Susan brady (online-audio-converter.com)

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**SPEAKERS**

Susan Brady, Murielle Machiels

Hi Susan, who are you,

I am a mother of two thriving teenage daughters, while one is now 21 is now and 17. I'm a partner to a wonderful and supportive man. I'm also an author and a writer. And I'm an enthusiast about eradicating harshness in the world. I'm the CEO of an inclusive leadership institute. And I'm a coach and an advisor on gender and leadership, and leadership, and an overall sort of supporter to all humans to live in their best self. So Wow.

Impressive. It's very impressive. And so I also read that you specialised or really like empathy. And so my first question was, why is empathy so important as a leader? Oh, you

know, I think without empathy, we cannot be in healthy connection with ourselves or others. So, first, it has to happen inside ourselves. And I, I see so many people so hard on themselves, and so critical of themselves and working harder and harder and harder. This is your expertise, and not giving themselves the kind of compassion or empathy that they might be more prone to give others. And conversely, sometimes we don't give others empathy or compassion. And I do think that at the core of what it means to lead in any facet of life, regardless of power or position, is it is a relationship. It's a relationship itself. It's a relationship with other and and it's really hard to have a healthy, meaningful connecting relationship if we don't have empathy.

Yeah, yeah, I agree. And why do you think, because I noticed that it's a skill that became more and more important in the last years. Why do you think is that?

Right? So look, I think there's a convergence of phenomenon causing stress for leaders at all levels for humans, that demands a new playbook. You know, to name five, you know, we're in a pairing post pandemic futures, hybrid world that keeps changing. We have a mental health crisis, a wellbeing crisis, yes. There's demands for inclusion and belonging, and equity and calls to particularly men in power to lead the way that is rife with risk and fear. There's, you know, an increasingly hate filled, fractured and fragmented political climate, not just here in the US, but I would say globally, yes. And, you know, our economic uncertainty is inviting scarcity mentality, you know, take all that stir, right. And, you know, humans are stressed out and probably less inclined to seek first to connect as a human being with other human beings, and skip over that just to get things done. And all of that is preventing us from maybe being our best self, which is our most, you know, empathic respecting self.

Yeah. Yeah. And I also think that because the world has become so complex and interconnected, the challenges are also tougher than then in the past. And so, we need teams to solve these challenges. It's not enough anymore to have this all powerful leader that finds a solution. And then communicates it to the rest of his team. And to have those well functioning team, the psychological safety is so important. And there again, I think empathy plays a role as well.

You know, look, it's certainly in the halls of corporate America, there are conversations about how to have a culture of inclusion, which is what my specialty is. And, of course, you can't have that without psychological safety. But at the end of the day, organisations and people want to feel like they are striving to produce something worthy, you know, hitting our goals, or creating the kind of, you know, changes in the world we want to create. And I, if we back up a few steps, none of this is possible if we're not leading from our best selves. And I see people fundamentally leaving themselves behind with great pursuit for things like psychological safety and inclusive environments and innovating and problem solving. And yet they behave in ways that don't draw other people in. Yes. And so that's, that's been my life's work.

Why do you think because I can, I think when I talk to leaders, the vast majority, at least in Europe, of course, I don't know when the US understand that empathy, listening, trusting, caring has become very, very important. But when I talk to their team members, it's not always the behaviours they show. So what do you think is preventing leaders from being empathic at work?

You know, I think that we are still even even even even though traits like empathy, like listening, like connecting, are becoming part of what it means to succeed. As a leader, we are rewarded for getting things done for hitting goals for maximising our time for surpassing goals. And I think there's a natural tension there. I also think that my, my joke for leaders material is that the higher you are in an organisation, the harder people laugh at your jokes, and the less people tell you the truth. So people aren't being told the truth. And so what I implore to leaders of all identities is to check in to see if your intention is aligned with your impact. So I'm really working on becoming more connected, and not just doing doing doing when I had the meeting yesterday, how did that land for you? Oh, it didn't land like I was connecting. Okay, is there anything I can do to close that gap? So, so the language I offer leaders everywhere is, if you wake up with the pure intention, good intention of closing the gap between what you want to do, how you want to show up, and how you actually show? You know, we're all learning, it's just right. So we don't have to go and feel bad about ourselves. We can say, okay, we're working on it, how can I be better and try it out? Again? You know?

