

Raw Transcript: Do This Not That_Jeremy Blanchard Full Video

SPEAKERS

Harjot Singh, Jeremy Blanchard

Harjot Singh 00:16

Hello, Healthcare Leaders, do you want to know how you can engage a physician, even when the conflict is high? That sounds so different than what our basic evolutionary instincts do to us. We want to run away from conflict, or we want to cool it down in some weird way. Or some people think have weird ideas of constructive conflict in a very Pollyanna-like way. We have an expert here, who's going to teach, how you not only use conflict to engage physicians and mine for it. And I'm so proud. He's my co-author in the book as well. This is healthcare leadership Insider. I'm Dr. Harjot Singh, from HarjotSinghmd.com. And this is part of our special series Do This Not That for Physician Engagement, Burnout, and well-being. It's a hot topic because physician engagement, turnover, retention, Recruitment, Burnout, and the very existence of healthcare workplaces related to all this. And this is an effort that I and my co-authors talk about. And this is where you find the twin strategies and tactics of physician engagement. And one of my very esteemed colleagues, Dr. Jeremy Blanchard is here. Dr. Blanchard is the systems Chief Medical Officer of North Mississippi Medical Services. And with a long history of being a physician leader in two other big healthcare systems, Jeremy is an intensivist by background, and he has given us a treat in this chapter of the book that turns conflict on its head. So welcome, Jeremy.

Jeremy Blanchard 02:04

Thank you. It's so nice to be here, Dr. Singh. I appreciate you. giving me this invitation. And recognizing this topic is so essential for not only good physician leadership, but also acceleration of our ability to impact lives in a loving, caring, and yet accountable fashion.

Harjot Singh 02:25

Yes, in fact, how conflict is an opportunity to do that. That's the amazing thing you talk about. Tell us about your chapter in the book. Why, and tell us why your writing would appeal to a leader who was seeking engagement from their physicians?

Jeremy Blanchard 02:41

Well, I think one of the things that people forget when they look at a senior physician, executive, or any senior leader is, that there are a lot of scars along the way. And as I sort of evolved through my career, there's been a lot of scars as well. And I've always seen those as growth opportunities or not badges of honor, but really, moments of failure that I have that I nurture as pearls, so that I can continue to grow.

And so Carson Dye, who is the editor of this book had approached me as he did you, other physician leaders and executives that he knew and he respected to say, hey, you know, Can you help us talk about some different topics, and I said, I would really like to speak about mining for conflict because I think conflict has a negative connotation for most, but I actually see it as the niceness of a generative conversation. And when it is approached from that aspect, rather than a win-lose, it allows incredible experiences to take place. And I have built it into every moment of my day. And actually, in the chapter, what I tried to do was rather than sort of present a philosophical or theoretical approach, I have attempted to share evidence-based approaches, and then to give the learner many different exercises that they can easily and not always comfortably, but at least sort of stick their foot into the water to identify opportunities for these generative conversations in places that maybe they felt uncomfortable or awkward entering before.

So for example, if like today, I know for at noon, I have a very difficult conversation where four individuals are going to be worried about a specific situation that I appear to be on the opposite side of, and as my wife and I discussed, you know, some people would see this as walking into a firing squad where I really think it's an opportunity to listen to understand not reply without judgment and to have them work through this process of how do they want Like to help a colleague of theirs Be the best version of themselves. And how can they be accountable for that?

Harjot Singh 05:07

In fact, what I love is right at the beginning of the chapter, you discuss examples, like stories. And those illustrate the idea that you don't just face the conflict, you look for it. Tell us about that and look for the mining for it. Tell us about that.

