

Disrupt Yourself Podcast

EPISODE 287: STEPHEN M.R. COVEY & MCKINLEE COVEY

Welcome back to the Disrupt Yourself podcast, where we provide strategies and advice on how to climb the S Curve of Learning in your professional and personal life, disrupting who you are now to slingshot into who you want to be. I'm your host, Whitney Johnson. This week, we cover a big and thorny topic, trust. But we're not focusing on how to determine if someone is trustworthy. Our minds are wired to always be on the lookout for that. Instead, we're going to talk about our ability to trust others. To delegate those big projects. We're so used to doing ourselves to relinquish control and face the possibility that someone else might do it differently, do it worse, or even do it better than us. This can be scary in business or creativity or relationships, especially parenting. But our guests, Stephen M.R. Covey. Yes, he's the son of the *Seven Habits*. Covey, that one. And McKinlee Covey, who's obviously the granddaughter, say that overcoming this fear is well worth it and can be absolutely life-changing for both the truster and the trustee. This father-daughter team have a new book out entitled *Trust and Inspire How Truly Great Leaders Unleash the Greatness in Others*. It's filled with fantastic examples of how setting up clear expectations and boundaries can form a cycle of trust that can inspire teams to greatness. They also argue that the old approach to management, commanding and controlling, is outdated, especially in an era of hybrid work and high burnout. I trust you'll enjoy this conversation as much as I did.

Whitney Johnson: Stephen, you have several coauthors on this book, including your daughter McKinlee. And in our last interview, you talked about a story. And I want all of our listeners to go back and listen to that because it is a fantastic story. It's the green and clean story. So, what I would love is for you to recap that story quickly, and then we're going to hand the mic over to McKinlee to tell her own green and clean story. So, go ahead, Stephen.

Stephen Covey: Yeah, well, it's a fun story. It's a great story. And it really is a trust and inspire story. You know, I was just a young boy, seven years old. My father is delegating, extending trust to me. He's telling me to take responsibility

for our lawn, to make sure our lawn is green and clean. Trains me for two weeks, turns it over to me after all this training, and then I do nothing. And, and, you know, but the thing about it is that he had in the training, he not only created expectations green and clean, he also created accountability, a process for accountability that we would walk around once a week to see how the lawn was doing. And in the process of doing that, I kind of judged myself as a seven-year-old boy, and I realized I've done nothing. This lawn is not green, and it's not clean. And it was at that moment that I kind of took responsibility for it. And it ended up being a great illustration because the rest of the summer and then for many, many years beyond that, I took over that yard, and it was green, and it was clean.

Stephen Covey: And yet, at first, I had squandered it, had done nothing. And so, my father had been very tempted to kind of just pull it back, thinking he's too young, he can't handle this, but he stayed with it. So, my father would teach this in Seven Habits to talk about a win-win performance agreement. I was seven years old with me. I did not understand what those words meant. But here's what I did know. As a seven-year-old, I felt trusted. I felt my father trusted me, and I didn't want to let him down. It's my real first experience with the power of being trusted. What it does to people, how it inspires them, brings out the best in them. And I rose to the occasion and, but my father summarized it this way. He said, Look, my main goal was to grow my kids, not the grass, but in the process of focusing on growing us kids. He also got a green and clean lawn too, because I did rise to the occasion and take care of it. So, he ended up with both.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah. Okay. I want to punctuate a few. So, grow the kids, not the grass. Yeah. So powerful. And I'm thinking about a quote paraphrasing is that delegation is not about getting more things done. It's about growing people.

Stephen Covey: That's beautiful.

Whitney Johnson: Which is what you just said. And I was going to ask you this question, which you just answered, is that when you feel trusted, you're inspired.

Stephen Covey: Absolutely. There that I put it this way, to be trusted is the most inspiring form of human motivation. It brings out the very best in all of us to have someone extend trust to us. That is extraordinary of what it does to us and how it does inspire us. Now, there's other things we can do to inspire, too.

Whitney Johnson: Right.

Stephen Covey: That we talk about in *Trust and Inspire*. But there's no question trusting others inspires them.

Whitney Johnson: And that's your high, high level. Okay, everybody, don't turn it off now. But if you did, if you trust people, you will inspire them. All right, McKinlee, over to you. What's your, what's a time where your dad or your mom trusted you?

McKinlee Covey: That's a great question, Whitney. I don't know if I have anything as catchy as the green and clean story.

