

S01-E04 - Rooted & Unwavering - Sep 9 - Hylke Faber & Erica Schaper

Diana Belluomini

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 Silca Faber transformational coach, facilitator, and award winning author of taming your crocodiles and his guests as they explore leadership greatness in today's episode of rooted and unwavering.

Hylke Faber

Well welcome everyone, welcome back to ruses and unwavering broadcasting live from Business Radio X, Phoenix. And this time broadcasting live from the Netherlands I'm engaged check, which is close to where I was born. And this is where we help leaders connect more deeply to their innate potential. I'm your host Toka Faber. And today is with me, a friend, esteemed guest and colleague on this path of connectedness, Erica's Harper, Erica, how are you today?

Erica Schaper

Thank you, I'm fine. I'm very excited to be in your show in your podcast and want to tell something about my my way in life. And I had a busy day in the Netherlands. It's the start of the evening already. But I'm very excited to be here. So Well, let's start I would say,

Hylke Faber

let's start well, as we get started, I start I want to let the listeners also know a little bit more about you. And so I'm going to share a little bit about you also about how we met and I still remember, first when somebody started talking to me about you, I was working at the time in the university that you lead, NHL Stenden. And they said, Oh yeah, you gotta meet Erica, you know, she's so strong, and so warm and so creative. And so why so you got to talk to her. And so then when I met you, I, I felt all those



things, I see you as a deeply humane, very wise, strategic, innovative, and daring leader and looking at your bio is that speaks from that you don't do that tried and true, you do something new. So to school, you, you lead NHL Stenden. University for Applied Sciences in the north of the Netherlands is a merger of schools in the past. It's a large school, you got lots of students. I read about 24,002 1000 academic staff, you are an international school with relationships in South Africa. In Thailand, and Indonesia. You have students from all over the world, 90 nationalities, it says, and you have this concept of design based education, and you've been serving in public service and public leadership for a long time. Before this, you were the managing director for the Dutch trade union, F n Fe, where you also helped guide a merger process of five organizations. You're also the director of the fronthaul Larn, Stein, university and interim manager for several other places. And throughout it all, I send your innovative and daring Spirit just lighting the path as a lighthouse, which for a Dutch person it is like me is a very strong metaphor. So that's a little bit about you. I'm so glad you're here today. So let's dive into this conversation, Erica, about connectedness, because that's what these podcasts about. Right? The podcasts are about helping people to connect more deeply to what is true to their innate potential. And in each podcast, we hear from different leaders about their stories, and learn from them. So tell me a little bit. Tell us a little bit about your journey and what you've been learning about being connected, staying connected, maybe getting disconnected over your leadership journey. Can you say a bit about

Erica Schaper

Yeah, yeah. Well, it's it's interesting, what it is had been connected and where I what I think about was that there was one moment where I can go back to where I learned, what for me is important in being connected. And that was when I met a colleague who had a theory about energy in organizations. And he made it very physical with some plates on the ground where you I don't know exactly what the theory was, but you can really feel how it is to be in parts of the organization. One of the blades was structure and cores and meaning. And I thought, well, this is this is what what, what I liked what I liked working on. And I was standing on this plate and actually nothing was happening, but as an other plate. And that means being part of a greater wall be a bit boo to like. And I didn't know I didn't have any image with that, but when I stand on that plate it I felt like like a rocket like I was like, I fly into the air. So that moment is for me very important in my connectedness, because I always know that in which situation I am, I have to feel, what is the importance for the greater whole? Why am I doing this? What brings it to society? What brings it to people? And when I go back to that moment, I always can. Yeah. Till now find words for what it what it is what I'm doing and why I'm doing that.

Hylke Faber

So beautiful.



Erica Schaper

Moment, yeah,

Hylke Faber

yes, yes, it's so beautiful. As you say that I, I see you like looking in the distance, and I am imagining you standing on that plate, or you being in the middle of the meeting of or off a meeting and looking away and asking yourself, like, what is the bigger meaning here? What's the bigger purpose here that I am part of? And how do I lead from that? So tell us a little bit more about what is that bigger purpose? If you think about the arts of your life, that you are learning, or that you know, that you are part of and therefore want to be of service to?