Jeremy Blanchard 05:26

So, you know, I mean, there are many different ways. And in the book, I sort of give some classic types of conflict. But I think, for me, trying to identify what type of conflict is not as valuable as looking for is there a difference of opinion. And you're going to see it in different ways. Sometimes the difference of opinion is silence. And so I think it's always great to say, Well, hey, would you mind sharing with me what you're thinking, and it always has to come from a place of authentic respect, you can't ask somebody that if you're looking at trying to rebut them, or you're just wanting to be able to say what you want to say, again, you really have to approach it from an aspect of curiosity, and respect, and then expect respect. And when you sort of create those set of expectations, you can find it anywhere. So, you know, yesterday, I found it on the pickleball court, there was a person who, you know, really wanted to beat me on the pickleball court. And so part of it was looking at how could you help them experience this and rather than in a combative way, a spirited, competitive way. And I think as you look at those in your life, you're going to be able to look into your day and say, you know what, that has a risk of having a difference of opinions, or of someone feeling as if they don't have power, or this person has a history of not speaking up. And all of those, I go look for him in a private unkind way. So, let's take those three. So if you take someone that you think is going to be sort of combative, a lot of times, they're at a point where they don't feel like anyone is listening to them. And so, if you can start by trying to listen to them, and understand them, not to judge them, really just listen. And you know, one of the things that always got my way is I'd have a great thought in the middle of when someone was speaking. And I'd continually try to say that thought over and over in my head as a mantra until they pause so I could blurt it out. And so now what I do is I usually have a piece of paper, and I just make one word, bullet point, so

that I can go back to that word as an anchor if I want to come back to that thought, which I always don't always want wish to do, because it sort of doesn't matter anymore. But by doing that, then I can really listen to them. And I believe, especially in that circumstance where somebody is sort of geared up for a battle, that they feel as if they have spoken, nobody's listened. And if I can truly just listen to them to understand without judgment to not reply, then I might be able to help them hear what I have to say if it's valuable. But until I do that, they're just going to say it over and over. And I bet each of us can think of a circumstance where somebody just kept saying the thing over and over, even though we tried to talk to them, and it's because they don't feel heard.

The second one is where they're quiet. I know often that person in my experience is someone who either doesn't feel valued or has an introverted processing approach. And so what I find is give them a little breath, and then follow up with them and say, Hey, you got, you know, 10 minutes or so where I could just drop by, and we could just talk, or you could drop by and we could talk and then what I do in that circumstance is I just say, hey, you know, I really value your opinion. And I noticed you were a little bit quiet, or I thought you might have thoughts, and I didn't really hear him. I was wondering, if would you be willing to share, I want you to know, this is a safe environment, I just want to listen to understand. So that's the second one.

And then the third one is, is when you know, they're sort of a naysayer, if you can get them before you get into a group, that's great, because it's usually a personal issue. But I go and find that person and say, hey, you know, I'm going to bring up this topic in a meeting. You know, I'd love to know what you thought so that I could have an opportunity to represent a lot of different people's conversations as I facilitate, would you be okay with that? And, you know, if they say no, then I'd say, then I'd show curiosity. Well, tell me a little bit more about that. Or help me understand, you know, or something like that.

An example of that would be I had somebody who reports to me in an academic position, and I oversee some academic roles as well. And that person felt like there was an inequality between two different programs than they were actually right. And it was a payment of the preceptors in that program compared to another program. And it had been an acute change, no one had done it on purpose. But I felt very bad for this person. And they wanted me to fix it. But I really needed my colleagues to help me with that. So, it was taking longer than they wanted. They sent an email that was very inflammatory to me only. And then they're in the meeting with me and another leader. And they brought up that they only really had one issue with the situation when they had about three. So, I said, Actually, I thought you had more based on an email you sent me, and they felt as if I had shared that email and broke their confidentiality. So, to me, that's when I see any sort of blew up. And when I see that I often know I've run into a core value. So, I had to step back emotionally and say, okay, which core value did I run into? And that was, you know, respect because they felt like I had shared a private moment. And I said, well, first, I didn't share that email. And second, is it not accurate that you had more than one issue, and I believe this is the place we should share it, because we're in a closed room, we've agreed that we can share it stuff here. And I think we got to get it out on the table. And it diffused the person a little bit, but it held them accountable to be a partner in this setting. And I think that's an all three of those, but especially that last one, you can see, I was really mining for conflict, I sort of poked the bear in a respectful way, because it was much better dealt with than popping up again and again, and a bunch of different places. And as we walked out of it, then I asked him, you know, how do you feel? You know, what are you thinking? Are you in a better place? And initially, they were very caught up in that moment of interaction. And I shared with them, you know, maybe I didn't handle that interaction, as well as I'd

like, I accept that accountability. And yet, don't you feel that we should be talking about this? You know, because isn't this really an issue you have, that we need to address? And that I think is appropriate to address? What do you think? And that form forces them to be accountable for? Yeah, they had issues that weren't shared. Yes, they think we probably should have shared them. And yes, they'll continue to contribute to a respectful, accountable, and generative relationship as we go forward.

