TRANSCRIPT DOWNLOAD

FIXING CRAPPY WORK RELATIONSHIPS

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.

Hey there, my friends. Mel Savage here from The Career Reset, where I help high-performing ambitious women achieve their goals faster, easier, and with a lot less drama so that we can have a lot more fun at work.

I think work needs to be fun. And I'm having so much fun right now. I'm not trying to rub it in anyone's face. I have been on lockdown like everyone else but working with people is fun. I choose to look at it as fun. I just get so much energy from other people, especially right now when we are confined.

There's all these variants and all these things going around. I just think it's such a pleasure to work with people, care about them, help them, and collaborate with them. It's honestly one of my favorite things to do. Even though I am apparently, according to Myers Briggs, 50/50, introvert-extrovert. Pretty much, I think it's like 51/49. I just think people are awesome.

That brings me to today's topic, which is around relationships. Because having relationships with people isn't always the easiest thing, especially in work environments. Because you're all working collaboratively to get to a goal, put stuff together, or reach results. We all want to be great at our jobs. We're afraid of being judged. And all this stuff happens at work with relationships. We have these thoughts around all these external things that are happening that impact the relationship.

Like, I can go for a beer with someone at a bar, and we can have an amazing time, then put me and that person on the same team trying to work towards a common goal. It may not be as easy to work with that person in that environment like the bar over a beer, which is much easier. I have to say in my life, I'm not suggesting this, but a lot of great relationships were formed and fixed over beers and bars. There are other ways to do it. And that's really what we're going to talk about today. This podcast is called fixing crappy work relationships.

Today, we're going to talk a lot about relationships in general, like work relationships in general, why they become crappy, why they're hard, what really makes a great work relationship. And then we're going to talk about how to address some of the ones that may not be working for you as well as you want them to. This is a big part of your career plan in general. When I talk to my clients about career planning, a lot of people think that the job and the career are the same thing. But they're not.

© SAVAGE LIFE

I say this all the time so you're going to have to bear with me, as I say it again, your job and your career are two different things. Your job is just one strategy within your career plan. A few strategies that I work with people on and one of the other major strategies beyond your actual role are the relationships that you build and the relationships that you nurture. I think it's really important to spend a lot of time on this podcast talking about how to build and nurture really strong work relationships inside the organization that you work out right now and certainly, outside the organization that is still in your field. I'm still talking about careers in general, about how are you nurturing them outside your organizations, in your industry, at events, whatever it's going to be.

I want to start with one of my own work relationships. And there's so many. I worked with so many people. And overall, I would say, I liked working with people, but I always wasn't always great at it in my life. And when it wasn't great, I always blamed the other person, for it not being great, which wasn't really the problem. But I remember, I had a couple of bosses that I was pretty convinced didn't like me. But there was one in particular, that I was pretty convinced didn't like me. And I might have been on the nose. I don't think she actually did like me. But she never came out and said that she didn't like me, to be honest.

Where it started was we weren't too chummy. She wasn't a chummy person. And she didn't really take on my ideas. She wasn't really welcoming to me. I was. So I was convinced that she really didn't like me. And it affected how nervous I was going into interactions with her. Like I said, she never actually came out and said she didn't like me. I still think that maybe there was something there. But who knows? Regardless, I was convinced at the time this woman didn't like me. So it affected everything I did.

I would show up nervous to meetings, and I would be second-guessing myself before I offered a solution to a problem. It affected how confident I was when I was presenting in a room when she was in it, or if I was asking for a specific opportunity or for help. How I was approaching it, I normally would just be like, *Hey, I need this or this came up, and this is what I want to do about it. That's how I want to work.* But for whatever reason, I put up these barriers for myself because I was convinced that she didn't like me.

I wanted her to like me, so I was like, my own personality doesn't work in this situation. Maybe I could figure out how to perform in a way that would get her to like me. But no matter what I did, it didn't change. This, by the way, is all going on in my head. And I would complain. I didn't really have an outlet. I wasn't in my own mind getting anywhere with this woman. So then I would complain about it. I needed an outlet. I would complain to my husband and I would complain to my workmates and I would blame her. What was wrong with her? She doesn't like me. She did this and she did that. It was bullshit. Really, it was all bullshit.