Erica Schaper

Yeah, yeah. Well, I think it has to do something with my values. And my values are based on that on the Christian I not from the beginning. Yeah, well, from the family I'm from but then there was a time that I didn't know what to do with that. And after when I was about 40 I reconnected with those values. So, I think the connection with Wu to with Desmond Tutu has to do with that, that you know, that your that your purpose on earth is to contribute to society to contribute and to stand for people who maybe have not the good starting position as we have to serve society to be capture also the creation of God, those things are important for me and by all the things I do, sometimes you have to make difficult decisions, but if it can links to that it is important for the greater whole for society for humanity for the nature done it, then I can I can I can follow that path. It's I think the last years you can make it very big and and sometimes it can be disappointing, because you can't be Debt Debt contribute. contribution can be not that big. We only short periods on Earth. So the last years I think I tried to make it maybe a bit smaller. So you can also be a small contributions. But in everything I do, I want to be close to that, to that, that that greater whole to, to have impact. That's That's what what drives me every day, I think.

Hylke Faber

I love that. So that that sense of deep connectedness to the greater whole. I hear you also say that this is not necessarily Lovey Dovey, it's also about difficult decisions and being guided to make difficult decisions by that greater hole. Maybe you can say a little bit more about that and also, maybe say a bit more about how Ubuntu plays into that and what that is for you. Yeah,



Erica Schaper

yeah. Well, in the work I'm doing, if I was a doctor or social worker, it will be very easy to follow that path. But I came into responsible positions in organizations. And sometimes organizations are in bad weather and have to focus on to make a new strategy or something like that. So then I find it as a responsibility for me to make people enthusiasts stick about this new course too. Try to bring new energy in an organization, try to empower people on that. But sometimes it's necessary to work with less people or when there is a financial problem or quality problem, sometimes the fit between the organization and people isn't ideal anymore. So, being a leader being, I always say that that, you know, in the accounting to know what is a true leader, if you sit on a table with someone, you have to tell if he or she is losing a job, then it's not very difficult, but that's the moment where it keeps on being leading. It's not always difficult. But then, at that moment, that's the moment of truth if you can stay in connection with someone, but you have a very, you have very bad news for for him or so then it comes to being authentic, being honest being have courage to tell the true story and try not to lose the contact with with a person.

Hylke Faber

Yes, yes, let's explore that a little bit more. Because, like, when you fire somebody, or we let somebody go, Oh, that is for both people hard. Definitely for the person that's being let go off in many cases. So you said a little bit about, I stay connected, or I practice connectedness buys by being authentic by staying truthful, and then also looking for not losing the connection with the other person. So how do you work on not losing the connection with the other person because the other person I can imagine? And I've experienced also myself can be reactive or emotional or despondent or they can be despair? How do you work with all that?

Erica Schaper

Yeah, I try to, I try to be honest, on that moment, telling the why. And also accepting that, maybe this person will be angry or emotional, or sometimes I'm at that moment, not the person who can help this person in a couple of days, but try to stay connected with him or her because after a couple of days, or a couple of weeks, he or she can continue to another another phase, and sometimes you can reconnect them as well. Because can also be a challenge, if someone is angry at you at that moment, I think it's important to let that be as well. Because if if then I want to be that everyone's friendly to me that that would help this person, but giving space for the process that this person is in and but also, sometimes after a while after the bitterness, and the angry period is over. Sometimes you can reconnect and the person sees that maybe the Fit isn't that good anymore? Or maybe there is another opportunity or well try to help someone but but not being not trying to be always the most friendly person because sometimes your your message is very hard and or give also room for the emotions of the person.



Hylke Faber

Yes, yes, I imagined you sort of standing in that plate in that on that plate in that place that you alluded to earlier about the bigger purpose that holds the place and also that creates a space for both you to stay in your truth and also to allow for the process with the other person to unfold. Where you don't follow a niceness recipe. Know, to be truthful, and not deceptively nice, for example, about it. That is also a great sign of respect for the other person because inherently you're speaking to the truth of the other person and connecting to their truth. What's really going on as opposed to being deceptive about it. So that is that is very beautiful. Thank you for sharing that. Stepping back for a moment. You mentioned boon to Christian valleys values, maybe a Freudian slip valleys. Something about say a bit more how you've learned in your life to stand in those values. and maybe also how you may have sometimes be challenged to stand in these values in what what have you learned maybe from the valleys also?

