TRANSCRIPT DOWNLOAD

YOUR MENTAL HEALTH @ WORK

Disclaimer: Some of the content and information mentioned in this episode might no longer be applicable. This includes references to specific links, courses, or programs. As a result, all the links mentioned will now redirect you to our current website. There, you'll find up-to-date information, resources, and exciting new content to support your journey. We appreciate your understanding and unwavering support.

Hello, my friends. How are you? It's great to have you back today. I have to say, I have been really inspired in the last two weeks that life goes on despite the fact that we are probably at our upper limit with what we can manage in terms of change. I know a lot of people feel like all of this self-isolating is putting their lives on hold. But what I've seen honestly in the last couple of weeks, is people continuing to move forward and live their lives. And I love that.

I was interviewing someone yesterday, like a pre-podcast interview, like the interview I do with my guests before we actually record the podcast. I was talking to an ex-colleague of mine, someone I worked with, like 15 years ago or something. He left the marketing business and started a huge real estate business in Vancouver. I think last year, I saw a LinkedIn post from him saying that his business had about $100 million in revenue. So you do the math in terms of what you think he might be making.

Obviously, with Coronavirus, a lot of people think this is not the time to buy a house. How do you even show a house? How do you list a house during this time, and so a lot of people have been shutting down their businesses. But Derek, the guy I'm talking about, will be my guest on an upcoming podcast. He decided to call all his clients and list their houses. He thinks that this is an opportunity. A lot of businesses are shutting down so there's not a lot of inventory on the market. And he's going to put these houses up for sale.

I think that some people get upset by that. That you could put a multimillion-dollar house on the market in the middle of the Coronavirus. But to me, that just says, life goes on. We find a way to adapt, we find a way to move on. He told me he's had more business in the last four weeks than he's had all year. And that's amazing. That means people still want to carry on. My husband is an artist. He paints paintings. He's an artist. And he's had two calls this week. One woman bought one of his paintings and one hired him to do a commission for a painting.

What's more of a luxury purchase right now than art? For myself, in the last two weeks, I've had two new corporate workshops. Two new corporations hired me to do workshops, and I've had three new clients. And I've barely had to hustle for those. So I have to just point out that life is happening. We can also have success. We can all still have wonderful moments in the middle of this pandemic, which has moments that cause us terrible sadness, as well.

© SAVAGE LIFE

But that's part of life as part of being human. We can go on with our lives, we can still do the stuff that we need to do and we want to do and pursue our goals, and still feel sadness and heartbreak and stress and disappointment. And that's okay. All of it is. That leads me to what I want to cover a bit today, which is about mental health. I think one of the things that has come to light throughout this outbreak, one of the big takeaways that we can really focus on is how many people don't really know how to manage their mental health.

We're freaked out by this whole thing. It's okay to be freaked out but they didn't know how to manage it. That's why you're hearing a lot of people talking about Quarantine 15 because they're stress eating or they're stress shopping or all they want to do is watch Netflix all day. It's about avoiding our feelings and not knowing how to deal with what's going on around us.

I see a lot of companies out there scrambling to help their staff with the best of intentions, especially the two companies that have hired me as well. That's their intention. They want to help their staff cope with what's going on. And I think what is raised, especially for big corporations, or small corporations, or any business really, is that helping people learn how to think and manage their mental health is an opportunity to be integrated into everyone's performance development programs.

That, in my personal opinion, needs to be the foundation for all personal development programs in organizations. Until the school system decides to help people deal with their emotional health in a healthy way, their emotional and mental health, teaching people at a young age how to handle their emotions, and how to think. Until that happens in the school system, I think it's an opportunity for organizations and companies to revamp their performance development, and to start helping people manage their mental health.

I'm not just talking about a specific workshop about mental health, I'm talking about how you handle your thinking in all parts of performance development, which can be leadership abilities, relationship building, communication skills, and collaboration skills. All of those skills require us at the foundation to understand how we're thinking and how we're approaching those skill sets.

Ultimately, what I'm saying is, that how people think is truly the root of their performance. But instead, what we do, what we all have done, I've done it as a boss, and so many companies have done this. Every performance development system that I have been part of in my career focuses on teaching people how to act and what they need to do. Here's what leaders do, here's how a leader would handle this situation, here's how you give feedback, and the action steps that you take to give feedback, here's what you need to do to listen better.

It's all about what we do. And really, what I'm suggesting is it needs to be how we think. Because at the root of everything, how we think creates our feelings, and our feelings drive our actions. I want to break that down. I have done this before. But I really want to break down that philosophy of thoughts, feelings, and actions in this podcast and how it relates to specific skill sets in performance development. But before I get to that, I really want to talk about mental health in general and give some context.