Whitney Johnson: He's had lots of years to perfect that, just to be fair.

McKinlee Covey: He has. He has. My parents both have been great examples of trust and inspire to me. They've trusted me. They inspired me in so many different ways, you know, with babysitting or getting a dog, which I really wanted, you know, that's a big extension of trust. But one thing that comes to mind for me when I was 13, so a teenager, barely a teenager, not the most mature person in the world, the little boy, crazy. My school, there was an opportunity to go on this trip to Germany, potentially. This exchange program to go to Germany for the summer and live there with a host family. Normally they didn't take kids that age, but they had somebody drop out, and the spot opened up, and my German teacher suggested, you know, why don't you go? And I was like, Oh, summer in Europe, away from my family. Let's do it. So, I remember when I talked to my parents about this, they were so calm about it and were totally open to discussing it. And after discussions and talks and everything, they decided that this would be a good opportunity for me to do and to participate in. Even though I didn't speak German at all. I'd been taking it for like one seventh-grade year, which means nothing really. And I didn't know the host family, and I was

going to be gone for the summer with another group of kids. But they talked to me about how they trusted me. They knew I'd make good decisions because I was part of this family that focused on, you know, being, being responsible and all of these different things.

McKinlee Covey: So, I went off for the summer to Germany and live with his host family and learned the language. And while I was there, you know, there were other students in the program who made some questionable decisions. And I remember being there being 13. And any time that I was in a situation where people were making decisions that I knew my parents would not be okay with me making. I could hear their voices in my head, and I said, you know, my parents have trusted me to come here and not just to be here and enjoy it. But to learn, to learn the language, the to learn the culture. And so, I'm going to make the best decisions I can. And that it was so inspiring to me because I had this incredible experience. But it also shaped the rest of my life because I'm a German teacher now. I teach German at the high school level and love it. I've taken my own students to Germany, and when I look back at that now as an adult, I don't know if I would let my 13-year-old go spend the summer in Europe. But the fact that my parents, they had expectations for me, it was very clear. I knew I knew how I was supposed to behave while I was there. And I did what they what they wanted. And that inspired me to continue to love the language and the culture, and, and, and that's led to where I am today.

Whitney Johnson: What a great story. And I think that every parent listening to this is going to say, I would not send my 13-year-old over to Germany, especially when there's a lot of drinking in Germany. I'm sure most of your friends and you're like, I don't want my 13-year-old to do that. And yet that, that illustrates so beautifully that they trusted you and that inspired you to make sure that you honored their trust.

McKinlee Covey: Exactly.

Whitney Johnson: So, you've written a book titled *Trust and Inspire*, and McKinlee is one of the co-authors. Tell us what you mean by trust and inspire. And then you've got this idea of command and control. Talk us through it at a high level.

Stephen Covey: First of all, what McKinlee, the story she just said, that's just.

Whitney Johnson: Do you love that story?

Stephen Covey: I love the story. But, you know, we did have expectations, and she lived up to them. And, and it's amazing when you treat people according to their potential, they live up to it. And she was always that way. And it's just amazing.

Whitney Johnson: I'm so glad you came back to that. The proud, proud dad.

Stephen Covey: As the proud dad, I have to say that.

Whitney Johnson: Well, actually, you know what? Now that you went there let's go there a little bit longer. So, can you think of an experience? So, she's 13. She's carried out her mission with high honors. Something else happened later where she said, Mom, Dad, I want to do this. And you're like, Yeah, absolutely, because we trust you.

Stephen Covey: All kinds of things. And basically, like she said, it became a foundational experience in her life that not only moved her into a path of what she's doing now, teaching German.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah.

Stephen Covey: But she just demonstrated such maturity, responsibility that when someone shows that, then you can even become more abundant.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah.

Stephen Covey: In your trusting, and you know this, extending trust to others is not a one size fits all. We have to use some level of good judgment, but when someone demonstrates that they can be trusted, then you can be even far more abundant in extending more trust and more opportunities. So, she basically had her way with us from that point on because we knew that she was going to do the right thing. Right? Oh, I love it. So, it kind of took over. Yeah. And became part of how we could parent with her. So, the idea of Trust Inspire is I'm trying to name and describe the kind of leadership that's needed today. In our new world of work, where it's intentionally flexible work, hybrid, remote combinations. You know, all of this is kind of being worked out. Figured out that a new way of working requires a new way of leading.