Harjot Singh 12:41

The first time I read the chapter, the one thing that stood out for me, you call conflict, an intellectual nutrient. What a beautiful metaphor. What made you say that? Because I haven't ever read it? How did you come up with that?

Jeremy Blanchard 13:00

Yes, you know, my friends will say that to Jeremism. But because I think a little differently than others, Nobody in my family ever graduate from college. I sort of came from this very educated, uneducated mother. And that really helped me think outside the box, think of potential impossibility, rather than, you know, sort of restrictions and anchors. So, when I thought about intellectual nutrient, I think there's so much untapped or unmined conflict, that leaders are avoiding, that it consumes this huge amount of energy. And if you think about people that you know, aren't healthy, it's often they're consumed by either worry or other kinds of negative effects on their life. And when I say negative, it can be something they couldn't control. It could be cancer, that's consuming their resources. It could be drug addiction, it could be anxiety, it could be anger, it could be you know, sedentary behavior. All of these are things that take energy, away from our joy of life, or fulfillment of life are living in the moment.

I see conflict as sort of opening things up so that they're in the day of light a day. And it allows for generative growth and for love to be given an authentic of emotions to come into play. And it's so much more respectful than dodging conflict. And I think people are caught up in the word conflict.

For me, conflict can be just as simple as a conversation and there are very different sides to that.

I'll give you a personal example because it's so played in my life. So, I had a friend we were going to see some land I had purchased, and he was very excited. I thought we just talked about that and possibilities, and we are driving back. As a system chief medical officer, we've just gone through COVID. And this person became sort of, I guess, agitated about the political setting right now and about a lot of the measures that have been used to treat COVID. And at a very polarized different viewpoint than I had. And yet this person represents himself as a very spiritual person. And many times, they are, and they're very influential in our community. And so, I listened, and I listened. And we got to the end, and I and this person had described isolating themselves from a group of other people, having enough food, having enough water, having enough gas, having all those things to be able to survive if our government were to fall apart or something like that. So, it was a powerful conversation. And as he finished up and I listened to him, I said, you know, **his name?** Can I ask you a question? And you know, would you be comfortable with me asking you a challenging question?

So, there I was mining. I was seeing, okay, is this a place where we could have a constructive part of the conversation? And he said, Yeah, I'd appreciate it, and I said, how do you align isolating yourself, with your spirit, to beliefs of loving other people? And it was, it was silence.

Jeremy Blanchard 16:28

I mean, you know when people put on those crickets, it was crickets. And you could see oh, wow, I have a misalignment. And that wasn't me trying to be right. That was I had listened and listened to understand, not reply. And I tried not to apply judgment, although I probably had somewhat, I mean, I'm human. But it was really I loved him enough to ask him the most important question. In his core values, was he honoring the core values that he opines and my take on it? And possibly was? No.

Harjot Singh 17:04

I think what we are getting at is, obviously you are regularly, deeply intensely living this. So, if this isn't like a matter of technique for you at this point, and this isn't like something, someone can say, Oh, I have a checklist for conflict, something mining or conflict resolution, whereas saying, Look, I'm doing it, and I'm very comfortable with it. What's the one thing you can tell that helped you be so good at this and are so comfortable with this?

Jeremy Blanchard 17:41

Yeah, let me tell you a story if that's okay doctor Singh. So, I am a critical care doctor. Our ICU went to number one in the nation. To give you an example, we had one year with 60 ICU nurses with zero nurse turnover. And we had gone three years without any, you know, urinary tract infections, central line infections, skin breakdown, falls, or ventilator-associated pneumonia, and really had an incredible kind of setting. I saw a decision made I didn't agree with, and I decided that I needed to move into an executive position. So that's how I became a CMO. As I really started, got perturbed with a decision that was made, I went, got a master's, and became a CMO. But I was not prepared to become an Executive leader. My leadership style was autocratic, I really was a Jim Collins, you know, if you're not on if you don't have the same beliefs on my bus then, hey, don't let me don't bounce as I kick you out the door. And it really was not effective at a senior leadership position to have that leadership style.