The question is, how do you define mental health? What are we talking about here? I think there's been a lot of great talk about mental health, but how do you really define mental health when it comes to work? Because a lot of people think about mental health in the way that this is how my brain is supposed to work. If I'm not on meds,

© SAVAGE LIFE

and I haven't had any sort of major traumatic experience that has caused me some leftover trauma or PTSD, my mental health is fine. I don't have to think about my mental health.

That's often the extent of how people think about mental health. They're thinking about the brain being physically healthy or physically unhealthy. And so they think that as long as they don't have some kind of chemical imbalance or degenerative issue, then they're good. My mind is healthy. The reason that a lot of people think that is because that has been the popular understanding of mental health, what it is, and how we see it, generally speaking, in movies or communication around us. And the idea is that if someone wasn't mentally healthy, there needed to be some kind of shame around it.

Thankfully, in the last few years, the whole idea of mental health and focusing on your mental health has become more and more socially acceptable, trying to remove the shame around the idea of mental health. And so it's okay to talk about it. But still, it feels like it's okay to talk about it when we're talking about someone else's mental health and when we're being compassionate and empathetic about someone else's mental health. But what I want to offer you is that mental health obviously goes beyond the physical health of your brain.

The definition of mental health that I want to offer you is that people who are mentally healthy are actively aware of what they're thinking, and how they're thinking is driving their emotions, and creating the results in their life. I want to repeat that, and I want to say that the key thing is that you're being actively aware of what you're thinking, and how you're thinking is driving your results, and how what you're thinking is driving how you feel, your emotions, which ultimately are creating the results in your life.

If that is the definition of mental health, being mentally unhealthy is not being aware of how you're thinking, not trying to manage your emotional health, blaming your results on things other than your own thoughts and feelings, and not actively trying to manage your results in your life. To help us understand this, I want to throw out a few different ideas. I want to talk first about the current emotional education that we get in our lives. That the very first thing that we're taught at a very young age is that other people make us happy, or other people hurt us.

Some child on the playground said something to hurt your feelings. Don't say that to Mommy, you're hurting her feelings. Or if you do this, you're making mommy happy. Or you're making your teachers happy. Or saying or doing something to someone else hurts them or helps them. We're told to find someone to marry who makes us happy. Your boss has said something to upset you. And it's your boss's fault for saying that. And the fact that you're upset.

How many of you are working from home right now? And you're feeling like your kids are driving you crazy. Or your husband is driving you crazy, or your husband has said something to hurt you. We're taught that other people are in control of our emotions. So other people make us happy. Other people hurt us. If other people like what we're doing, that means we have value. If other people don't like what we're doing, that means we don't have value. And that is what we're taught about our emotional education at an early age.

It's the same thing when it comes to circumstances. We're taught that circumstances also make us happy and sad. When I say circumstances are like random events, does your job make you happy or sad? Do you like your job, is it making you happy? Is this project that you're working on making you happy or sad? How is that project in

© SAVAGE LIFE

control? It's like that project is in control of your emotions. Or the weather. It's raining, I feel sad. It's sunny, I feel happy. The weather somehow is in control of your emotions, or a piece of news.

This pandemic, it's kind of saying Coronavirus is in charge of whether I'm happy or sad, and this is what we're taught. We're taught that we are not in control of our emotions. Other people and other circumstances are in control of our other of our emotions. And that's scary because we can't control other people, and we can't control these random events happening around us. So if we can't control people and events, and they control our emotions, then what we're basically taught is that we are not in control of our emotions at all, ever.

We are at the whim of other people and the world. When you say it that way, you know that's not true. Every feeling you have is based on a thought that you're having. Everything that you do or don't do in your life is because you want to feel or avoid feeling a certain way. And all of those feelings are caused by your own thoughts.

At work, let's take a controlling boss. Why are they acting in a controlling way? It's because they're anxious, they're stressed out, or they're insecure. Those are feelings that they're feeling that's making them act in a controlling way. And why do they feel that way? Why do they feel insecure? Because they have a thought in their head that the only way they're going to avoid failing in this position is if they control everything that happens. That is the thought that's leading to the feeling that's causing the controlling behavior.

I want to take a minute right now and just reintroduce you if you haven't heard it before to something I call the *Self Reset Model*. It's not a model I invented. I learned it from my coaching certification program. They just call it the model. They didn't invent it. It's simply how our brain works. And it's a tool you can use to manage your own mental health. So this is the Self Reset model.

