

S01 - E56 - Rooted & Unwavering - Hylke Faber & Patricia Obermaier

Presenter 00:08

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 fauver 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 episode 56 where we help leaders connect more deeply to their innate potential. I'm your host, hylka Fauci and I'm so delighted and honored to be here with Patty. Obermeier, Patty, how are you today? I'm good. Hylka, thanks for having me. It's amazing to sit with you today. Before we learn more about Patty, I'm going to share a little bit about this podcast, as we do as the at the beginning of all of these podcasts, and then we'll learn about more about about petty so rooted and wavering idol says it it's about staying rooted and connected to what's most important. And I know if you're anything like me, you got lots of kinds of things in your head going around all the time that pull in different directions, and especially when we are leaders in high profile organizations, there's so much on our plate all the time, and so how do we stay focused? And like we say later, yes, when I look at myself back at this time, I admire or I'm at least have some peace in my heart and some pride in my actions when I think back of that moment. So how do we do that? And to me, that is not a recipe, that is an ongoing practice, and one where we need all the encouragement that we can get. And so consider this podcast to be an encouragement podcast, and think about how we can learn from the leaders that we hear from, like Patty today. So Patty is a person that has been a tremendous inspiration for me. I've worked with her in the past in working on culture and leadership development at Microsoft, and she was still a leader there. And one of the things that I will say about patty is that she is a person who is tremendously focused and human and encouraging under pressure, like human, encouraging, kind and focused, are things that come to mind when I think about Patty. Patty Obermeyer petty comes with us with so much experience. Currently, she is on many boards and an advisor also to start up so many boards of established organization and advisor to startups. Before that, she comes with a very illustrious career. She let the emerging growth worldwide business for Microsoft's \$12 billion health and life sciences business. She also helped to increase the US, Microsoft US health Life Sciences business unit from three to five, three to \$6 billion in revenue while addressing critical industry needs during the COVID 19 pandemic. She's known for developing high performing, diverse organizations that deliver exceptional business results. Before she joined Microsoft in 2019 he founded and was the CEO of resili. I didn't say that right. I think I got it right. A strategic advisory and information management



services firm where she also was a board chair and and she will tell us more about that. And then she's also held previous roles at ecua and Unisys with PNL and delivery responsibilities for analytics and technology solutions to healthcare, payers, providers and government agencies, and she's passionate about technology, using technology to solve human challenges and cultivating leadership skills in future generations. She is the executive mentor and board member of the global good fund and volunteers for the Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts and girls excelling in math and science. We'll hear about that more, because also her kids are into this. So she lives with her family in Oakton, Virginia, and they're committed to community service, where her three children are being. Featured speakers at the Youth bike summits and spotlighted on Nicolas worldwide day of play NPR and salute America. And I'm sure other things that are not yet known to me, besides that, Patty is a person that is very involved in the community and has a deep passion to bring out the best in every person that she works with, which I've also experienced. So Patty, welcome. It's wonderful to be with you today. The first question I have for you is tell us more about what you have learned about connectedness in your life and leadership that was about,

Patricia Obermaier 05:42

that's a open ended question, Hylke, but I think it's going to be a fun one to be able to to answer. You know, I think there's a couple things it might be helpful for the listeners to understand a little bit about what is my life philosophy and how I keeps me sort of rooted. And then I think it'll transcend into sort of my leadership learnings. I have a personal philosophy of loving fearlessly, living boldly and making positive impact, and I'll just dissect that a little bit for me, loving fiercely is just cherishing and nourishing the relationships in my life, whether that be personal work, the relationships I had to able to build with you, Nico, and all the work we did around culture, to me, that's super important. And so I try to make sure I take time out of my busy life to make sure those relationships are being nourished. And of course, I'm cherishing them. Living boldly is having the courage to seize opportunities that are in front, in front of me, but also it's in some cases, and you're in a tough meeting, or you have a dissenting view, it's having the courage to to stand up and speak and say, This is why I think we should consider it not always easy to do, obviously, in certain situations, and then the Last one making a positive impact. You know, I think when I was younger, that positive impact had to be grandiose or huge, and I'm much more like, Can I make a little bit of a positive impact? And I, you know, I may not see the smiles that come from it, but, for example, I bake cookies to go into homeless meals. I love to bake, and I hear if someone gets a really good chocolate chip cookie, I'm hoping it puts a smile on their face, and they feel like somebody's thinking about them, just those little things that that mean a lot. And so when I think back over my leadership, and I've been blessed and honored to lead some just amazing, teams through good times, and by the way, in some challenging and tough times. For me, it's it's always been, and I continue to mentor folks on you have to lead from the seat that you're in and make sure that you are open and honest with with who you are, so you don't be the top of an organization to lead, you don't need to be a manager. Everybody has the opportunity every day to provide their their thoughts and their leadership skills, and it's okay to to know and share with teams who you are and what's important, because people need to see their leader. The other key thing is I often share with younger generations, and it took me a while to realize that leaders are good when they ask the best questions, not when they



have the answers. Right? We're raised fast. You gotta have an answer, gotta have an answer, gotta have an answer. And it's like, then you start to realize I've got an amazing team, or I work with colleagues that are amazing, maybe I can just ask the right question, and then you see the awesome leaders, whether CEOs, whether they're running countries, whether they're running nonprofits, what are the case may be, those that ask the right questions and are open to really hearing what the answers are going to be so