The second thing is, I felt because I am from Montana, and because nobody had ever graduated from college in my family, except my one cousin in art, I really felt like I needed to help people understand that I was valuable to invest and that I can make a difference. I found myself consuming oxygen in many rooms, I would have to, I would have such great ideas in my mind that I needed to share with people that I was smart and that I could actually do that. And although people appreciated my ideas, they found it very frustrating that I wouldn't shut up, basically.

So, I have always pursued a coach in each of my contracts, I've negotiated a coach to help me, you know, acclimate and to be a better leader. And so, I got a great coach, and he listened to a bunch of other people, and he said, you know, Jeremy, you're not listening to understand. And that was the first introduction to that. And then as I sort of began to think about it, I really began this mantra that I think I probably already said a couple of times, and that is, I want not to listen to understand not to reply. So, my goal is not when can I tell you what I think now? It's my goal how can I understand what you're thinking? And can I do it without judgment, so I can be a good partner for you. So, I can serve you because I'm a servant leader. And so, I would tell the audience, that's where it all began for me.

And that's really where it should begin for people. When I lead groups, I many times start with two things. One, is I have them do what I call a four-part breath. So how many parts are there to breathe?

I asked my audience, now almost always a healthcare audience. And as you know, as a physician, people will go two or three, but they're nervous because they do not want to make to say the wrong answer, right? We're just, it's the way we're built. And this seems like such a simple question, though.

It's, they think it's a trick question. But if you think about a heartbeat, you have a contraction, and then a pause, and then a relaxation, and a pause. Well, breathing is the same, you have an inhalation and a pause, and an exhalation and a pause. So, there are four parts to a breath.

So now they're sort of thinking about the breath, they've sort of forgotten a little bit what they came into the room with, or where they're going to. So, then I asked them if they were safe to close their eyes, and we do a four-part breath. And by the end of it, then I asked how many of you are not thinking about the breath during this period, in my experience, it's usually 10% or less. So now 90% of my audience is engaged with me and present. And then I have them do a listening exercise. And this is super easy. And I would recommend any listener, to do this at home, take your loved one or your friend, and ask them, you know, this is a very non-threatening question. What is your professional life gives you fulfillment today, and then give them a minute or two minutes, and then just try to listen to understand not reply without judgment.

And your goal is you can't say anything you can say, Wow, interesting. Or you could say, you know, just say a little bit more about that, please. But that's it, all you can do is facilitate them to share. And then you flip it at two minutes. And when I do that, then I ask people, well, how, who liked listening to the most. And a group will raise their hand, and I'll say, tell me why. And they'll say, well, because I really felt like I was giving them a gift. And like I had shut down my brain, I could hear what they had to say. And that was so valuable. And then the other group is the ones who wanted to be listened to.

And they said, it felt like for the first time and a long time somebody cared enough to truly listen.

It's a very intense experience. But it's a way to get an idea of what it feels like to either be listened to that way or to listen to someone that way. And if you just begin by that, and then look on your calendar, and in the next week, identify one conversation, where you really think it would be valuable if you just worked on listening, to understand, not reply. And what you'll find is, that becomes more powerful, and you grow upon it.

And I must repeat this all the time, I have a daughter with learning disabilities who loves to watch Charmed, and she wants to tell me about charmed and, you know, and sees them as her friends and you after a while when you know you've been with this kid for 30 years, charm gets a little old. And I find that sometimes I slip out of that I sort of play with my phone or my watch or whatever. But I think if it appears that I've sort of, you know, I'm amid mastering something and they want to look at, well, how would I start on my journey, to not be intimidated? Start by listening to understand not reply without judgment, because it's such a respectful way to go and then it allows you for the other person to feel as if they've been heard. They can hear what you have to say. So, I think that's the starting point.

Harjot Singh 24:11

Seek first to understand in fact, listening is a gift that great spiritual traditions talk about you give and now the science of positive psychology calls it active constructive, responding, you gave such beautiful examples of that. This is like a textbook example of active constructive responding that you showed us.