In this model, there are things that you can control, and there are things that you can't control. The things you cannot control are circumstances and circumstances are indisputable facts. In disputable facts, no opinion is allowed. So everyone in the world would agree on a circumstance, that means, you don't want descriptive words or adverbs or adjectives or emotional words. Circumstance is a circumstance. And circumstance includes other people.

You can't control other people, no matter how much you want to. They have their own minds, you can't control them. And believe me, if we could control them, I would be first in line to want to control everybody. Because, of course, I know exactly what I'm doing all the time. But unfortunately, you cannot. You can't control people and what they think. You can't control what they feel, and you can't control what they say or how they act. So you got to let that just be even when you're in a position of power over people like that.

Say, you're someone's boss, you can tell them what to do, and maybe they will do what you tell them to do. But eventually, they're going to resent the crap out of you. And they're going to revolt anyway, in some way. That's why you've seen civil wars and just general wars in the world. That's why people quit and managers quit their jobs. They don't want to be controlled, they revolt in some way. Or you get a bad review or whatever. You cannot control other people.

The other thing you can't control is the past. You can't change it. It has already happened. So trying to change the past or trying to rework it in your mind or wishing something didn't happen. It's in the past. You can't change it.

© SAVAGE LIFE

The other thing you can't change is random events. You can't change the weather. The weather's the weather. Coronavirus is a random event. It is what it is. The office is closing, out of your control. Tech blowing up right before the meeting. My Wi-Fi right now is totally janky. I can't control that. I got to work with what I've got.

So far, when I talk to people about this and talk about there are circumstances you can't control. They're nodding and they're like, *Yeah, okay. Got it.* Where I lose people, generally speaking, is when I tell them that all of these things, circumstances themselves are always neutral. Circumstances have no power until you start thinking about them. So your boss says something. I use this example because it's such a powerful example. I think I used it last week or the week before.

One of my clients came to me and their boss said, *You're not worth the money I'm paying you.* Now that's a circumstance because it's in the past. It was something someone said. The boss said, *You're not worth the money I'm paying you.* Now two things happened there. You're having an opinion, you're having your own thought about that experience. How could that boss say that? What a terrible boss that is! Who hires these kinds of people? These are all thoughts you might be having.

Some other people might think maybe they were right. Maybe she's not worth the money they were paying her. So all of you have different thoughts about that experience that happened to someone else. You have your own opinion about it. And that thought that you're thinking right now is what's creating your experience. It's creating your feelings about that situation. Before I told you that situation happened, you didn't have any feelings about it, or you didn't have any thoughts about it. That thing was completely neutral.

Let's say you're on the receiving end of a comment like that. Again, you could have lots of different thoughts about that. You could get really small and think, *Oh my goodness, this is horrible. How could someone say that to me?* Or you could say, *They're wrong. They don't know what they're talking about.* These are things in your mind. These are thoughts that are coming up. *Of course, I'm worth it. The problem's with them, not me*. These are all thoughts you could be having and all of those thoughts are going to create different feelings and different actions.

Again, it's hard to believe that when someone says, *You're not worth the money I'm paying you* is a neutral thought. But it's neutral because it's your thought that gives it its power, not the actual comment itself. You take Coronavirus. That is neutral. It is neutral. It's your thoughts about Coronavirus that are creating your experience around it. There are some people who haven't experienced any tragedy around Coronavirus.

They haven't lost their jobs. Maybe they get to work from home. Maybe they like working from home. Maybe they don't know anyone who's died and they haven't experienced anything and they're thinking, *Coronavirus isn't that bad. It's kind of a drag that I can't go see my friends and have dinner and socialize and that I have to sit at home and homeschool my kids*… Maybe they like homeschooling their kids. There are feelings around Coronavirus and their thoughts around Coronavirus are going to be very different than someone who has experienced tragic tragedy and who has lost someone.

Even if it's not to Coronavirus, it could be that they've lost someone and they haven't been able to give them a funeral. I have a friend who lost a father who had dementia and she hasn't been able to comfort her mother and she hasn't been able to bury her father. That's a tragedy. And it's okay to feel bad about that. It's okay to feel sad about that. It's okay for her to be mad that Coronavirus happened and that this experience she can't experience

© SAVAGE LIFE

and say goodbye to her family. But these are all thoughts that she's having that are creating her experience from Coronavirus.

There are lots of companies thriving right now. Like furniture companies, because everyone wants to redecorate their living room. Zoom and a lot of technology companies are thriving right now. Amazon isn't doing too badly right now. So everyone has a different opinion about it. Even the weather. When it snows, some people think, *That's just living in Canada.* Some people think, *Oh, I hate the snow. It's so dangerous to drive in the snow.* Some people like, *Oh, it's so pretty.* The snow is neutral. It's your thought about it.