Erica Schaper

Yeah, a good question. Bucha was something what came on my path and which was so I recognize it's so much. And also in the context of South Africa, where values like truths, but also reconciliation, were very important. So that that's what I try to integrate in my in my life as well. I remember we had a very nice visit from the daughter of Desmond Tutu to NHL standard. And she gave some examples from how her father works on it every day that epic picking up a piece of paper was also part of Ubuntu, and feeling being humble, and showed some kind of hospitality and connectedness to people every day in every situation. And that inspires me a lot. That isn't always easy, because sometimes you being a good leader, sometimes make it difficult to have a good conversation, good relation with all people in some areas when you have to make difficult decisions. But when I know what I'm doing, when I know this, this is the right course when when you are trying to look myself right into the mirror every day. I can follow that path, even if sometimes you need some some courage as well. I also have experienced once in one of the working space I was that, that that I was in a situation where I wasn't in in my best power that had to do with organization that had to do with the board I was working for there was some discussion within that board. And then I I find it difficult to find my position. And then I felt that I withdraw from my responsibility, which wasn't I wasn't normally not normally doing that. Because responsibility is very important for me, I learned it from a young age and I, I find it also pleasant to feel that responsibility. That's part of being the greater whole. So when I felt that I was withdrawing, and there was a distance between the heart of the organization and the strategy and me, that was the moment I said, Well, I quit this organization, I can't contribute anymore, because well, now this not the best, best of me, I can't give the best of me anymore. And then yeah, then I've I will be very unhappy. And I think your organization, okay, I also if I will continue.



Hylke Faber

I understand that, that that sort of brings me to this question of you looking yourself in the mirror, because I can imagine, and I find myself those moments of truth, connecting to my truth, especially if it's a decision involving other people hard during these challenging moments. So how do you connect to your truth? And how do you know that it is true for you?

Erica Schaper

Yeah, that's a difficult question. You never know. What what I find extremely important is that I have the mindset for that. And if I'm very busy, I'm running from appointment to appointment, then you can easily lose yourself in in connection with yourself. So what I need is and I'm sitting on my study room, and I'm looking out I have the opportunity that my my spouse has a riding school because I see all around horses. Being in nature, being with horses, sometimes doing working with them. That helps me to feel connected with nature feeling. And that's also connected with myself. Because when I'm very busy, I'm working in my head all the time and to come back into my body come back to Earth. Literally, I find it very nice to be around here working feeding the horses, walking, riding. Also, walking is a very good way for me to stay connected. with myself, I also like long distance walking. And sometimes you get in a rhythm, some kind of rhythm, which can be, you know, some some kind of, it's very good for your mind for your rest, and sometimes you're walking or walking or walking, and then all your thoughts are gone. And then something new is coming, it's coming in. So that are ways for me to stay close to myself,

Hylke Faber

I love that it's opening the door to something deeper. So looking out the windows, seeing the horses, you know, maybe your spouse may be feeding the horses working with them. Taking a walk in nature. And I also heard you say about, then I sort of go beyond my thinking. And something deeper opens up. And that's I think that is so interesting, because in all the conversations in my own reflections about connectedness that is often where we end, we go towards that, that space. Father, Thomas Keating talks about this a lot this space beyond thinking, that opens up a deeper wisdom that is always available. We just don't listen to it all the time. And no, love your description of being busy. And then sort of Ah, come back into myself. Yeah, myself. What does it feel like? In we talked about being in your body? What does it feel like when you are connected to your true self? And what does it feel like when you're not?

Erica Schaper



Well, when I'm not, then my spouse sometimes said, can you turn off the turbo? So that said, and I'm too busy to, maybe I think people recognize that too busy, very quick thinking. And I have imagined that I'm very productive. But I'm not sometimes you need that kind of energy and doing things. But that, then I'm not connected to what is really important. And what I am, I feel far more relaxed. Yeah, I can have deeper thoughts. I can also have it when I am really into a good book, for example, when when you are in the story, you it's like time is is passing by without without knowing. And that also with walking when you were in some kind of meditation, and in that state, New Ideas come up, or, well, sometimes answers. And for me, I said, I'm a Christian. And sometimes in a church, I can have that, that that same kind of energy, what I like that it's also some kind of meditation with some songs or, and then I need to, to, yeah, to be close to myself to know what is really important. I had some some moments, I can remember that I was preparing a speech. And I was in church. And when I was thinking about that, and not not in a very direct way, but it's it comes to my mind. And then I thought, well, this is completely not a good way to have this speech, I go back to something far more and what's for more deeper and closer to myself. And that moments can happen in church in nature sitting on a horse back walking. That's a no this is no good. I have to come back to myself. Yeah.

