for this brother, Peer, peer ness to support him. Why do you think that is?

Don Johnson 40:10

I think I think it's because I, you know what? I realized, you know, okay, I was in this monk situation for 1010, years, and then I came out, and I went to my first therapist, and he was a Jungian therapist, and he chatted with me, and he said, he said, Well, he said, Would you like to hear my assessment of you? Well, sure. What do you got? And he said, Well, here it is. He said, you've got a lover inflation, because I've been in this devotional ashram experience, so that made sense to me. So I was too, too filled up with lover energy. He said, and you've got a warrior depletion, so your ability to, like, really sink your teeth into something, or fight or battle that maybe that's a little diminished because you haven't worked on it, and you've got a magician leakage. And that really cracked me up. I said, What the hell is a magician leakage? And I intuitively, I kind of, I sensed it. But he said, Look, he said, you drift off like you're sort of like you kind of lose focus. And that's, I'm simplifying this, but so I began to under appreciate the fact that I had to seek balance. So that was a beginning of unpacking stuff, and it helped me understand that, yes, I'm a spiritual being, I'm a physical being, I'm an emotional being, and I'm a mental being, and the meditation that I had immersed myself in was great for my spirituality, great, but I ignored all the other aspects of my conscious of my psyche. So for example, on, as you mentioned, I write on medium, and I've I wrote a lot of articles in the beginning about the importance of meditation and mindfulness. Great, that's fine. I went on. As a year or two went on, I began to realize that there were other things that I hadn't said. So I wrote another, a couple of other articles that said meditation alone is not the most experience. Is not the most important spiritual practice. And I said, Here's what I think is the most important thing, even if you never meditate, I said, I think the most important thing, thing is you have to do your own work on your inner self. You've got to unpack your traumas, your wounds, all this, all the stuff that we inherit from our family of origin, our life experiences, whatever. That's the message that I'm this is, that's the drum that I'm beating these days, which is, we need to do the inner work to clean up our shadow, our darkness. We have to we have to be able to face the parts of ourselves that we would like to say they don't exist. We need to find a way to make peace with them and create and find wholeness, which I totally believe in as a really important thing for all humans to do.



Seek wholeness, seek balance, seek that way. So I'm a big fan of Robert Johnson's work. I'm a big fan of Jung's work, which is Shadow Work and integration and acknowledging and respecting all the different parts of ourselves as leaders, if we just think that we're just there and we we're just there and we have only one thing to do is to hit the numbers we'll miss the other parts of the Business. Take care of the people, create connection, create cohesion, create community. Those are all things. It's not just the numbers. Same thing as a human being, I can't just say, hey, you know, I you could parrot that line, which I believe in, I think it's a good line, which is, we're spiritual beings living in physical bodies. I believe that, but I can't just go around chanting it and just think that's going to make everything great. You know, I've gotta be willing to to do my own work and to

44:29

to

Don Johnson 44:30

I might have. I gotta be willing to feel some pain, to cry, to tear things apart in the in the in the in the pursuit of wholeness, of being a better person.

Hylke Faber 44:44

Thank you. Don I I resonate with this word wholeness, and I also resonate with not taking a spiritual bypass, which which the tenting of everything's perfect and everything's fine. And you know, I'm just spiritual being, having a physical experience, whatever, like that. You're saying, no, no, no, you have to face the whole catastrophe of the thing you know, face, face the whole thing and the physical, the mental and the emotional, all of that as a leader, as a human being, because if you don't do that, you're not able to take care of your people, connecting, I would add, not being able to actually make wise choices, because you're operating from a fraction of your of your beingness. So you got to take care of those parts of yourself. And I, I totally resonate with the escapism your your your therapist, sound like a wonderful person and and they might have said something similar to me. So, yeah, I maybe still today, who knows? So, so you talk about doing your inner work, right? Yeah, well, that sounds gargantuan. So where do you start and how do you do

Don Johnson 46:12

it, yeah, I suppose it does. Hylke, you know, for me, for me, it started. And again, I think everybody's different, but for me, it started with healing up, healing up one of the childhood wounds, and that was making peace with my estranged father. And that happened when I was I started doing it in my early 40s, and then it took some years, and it reached more of a completed Stage by the time I was maybe 50, and it was probably one of the best things I ever did, because it taught me a lot I had to, I had to confront my own father. So the so the child was becoming the man in that process. And I began, I developed a, I think I developed some inner confidence, something, something was healed that was broken. So that's where I started. Other people probably start somewhere else, right? But that's, that's where that's, that's where I started. And then there were other things that I did, you know, later, but I, what I did was, I guess I just sort of paid attention to like, the things that came by like, passed my way,