Hylke Faber 09:01

much in what you're saying. Betty, I want to come back to those leadership principles, and I would love to hear more more from you about, how did you get to those? How did you get to those? Because that's there's so much in that, like, like, that. Love fierce, fiercely, I think you said

Patricia Obermaier 09:24

lovely, and live boldly and make a positive impact. And, um, it took me some while. It took me some time to get sort of even some self reflection. But I think, and there's a lot of folks out there like that, will ask people, do you have a philosophy, what drives your life and you I don't think you can create it tomorrow, like somebody can't listen to a podcast and go say, I'm going to sit down with a blank sheet of paper and come up with specific words real quick and fast. You actually have to go back and reflect and think through all the things that you've done and what has been super you. Helpful for you, where you've learned, but also spend some time analyzing your behaviors like you know. And for a moment, there I was like, Why do I spend a lot of time reaching out to so on, so on? Why do I check in and say, How are the kids? And I realized, because I cherish those relationships, right? Very, very much at Microsoft. There were times I came in from the outside, right? So a lot of folks at Microsoft, not everyone. Of course, some folks have been there 2030, years. So my views, in some cases, were an outsider, a very contrarian, and when I didn't step up, or I didn't share my perspective, it didn't feel right, like you just, you know, that's that chain that, that biological reaction to you're not living something. Or people say, like your mind and brain are different. The brain is the biology the minds. What

Hylke Faber 10:51

you're thinking doesn't quite jive, yeah, but you feel, you feel

Patricia Obermaier 10:55

weird and and, and then I realized that there have been a lot several situations we all face them that you're like, I just didn't show up the best, or that didn't feel right. And so knowing me and be able to put it into those two simple words, like, live boldly, it's gotten me there are times I'll sit there and go, Patty, what are you doing? Are you living boldly? Are you just sitting back? And if you were to live boldly. Would it be? Would it have a positive impact on others? Would it help the organization to grow? Would it be? Do we think other people are thinking the same thing, but nobody wants to say it, those kinds of

Hylke Faber 11:32

situations? Yeah.



Patricia Obermaier 11:37

And then again, the positive impact I just spend some times, I think, as a kid, I've always loved to give back and help others, and it's just one of those common threads throughout, throughout my life, and I just spent a lot of time going, what is it? And as I mentioned earlier, it's and you start to think it was this big, huge impact. It's not, you know, just smiling at somebody can have a positive ripple effect when you're in the grocery store, something that you have no idea, because you don't know what people are going through in their lives. And so that's kind of how I distilled it down. I did a little bit of self reflection and just some and of course, you know, I tested it with some friends and people that really knew me well, like folks that have been coaches and mentors, and I was like, Is this true? Like, do you see me doing this? Yes, if I say that and I'm actually not executing in that way, or I don't have those behaviors, then I'm kind of kidding myself to a certain extent. People like, No, I can, I can see that Patty and you mentioned he'll give me into my introduction. You see me as a kind, human person, even in these tough, tough times. Yes, I try hard. I work hard to do that.

Hylke Faber 12:48

Yes, yes, yes. I see that I love the combination of love fiercely and lead boldly. I think that's a that's fantastic. I love that. I want to know more. What was it like for you, because you sat in these chairs like I in the introduction. I mentioned, mentioned those big numbers, like 1215, many billions of dollars, many people, lots of pressure to deliver and deliver and deliver like, how did you in that situation, come back, keep coming back to that. How did you do it? How'd you do it, and what, what did you find easier? What made it easier? And when did you sometimes maybe feel like, I'm not able to do this, and then come back to it, how, what was your process in that? Because my imagine, imagining I was, I was in meetings with you, and I saw you, and I was like, Okay, how does she do it? How does she do it? So tell us about that.

Patricia Obermaier 13:54

Yeah, it was a, it's a good, good question. And I think it's a tough one. So I'm going to just try to distill it down a little bit I learned early in my career, and I can tell that story, it's of interest to folks, where I learned pretty quickly how to separate the problem from the people, because the problem could be huge expectations on growth. The problem could be an underperforming business unit, maybe a variety of different problems. And I learned that if I could separate the people from the problem, and in fact, take the emotion out of the problem, then I but then we could start to distill it down to the root causes, or the first order effect. If we make a decision on what's going to happen on the second order, whatever the case may be, I can so I kind of try to put the problem in one side and then the people in another, so I'm not losing the human aspects of the people or the team. Now with that, with that. The problem could be immense growth expectations. I just think during COVID, right? I ran the health and life sciences team, we had these huge growth opportunity, growth numbers and targets, and the industry was just trying to deal with keeping people alive. So you had to, we had to sort of distill what the problem was, and then say to folks, okay, here are the people. I gotta take care of my people first. And sometimes it's a it's a confidence issue, like, Can we do this when you have high expectations? So my job as the



group, as the leader, has always been, we, can we have it in us? We can do that. And so sometimes it's not, hey, Patty, what do we have to do to get there? Sometimes I'm like, well, what's the next reasonable action? Now? What's the next reasonable action? Now? What's the next reasonable action? So I guess it's really dissecting the problem, coming up with an action plan, but being able to separate the people from the problem is, is absolutely critical.