Hylke Faber

I love that. I love that you have expanded at least how I'm seeing it, I'm hearing it the idea of church. Practice space is sometimes in a building with the liturgy and songs and prayers and, you know, text and all these things. And sometimes it's feeding the horses while saying Hey, turn off the turbo. Yeah. Or are just taking our reading a good book that that is that's very beautiful. Can you say a bit more about how that connectedness in you has matured over time? Oh, we have listeners from different stages of life, you know, and I can imagine that connecting for you in your 20s might look a little different might have looked a little different from the way it's looking today.

Erica Schaper

Yeah, I think that that's that's true. That's getting older. I think what you said reminded me of I once did a course. I do courses quite a lot because I think that's also a way to to develop yourself. I did a course with a mouthful. gets the freeze. That's a Dutch guru on management and use psychiatry as well. So those those courses are very deeply and it wasn't at INSEAD a very international group of leaders all over the world. And he actually said two things as a leader you leadership is teamwork. And you have to know yourself as a leader. So there and also with other way other courses, I have the feeling that I know myself bit by bit more and knowing what what, what is my background, where I come from, where does that bring in my way of looking to the world, scared confused. The other way is knowing myself better. But I think I get more questions about the world. Every year I get older, sometimes I think I understand it every day less instead of more, when I think I know myself better knowing also, in my work, what kind of person I need, surrounded me being effectiveness or being effective. So that has a development throughout the years. So when I firstly thought I have strategic discussion, that's where



I'm from, I now know that there is only that that is not a goal, but there is a meaning. And what I really looking for is to contribute to have impact in all kinds of ways. I also know that I'm coming from a very harmonious family, very nice background, very nice views. So but that is there is a pattern where I didn't learn, very good to have a coral. So those kinds of things I, well, I found out, worked on it. I'd also once did a course in executive coaching, I never will be an executive coach, but it learns to be all kinds of methods to get to know myself better. And that's what I try to do all my life to, well find other parts of of myself.

Hylke Faber

I love that that sense of finding other parts of yourself as you're letting more complexity in. And that pointer of leadership is teamwork. And it is knowing yourself. And I'm reminded of what you said in the beginning of our conversation, which I heard you say before, as I as I'm getting older, I might adjust my purpose a little bit that I'm I'm thinking about my purpose a little differently, maybe even bigger scale, maybe even smaller scale, also knowing the brevity of the time that we're in. So let's explore that, that connection a little bit more about that. After the break, I suggest we take a short break and hear a little bit more after the break about how you've been getting more into connecting to yourself and putting it to service in different ways. Also, with more awareness of the brevity, that of the life that we're in, here's your wit. So thank you so much so far, Erica, and let's take a short break. Now.

Thank you. 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

All right, so this question of connectedness. So if you're just dialing in, are thinking about this podcast, we've been talking to Erica Harper, who's the chairman of NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences in the north of the Netherlands, from which we're also hosting this podcast today. And we've been talking about how connectedness is something that has matured over time. It is something that for Eric is about connecting to deeper meaning really taking your stand to sign into something it's about also realizing that our deeper truth sometimes has his make unpopular decisions and give space for others to be in that we've had a conversation about how being connected to ourselves is core to leadership. And the question that is on the table now is how how is your sense of service and purpose maybe that



you connect to been evolving as you mature and maybe get more face to face with the brevity of this life that we're in?