Jeremy Blanchard 24:35

Dr. Singh, I wanted to comment many people talk about active listening or you know, what it is you give these responses. Yes, kind of thing. And I find that is not those are not synonyms. And I really think you can do active a form of active listening without, just waiting to reply. And I think that's destructive. And I spent a lot of my life doing that. But about the last 10 years, I've really done everything I could to listen

to understand that reply without judgment. And, if the listeners are interested in my LinkedIn, I've done an interview and an article on mindful listening, which is another way of saying, you know, listen to understand not reply without judgment.

Harjot Singh 25:25

I'll put the link to that. And I'll maybe you can send it to me in the email, and I'll put a link to that. And with this, so that intellectual nutrient concept that it's going to help you grow, you also make a very solid point that mining for conflict will not only improve relationships, or physician engagement or retention, it will also improve patient quality and safety.

Jeremy Blanchard 25:56

I 100% agree, especially with physicians, because in a leadership position, you're going to have physicians that are going to come to you with an issue now there are ones that are going to come in a constructive fashion. And then you're going to have these disruptive moments where the behavior is unacceptable behavior.

In my experience, all those behaviors are, or at least, almost all of them are a reflection of a clinical issue that the doctor or the nurse practitioner felt was egregious. They just have a behavioral response that is so unacceptable, people can lose track of why they have this response. So, I really think that mindful listening allows you to manage both of those. So, first, you can hold them accountable for their behavior. And then in a second conversation, maybe with you or someone else, you can really look at what was the quality issue and be able to assess it. Now, what's interesting is Dr. Hickson out of Vanderbilt with their cup of the coffee program has done a bunch of research on when you go to providers and share with them that the behavior that they had was unacceptable. Could they consider a different way of responding in the future, that somewhere around 87 to 90% of those whom they've done their studies with just one intervention was needed for their whole career. And then the ones that have more than those interventions required or higher level of intervention, they are often associated with quality issues, such as, you know, bad surgical outcomes, lawsuits, or bad interactions with teammates. And so, I think mining for conflict really allows us to define expectations of Team professional behavior. And I firmly believe in all settings, whether you're talking psychiatry, critical care, hospitalist, IDI, ambulatory, or even pathology, a team experience leads to a higher level of quality, because medicine is so complex anymore. So, I think there's that general kind of quality. The other one, though, is their specific intervention. So, I have multiple hospitals and in one of my hospitals, the surgeons at that hospital have a higher observed versus expected mortality. And yet, they are renowned among their teams is having great hands, great interaction skills, and being seen as excellent surgeons. So why could we have that disparity? And I suspect it's because of the way they're charting or the way we're interacting with their charting. But if you take that away, a great way to mind for conflict is to have a quality meeting with them to say, hey, we've got a number that just doesn't fit with how we think about you. Could you help us figure out what that might be? And right there, instead of saying, you know, look, you guys have a very high observed to expected mortality, you got to fix this. That's generating conflict and battle. But by going in with curiosity, could you help me understand what we can do to support you? Or to look at this and would you support an investigation? Now, you know, you're able to listen to understand not reply without judgment, and then be able to give data that draws them in as partners. Imagine the acceleration of that general surgery program, as they now are felt to be valued and engaging as partners rather than being questioned whether they have good technique.

Now, there are times we may find that there's a bad technique issue or one that can be improved upon, but there'll be partners in discovering and I think that's a great way of example of improving quality.

Another one that had nothing to do with me, but it was very interesting is I was at a facility where we didn't have enough OB-GYN ins, and family medicine. Docs had gone to A special fellowship to increase, their ability to care for more complex OB patients and gynecology patients. And the OB-GYN felt very protective of their service. And they did not want those privileges to be given to the family medicine, and docs who had gone through this training, and yet, they didn't have a note enough OBGYNs to cover the deliveries or their services. And so, it went to the medical executive committee for a decision on that medical executive committee very uniquely, were to community represent laymen representatives that had been trained, and had fulfilled job descriptions, questions, and we're committed to confidentiality. So, they were there for that whole conversation. And at the end, one of the laypeople asked the question that nobody else in the profession asked, and they said, let me understand this correctly, I've listened carefully, you're telling me that you do not have enough manpower to be able to care for our community. And we have identified that we do have the manpower that has the skill set to care, care for our community, and yet you won't accept them as colleagues. It was it was beautiful. I mean, what were they supposed to do? So, you know, we adopted that, and what criteria and what metrics we would look at for quality, and both parties were engaged, and they developed a symbiotic relationship that over time became very fulfilling for all in our community benefited from it. So, I really think it's everywhere. And when we have those kinds of conversations, it turns out, it becomes safer to have those conversations. And people develop trust, and it must be done in a respectful fashion. And now, what I define as conflict would not even dawn on the layperson when they watch this happen, they would just, they wouldn't know what to call that they just would never think because it was a generative, constructive conversation, which really is pre conflict or a version of the conflict. So that's why I mind it at all levels.