Hylke Faber 16:05

I'm really struck by what's the next reasonable action? Because you say so like to me unconscious, skilled, well, I've got to be confident, and I've got to instill confidence to lead people to the next reasonable action, right? What happens when you and I imagine you have these these, these moments where your own confidence goes like, Okay, how we're going to do this? And I'm asking that question, because, you know, the more visibility we get as leaders, the more people look to us. And you know, we're humans, we're humans. So we're not always confident, at least most people that I know, maybe you're always confident. So tell us about how we maybe give us, give us an experience. Maybe give us an example of where you felt like, oh, not quite sure, Patty, how I'm going to do this, but we're going to do it, and we get to the next rest, next reasonable action. Tell us about that.

Patricia Obermaier 17:16

Yeah. You know, I think we all have days that we're just confidence or something's not quite on par with where it should be, whatever the case may be. So I gave myself and my teams years ago, the grace to say I can't do this today, like today is just not the day. So I knew I had enough self realization to be like, it's just not going to work today, rather than trying to navigate it through. The other key thing is I, I enjoy being outside, and especially running, for me is how is my meditation, is my relaxation, and I find my best thoughts come, come then right and, and I sort of say to myself, Okay, if I can run and I can increase the speed, and I can do this, okay, if I can do this physically. I can do this at work and so, but I know had to be self aware enough to know, okay, we gotta hit that. We gotta hit the pavement tomorrow. And that's just mentally and physically how I how I keep it together. And then I also just have the grace to say, Today is not the day, and then it's harder to do. But sometimes you got to step back and say, All right, let me go back in my life, announce if I face similar situations, maybe not the same, but similar. And do we learn anything? And are we repeating the same silly things we did in the past? No, okay, then we can go we can go forward. And then, of course, so is your family and your family and your mom and your dad and everybody that'll tell you you're great. So those goals are helpful for from but you know, you know, in all seriousness, I think it's really just I have to mentally, keep my mind going and physical and just know, like I don't have the answers today. I don't know at all in many cases, and I am a huge and we work together. Okay? So, you know, I'm a huge believer that diversity of thought will come up with the best answer. So sometimes I have to be real with myself and say, okay, Patty. You may not feel confident here, but you could put a team together and pull folks together that have amazing competence in a variety of different disciplines, and they will help work through it or come to that answer. And I that has just been proven so true over and over and over again for me, at least as a leader,



Hylke Faber 19:37

yeah, I see in what you're saying is like the patty running, keeping the energy going, keeping engaged and that, transmitting that into working with the team, showing up. I'm going to stay in it. I'm going to ask for help. I'm going to say, well, today is not the day. Okay, and we will come back to it. Don't get me wrong, we'll come back to it tomorrow. And the confidence that when we bring together people, when we ask for help, things will happen. Those things will start happening. Patty, I'm very curious about younger patty. No, you have a bachelor's in Biology from MIT, and then also you got an MBA, so a very diverse experience in terms of that. Can you tell us a little about how you grew up and how that has informed who you are today? Because what I see today is somebody who is so competent, so clear, so on. It's like, whenever I see patty on screen, she's there, right? So tell us about your experience as a little person, as little patty. That may have informed some of this.

Patricia Obermaier 20:55

I have, uh, two brothers and a sisters. My two brothers, I would say, would hassle me a lot when I was a kid. So I accept that, I accept challenges, I guess, if you will, in that perspective. But I also had parents who always believed you could do whatever you want. You just have to put the same you put your mind to it and and figure it out. And so I would tell you in high school, I love math and science. I didn't get English or, I mean, history, yes, I learned it. I did fine with it. But I remember distinctively sitting in some high school English classes and the teachers trying to go deep into the meaning and these passages, and d h Lawrence was the book, for example, I still remember I had to do a burning bread, and I was like, Oh, the bread's burnt. They left it in the oven too long, and the teacher's like, not always symbolizing the end of the relationship. And I'm going, oh, boy, totally different planet. So hence, that's why I ended up going into math and science. And the interesting thing because when I was in college. It was probably the end of my sophomore year, the beginning of my my junior year, I was doing a lot of lab work, a lot of experiments, in vitro, and then in vivo with animals and so forth, and and I realized I like people better, like I just didn't enjoy the environment. But you're you're stuck in here, you're 2021, years old. You're like, well, do I switch my major, or do I continue doing what I do and just sort of expand out the courses? And I did that. I said, I've got, only got a certain number of courses. Let's finish the biology degree. And then I started to take some business classes, because I was curious on on the business side of it, and that's how I decide. And so I did that. And then I worked, and then I went back. And when I look at both areas of my education, being being trained as a scientist, you consider so many different factors. You have hypotheses, even if you spend so much time doing experiments around those hypotheses, and they're they're wrong or didn't, but the hypothesis doesn't pan out to be the truth, but something else does. They don't look at it as a failure, which is fascinating on the business side, because the business side tends to jump to, that's a that's a failure, as opposed to, that's a fast learning, or that's, it's how fast we pivot from it. So I had sort of two different different trainings. Now I have to tell you now, given where we are, and I know this isn't a technology discussion, but given where we are with AI and understanding how the human body works and the compute power, I have been spending the last six to nine months going deep back into cellular biology, the body in space. And my family was like, why? Mom? And I was like, well, because, you know, I was attracted to



that at one point in my career, and I'm really curious, so it's fun to go back. So I was like, curious kid, as you can as you can tell I'm still a curious kid. I'd like to say, I