My thought yesterday was, because it was snowing, why the frick is it snowing in April? This is insane. I wasn't happy about it. The fact that it snowed was neutral. How I felt about it was less neutral. That's what I really want you to understand. There are things you can control and things you can't control. You cannot control circumstances. What you can control, what you can 100% control are your thoughts, your feelings, and your actions coming out of every circumstance.

You can control losing 20 pounds, but you cannot control everyone thinking that you're thin and beautiful all of a sudden. You can control getting your presentation finished on time, but you cannot control if everyone thinks you're a superstar because you did that. You cannot control your boss saying things to you, whatever things they are, but you can control what you think about them. And I think that intellectually, people are generally buying what I'm saying.

When it comes to accepting that other people or other events aren't the cause of their emotions or actions, it feels intellectually something that we can accept. It's when it becomes practical in our lives that it becomes harder. Some people would say, *My mother does drive me crazy. I'm not making that up. It's not my fault. She's driving me crazy.* Or they would say, *My boss is making my life a living hell. What do you mean I'm doing this to myself? Look at their behavior. They're the worst leaders in the world. They're a jerk.*

Some people might think that Coronavirus is really causing their feelings and they'll say stuff like, *Coronavirus scares me. Coronavirus is ruining my life.* That's the language that we use. So intellectually we get it. But practically, it's a bit tougher to accept. So why am I telling you this? Because I think this is applicable to performance development.

All of us are dealing with behaviors that we want to change in our performance at work, whether we're running our own companies, or we work in a corporate environment, we have things that we struggle with, and we want to change these things. We want different results. We want to be able to get up in front of a room and present to people. We want to be able to get promoted. We want to be able to grow strong, successful businesses.

And we keep coming up against resistance or fear, or some kind of feeling that's holding us back from achieving what we want to achieve. And so what I'm suggesting to you is that if you want to change your results, you need to change how you act. And if you really want to change how you act in a sustainable way, you need to change your feelings and thoughts that will drive the preferred action. How this works, the performance development is, let's take leadership, for example.

I have a leadership course that I teach in my membership group. It's really focused on practicing thinking like a leader versus acting like a leader. I have read so many great books on how to act like a leader. There are amazing

© SAVAGE LIFE

leadership books out there. In my leadership course, I also give you suggestions on what to do. But it always comes with how can you think to drive your desired behavior.

In your company, if you are in HR, and you are in charge of learning and development, and you are in charge of your performance development program, I'm sure that you have a set of leadership principles that you use and give your managers and your people as guiding behaviors by which they are meant to measure their overall performance, their leadership performance, whatever it is that you call it. Usually, all of those principles are based on how to act.

As managers, we give reviews. We tell people, *What you did here was wrong, and here's what you could have done differently.* But we don't always talk about helping people explore how their thinking is driving their behavior. And because people don't understand that their thinking is driving their behavior, or what they could think to drive a different behavior, ultimately, they don't see sustained impact and growth in the behaviors that they're trying to change.

As managers and as organizations that put together PDP performance development processes, what I'm suggesting is we teach our people how to think and what kind of thoughts create desired behavior and help them choose thoughts that create the desired behaviors. Because when you're trying to change your actions, without changing your thinking, you're constantly butting up against your thinking.

It's like when you pretend that you've liked somebody, and you've decided that you don't like them, but you're trying to pretend you like them, for whatever reason. Maybe you work with them, maybe it's a social event, whatever, or maybe they're the spouse of somebody that you work with. And the whole time that you're pretending that you like this person, you feel like in your mind, you're thinking, *I don't like this person*. You feel fake or you feel unnatural. And when you're talking to that person, all you're thinking is, *I don't like them. I really want this interaction to be over.*

But you know what, most of the time people can sense it. They can sense your thoughts, even though you're trying to white-knuckle your way through this conversation. It comes out in your tone, it comes out in your facial expressions, it comes out in the fact that you're trying so hard to be unemotional. You don't want them to see your true emotions. You're fighting against your emotions in that conversation. But rather than white-knuckling your way through the conversation, what if you changed your thought? And you don't have to go from *I don't like this person* to *I think this person is super awesome*, because maybe you don't believe that.

But is there a neutral thought or a slightly positive thought that you could believe? Maybe you said, *If this person isn't all bad, I'm sure there's something about them that I could appreciate. What are some believable thoughts about them that I can focus on, that would change my opinion of them? I can actually focus on having a productive conversation, versus trying to fight my feelings the whole time.* It's like coming back to the whole thing about being a controlling leader.