I even thought about quitting my job at the time to the point that I worked myself up, and I wasn't having fun, because I was convinced this woman didn't like me. I was kind of not in a good place. She could have reached out. She could have said, *What's going on with you?* That wasn't her thing, whatever. Finally, I decided to talk to her about it. And you know what? She said to me, *Look, I have no problem with you. I have some problems with these things or performance-based things.* And things that she wanted me to deliver on which she didn't communicate. Fine. But I didn't ask, either.

I'm in control of how I perform. I'm in control of the information I give. So just talking to her about it, and understanding that for her it wasn't personal, it was professional, and we could move on was actually a load off my mind. It was still hard to get past that for me in that particular situation. But for me, what I realized at that moment was I had worked myself up to changing who I was, trying to '*perform*' for her, and finding a way for her

© SAVAGE LIFE

to like me, people pleasing and there was lots of perfectionism. I needed to get this just right, or she was going to be mad, *yada, yada, yada* to the point where I was unhappy.

I was doing unprofessional things like complaining about her behind her back. I was thinking about quitting my job. That's quite dramatic, I think. And I'm a senior. I'm a hard worker. I was very high performing, good reviews, all this kind of stuff. It wasn't like I was the problem. But there were just things that we didn't connect on. She didn't like the way I was doing it. I'm not saying she was perfect. I'm not saying that she couldn't have shown better leadership, whatever. But at the end of the day, my experience in my job is on me and I was creating this drama experience for myself that didn't need to be there.

Some of the lessons I learned from that experience, and certainly many relationship experiences are, I say this because it's going to sound weird. But the very first thing is what other people think about you is on them, it's not on you. You cannot control what other people think about you. They get to think whatever they want. It doesn't matter what you do, you could do the same thing. I remember I was, I'm quite outspoken. I'm generally the kind of person who just shares my opinion on stuff. And I share it fairly confidently, especially when we're working on something. We got to get it out. I have strong opinions and just share them. Let's get through this, whatever.

There would be people who were intimidated by me along the way. Now, there are people who really appreciated my style. They knew where they stood, they knew what we were doing. They knew I had no agenda like we were just going to figure this out and move forward. And then there are people who are like, *She's scary. I don't know how to talk to her. I'm afraid to ask her questions.* But I was just being me. And whether that's right or wrong, who gets to decide at the end of the day?

The point I want to make is, if you're in a room with 10 people, there are going to be 10 different opinions about you. Some of them are going to be similar, some of them are going to be totally different. The different opinions aren't based on how you're behaving. The different opinions are based on what people are thinking, where they're coming from, and the stories they're telling themselves about you in their heads. Whether those stories are right or wrong, I always say it's none of my business. I say that now but it is none of my business.

I can't control it. If there's someone in the room who's a bit more inexperienced, or a bit shy, or a bit less confident, or whatever when I'm in these rooms, how can I change myself to make that person comfortable is not a place I want to go. Why would I do that? Just like if there is a person in the room who's really outspoken and I'm not. I'm not going to change myself to being outspoken just to please them. I need to be who I am. And that needs to be enough. Having the courage to let people be wrong about you is okay. That takes a lot of courage because you can't control what people think about you. It would be so exhausting.

What people think about you is like if you do something and then everyone writes down what they think about. Then they put that in a hat and then they pull it out. That's what it's like. You pull out what this person thinks and what this person thinks. You cannot control it. And the more you try to do it, the more exhausting it is. The more you start to question yourself, the more you lose your confidence, and the more you lose sight of who you are. So the most important thing that you can do is stop trying to control what other people think about you. Don't let it be your business. You want to think this? That's your business, not my business.

I know in a work environment, maybe it is a little bit about your business about what your boss thinks about your selling your peers think about you, but you can deal with that. You can understand it, you can come to

© SAVAGE LIFE

agreements, you can set boundaries, you can collaborate. You can do all of these things. You don't need to change who you are. Because the more you change who you are and try to control other people liking you by changing who you are, the more you're going down a path that's not going to lead to success, to be honest.