Hylke Faber 23:55

love that I and what you said about how in science, when the hypothesis doesn't pan out, it's a tremendous learning. That's why we have the hypothesis, because we are we're not not to prove it right. We're here to figure out if it's true, and then so we can learn from it. And so then we pivot that into business, where we can fall into the trap of taking a a not expected outcome as a failure, and then emotion, and then we get lost. Or, as you say, as a scientist, you pivot, you bring these different perspectives to it. I am curious. We are living an interesting time Patty, and I'll just call it that, what are you doing in this time to live your principles? Love, fearlessly, fiercely, live boldly. And the third one, remember positive impact and make positive impact. So what? What do you do in this time? What do you do in this time? Yeah, you

Patricia Obermaier 24:59

know, I. It's it is challenging times for folks in a lot of different areas. And I'll kind of put personal life, and then I'll put it sort of in the business world, because there's two, two sides of what I spend my day on, um, I have ramped up my volunteerism on the positive side of it, because I felt that that was super important. And then, and I've tended to revolve more so around the issue of food insecurity. So I talked about baking cookies, but I also put meals together. We hand out meals and so forth, because if you're hungry, you can't really need a fruitful life. So I try to spend a lot of time on food insecurity, but that makes me feel good on the personal side of it, and then on on the business side of it, you know, I working with a lot, whether I'm sitting on a board or I'm advising companies. I'm working with a lot of leaders where there is no playbook hylka, especially those organizations that do government contracting where there was very the playbooks were out there for many, many years. There were certain procurement rules. There were lots of rules, and that sort of changed now. So I've seen several leaders sort of struggle with, where do I go? I don't have a playbook, and then it really comes down to, what do you think is right? What do you know? And part of it is, too, is folks will say, we can't do this, we can't do that. And I spend my time with folks going, Hey, if you can't, why? What assumption Are you making? Because those assumptions are helping you to get to a conclusion that in today's world, are is upside down. It's just upside down for for a variety of different reasons. And so that's, that's what I've been doing there. And just, you know, when you get together with with friends, I've really had to sort of say to myself, Is there room in this relationship for differing political views, whatever those may be, on different sides and and if the answer is yes, then I'm like, okay, and stay open, stay curious, stay engaged. If the answer is no, which it really hasn't been, because these tend to be long term relationships, then it's then it's a different situation. And so that's, that's kind of how I've been keeping, keeping myself focused, if you will.

Hylke Faber 27:22

I'm I, I appreciate the the self care through generosity, and then also transmitting some pettiness to the people that you coach, and saying, Oh, well, you know what? Let's, let's actually stay focused on what's



actually going on here. Let's test our assumptions. Let's stay focused on, well, what can you do and how might things have changed? And therefore, I think back of, I'm filling in the blanks here, but what's the next workable solution? What's the next thing that we can do, give what you said earlier in the interview. So we're almost at the break patty. I'm curious, what would you say is in for if you look back at your decades of leadership, the one or two things that you say, well, because I came back to that. I made it through. What was that?

Patricia Obermaier 28:29

Hmm, question. So because I came, I think every situation that was sort of challenging that I that I faced when I came back for me, it was my family, and knowing that I have the support of those around me, that love, that love me, has helped me get through it. And then also, just, I think, as you know the wisdom to know that this too shall pass, this too shall pass, and we all create stories in our minds, right? Hylke, and so sometimes I'll come to this conclusion. I'm like, where are you getting that Patty? Are we creating that story? Because that's really not the case. You have the love of your family. You face these challenges before. Where is that coming from? It's usually coming from fear or not knowing what to do typically,

Hylke Faber 29:22

yes, yes, yes. I think that's great. So that coming back to the core of your family and also asking yourself, like, is this true? Let me check my assumptions here, and this too will pass to create some space around it. We're going to take a brief break. After the break, I want to come back to this question of I'll go deeper into this. What have you learned about changing your assumptions, changing your assumptions, and how has that helped you as a leader, to stay more connected to what was most important See you after the break. I.

Presenter 30:01

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 30:26

Welcome back to root and unwavering. I'm speaking with Patty Obermeyer. We've been talking about what's the next reasonable action? We've talked about loving, leading, boldly, loving, firstly, making a positive impact. We've talked about challenging our assumptions and coming back to our core and and how volunteering and giving back actually helps us, and how to stay in relationship helps us. You mentioned this thing about assumptions. Patty, tell us about some assumptions that you made in your leadership that you then came back to maybe not. Maybe this is not it. Maybe there's another way to think about this. Can you think of maybe experiences that you had where that shift really helped you and the team?