Erica Schaper

Yes, I think that when I, when I was younger, even as a kid, I had an idea that if it would be possible to bring peace to the world, I will do it immediately. But seeing how the world develops, especially at this moment, the complexity is growing, or maybe I see it more. We're far from peace in the world. And that's the you can do two things, you can get very depressed that maybe the world is not getting better every day, but maybe worse, every day. But you can also make your own contribution a bit smaller and mid a bit closer, I think, also, the COVID period helped me with that to, to bring you back to the essence of life, your your, your spouse, your family, the place you're living the community you're in. And maybe you cannot save the whole world, but maybe you can contribute to a few people, or maybe you can make it a bit smaller. So the impact isn't, because some problems can't be solved. I think that is one of the my insights from the last last year I did a course where I made a trip to to the Middle East with a group of Dutch leaders to do all that and Lebanon and Israel. Well, if there is any place in the world where you can think Well, I have no idea how can how this can be solved. For the coming generations. It is Israel. So that struck me really. So sometimes maybe I was the type of leader who thought, well, if I put all my equity in it, I will solve it. And then more complex, the problem is, the better I my guy can put my energy in it. Yeah, some problems can't be solved, not by me. And it made me a bit more humble. I think.

Hylke Faber

That sense of humility, and I relate to that as powerlessness, while taking responsibility for your part is what I'm hearing. So how do you write that balance? Because I think about that as well, I can find peace, letting go right in saying that this is not for me to solve. At the same time. I also don't want to be like an ostrich putting my hand and bite my head in the sand, you know? So how do you work with that? How do you stay connected to what's really true for you and not make it too small or too big?

Erica Schaper

Yes, I'd that I try to be close to myself, if I'm in the right position in work, if I can contribute to an organization where students are prepared for for the world I really like it to be working with, with young people and prepare them for for the world of today. With all the people working for NHL standard, so So what that gives me a lot of a lot of fun to do that, but also satisfaction. And I think that there will if I'm good at that there I can contribute. So if organizations I can help develop organizations where it's good studying, but also good working, I can play that role. That's, that's, yeah, that's an everyday balance.



When I'm still on my on the good spot, I think there and in my in my in my surrounding year in my family and the people we live with, we try to look how we can contribute. For example here on the on the writing school. We have a long time ago it was when whenever you have your 50th birthday, and he's now almost 60 And so we invited 50 children who want to also ride on ponies but haven't can afford it and whatever the group of children which comes here every week, and a couple of months before there were also a lot of Ukraine children. So we try to give them pleasure have the pleasure of writing. That's a very small initiative, but Well, we think okay, if we can do that, maybe that's our purpose. To do that. Make It's smaller, giving children a way, sometimes also, adults here for four camps. Well see what we can do within the possibilities we have.

Hylke Faber

That's great. And so I'm wondering, I'm just wondering back of these, these I'm seeing you like make contributions to things that are within your scope of work, for example, with NHL standards, so beautiful. And then doing it at your spouse's horse riding farm, inviting children in. And we talked a little bit you start alluding to the societal issues. So how do you navigate that? And do you feel peace in your heart? When you watch the news? Or what happens with you? Or do you not watch the news?

Erica Schaper

Yeah, yes, yes, I do. Watch the news. I couldn't imagine that, that I won't do that. Because I feel responsible. For my, my, my part in the world and things like what's happening now in Ukraine, all the populist parties who are getting bigger and bigger, some discussions where solidarity is far too far ahead. I find that very find a difficult and but also things like climate change, am I doing enough? Do we give the earth to our children and grandchildren in a proper way? Well, I think the answer is no. And I'm not sure if I if I've done enough, of course, I think we all have debts. But but when I, when I was a child, I was very worried about pollution with oil. I could I couldn't sleep for that. So that's part of my genes, I think. But now I think I can, nobody will get better. If I'm worried I bet I can do well try to do what I can do. I can't solve the problem of all the refugees seeking for looking for a better place. But maybe I can give a future for some people here my surrounding. And so that's what I tried them. Yes. So

Hylke Faber

you go ahead, go ahead, keep going.

Erica Schaper



So make it make it smaller. See what my contribution is? Not knowing if that's That's enough, if I if I can do more, but I don't I also don't want to be depressed by the situation because no one and then I also don't help anyone with that as well.

Hylke Faber

Yes, yes. So I hear you, being purposeful also about your inner state. And saying, No, my interstate, I cannot give into worries. At the hilason A Dutch non survival of I think it was the Holocaust wrote. Yes, yes. Like wrote like worries are like fleas. I gotta get rid of them. Because that allows me to stay. And I'm parents paraphrasing right now, this last bit still helped me to stay in the presence of God of truth of strength of what is here. And what I hear you say I hear that. You talk about almost casually, like I hear it very much like this is like second nature for you. At this point. It's like no, I am not going to let myself get down by worries, or other nonproductive thought forms. Because I need to be of service. And yeah, yeah, can from that place.