Yeah, I really liked that. Because I think, yeah, there there is an issue with this feedback culture. I think it's difficult for people to give feedback, and especially give feedback to people that are in a powerful position. But I think it also is difficult for people to receive feedback, because it hurts and, and often, in my experience, a lot of leaders became leaders and climbed the ladder, because they had, like, a little problem with recognition or a little need to prove that they are worth it. Yeah. And so for them feedback, it's even harder.

Yes. I mean, I know that's true for me, right? My achievement orientation. i From an early age, I knew I, you know, and was and was told I was good at leading and making things happen and enrolling others, and I put so much good energy into everything I do. When I got negative feedback. I would be like, really, you know, I mean, can't you see how hard I'm trying here, you know? And so it didn't cause the effort and the need for wanting to have the accolades didn't come shoot with any difficult feedback, and so I'm a recovering overachiever. And, and still, you know, and still striving, right, I think there's a difference between between healthy striving and hustling for our weddings, and a lot of achievers hustle. And it doesn't feel good to be on the other end of someone who hustles because they're doing it for them. You know, healthy striving is when you're giving up your gifts. For others, it's you feel differently about people who get things done in big ways, when they're striving versus hustling. But I want to say this, my top three tips for giving feedback is assume good intention, assume good intention and assume good intention. So I just had a feedback conversation this week with a member of the Institute team. And the first, probably five to eight minutes was, I want to share with you what I see you doing that is so awesome. And how I see your intention is this, this, this, it's all good. The impact is tricky. And so and it's usually because people get into an immoderate behaviour, that's all. And so I don't have to make you wrong or bad, or sabotage your self esteem or make you you know what I mean? I can say, We're just moving into moderate with this piece, what gifts to be able to tell that to someone who is working so hard to show up so well. And you know what I mean? So starting from a place of good intention, I assume yours. What a gift what a generosity. And, and I teach it, and I try to practice it imperfectly, because of course I get disappointed in others, just like I'm human. Yes.

Yeah. No, I agree. And one thing that came into my mind as well. And it's, it's from Carol Dweck, it's this fixed mindset is we have been educated to to be focused on results. And when we're too focused on results, and maybe not enough on the process to get these results, we can immediately assume or we unconsciously, will assume that if I don't get the result, it means that I'm a failure, instead of I failed at something. And I learned from it, and I'll try again. And I think that a lot of great leaders, unfortunately, have also this fixed mindset and see this feedback as really, it means there is something wrong with me, it's more than okay, that's okay. It's nice, because now I have more room to improve myself. I'm not there yet, but I'll get there.

You know, one of the things that I was delighted by in the field research of my latest book, arrive and thrive was this notion of maturation and continuation. And with the practices, these are seven practices for navigating leadership, which we offered for women, but apply to all humans. Each of the practices are about evolving over time. And you know, even authenticity, I think that's the research on authenticity. And I included Carol's works, this is what made me think of it work. The research on authenticity is actually counter to what I think sometimes we think, which is once you discover your true self, that's your true self. It's like, actually, no, you know what I mean? Like, it's a rediscovery. And so we offer a values exercise in in the chapter about authenticity and fostering authenticity. And what was so interesting is even looking for myself, like the, the values I have that makes me, me, that that I think, helped me show up as my true self are, are not altogether different than they were 10 years ago. But 10 years ago, I had, you know, an eight and a 10 year old and I was working, working, working. And I mean, it was like a non stop. And I valued other things today. And it did happen to me to correlate with the independent the growing independence of my children. But today, I noticed, I think how I would define my authentic self is really different. And so just the thought that that'll change over time was actually very freeing. At first it was a little bit disconcerting. Because I think people think that there's like this person You'd have self and you'll arrive. Ah, okay. And then I'll feel calm. And I'll feel knowing and I'll feel wise and I'll feel integrated and aligned and my energy, you know, ya know,

until those needs are met, and then you have new needs and new values that you're pursuing. And yeah, yeah, and I agree. And that's why we often say also new level new devil,

new level new devil. Oh my gosh, I love that. I hadn't heard that. I love that. I'm gonna write that down.