Patricia Obermaier 31:16

Yeah, I think there's, there's several just just being human. Sometimes you make assumptions about people that, and sometimes those assumptions can be quick and fast that as you start to get to know people, you're like, that's actually not the case. And I can think of one example where I thought the strengths of one leader were one thing, and then we went through this whole team leadership strengths and so and they came out exact opposite. I was like, Oh, wait, why did I put up that filter? Like, what was it that I thought that I had totally misjudged what the person and the other, the other leadership teams thought were someone's strengths? So I think that's a question I always ask myself and stop and say, Okay, what assumption Are you making here? We're super fast also to make assumptions on what people's priorities are. This is what they're focused on. This is what's important to them. And I always say to folks, okay, let's take the time to really, to really know that. You know that we used to do in team meetings, bring an item that's important to you and share why it's important to you. Yeah, you learn so much about somebody in certain ways, and I'm like, Oh, I didn't have no idea. I didn't know that that was important, or that this is what they thought about, XYZ, whatever the case may be. So I try to test those assumptions, and then in the it was funny, because I will tell you my Microsoft days, when I first got there, Microsoft has its own language. It's got its own acronyms, its own words. You know, you come in from the outside and I'm like, I have no idea what they're talking about. Or I thought I knew what an acronym was, and then I would be like, hmm. And it's a silly example, but it's one where I had to stop myself all the time because I was making the assumption it was something, but it could be the exact opposite, and it could be and I used to joke with folks all the time because I would say, okay, that as an outsider, that's what that means to me. And they'd be like, No way, Patty. Where'd you come up with that? And I'm like, Well, what does it mean? And they're like, what means this? So I try to catch myself, especially in this world where we use acronyms all the time on what are we all talking about? The same thing, because sometimes we don't talk about things. And I had a many years ago, this is actually where I learned separate the people from the problem. I was given a project, younger in my career that was losing money, losing about 2 million a quarter. So everybody watched this project, and it was an IT delivery project, and it was like, go fix it. Well, you can't turn it around overnight. And so what ended up happening is we were working really hard with the customer. That's when we were first, first meeting. I went to people were yelling at us, screaming at us, you know? And I stood up and I said, I'm happy to have a conversation with you all, but not being yelled at. And so we I asked my team to come and walk out like I had to make that sort of dramatic shock to the system, because the client all thought that was okay, and I didn't think it was okay as a team leader. And then I then we started to work through and what we thought, or in some cases, what I thought was important to the client that cost us a lot of money wasn't important to them. And I'm like, then, why are we doing that? And so it was one of those, like, okay, women, let's and maybe this is Hylke from being trained as a scientist or whatever. Just we put everything on the board. What are the assumptions we're making? What do we think is important? Why do we think that? What? What proof do we have? And that's true, right? And in some cases, it's like, well, they said this. That's really, it's really, um. Signals are we getting? And then that's when I was like, Okay, here's what I think the problem is we have different, obviously different set of priorities, but we can come up with a shared account of what could work. And then let's just separate the people like, stop the misbehave, stop the yelling, like, let's just be people, and let's do something



there. We decided to meet over bag lunches, because people are, I don't know what it is about when you're eating with folks, but you get to really kind of relax a little bit. So,

Hylke Faber 35:29

yeah, yeah, yeah. So that's separating the people from the problem and then putting it all on the board, so really figuring out what's going on and realizing, Hey, you guys actually don't value this thing across a lot of money. So why are we doing this? I'm curious about this moment where you as a team leaders, made a stand. No, we're not going to do this. We're not going to have you yell at this team. We're not going to have that kind of situation. Tell us if you can recall that moment, or the moments leading up to that where you observed that and what was the inner conversation you had with yourself? Because that's a pretty bold thing. Think about like, yeah, that's pretty bold thing to do with the client, especially with a client that is paying you money to challenge, you know, and you're not coaching them like, if I do that as a coach, well, your people pay me to do that, but they were paying you to give them a technology solution. So in that context, how did you do that? I mean, there

Patricia Obermaier 36:36

was, you know, it's funny, you bring that up because first of all, you're fearful you're going to get fired. You're fearful the client's going to fire the company, and so you've got that worry about and I, but I at that moment in time, I said, If I accept this and we continue to have these be treated this way, what am I telling or sharing with my team that this behavior is acceptable when it just fundamentally just wasn't. In my opinion, the other thing is yelling at people, people don't do if anybody's had a team, you have to inspire people, you have to encourage them to do things being yelled at. You're like, I don't want to help. So I was like, Okay, I gotta change the environment. Like, oh, my heart was going pretty fast, and the adrenaline was flowing when I did it. And we all walked out, and I was like, Oh, what have we done? But the team was like, thank you. And reset it, reset the baseline. Like, it stopped the behavior, and it was able to for all of us to say we're going to fix this, we all have to change our behavior and the expectations of my team on how they interacted with the client, right? It wasn't just the client. It was also, we don't accept that, but we also are making sure we're not in any way replicating it. How

Hylke Faber 37:57

did the client respond to that? Like when you said that? No, we don't. We're not going to be yelling at each other.