Erica Schaper

Yeah. It is exactly the way I look at it. Try to contribute where I can not make it too big. And also, that that's what I tried to do enjoy every day. See the beautiful creation of nature. That's also inspiring for me as well. Because there are a lot of people who, but also be aware of the privileged life I have, are very aware of that. And I'm very grateful for that as well.

Hylke Faber

Yes. And I see you putting it to service relentless, very, very clearly, very clearly. I want to go back to the time that we I don't think you would have ever talked about which is your time when you were working in the Dutch trade union fn Fe and I I remember as a child, which is when I was living in the Netherlands, looking at the F and FE and seeing them being involved in all kinds of conflicts, almost like that was their business. Now, I may have completely misunderstood. So can you say a little bit about how you worked with staying connected and being connected in that organization, in that organization

Erica Schaper

is a very interesting organization, because it has every day to do with power, bargaining power, balancing power. And I think the power of the working people is very important. And balancing also in capitalism on the scale of the Netherlands, for example, politically, it's very important that that the



working people Are they someone who's stand behind them, the organization itself, and working organization of the FFP is a very complex organization. Big conservative, sometimes with people, they are looking for people who are good in bargaining, but they do that internally as well. So every day you have to do with power with I never had in my life, so much petitions from all kinds of subjects that people have organized themselves setting signs for things and, and that makes it difficult. It was very, if I find it one of the most complex organizations to work for, because you can nothing do on your position, but all looking for, can I move, make little steps, all my political abilities are stretched to the max in this organization. And that's makes it interesting as well. But it cuts costs. They also love entity. So I did work there very long, but I learned a lot of it after four years, I thought well, there is no good for different for the next one. But it's a very interesting organization.

Hylke Faber

Uh huh. So when you look back at that, because we can see every chapter in life as a tremendous teacher, whatever is written in that chapter, whether we like it or like it. If we thinking about connectedness and staying true to yourself, and you're talking about power, maybe staying connected to your true power or working with power around you. What did you learn from that period that really has served you well, now that you are the chairman of this large University in the Netherlands?

Erica Schaper

Yeah, yeah. Well, the interesting part of the movie was that you're working very close to all the political decisions makes, because every is every table, every word there to do with with economic problems or with so that I find it very good. And within the values for standing for people aren't able to stand for themselves. It was close to my values, the depth part was close to my values. The other side is that the working of the organization, which had so much to do with power, I find that sometimes hard that it wasn't about the best idea, but it was about can you get a majority or not. And that that made that was that wasn't that close to my heart? That was the difficult part of it. But I also can have some kind of fulfillment, if you see that something is very difficult, and you can make small steps and after a while you look back and you see well, I still have have realized slight changes. Yes, yeah. So that was a it was a it was really a learning period for me.

Hylke Faber

Yes. So I'm hearing something about the wisdom of small steps, which is also a very powerful tool to stay connected to our true self because our thinking mind, you could say the ego is always ahead of the band, maybe your spouse will call that turbo like your head of it anymore, right? With the wisdom of small steps, I think there's even a method called Kaizen that talks about that where, like, we are staying



like it's a way to stay in the moment. And it's also a way to practice humility, just like we've been talking about. Yes, the side society's issues that we're facing at the moment. The wisdom of small steps and having faith in those. And I also hear you talk about the, the, the energy that you connected with, with this organization that takes a stand for people that don't have a stand by themselves are not much of it. Yeah, that's, that's that sense. And I see it a little bit as a as a as a as a as a red thread through your life because you're now taking a stand for students and young people in society. Now they're just starting. So stand for them and making sure they get the best treatment even though that may not be in the best financial interest short term of the society that takes a fixed sum standing for as well. So can you say a bit more about your you're staying connected to yourself and what you talked about enjoying, like, tell me more about leading an organization that is serving students, young people? What's that like for you? What does that bring out in you?