Harjot Singh 32:35

I think you're giving such beautiful examples of all the things you discuss almost like a checklist in the chapter. But the one thing which absolutely helped me help my clients get on this, right from day one was the chart you have in the chapter, let me show you that diagram, that graphic, which is a lot about how, like, how quickly someone can even start doing it right today, right now. Tell us that tell us about just one of these things?

Jeremy Blanchard 33:11

Sure. So, I recognize that I'm a little bit of a pioneer in this regard. I think when you read about conflict, you know, you'll hear about Crucial Conversations, which is a great core, she'll hear about active listening. There's one group out there that has an acronym called Pearl language of caring, which is another group has an approach to sort of scripting of conversations, realities. For me, I can't remember that stuff. I'm so attuned into the moment that I want to develop a skill set that I can use in multiple different places. And then I can sort of follow my gut. And rather than trying to sit here and carry on an internal conversation, I do step one or step two, wait, which am I supposed to do? That isn't helpful for me in the way I process. So, I really think this chart is a reflection of how I can improve as a servant leader to empower others to be the best versions of themselves. Because when I stepped into my current role, for example, and then I'll go to this chart, but I think this gives context. So, I came to

Mississippi to the north Mississippi health services to time Baldrige winning system in rural Mississippi. And within six weeks, we were in the middle of COVID. And we saw it coming, you know, because the first case was in Washington state, so we had a little bit of time. But I didn't even know how to pronounce some of the towns where we had hospitals. I didn't know anybody. And the reality was a dictatorial approach to leadership, or one where I was the kingpin of all decisions would have failed. And my CEO has taught me to push decisions out to those who are We're best capable of making that decision whenever possible. And so, what we did is we modeled where our rate limiting steps were, we augmented those, we developed relationships, and we came from a humble place where everybody matters. And that really allowed us to go forward. But to do that I had to have each of these six skills. But I realized as I began to coach these with my peers, those who reported to me, and those other servants beside me, that not everybody had thought about it this way. In fact, nobody else had thought about it this way. And so, I wanted to give them an opportunity to develop the skills without even really saying, you know, let's mine for conflict, because that means different things to different people. And so, I always start with mindful listening. But I think, an incredible augmenter of that is the assumption of good intent. And I think this is so evident during COVID, because everybody was wearing masks, and I don't know if you notice this, but people when they wore masks, it appeared to me, they thought that their nonverbals were not being identified, okay, they so had associated all their nonverbal with their mouth reactions, that they felt like, you know, they didn't have to hide how they really felt because people will put on a facade of liking you or agreeing with you or whatever. But inside, they felt differently. And so, they manage their face quite a bit. But the reality is, the whole rest of their body screams different messages. And without, with a mask on that you're no longer distracted by their face. So, I'd watch their shoulders scrunch up, or their hands clench or, you know them to slouch, or there, you know, I don't like arms crossing as an identifier, because I found people just when they're comfortable, do that, but different activities, tapping fingers. And what I realized is I could affect those responses just by thinking about someone in something and that other person that I either respect, respected, or like. And I think I even use in the book that when you really have a difficult time, when it's somebody that you really do not like or do not respect, but you need to have a generative conversation, it can be as simple as Wow, those are great looking shoes. Or, you know, that's a nice bow tie, or, boy, you know, they're a great father, a great mother. And that assumption of good intent. And if you think about that with a concentrated thought for a moment, your shoulders relax, your body relaxes, and it allows you to be open to listening to them to understand reply without judgment. And then it allows you to look for differences of opinion, and with curiosity, to be able to mine for well, okay, what is the difference of opinion? Because I find naysayers are some of my greatest colleagues. Because the beauty of a good naysayer is they've done the research. They are ready, they're coming in loaded for bear. And I find when I listen to understand, not reply, they're totally taken by surprise. by that. I mean, they are coming in for a fight. And when I just want to understand their opinion, and I value it, and we look at, okay, how can we move forward? It really changes the game. And even if I'm not going to be able to agree with that thought process, I can say, could we try this for six weeks? And if it was successful, how would you know it? And how would I know it? And can we agree upon that outcome and set an opportunity at four and six weeks to reflect on it? And the way I learned that was the first time I was called on that myself. So, I had a team. And as I shared it was an ICU, a very high-level team. And we had patients on ventilators. And there were two ways that we manage the moisture and the heat of the air they breathe. And one was with a sponge, and that would manage the moisture. And also, you know, protect against, you know, things getting into the breathing too. But it really was there to