You just really need to lean into yourself and work with people to understand how you are and who you are is going to benefit the situation. How can you really leverage and amplify who you already are to solve the problem, build the relationship, and fix the situation, versus trying to change who you are? A lot of the time, people spend so much time people pleasing or on perfectionism. These are the kinds of things that we do and I've done them all to try to get people to like you.

People please by maybe not saying what you want, or saying or trying to say in a way that makes them happy. Or perfectionism, where you're trying to make everything perfect before you share it. Or not setting boundaries with people, letting them step over your values or whatever. That's another form of people-pleasing. I have a really good podcast on perfectionism and a really good one on boundaries, too. I'll put those in the show notes, which will be at thecareerreset.com/58. This is episode 58.

So that's really what I want to say. I think on the back of that not controlling what other people think about you, I just also want to, as a sidebar, like a little aside, that it doesn't really matter if people like you, anyway. I will say this. You don't need to be liked. I would get rid of that idea. You need to be respected for what you do, the contributions you make, what kind of leader you are, who you are as a person, and how that impacts the kind of leader you are in the work that you do, and being proud of that, and being confident about that.

That's what people respect. Delivering results. That's what people respect. Caring about people, nurturing your team. That's what people respect. Get a sense of what you need to be successful in your job, and then do it through who you are, not who other people want you to be. Because respect is so much more important. I've been in situations where I love working with certain people. They're so much fun to work with.

I've been asked, *Would you promote this person to this job?* And I've had to say no. I really like them. I like working with them. But that doesn't matter when it comes to should this person be doing whatever role it is. Respect, credibility, and doing the job well, that's what's most important.

Honestly, if you spend 50% less time, I would spend 100% last time, but let's just start slow, like 10, 20, 50% less time worrying about what people think about you, and you invest that time into really learning about how to optimize who you are in relationship to the goals that you're setting for yourself within your team, your job, whatever it is, that's going to make so much more difference. That's the first thing that I want to share with you.

The second thing I want to share is really about what makes a great relationship, the quality of a relationship. I've said this before, I'll link to a couple of other relationship podcasts that I've done. But the quality of a relationship is really in your mind. We talk all the time about how relationships are between two people. There's them, there's you, and there's the space in between. What I want to offer you is the entirety of the quality of the relationship, when I say the quality of the relationship, is it a good relationship, a bad relationship, is it a you don't give a crap relationship, whatever. The quality of that relationship is all in your mind?

Have you ever been in a situation where you really liked somebody, you get along with them, but they don't like you back? Or someone really likes you and you're like, *Meh, I don't know.* You have been in relationships. I would

© SAVAGE LIFE

have a relationship with the CEO of my company, for instance, when I was working in corporate. Maybe they didn't even know I existed when I was a junior. You have a relationship with the senior people in your organization. They don't know who you are, but you have a relationship with this person.

If there's anyone that you're thinking about right now. Like I have a relationship with the woman who runs the coaching school where I was certified. It's Life Coach School, it's an amazing school by Brooke Castillo. I have a really strong relationship with Brooke Castillo. She doesn't even know who I am. That's fine. That's totally fine. But I think about her, I watch her on videos, I have thoughts about her. That creates my relationship with her. So I want to just say there are three things that create the quality of the relationship you have with someone. And those three things are all based on your thinking, all of them.

The first one is what you think about that other person. If you have negative thoughts about the other person, that's going to feed into the quality of the relationship. If you have neutral or positive thoughts, it's going to fit into the quality of the relationship. You get to think whatever you want about that person. All the thoughts are optional, and you might have thoughts like this person is not qualified. And also, this person is really great at this other thing. You get to choose.

There's going to be 50/50/ You're going to have maybe negative thoughts and positive thoughts and neutral thoughts about these people that you're working with. Sometimes we think that when we see something negative or we have something negative about that person, we have to believe that thought. We have to focus on that thought like someone's got a gun to our head or something. No.