Erica Schaper

Yeah, I really can enjoy when I go to the university to the buildings when I entered the campus. And I can feel the energy of all those young people doing all kinds of things sitting, laying down, having Funny, funny parties. And so I really love that energy. And what I really like if we can bring them a broader perspective, then they come in with like, internationalization is a very important part of the strategy of NHL standard, giving them tools to, to cope with diversity in all forms, they will meet in their life. Some of them will have an international career. So they will meet an awful lot of internationals, but others will meet other cultures, other ways of living. And if we can contribute, that they're not afraid of that what I see with a lot of populist parties, but they can embrace that they can see the failure of that they can practice working together with all types of students from all social classes go to a background. Well, I really can enjoy that and seeing them growing and also see the joy our employees have in working with students. That gives me a lot of fulfillment.

Hylke Faber

Yes, yes. I, I can't help but think about the harmony family that you grew up with. And about, you know, bringing people together. Yeah, that being one of the things that really makes you tick. And, and seeing that, like, I can just Well, I saw you and I can imagine you also now these these days, walking into the buildings and seeing the students do what they do. And you never know exactly quite what they're doing next. I'm sure it's like you. It's very creative.

Erica Schaper

Very. Yeah. And also, for me, that's also where we are also part of the ecosystem in the north of the Netherlands. So with students with our research with our the knowledge to contribute to the region that



has the same energy for me, sometimes with students participate in all kinds of programs, helping entrepreneurs to also to broaden their vision, that that kind of processes gives me a lot of a lot of joy.

Hylke Faber

Yes, I hear that I see or hear that. Eric, I always think of you as a person who is unconsciously excellent at so many things. Like being kind. That's what I think that's what I say, Okay. And you know, I live in the States. So I get to say these things in the Dutch society, I would say, You're not bad at those.

Erica Schaper

But I've lived in the north, they say that yeah,

Hylke Faber

right. So but you know, the US we say things like that. And I do believe that from my heart that you're unconsciously excellent meaning this comes second nature to you like being humane connecting people, staying connected to yourself, I witnessed you in, in meetings also, that weren't always the easiest ones. For some people, they are in a different stage of the journey, maybe see some students, you know, working, walking around, you know, may get overwhelmed with whatever it may be, you know, something that's happening in class, something that's happening in their world or in their country or in their family or a person that's working in an organization and they they may not see the they might they might be looking for that play that you found in that course. It's like, Yes, that's it right. What would you say to them to those people that might be a little lost or feeling lost in the wilderness of life? What would you say to them?

Erica Schaper

Yeah, I would say, give yourself time and space to Look for for your, what's really important for you and try to have the courage to do the journey inside, go look into yourself. And sometimes that's not easy, because I really know how privileged I was also in the way I was growing up, and some people have far more difficult lives, so that that may be far more difficult. But try to find where your drive is where your energy is, and stay close to that, and try to be encouraged to find your way and not let your letting down what the society wants from you or the surroundings, or sometimes family wants from you to try to find your own path in life. I think that it's important, there are all kinds of people who wants to help you with that. But the journey aside, you can only make yourself. And for me, for me most difficult is the type of



students or employees who seems to have not been motivated in some all kinds of energy, even resistance is energy. But if people say I don't care, that that's for me, the hardest way to deal with still I would say, try to find it can cause some time, give yourself time to find out what really drives you in life.

Hylke Faber

And I can imagine people then asking, Well, yes, I look inside. And they may discover that the life that I'm living actually does not match up with no values that I'm discovering inside. When I look beyond my, maybe fears that I have or to social programming from society, from organizations, from family, from community, whatever it might be, like, oh, this, like my heart says this way, but life is going that way. Like, what? What would you say to them? Like how do you work through that?

Erica Schaper

Yes, sometimes I see that sometimes with with employees who fear to, to take steps to change things in their lives thinking that they have to stick where they are, because what kind of reasons sometimes reasons like, don't you bought a house or whatever, it can be very frightening. Change can be very frightening. And what I would say and not knowing everyone's situation, of course, that at the end, if you follow your heart in what you're really good at what you really give energy that's, that will fulfill you more than when you're in a place where you think I don't know do not belong here. Because so much energy and life is short. And energy, the air the best you can give other people is your time and energy. So well be be seated to give the best of yourself, adequate moment don't spoil too much energy in that in that way. That's that's what I would say.