manage the moisture. And then the other was a heated wire that sort of heated the air as a pass from the ventilator to the patient. And I was a firm believer that you had to have a heated wire too, but they're much more expensive. And it was based on anecdotal history that I'd had that a couple of patients with the sponge approach had had mucus developed within the tube that occluded it, and we'd had to change out the two. But my team thought that was not true and that the data didn't really support that. So, they asked, and they felt there were more of them that felt this way than I did. Could we try six weeks, I'm like, I wish I had never told him that but six weeks using the sponge and then monitoring how many tubes are occluded. And if we don't have any tubes included, and the state supports it, could we switch to this and make a very significant financial impact, as well as a much-decreased effort by the respiratory therapists for managing these patients? Sure enough, I had to do it, didn't want to do it. But I had to walk the talk. And it was a much better approach. And it was very effective, and we switched. But when I did that, as a leader, man, then I could hold them accountable, and they wanted to be accountable because I had walked the talk.

So, the other thing about mining for conflict is it gives you an opportunity to be vulnerable. You know, they knew that I didn't agree with this approach, but that I was going to support it because it was what the team wanted to do. And the data was not conclusive. So, it was the right thing to try. And they respected that vulnerability, which I think is as I said earlier, the superpower of servant leadership. So, mining for conflict, it's foundational, it's a piece of rebar. And, and that assuming good intent, mindful listening, you know, paraphrasing back, what the person had said, to be able to sculpt the messages, those techniques are each can be individually learned, and slowly they meld together. But I truly do not believe anyone should be overwhelmed by this thought process and doesn't even have to agree with this thought process that I've put forward. Just if anything, try either assume good intent or listen to understand not reply without judgment. And you'll be amazed at how it changes conversations for you.

Harjot Singh 42:00

Yes, and I read that you describe it as a journey, not like a weird destination you're going to get to, and then not waiting for that to happen.

Jeremy Blanchard 42:12

Yes, I'm still on that journey. I'm a work in progress, for sure. And yet, um, you know, the ability to develop relationships of trust is so impactful. And sometimes, you know, people don't have to say things you can sort of assume there might be conflict. And by prophylactically, intervening, it can be really powerful. An example is in the state of Mississippi right now, we've had flooding. And one of our sister communities in the South Jackson, all their water has gone bad. So, our volunteer department under the direction of our chief operating officer has decided to donate bottled water to Jackson, Mississippi. And so, I know our volunteers are working on that. But I thought to myself, how can I leverage this? And people want to do great things. So, I reached out to a friend in the community who owns a grocery store, and I said, hey, could we get a deal on water? Do you have enough water that can buy four flats of water, we could donate that, and I'm willing to pay for that myself, but I recognize giving is really fulfilling and a team bonding experience. So, I sent out to all my senior leaders, we've got this deal on water, you know, we're going to actually showcase this grocery store, even though they didn't know we were going to do that just out of our niceness, and would you like to be able to give, and I didn't ask for any specific money I just asked. And, you know, you had people giving, you know, \$10, and people giving \$240. And it's just amazing, they felt fulfilled, but I got to thinking, while I may have just distracted