Patricia Obermaier 38:03

It was a bit of a shock, but I got a phone call pretty quick from the senior executive that said you were right. I apologize for my team. Do you all want to come back in? And I said, No, I don't think so. I don't think we should come in right now. I think let's let it sit with people like, let's come back in a couple days and get together. I said I wanted to sit with your team. I wanted to sit with our team, and then why don't you and I get on the phone before we get together and just talk about sort of the new rules, if you will, of how we're going to engage and so I work. So that was an interesting experience. It worked out pretty well in that case, but it took a fair amount of courage to to stand up



Hylke Faber 38:44

for sure. Yes, yes. You mentioned the the word fear. And you know, that's a word that I, I think about often. So you said, you know, I'm, I think I heard you say I was, I was afraid that I might lose the client, or they might fire us. And as you think about your leadership career, what have been some fears that have been sort of in your mind, in the background, or maybe sometimes in the foreground, and how have you dealt with those?

Patricia Obermaier 39:18

Yeah, I think they. Everybody has the fear of not being successful, right? And then you have to sit there and say, Okay, are you defining success the right way? Because it's always, did I get the next promotion? Did I get the advancement? Did I get to and sometimes it's like, did I learn and did I've always said to teens, I like to work with, folks that their career trap directory has kind of gone sideways a little bit because they've gone off and done something different, or they've taken a different role for to expand their horizons, whatever, and then and then go up. So I think there's, there's that fear, and then there's the fear of I talk about. Loving fiercely. For me, it's a fear of losing some relationships, or some friends or colleagues that are losing their respect, that that I'm more fearful, they probably say, Patty, you'll lose more of a respect if you don't act boldly, because we know you, that's what you do, like live your your true self, and you know he'll go. I've started a couple companies, and I never worried about the fear of not being successful, from or succeeding, and one did not, but we learned a heck of a lot. And so I've always been, I've always been okay with that, but I'm always fearful of not showing up, right? Not showing up well, and then also the fear of, like, whoops, you're gonna get you're gonna get fired. Yeah,

Hylke Faber 40:50

yeah, yeah. And, and so the and I'm hearing that the way you're working with this is to come back to a bigger perspective and saying, What can I what can I learn from this? What is success, really? What can I learn from this? Now? How have you dealt with the fear of not showing up? Well with that one?

Patricia Obermaier 41:14

You know, actually, as I was preparing for our chat today, I have a tendency. I'm like, Okay, I gotta think this is all through and so forth and, and I'm always prepared. I try to be prepared and so forth and, and sometimes I say, Okay, wait a minute. You don't have to be perfect. Like, good is enough. Like, just you can't predict it. And every time I'm the more prepared I am, the conversations ends up going a totally different path anyway. So I'm like, Why did you do that? Like, why did you spend all your time doing that? And so I and I think it's you can over prepare, and the preparedness is a fear. It's a fear of just not showing up, or not looking well, or whatever the case may be. And I've learned that. I've learned that about myself. Now, would I ever walk into a meeting totally unprepared? No, because I just, I like to think things through, and I think that's part of what makes me a good leader, is, is I can think through what questions we might get asked. How will this be perceived by the team? What am I



missing on the market? What signals Am I missing? What am I not looking at? Just those kinds of questions, yeah, help me to be better prepared.

Hylke Faber 42:26

I love that. So as you think about as you think ahead, so you've got a career behind you, and you're also have I'm ahead of you. So that's true for all human beings. That was an obvious thing to say. So think about the next 10 years. What do you aspire to? What really gets your blood flowing?

Patricia Obermaier 42:52

I aspire to one just continue to learn and be curious, which is, I think, why I was looking about biology and space, like, what? Like? What? Do I have the time now to really dig deep into? But two, I really hope to spend time more as a mentor, not necessarily as a coach, but as a mentor, and helping people to achieve great things and doing some really fun, fun things out there, and because I think that's building that next generation is what's really on my mind right now. And now you talked about the turbulent times we live in. Our younger generation has gone through COVID, and now these turbulent times, and in some cases, things that were just so known for all of us just isn't the case anymore. And so just helping people be resilient and agile. Now you'll laugh. The company called res agility that I started, it stands for resiliency and agility because I felt that you need to be able to have both those skills and in some cases, at the same time, which people would say, Well, how can that be? That's a binary decision. You're either resilient or you're agile. And I'm like, No, I think it, they live together. So that's a little bit about what, what I aspire to. I do have to tell you, Okay, I'm going to take this a little bit different path, just for it. For a second, when I saw, you know, connected, I was like, what, what does that mean in my life, or what the case is going to be? And I want to share, um, two stories with you. Yes. So whenever I decide I'm going to go do something different, whether it's going to leave Microsoft or whether I was going to leave another company and start a business, I've had two interactions with nature that I was curious about. The first was when I started my very first business outside my window for a week, I had a bat just on the screen, and I'm like, what does a bat mean? Because and then it disappeared, and a bat is all about rebirth in Native American Indians, it means you're going to go through a rebirth. You're going. To be doing something new and different and and I had a business partner at the time, and she's like, Patty, you're you're birthing a business. This is what's going to be super exciting. And then when I was trying to decide if I was going to leave Microsoft the middle of the day on my porch, I look up and there is a brown owl. Owl should be out in the middle of the day, right? So I was like, Okay, now what does this mean? So of course, I have to go look that up, and that symbolizes a coming of change and the wisdom and knowledge from within. And so I was like, Wow, maybe the knowledge of what I want to do next is within me. So I share that with you, because we talk a lot about connectedness with people, but I always believe there's a the universe, the world, whatever people's beliefs may be, especially nature, very much intrigues me. So haven't had any visits yet, but I'll new ones, but I'll keep you posted if something else pops into my