Yes, yes. Yes.

So it's all about the journey and constantly growing and yeah, and evolving towards a new version of ourselves, of course, that is aligned with our values of that moment, hopefully, and not with what society expects us to be.

Yeah, yep. Yep.

Yeah, and I, we included in the book, the the very first practice of arriving and thriving is about investing and leading from your best self. And the way we define this is, it's where your strengths and talents be that character strengths you were born with, or, or learned strengths and talents over the course of your life, where those come together with where you're called to add value. And when that's emerge, emerging with and or connecting with what brings you vitality. So when my strengths and talents are called to serve, and that makes me joyful, boom, I'm in my best self. So I'm not advocating that everybody find their best selves zone and attempt to live there all the time, no realistic pursuit, I am advocating to at least figure out what it is, yeah. And pay attention to how this changes over time, and in what contexts and in what relationships, and start to become allergic to what throws you out of your best self. Be that self care practices that you know, you should do that you aren't like sleeping or moving your body or eating whatever foods make you feel good, all the way to, you know, working in environments where you feel valued and respected. You know. And so while that shifts, I do think there's a, there's an opportunity for us all to familiar for, to get to know ourselves at our best. And I think it's an obligate, I would say it's, I feel like it's my obligation, the minute I agree to lead other human beings at home or at work, I have an an unwritten obligation to do so it as clean away as possible. And my clean way is making sure my act is together. And don't spray my frustration and my anxiety and my worry, or my fear or my anger out on the people around me that I come back to a place of compassion and love for me and others. Or I take action. It's a moment to moment practice. And it's hard. Sometimes it's hard. Sometimes it's hard. Yeah, it

requires practice. And because we now talk about your book, I'm also curious, how did you come to these seven impactful practices? Because I think you've interviewed many leaders, how many did you interview we interviewed

24 Sitting C level executives, most of whom were women, which is triumphant. But we came to this seven practices before our interviews, and a lot of this is I had the opportunity and honour to co create this work with my co authors, both of whom we all come from very different arenas. Janet Foudy is the Executive Chair of Deloitte us. She has a storied career in her industry and is running that organisation, the the work she's done to as as a woman leader, no less, to talk about authenticity to talk about vision. She was doing this before I met her. She hadn't codified her sort of practices yet. And then we talked to Lynn Perry Wooten who is a scholar and academic and was at the University of Michigan in Michigan and then at the Ross School of Business and then was with Cornell for a series of years years and now is the president of Simmons University in Boston as our first African American president, and she has done a good amount of work on crisis. Leadership and has a lot published. And she and Janet and I got together and it's like 85 years of scholarship and field research and, you know, evidence based leadership work that we've done. And we wrestled with this for a while. And these themes like, you know, kind of organically emerged. And so those people haven't seen the work. It's investing in your best self. Cultivating courage.

Very good. That one I feel we miss so much courage in companies,

we miss so much courage in politics

also in Yeah,

I learned about courage while writing the book is courage is not the absence of fear. No, exactly. It's the it's the presence of vulnerability. It's the presence of taking a risk. And we overestimate

the risk a lot. Yes, yes. And

the fall of from the risk. So I talked about authenticity. That's a practice, fostering resilience is another practice. And what we we talk in depth about is when you have a setback, however you would define that as you come through it, you will not arrive where you were, at the start of your setback, you're going to be catapulted forward to a different awareness, a different maturity, perhaps, in a different relationship or a different job, whatever it is, but you've had growth. And I think, not that that's easy at all. The opportunity, though, is to really pause and reflect what is it about this setback that provides opportunity that I can offer to others for growth right?