If you are told that you are a controlling leader, most people try to figure out how to stop being controlling. And rather than trying to explore what thoughts are creating this controlling behavior of yours, you just try to change your actions. Maybe you try to let someone do something without you telling them how to do it. But it's painful for you the whole time because you're fighting against your thoughts. You're thinking, *I know how to do this better*

© SAVAGE LIFE

than you. If you don't do it this way, we might fail. And you start to manufacture reasons to actually take over again. Or someone on your team does something that you don't like, and your brain goes into panic mode.

Even though you're trying to control what they're doing, it's still this panic that is oozing out of you in your tone, the types of questions you're asking, and how you're asking them rather than trying to really explore your thinking. What thinking is causing your need to control? And what could you think differently to start taking steps forward and start making small behavioral changes? What thoughts could help you drive those small changes?

It's the same thing with feedback. How do you give feedback and what's your intention in giving the feedback? A lot of people are crap at giving feedback. It's like this random at the moment, drive-by feedback. I've done it. I still do it to my poor husband all the time. It's like this thing where it's not really feedback, it's you getting some frustration off your chest, and you're calling it feedback.

So if your intention is really just to release yourself of this thought that you have, or this annoyance, you're annoyed by the way this person is behaving, and you are trying to tell them because you want to let them know, give them feedback that they are annoying you or what they're doing isn't working. In your mind, you're thinking, *You're doing it wrong.* And then that creates a feeling of frustration, or stress, or whatever it is. And then your approach to telling them is not effective, it's critical. You say critical things as your action.

Whereas, if your thought was somewhere in the realm of genuinely helping this person. If your intent was a thought focused in the area of, *I want to genuinely help this person, I see that they're trying, and I'm going to help nudge them.* If that was what you were thinking, what kind of feeling would that generate for you? How would you then give them feedback? We go into the steps and some of the ways that you can give that feedback, but the very first thing is about the intention. What thought is going to generate the feeling that you need to feel to generate your desired behavior?

As I said, it's the same thing with handling relationships, particularly with your boss. If you have a boss that you don't like, and your thoughts about your boss are things like, *They're mean to me. They don't respect me. They don't know what they're doing. I'm smarter than them. They're trying to control me. They're not a good leader.* Or whatever. If those are your thoughts, what kind of feelings are those going to generate? And how will you act towards that boss?

Whereas if you have a boss that you're not connecting with yet, and rather than going down the path of self-protectionism, which is all about these thoughts that you're having about them, about how they're not a good leader, and they're wrong, and they're not treating you well, you could start to look for evidence of what's working. You could start to say, *They were hard for a reason. I'm going to focus on what they do well. What can I learn from this person?*

You start to think about things that will drive different feelings about your boss. *How can I help them be successful? Where's the opportunity for me here? I can see they're trying their best. They're just human beings like me trying to figure it out.* There are all these things that you could think about your boss that would generate different feelings to create a more productive relationship. It's one thing as a person at work, as an individual who's in charge of their own performance and how they show up. Yes, you. I encourage you to take control of your mental health.

© SAVAGE LIFE

This is what I'm calling, your mental health is knowing what you're thinking, and what you're thinking is driving your behaviors. As an organization, it is also your responsibility as a manager. It's also your responsibility to help people grow. That's what you take on when you hire someone.

I would suggest, and I would offer you the idea that building in the opportunity to teach people how to think as part of performance development is a critical part of long-term behavioral change. And it creates results so much faster. Everything I teach in my membership is about how you choose to think and perform at your best. That includes overall leadership skills, feedback, communication, relationship development, and personal brand development. All those things at the core are about how you think.

So I would encourage you as an individual, and if you're in charge of running your PDP process, in your company, to think about how you can help people think differently and create really strong mental health for people at work. Of course, if you are a company and you want to talk about this more, I'm happy to chat with anyone who wants to talk about this – company or individual.

I'm really passionate about creating work environments that create mentally strong and emotionally healthy people. I don't mean being happy sunshine all the time. That's not emotional health. Life is 50/50. That's a conversation for another day. But it's okay to feel negative emotions sometimes. It's just about not indulging in them. That'll be a topic I'll talk about another day.

But it's learning how to feel negative emotions without freaking out. It's learning to process negative emotions and it's learning to choose to think differently, to be able to create different emotions, different feelings, and different behaviors. So I wanted to leave that with you today to get your brain thinking about how you can manage your mental health, in general, at work, and in your life.

If there is a different result that you're looking for in your life, in your career, or with your people, start with what you're thinking. I always say if you want to change your results, you have to change your mind.

That's all I have for you this week, my friends. I'll talk to you next week. Bye for now.

mel savage
EXECUTIVE COACHING

© SAVAGE LIFE