like, and I realized that, that if I was if, if I was caught up in my own fantasies, in my own junk, then I would not be able to see the real opportunities that would come my way. So in other words, like I so that's one thing I did. So another thing that I then started to pay attention to was, what is my negative self talk like, or what is my self talk like at all. And that was another thing that really, really helped me, was situation occurred, and I realized that I was afraid of having a conversation with someone, because I was afraid of what might happen if I did that. But I knew I had to have that. I knew I had to have that conversation if I was to find out what's on the other side. In other words, if I let this relationship go, and I know that it's not really serving me, but I'm afraid to let it go, I'll never know what it's possible if I don't let it go, it's like the trapeze artist I'm holding on to the trapeze. I don't want to let go, even though the other one's there, and I know I need to grab that other trapeze, but I've got to let the first one go. So when I started paying attention to my negative self talk, I realized that I was actually trapped. I was trapped in my own beliefs of I'm not good enough. I can never do this. I'm worried if I might do this. I crossed paths with someone, and they said to me, here's what I want you to do. Repeat after me. Having this conversation will be not as hard as you think. In fact, it will be fun and easy. I looked at the guy and I said, You got to be kidding me. It sounds like complete garbage. He said, trust me, say it again. And I said, All right, this will be fun and easy. I started. To believe it a tiny little bit anyway, then I went and had that conversation with that person. And guess what? It was nowhere near as hard as I thought it was going to be. In fact, it totally changed my life and liberated me from something that I knew wasn't really serving me. It wasn't good for me, but I had the belief. I had the belief that I couldn't get out of it. It was like a the elephant tied with a string to the because it had been trained that way. So then this is another thing that took me to another place. I realized, Oh, my God, the power of limiting beliefs. Holy smokes, ilka. And that was another that was another layer to peel about doing the inner work, which was to uncover, what are my limiting beliefs? How do you find out your limiting beliefs? Here's how you find them out, at least how I did ask yourself, What are you afraid of? Write it down. What are you afraid of, and what do you believe about that? I didn't go to therapy for that one that was, that was something, that was just something else. So

Hylke Faber 51:16

what are you afraid of, and what's the limiting belief about that. So let's, let's do a little practice on that. So what in this moment are you afraid of? And I'll share with share your mind. Okay,

Don Johnson 51:28

what am I afraid of?

51:32

I don't

Don Johnson 51:35

know. I could say, Hey, I'm afraid. I'm afraid that I wasn't as articulate on this podcast as I would have liked. There were, there were moments early on where I'm not sure if that made sense. So I could say,



Yeah, I'm a little bit afraid. Like, okay, it wasn't great, okay, it's all spontaneous. So, but I'm a little Yeah, I'm I'm a little afraid of that,

Hylke Faber 51:55

okay? And the limiting belief is that, what the

Don Johnson 51:59

limiting belief is, I guess you could say I'm not as good as, you know, I'm not the greatest podcaster in the world, you know, kind of a thing.

Hylke Faber 52:07

And so that's limiting belief. So that's, that's the, that's the, that's the little feather to the the elephant to the tethered with little robe to a little nail in the sand, exactly. Thinking like, Oh, I'm very used to this. Okay, so before we practice, we release that. I'm going to share with you one of mine, one thing that I'm afraid of is the state of the United States. Okay, yeah, I'm very afraid of what's happening in this country, right? And the limiting belief is one of the limiting beliefs I have about it, is that I should save it and and that it's all going to be bad, right? It's not a limiting belief, right, right? So, so when I release myself on those beliefs, then like, Okay, well, that's an old belief in my family system, that I was the Savior, and my prediction that things was going to be bad, yes, was an old way of protecting myself against future problems. Without that, I can be in this moment with you and enjoy the beautiful sun in Phoenix and be of service today. What about you? Don what happens when you release yourself from those Yeah,

Don Johnson 53:29

no, I think your point is spot on, and it brings me to the concept of in the present moment, everything is fine, you and me right now, it's fine. There are many beliefs. Go to the what's the worst that could happen? Belief, worry and fear. I think worry and fear are disempowering. I think worry and fear take us out of love, out of kindness, out of being at peace, because we are anticipating what's going to happen in the future. Because, okay, so all these things are happening in the US, many people are already saying, Oh, well, this is going to happen, or that's going to happen. It hasn't happened yet. It may happen, it may not happen. So how can you suspend belief? Be pragmatic? Do it do what you think would help mitigate against any repercussions. But I think fear is paralyzing, you know, it's a reptilian brain, you know, element, really, it's designed to protect us. I get it, but to live in that is not going to bring the best out of anybody, to live in fear, yes,

Hylke Faber 54:59

yes. So. So apply that to this limiting belief. I wasn't as articulate, I'm not good enough that in this podcast, right?