Or to myself?

Yeah, like, what did I learn that I want to kind of hang on to for a while and practice?

Inspiring a bold vision is our fifth practice. Creating a healthy team environment is our sixth and our seventh is fostering a culture of inclusion. And we offer the work of the inclusive leader Deloitte has a good amount of research on inclusive leadership, so to sevens University, and so we offer both frameworks and commingle them in the book. And I think it's sort of the practices go from very, very, you know, sort of me oriented, what we call in trust, personal, my relationship with myself to interpersonal, meeting others. And so, I think there's something for everybody in the seven practices. And there's a lot of tools. So what we did when we interviewed others is we said, hey, what have these practices speak to you? What of them do you think has really been helpful for you in your own leadership rise? And it's funny, the only one who said all seven was Indra Nooyi, who's the recently retired chairman and CEO of PepsiCo worldwide. And she, she said, I'm not going to pick one. And so that's how she became the author of our foreword to the book, because she talks about the importance of all seven practices. So it was such an honour to to interview these incredible leaders and get their validation and insights around the different ways courage and authenticity and resilience and teamwork has shown up for them. Very cool. But yeah,

yeah, no, I really love your, your practices, I think they're a very good summary. But they, I feel like they all require a deep connection with yourself and, and this alignment between your mind your heart and your body. Because I often say, when leaders asked me I'd like to be an inspiring leader. I will often say being an inspiring leader is more about removing layers that you put on yourself to protect yourself. And then having this alignment between what you say what you feel and what you do, and also what transpires from your body, of course, because we can already see somebody's how somebody is walking or positioning itself. You can see already that it's an inspiring person or not.

I love that you talk about alignment. When I first was working on investing in your best self and writing about it, I really was taken by the notion of best self. What a tall order that is like hold on. I'm supposed to be my best self every day all They, I just, I don't know, there's something about it that didn't click for me. So I asked several friends, male female, if, what word they would use to describe themselves when they're at their best without using the word best. And I loved what I heard, which was my authentic self, my, my integrated self, my harmonious self, my aligned self. My true self. So, you know, I think the the, the tie that binds is it is a alignment with Mind Body Spirit. And, you know, when leaders are like, what does that mean? When I say, okay, is your energy out in front of you? Back in the last conversation you are in, in your head? Or are you feeling like you can be present, with your body with yourself energetically with whoever, wherever you are? That's how you know you're aligned. It's a simple like, quick check, like, how am I doing? And with the emergence of all these breathing activities, some leaders are allergic to the concept of mindfulness, and I practice micro mindfulness. So I am not a 20 minute a day meditator. The practice of returning to best self is I offer four steps. It is about pausing between stimulus and response, yes, give ourselves the opportunity to realign. And, you know, breathing is a great taking a walk, taking a timeout, you know, whatever it is, you can do it in a meeting, you can do it over the course of a day, oftentimes, in response to something that's triggered us out of alignment, right, so someone says something, or if all of a sudden there's a new pressure or stressor, it's easy to get out of alignment with ourselves. And so I'm interested in people like really flexing the muscle of and taking very seriously their re alignment moments so that they can show up as their best self. Yeah. Yeah. So we're, we're in the same business.

Yeah, yeah, definitely. And I was also thinking you were talking about setbacks, and what can you learn from them. And what I feel also with that, when you have a setback, or really a breakdown or a crisis, it's only when you allow yourself to feel the suffering, to feel the negative emotions that go with that, that you also find the strength and the courage to change yourself and to grow. And that's courage. That's courage to face some things inside of you that maybe you've put a lid on for many years, because you didn't want to face it. But I feel like the higher you get in an organisation or the most inspiring you want to be, also, the more you need to do that work to free yourself from unhealthy conditions, behaviours, and we programme yourself to really achieve what you'd like to achieve and respond to situations instead of reacting a certain way.