Which thoughts you focus on is a choice. You can choose to focus on the weaknesses of a person, or where they don't align with how you think, or mistakes that they have made. You can focus on those things or you can focus on where they excel, how you can help them, and what you really enjoy about them. All of those are available to you. You get to choose which ones you focus on. They're all true. It's not like you're deluding yourself or anything if you believe all the thoughts and they're true to you. You get to choose which ones you focus on.

If you want to have a good relationship, someone with someone, try focusing on the things that you actually enjoy and like about them. Try focusing on the positive things. A quality relationship really is about what you think about them. It's also about what you think they think about you. So what you think about them, and what you think they think about you.

Like my example of my boss, I thought she didn't like me, I thought she had a problem with me. So I let that manifest and grow into this big honking drama that didn't need to be there. Meanwhile, she's over there, not thinking about me. I'm over here swimming in this mud. She's over there, totally fine. I'm creating my own drama. And the things that I created in my mind that I thought she thought about me weren't even true. But because I believed them, I made drama out of them and it impacted how I showed up for the relationship.

If I wasn't thinking she didn't me. If I was like, it doesn't matter if she likes me, whatever. I'm going to do my job. Or like, that was weird in the meeting. I'm just going to go ask her what that was about, get it out of my brain. If I showed up for the relationship like I normally am, then it would have been fine. If I didn't actually spend time worrying about what I thought she thought about me, it would have been fine. So the quality of the relationship is not just about what you think about them, it's what you think they think about you. And you should get that really

© SAVAGE LIFE

right. If you're not sure who you should ask, don't assume. This can really get messy, and make you show up in ways your thoughts will turn into actions that maybe you don't like.

The third thing is what you think about yourself in the context of that person. This is a huge one. What do you think about yourself in the context of that person? What I think about myself in the context of a peer is going to be different from what I think of myself in the context of a rapport, versus a boss versus the president versus a friend. I have different thoughts about who I am in each of those situations, which in itself is so weird. What you think about yourself in the context of the other person is critical.

I remember, there was this woman I worked with. She was so good at her job. And I thought less of myself in the context of her, which was insane. Why would I do that to myself? Of course, I've learned to be much more confident. And it's something that I teach as well. But if this is you, if you're someone who thinks less of yourself in the context of someone else, you need to come and talk to me because that is a huge waste of your time.

But I did that. I would think less of myself in the context of, say, someone I felt really competitive or was threatened by, which is also a huge waste of time, versus being intimidated by someone in authority, like the CEO. I want them to like me so much so I get all nervous, which is something that people do all the time as well.

So you want to think about yourself and ask yourself, *What am I thinking about myself in the context of this person? And do I really want to think that? Do I need to really worry? Why do I have to change myself and be nervous so much, just because they have the title CEO? I work for this company. I do a good job. I have people who like who I am. I'm just going to be myself. I don't care if your title is CEO, boss person, or report person. I'm just going to be who I am in all those situations, a professional. That's part of who I am, the professional version of me.*

I get to choose who I want to be in those situations. But so often, the thoughts that we have about ourselves in the context of people make us react in a certain way. I want to sum this up by saying, that the quality of the relationship that you have with this person is based on those three things. What you think about them, what you think they think about you, and what you think about yourself in the context of them. And those are all thoughts. In all cases, they're thoughts. I just want to underline thoughts are optional. You don't have to think anything. No one has a gun to your head.

I bet you if you sat down, and you thought about any one person, you would have positive thoughts and negative thoughts and neutral thoughts about that person. You can choose to believe any of them. As long as you believe that. If you just write down all the thoughts you believe about a person, I bet you there are positive things you believe about that person and negative things. So often, we tend to gravitate to the negative things. Our brain wants us to go there. But you could also just choose to believe the positive things. I bet if you tried that for one day, your whole situation would change for that day with that person. I bet you were like, *Huh, that's different.* I bet you would have a good day. Just try it and see what happens.