from the volunteers getting their water, they may feel concerned or worried or as they failed, because not enough water comes to them to feel like they've been impactful. So, I thought, wow, you know, that could be a conflict for them internally. Why don't I mind it? So, I called the second in charge of the volunteers. And I said, hey, Jessica, I just want you to know that you guys are doing a great job. And you were so inspiring to me that I reached out to my friend, and we're going to do this, but it's so much water. I mean, this is now 900 And you know, 70 bottles of water or cases of water. So, we can't really bring that in the front door of the hospital and put it in the lobby. And so, I shared that we were going to work on picking it up and that kind of thing. And I said see how you inspired our community to change this. I'm so proud of you and this approach you've taken and thank you so much. Well, it turns out my wife is a volunteer, but people don't necessarily know she's my wife was in the office when I call, I had no idea. So, this morning, I'm getting ready and I'm putting on my sports coat and stuff. And she goes, hey, I just wanted to let you know how impactful your phone call was. And I'm like, what are you talking about? And she said, well, Jessica went on and on about how special she felt and how valued she felt and how appreciated she felt that a senior leader acknowledged the efforts of the volunteers and that it had given her fulfillment, and that she felt so, so empowered to try to make a difference. And so, this mining for conflict is almost like dropping a pebble in a pond. And those ripples of love and respect. They just continue to go on, and people want to do, their best. And it's, it's amazing how impactful you can be as a human being. If you start by sort of looking outward rather than inward? How can I listen to you? How can I help you feel valued? And I love it.

Harjot Singh 46:08

When we're talking about the journey, I feel very compassionate toward people who are at the beginning of the journey, a young doctor, a young medical student resident, what advice would you give to a person who is at the beginning of this journey at this point?

Jeremy Blanchard 46:27

Well, the first is, is try these techniques and have fun with it. Because you know, you can't fail by listening more. I mean, now you can fail by talking, you cannot fail by listening more, you know, and that old adage of God gave you two ears and one mouth, you know, really works. And so, I would tell any young person, you know, if you want to make an impact beyond your own efforts, start by listening to others, and helping them feel valued. And then ask questions of curiosity, assume good intent, ask questions of curiosity, you know, that assume good intent is super subtle. And it's probably almost more powerful than listening, or mindful listening. So, think about this for a sec. Let's say somebody's driving in front of you, and they and they cut you off. So, you have you know, you have two options there. One, you can get really upset, honk your horn, flip them off whatever or the other is, you could give go, I wonder, if I assume good intent, what could be going on in their mind. And you end up with incredible things. You know, it could be that their wife just went into labor. It could be that they're late for work. And if they're because they had to take something with their child, and if they're late again, they'll be fired. It could be that they just found out they had cancer. I love that Cleveland Clinic empathy video that, you know, shows what's going on in people's minds. And I think it's a great video, and maybe I can send you that link as well that you could include. I show that to my residents. So, they can sort of think about, you know, what would it be like if you assume good intent, and I coined that, but, but it's really if you assume the other person had a story going on in their head. And I must do that all the time. A good example of that was, I have a friend during COVID, he was another senior leader, we really were

feeling a little bit down about leadership. And you mentioned positive psychology. And one of the things Shawn Achor, who wrote, you know, that Happiness Advantage talks about is gratitude journaling. So, every day you write down three positive things that happened in the last 24 hours. And that helps you, I think that it helps you change your pattern recognition. So, you go from recognizing negative patterns to positive patterns. And I needed my senior leadership team, to begin to look for the positives to help our team to evolve through this challenging time. And so, my friend and I, it because I assigned everybody, a partner, a happiness part, or where they would share three things every day, there'll be text or phone or whatever. We still do that two and a half, three years later. And so we were in the midst, I was driving and I was verbally dictating, you know, how good these positive things were, and a person needed to cross the street so I stopped and rolled down my window and waved them to cross the street and they cross the street and they never even acknowledged me and they were like huffing and puffing as they cross that street and it just irritated me. I pulled up and rolled down my window and I said you're welcome. You know. Wow, what? What a hypocrite I am. But it was important to me to recognize that, hey, I have to be vulnerable with myself. So, if I could give one pearl to everybody that's out there you got this because you got two years. Or even if you had a hearing impediment, you're reading lips or you're reading what people are saying. And if you start by listening to understand, not replying without judgment, then you then you're developing the most powerful communication technique, and that is dialogue. And its dialogue that's meant to value the other person. And that's how we serve.

Harjot Singh 50:40

Well, with that high note, and wonderful stories and Jeremysms. Thank you.