Yeah, yeah.

You know, the notion of the only way out is through. I never really understood that until I realised, Oh, okay. I'm supposed to feel this and it doesn't feel good. And then when we let ourselves release there's a lightness after.

Definitely. And we're afraid sometimes because we're afraid if I allow myself to feel that I might get stuck into it, or get depressed or and it's the contrary it's often we get stuck in it or depressed or have a lot of anxiety because we don't actually face everything we should face.

Yeah, yeah. Yes.

Oh my gosh, but you know, don't go it alone. Don't go it alone. Don't go it alone. No, no. My number one piece of advice coming out of this project, and also my own self journey, is don't leave yourself behind and in so doing, ask for help. You know, we we studied health and help and the correlation of how misunderstood asking for help is because and I'm not talking about yes, go to therapy if you need therapy. Yes, get an executive coach. If you need an executive coach, that kind of help. I'm talking about calling a friend when you're down and just saying like, I am in pain, and I just need, like someone to come sit with me on the couch, right? We underestimate how much other human beings

love. Healthy, helping?

Yes, exactly. I always say the same, it's a gift, when you ask someone for help, it's a gift, you give that person as well,

who doesn't want to feel needed? Yeah. And valued. So it's the corollary is, if we know that, let's just take inclusion requires people to show up as their unique, authentic, true self, with, you know, presenting who they really are combined with, needing to feel valued, right. And those are the core ingredients to even having a shot at having an inclusive team or an inclusive culture, just to exist, you know, how we can help each other is, you know, honour each other's unique gifts, tell each other how much we appreciate the things that make you special. And ask others for help for the things that they're great at. What Yeah, it's like a, we do that today. Everybody can think of something today, or somebody you know, who they can say, well, I really appreciate this about you. And maybe another person or maybe the same person to say, I would love it if you could help me with. Yeah.

So no, of course, it's a balance. So because you have those people that constantly asked for help and are like helplessness. So I often say to people, everything is a balance. It's not about never asking help, or asking help for every time you just feel something inside of you. When you ask for help from someone else. It's yeah, it's

we're talking about as moderation. You know, if there's, if you were to quiz my kids, and say, What do you think your mother? You know, what, what piece of advice do you Will you always remember that your mother said, I mean, even their friends say it, as they say goodbye going out to a party, they're like, I know, be mad or it be moderate. You know, moderation is key, we often don't see our own immoderate behaviour, which just goes back to our conversation about feedback, it's helpful to see, but if we start to parent ourselves, by checking in with, is this moderate? Am I asking too much of this person? The best thing to do is check in with them around you like, gosh, what am I immoderately x, x x, whatever x is, right? But that I think is the whole story here. As I think about my life's work, and about a kind of coming into alignment that you do. I think it's a consciousness that I feel like, above all, I'm, I'm asking everybody to say, Okay, what does that mean? You know, it's, am I aware that what I think and feel drives what I say and do? And how is that gap between my intention and impact? Because when it's aligned, I'll feel better about me. And chances are the people who love me and the people who I work with, and the people who I aim to inspire will feel better about me too, you know? Yeah. What changes me changes we?

Yeah. Great. Now, where can people find you? Or your book?

Thank you. So, right. I probably the best place to go is inclusive leadership.com. We also have a book website arrive and thrive.com. And certainly in the US, LinkedIn is sort of the prolific professional way to stay in contact so you're up as well. Yeah. Okay. So I'm on LinkedIn using my, my, my, my birth name Susan McEntee, Brady. But you can also Google Susan Brady, and you probably can find me and arrive and thrive. So Murielle thank you so much for for having me today. It's been great to talk to you. I love your energy. It's just like, Yeah, I can't wait to read your book.

Thank you. Thank you. And I'll order your book and read it because I think the seven principles are really great and I'll probably learn something from it and also about your writing. So thank you very much.