Then I'll do this quickly because it really wants to talk about this. But this is less about your mindset, but more maybe an action, really, and how to address a sticky relationship. If you have a relationship with someone who isn't so great, why not just address it? Why not just go after it? Sit down and talk to them. Why let that situation fester? Because, one, maybe you're going to work with them at some point. Maybe you got to run with them later in your career.

© SAVAGE LIFE

What's the point of having a bad relationship with someone? It doesn't make anyone feel good. You don't have to like everybody. You don't have to go for beers with everybody. You don't have to be best buds with everybody. But a solid working relationship never hurts. Now, again, if they don't want to work with you, they don't want to work with you.

There was this gal. I would try it differently now that I'm a coach, and I've been coaching for so long, I probably would approach it differently. But there was this woman at McDonald's, who I tried so many times to sit down and talk to her. Like, let's just kind of get it out on the table like, how can we work better together? And she was just like, *I just don't like you.* Sometimes, that's all it is. You can't force anyone to like you. And if she wants to base our relationship on whether she likes me or not, that's her choice. My job is just to be okay with that.

People can be wrong about me. People can not like me. It doesn't mean anything about me. It only says something about them. That was a special case. That was the only case in my life where someone came to me and said, *I just don't like you and I don't want to work with you.* Okay, fine. But usually, when you talk to somebody, it turns out that nothing's actually wrong. Everything's fine. It was just in your head the whole time. The other thing that happened was there was a misunderstanding.

It was a misunderstanding, or maybe you actually did do something that you thoughtlessly did. Not on purpose. You can apologize for it. Or you can explain it. Or you can just say, *Yeah, I meant to do that. And here's why*. You don't have to give your power away to this person and be like, *Oh, I'm so sorry.* But you can just acknowledge it and go, *Yeah, my bad. I did do that. And I don't think I would do that again.*

Talking to someone is so helpful, especially if you actually care what they're going to say and you don't have your ego involved. Talking to them with the intention of working with them better, with the intention of getting along with them truly, truly feeling compassion and curiosity. Not like protection and ego and all that kind of stuff. Let all that stuff go. And just be open-minded and say, *I really want to work with you. I like you. Let's do this thing.*

So that's really what I want to share with you today on work relationships because we think they have all this pressure on them, but they don't have to. They don't have to. If you're having a work relationship, whether that's your boss, I specialize in the boss thing, because I've gone through so many bad boss relationships, and I've learned to work through them. If you're having a tough relationship with your boss or a colleague or maybe with your reports, or whatever it is, come and talk to me like let's work through it. You can book a free consultation at melsavage.com/chat.

Just in summary, today, you can't control what people think about you. When people think about you, none of your business. They can think whatever they want. Let them. Let them be wrong about you. You have to focus on doing your job, doing what you say you're going to do, learning from your mistakes, and being the best version of yourself that aligns with all of your goals, and all the things that you're supposed to deliver. Just show up as the best version of yourself to do that and lean into it. Because that version that you are, that person that you are, is totally perfect just the way you are. So don't try to control it.

Instead, invest that energy in being your best self. Take back that energy and focus on showing up as the best version of yourself. Because when you're not showing up as the best version of yourself, that's when you get in

© SAVAGE LIFE

your own way. Stop trying to get other people to like you and start focusing on you liking you. Get a much better investment of your energy.

Quality relationships are all in your mind, my friend. And all the thoughts in your mind are optional. You can choose to think whatever you want about people. So why not choose something that actually helps the relationship versus hinders it? Just something to think about.

And, thirdly, if you have a sticky relationship, I would allow yourself to get really uncomfortable, and embrace the discomfort of going and talking to the person. The only reason it's so uncomfortable to go and talk to that person is because you are worried that you're going to be rejected or be hurt or whatever. But again, that's also in your control. You can go and show up and talk to that person. Be open-minded, care about them, listen to them, be curious, and just chat it out like two human beings. It works. Humanity and caring about people. It actually works, my friends. So try that this week.

I will talk to you next week. Have a great one, my friends. Bye for now.

© SAVAGE LIFE