Hylke Faber 45:58



life, I love that. I think your English teacher will be proud of you talking about this. It's like, wow. The biologists talk and talk about animals in a symbolic way. This is very interesting, right? So the bats and the owls and the entrusting your inner wisdom. So you talked about resilience and agility. What would you say in terms of, I see you like, Patty, I see you as a person who is extremely resilient and also very agile, and probably in that order, like I see you like, extraordinary resilient and also quite agile. How would you say you've learned your own resilience. How have you learned that? Because resilience is a nice word. It's a great word, fantastic word. But you know how? How do you tap into your resilience when you know, I know, like in your jobs, you would have to fly across the country or maybe further. And, you know, business meetings late and morning early. Maybe don't have time to exercise. Maybe did exercise. I don't know what you do. How did you What did you tell us about your journey with resilience? It's fascinating for me. About you. It's,

Patricia Obermaier 47:19

you know, it's something I honestly, I never really focused on, but because it's like, okay, I need to be resilient. In this matter, I don't know that that process ever was part of my brain, except that I was always on, which will make sense when I tell you, Okay, what do we do next? Like, how do we get out of this? What's going to happen? We don't control it in many cases, what's taking place in our lives. But and do I know the difference between what I can control and what I can't control is absolutely critical, and I think we live in times now that's so true, like what, what can I control, as you were talking about earlier, and how do I spring back? How do I quickly? And it's not always easy. Hylka, because this physically, do I do? I feel okay mentally. Sometimes it's just a lot of mental gymnastics in some cases, but it's also okay to sit sometimes with the emotions of the angst of the situation and just okay, why is this really, really bothering, bothering me, and what can I learn from it? But I just the next best step is a step forward, right? I'm also a believer. I don't spend a lot of time looking in the rear view mirror. I do for learnings, but I look out the windshield because it's just a lot bigger.

Hylke Faber 48:43

I love that, I love that, I love that that's a that's a t shirt. I don't spend a lot of time looking at the rear view mirror. Look at the windshield. It's a lot bigger. That's beautiful. That's a lot bigger. So what's next? What can and then also the and take the learning from, from the people, from, from the place in the back we are getting towards the final 10 minutes of this conversation, which has flown by. So I'd like you to think about people that might find themselves feeling not very resilient right now, for whatever reason. They're like burnt out, tapped out, maybe feel overwhelmed with all of the stimuli that that they that are getting. And I'm hearing some people talk about that like, there's the the change in with AI, the change, if you work in technology, change the technology sector, some job insecurity for people. The changes politically, the changes that are happening in other areas of life. Some people that happen to be at the intersection of all of these things, and for whatever other reasons, might not be having the best day of their lives, or not the best week or month, even year of their lives. What would you say to them? I

Patricia Obermaier 49:56



think if you come down to two things, hylka, I would say. On, take some self care. Take some time to make sure whatever brings you joy in your life, you're embracing that. So whether running from the outside, hiking, whatever, whatever the case may be, just just bring some joy and and try to play a little bit. So I don't know, people play pickleball, people do all kinds of things. Just bring some more play back into your life, because then that's where the joy will come. And the second I always say to folks is, Are you still learning? Are you learning something? Because if you're learning, then the brain is going and going, which is, which is super important to do that.

Hylke Faber 50:44

Are you learning and learning that's great. Oh my goodness.

Patricia Obermaier 50:48

Well, now all your lovely listeners can can meet my dog. Sorry about that.

Hylke Faber 50:54

What's the dog's name? Her name is Leah.

Patricia Obermaier 50:58

I tried to quiet it all down and ask everybody to keep the quietness so best laid plans and mice and men outside.

Hylke Faber 51:06

Lovely. That's lovely. This is also a podcast about animals, bats and dogs, it turns out. So I gotta figure

Patricia Obermaier 51:12

out what she was telling me that one up. What does the dog barking when you're saying something mean? I don't know, but sorry about that, everybody that's

Hylke Faber 51:21

lovely, no problem. So, so you're saying, like, do things that are fun. Well, let you help with that, things that enjoy, like pickleball, running, whatever you're doing, do something that's fun. And ask yourself, How do I keep in the space of of learning? How do I keep in the space of doing? And in this conversation, Barry, this has been like, I think, a theme throughout, challenge your assumptions. What's the next reasonable action? Bring people together that have different perspectives. Ask yourself, don't look too long in the rear view mirror. Look in the windshield. That's called the windshield, the windshield. I'm always that that's a word in English that somehow escapes me. Windshield, the windshield, that's right, it shields from the wind. It makes sense. Yes, it's a very good word for it. And and so when you think about learning, how do you feel Patty, when you learn? How do you feel? Energized?