Don Johnson 55:07



I just, I just, I can see that that's a possibility, and I say it's okay. Why? Because my, my, my goal is not to be the best podcaster. My goal is to do the best that I can in anything that I do and live it and leave it at

Hylke Faber 55:30
that. Leave it at that.

Don Johnson 55:33
It's, it's, I'm going to focus on the process, not the outcome.

Hylke Faber 55:39
Right, over over, over and over.

Don Johnson 55:42
It's the process. Because the process brings me into the into the present moment, into the present time. If I focus on the outcome, then I get all nervous. I get all worried. Oh, what about this? What about that? No, I'm going to enjoy the experience with Hylke in the podcast. That's, that's what I that's how I come into this

Hylke Faber 56:01
beautiful Yes, yes, yes. Don, incredibly in this wonderful conversation with you, which I very much been enjoying, we're getting towards the last few minutes. Don, what would you say to somebody who, in this moment feels very disconnected, like just not feeling overwhelmed, yeah, yeah, flooded, yeah, yeah.

Don Johnson 56:28
Be kind to yourself. It's okay if that's what you're experiencing. That's that's happening right now, right Why does, why does that happen? And I think being disconnected or being flooded, as you say, you know, is is a result of not being connected. So then you ask yourself, What can I what could with? What can I connect to that would bring me peace? How can I recover? What practices do I have in my toolkit that can help me restore myself to center? Some of us say, You know what I'm going to do. I'm going to go sing opera. Because when I sing opera, I can't think. I don't know if people realize this, if you really sing from the bottom of your belly, and you really you can't think in that moment you're free. So maybe some people sing opera, maybe somebody takes a walk, maybe somebody journals, maybe somebody meditates, maybe somebody just practices sitting quietly. So I have a lot of I have a lot of you know feeling about that kind of thing, because it's really difficult for people. When you get flooded, it's really so it's it's finding your way back home, what could work for you? But I think the first thing is, be kind to yourself. There's no point in beating yourself up for feeling disconnected or flooded. So it's just just wasted energy. Yeah, what do you you know what I mean?

Hylke Faber 58:05



I love that. Don, be kind to yourself. Be kind to yourself. And if I think back of our conversation, that's one of the things that will stay with me, Don and and I'm hoping for the listeners, this sense of kindness as a deep strength that we can fall back on, that we can cultivate, like the genie we rub it. And so we got we start to trust kindness more right. In the past, we may have trusted doing something really well, having people applaud us, or having great results, and that giving us the confidence. What would it be like if kindness was giving us the confidence all and and and being willing to the other thing you mentioned was staying in the process, staying in the process, in the in the present, and letting, letting and doing the work, not being disappointed, also, of when we are caught by our past beliefs, just saying, Oh, there you are. Okay. What am I afraid of? What's my belief? What could I do without it on? It's been a tremendous honor and joy to sit with you today, if you're listening to this podcast, I invite you to consider, what would it be like to become a little kinder to yourself today. Whatever that is, whatever it looks like, doesn't have to be a specific thing, no performance. Maybe it's looking out the window, maybe it's listening to your favorite music, maybe giving somebody a hug, whatever it is. What is that like and and how would that translate into different leadership? Last thing that you want to say on this podcast, Don Go ahead.

Don Johnson 59:57

Uh, hylka, it's been a I would just say, Gosh, uh. Um, you know, live, live your life from the inside out. Live with a sense of gratitude and joy for what you have. Maybe you don't have as much as you're somebody else, but we all know when we're grateful for what we have, it's it, it's, it's it makes us feel wonderful. And I just, and I just try to practice that every day, just looking at the fact I'm alive, I've got many things to be thankful for, and with that, I'm at peace.

Hylke Faber 1:00:29

Thank you, Don You have been listening to Don Johnson, a executive coach and writer of this beautiful book that just came out last year, and the title of that book is living a conscious life, how to find peace, wholeness and freedom in a chaotic world today, we talked about how that chaos often is on the inside we are if you're interested in This podcast, please don't hesitate to subscribe to it on Apple or Spotify or follow us on LinkedIn. It's been a pleasure being with you. With you. Today, you've been listening to Episode 55 of rooted and unwavering, where we help leaders connect more deeply to their innate potential. I'm your host, Hylke Fauci and see you next time

Don Johnson 1:01:22

you thank

Presenter 1:01:25

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 Hylke fauber on LinkedIn, or read hylke's award winning book, taming your crocodiles. Now, take 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. I.