Hylke Faber

Yes, yes. This, what really lands with me from what you're saying? That That really hits me is this really conscious choice of how I'm choosing my time and attention in this world? Because I'm here for a very, very short time, you know, and I'm reminded of the story of Jesus in the New Testament where his parents asked him, Where have you been? And he responds, don't you know, I'm doing my father's work. And to me, that is such a beautiful parable almost off, stepping out of the societal conditioned consciousness and having the courage to find your own work first of all, and then do it and follow it even if that may be challenging, because you're, you're challenging some things inside of you and sometimes also outside of you. So yeah, thank you. Yes, and

Erica Schaper



that can be hard to do. I mean, sometimes you have to tell your your family or your surroundings that that maybe you choose another path. I live together with a with a with a woman and also gone through the path that I have to tell my family that I that I love, that I fell in love with it with a woman and I don't never forget the words my father he passed away two years ago he said then Well, I don't hope you you find it difficult to say this because then If he's unconditional love that he loves me anyway and my mother as well, that helps me a lot. And that's not not for everyone, of course, the reaction of their family. But sometimes you worried a bit more about taking a step then then it would I actually will happen. So we'll try to if you stay close to yourself that makes you authentic. And most of the time, people will accept that.

Hylke Faber

Yes, thank you for that. So we're getting towards unbelievably are closing minutes already this conversation. Erica, what would be your closing reflections that you would like to share with listeners who are tuning in likely to learn more about how do I connect myself, especially in a world that feels quite disconnected and also triggers my being disconnected that time? So would you like to say to them as as a close?

Erica Schaper

Well, maybe what helped me but I can give more than then then what my experience was, is, maybe if you make it a bit smaller, to see what you can do, and what is important for you. That makes it a bit more feasible to see what's happening in the world. I think that's that, and try to find out where your passion is where your heart lies, and contribute. And where I also thought that that piece in the world was my mission, that was maybe a bit too big. So try to make a mission in life, that that's also doable. And that maybe that's, that will help you.

Hylke Faber

Thank you for that. I, I hear what you're saying the humble courage. Yeah, of the of the warrior in with the of the heart in this in this world. So thank you so much, Erica, it was truly a pleasure to speak with you as, as always, whether we are on the screen, or in a restaurant, or in a conference room somewhere. It's always wonderful. So one of the things that really hit me today, as as I was speaking with you was the sense of humility and deep honesty with yourself. Your willingness to take a stand and find the sense of energy comes from being connected to this bigger purpose, and there's bigger meaning. And you then being in that place of service, in your career in the places that you are leading. The discipline that I hear in your unconscious excellence is like I'm not going to give my energy away to worries or things that are not helpful right now in the humidity, you have to carve out your peace, in this



dance and mystery of life that we're in and, and then also your suggestion for those of us who are looking to not give up and and to make the space and to not get distracted. So thank you so much, Erica, for being with us today. And thank you all for listening to this podcast, and the late radio show of rooted and unwavering. I Unlike you, I invite you to subscribe to this podcast through the unwavering if you like. Or also join us for our monthly growth Leaders Network community conversations that we you can find on LinkedIn. We'll be here next again. In a few weeks, I'll be speaking with my colleague, Rick Gage, from growth Leaders Network, where actually we'll take a step back and review some of the core lessons that we learned in these four first four, four webcasts. And the ongoing question that we will be sitting with that I'll be sitting with is how do I stay connected with myself so I can be of highest service. So thank you all for listening. That's it for today. Thank you again, Erica, for your presence,

Erica Schaper

for your great pleasure. Thank you so much.

Hylke Faber

Wonderful and for also having the horses and your spouse be part of the experience. That was just wonderful. Thank you so much. Thanks for listening. I hope you found some helpful nuggets here today that helps you connect more deeply into who you truly are and put that to work in this precious life that is so short. You've been listening to Ruth and wavering where we help leaders connect more deeply to their innate potential. I'm your host Helga Faber. Thank you.

Diana Belluomini

Thank you for joining us in today's episode of rooted and unwavering leadership conversations about courageous candid openness presented by the leadership development company growth Leaders Network. To learn more, subscribe to this podcast, connect with growth Leaders Network and Hilco Faber on LinkedIn or read help us 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