Patricia Obermaier 52:22



Energized. Yeah. Um, you know. And I mean, there were times when I'll start to learn something and go, boy, I don't know anything about this. And I think that's one of the wisdoms that comes with ages you start to learn that you can't know everything, and so just get a chance to to learn. And we lose that right as kids, you're learning so much, you're trying so much, you keep getting up, you fall down. Get up. It's like, yeah, it's part of life. And then after a while, they were like, Oh no, I gotta know all the answers to everything. Oh my gosh, that's crazy, because you gotta, you gotta keep learning. So for me, I get energized when I learn something new.

Hylke Faber 52:56

And so you talked about learning about biology and space in AI. Talk about AI for for a moment. How do you see the what do you see is the role of a leader who wants to stay connected to what's important in that space. So

Patricia Obermaier 53:16

I think you know, leaders have so many different competencies in the AI space. And obviously, when living in Microsoft, you're in the middle of it. You're driving the field. It's unbelievable. It's you, it's used everywhere. And then you meet nonprofits or other organizations, and folks are just so unaware, or just like, where do I start that? I think that's the bigger thing, because, again, people have been incredibly successful in their career, and all of a sudden this is a new technology that's really going to change the way we work. So where do I start? And I just, I'm always like, just start learning and just trying it and play with it, because it will impact and has impacted all that. It has been around for a while. It's impacted our lives in tremendous ways, and just be ready for things to be able to do things that we could never do before. But I said that with the but, but I think your podcast around connectedness and courageous leadership is going to be even more critical in the future because of the human aspects that AI just won't ever be able to do, the nuances, the context of being able to understand somebody you AI won't get that. But where it's gonna be even more important that we have those soft skills as leaders, yeah, we

Hylke Faber 54:30

don't lose ourselves and and think we can delegate that to the the empathy bot, or

Patricia Obermaier 54:38

I'm good AI could take as many notes as it wants. I'm good with that, and then I can play with them, but they could never do the great conversation. So how do you know I'm not AI, I could, I'm then you never know.

Hylke Faber 54:50

I never know. I never I don't. The answer is, I don't know. That's my true answer, although the part of me knows. You're not, but we don't know. Maybe we get to a place where at this in 2025 I can safely say I know, but maybe five years from now, I won't be able to say that anymore. I don't know. It's actually



Patricia Obermaier 55:12

AI has been interesting because I had a conversation the other day with a bunch of business leaders around the future and just doing for new scenario planning for the future, and everyone's like, well, we gotta use AI for that. And I said, Well, wait a minute, AI was built on data from the past. We don't know what's in the future, so how can AI help us? And I was like, that's where you come in. That's where the human intellect and the creativity and where we can go. But it was funny to see how this group was immediately jumping to, oh, we'll just, we'll run the scenarios through chat GPT, and we'll see what it comes up with. I'm like, Oh, I don't know that that's gonna necessarily work, but

Hylke Faber 55:54

like, I like that challenge you, the trust are human. Stay connected to our own human potential. Last question, what would you say to you talked about future generations, and I know you invest in Super nurturing to your kids. What will you say to the next generations as a leader who has been through so much? If you say like these are two things. Please, keep this in mind. Keep keep this in mind. What would you say to

Patricia Obermaier 56:25

them? Oh, just be aware. You have no idea what someone's bringing to their day. Just be aware of that. Because it's so easy to expect people to perform in a certain way or lead in a certain way, and you don't know what their day was like, how they got there or they come home, whatever the case may be, just, just you will never know. And just keep that in mind.

Hylke Faber 56:48

I love that. I see that it's interesting that learning is such an important part of your life, and I see what you just said as an act of love and saying, you know, I want to keep learning about you and not make assumptions about where you are. And that's a way to really love fiercely, which is one of the first things that you start off this today, we've learned so much with you. Today, I'm going to give you the very final word in a moment, just to say anything you'd like to say. To close this conversation, I've learned so much from this conversation. One thing that will always stay with me is the windshield is so much bigger than the rear view mirror. I love that. That's good for my monk like brain. It loves to look back and in, but look forward. There's a lot there. It's big view, big view. So look, look at the big view ahead of you. Also to be aware that in science, experiments are there to learn, not to succeed, and that is to be such a radical shift in thinking about life and leadership and business, staying connected to what's most important, and then the power of self care, the running, the generosity, the baking cookies. Now I want to have one of those last words to you.

Patricia Obermaier 58:22

My My only recommendation or thoughts for folks is just stay curious. Stay curious during your day, stay curious in your lives, and cherish those around you, because it connectedness that that really brings us joy.



Hylke Faber 58:38

Thank you so much. Betty, it was an absolute honor and delight to sit with you. If you are listening and you enjoyed this conversation, of course, you can find Betty Obermeier on LinkedIn and other places. If you enjoy this podcast, you can find us on Spotify Apple, wherever else you listen to podcast, or you can re watch this on LinkedIn and YouTube and you've been listening to rooted and unwavering, where we help leaders connect more deeply to their innate potential. I'm your host, hylkel Fauci, and see you next time.

Presenter 59:18

Thank you for joining us in today's episode of rooted and unwavering leadership conversations about courageous connectedness presented by the leadership development company, growth Leaders Network to learn more. Subscribe to this podcast. Connect with growth Leaders Network and Hylke Fauci 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 you.