Stephen Covey: And, and I'm trying to name it, describe it, define it. Because the old way we could kind of more simply describe it as it's a command and control or some version of a command and control, whether it's a more authoritarian version or a more enlightened, sophisticated, advanced version. But the premise of the command and control is that, you know, that people are assets, resources, things that are utilized to get work done and the like. And, and I can be benevolent and all these things, but I still treat people and manage people as if like I would things. I manage people and things. Trust and inspire is recognizing the innate dignity, worth, and value of people in and of themselves, as well as their ability to contribute and accomplish great things, to move missions forward, and to serve purposes. So, it's both, but it's, it's describing the kind of leadership that people want today that they respond to. We all want to be trusted. We want to be inspired. I put it this way, people don't want to be managed, people want to be led. And so, in trust and inspire, you manage things, and you lead people.

Whitney Johnson: I'm going to say that again. You manage things, and you lead people.

Stephen Covey: Right. And we need good management. See, I'm not one of those that is trying to trash management. We need good management. We need great management. Management of things and things includes, you know, strategies and systems and processes and structures and inventories and finances and economic things. And we need to manage them, and we need to manage them well. But with people, people have choice and autonomy and agency and creativity to manage people like you would things is to defy the very nature of people and their autonomy and their uniqueness. And what will happen if you manage people like things, you'll end up with no people and a lot of things because people won't want to be there. They'll want to go someplace else where they feel they're being led, not managed, trusted, and inspired, especially today. And so, Trusting and Inspire is trying to describe to name and to describe the kind of leadership needed today. And I did it in contrast to command and control.

Whitney Johnson: And I just love that distinction of I think we, and you have a funny line in the book, and I don't know if you're going to remember it about no one ever said, I really love how my boss managed me today. Do you remember when you said that? Yeah. What was the line? Do you remember McKinlee?

McKinlee Covey: I think. I think you nailed it. I was like, nobody ever says I love the way that my boss managed me. It's great. Yeah. Love being managed, right?

Whitney Johnson: We don't say that.

McKinlee Covey: Nobody says that.

Whitney Johnson: Because it makes us feel like a thing.

Stephen Covey: Exactly. Exactly. And even it's so in our language, we don't even think about it. Hardly. I mean, I look at different publications, and they have a whole section on managing people. And, and you know, you might say, well, that's just semantics, but there's a danger in the semantic because it relegates people to more of a thing.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah.

Stephen Covey: And even, even the expression people are our most important asset. I understand the sentiment behind it.

Whitney Johnson: Yes.

Stephen Covey: Which is that you know, this is our greatest resource, greatest capability. But even sometimes the idea that you manage an asset and.

Whitney Johnson: We turn them into an object.

Stephen Covey: You turn them into an object, into a thing, and then we start to be efficient with things. And it's good to be efficient with things, but not with people.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah. So, so I don't know if this has been bubbling up for you for a long time, but this is just so powerful of getting our getting just having our brains say, what am I? Am I managing processes, systems, things, and am I leading people and just continually requiring our brain to toggle between the two? If I'm talking about people, I'm thinking about leading, about trusting them, and inspiring them. And if I'm talking about people, I can use the word manage, but I'm not going to use the word manage with people. Right. And just make that decision that you're going to change your, your vocabulary.

Stephen Covey: Yeah. Because it starts with the naming.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah.

Stephen Covey: And you know, the quickest way to change your behavior is to change your name or your role. So rather than saying, I'm a manager, people know I'm a leader of people. I'm a manager of things. Yeah, I lead people.

Whitney Johnson: So good.

Whitney Johnson: Change your name, change your role. That changes your behavior.

Whitney Johnson: All right. So, we talk a little bit, and I'd love to have both of you weigh in on this. Is this idea of enlightened command and control, and are there any tells that we can watch for when we're slipping into that?

Stephen Covey: So, one element of recognizing that maybe you're slipping into command and control, even if it's a benevolent, kind, enlightened command, and control, is if you, if you find yourself micromanaging. In a sense, micromanagement is the ultimate manifestation of command and control, even if it's benevolent. And McKinlee and I, in this book, we write about this, this pastor that we knew who was a fabulous person. And he was extraordinarily inspiring as a, as a, as a leader, as an individual. He's also a good model of what he taught. And, you know, he was trustworthy. He was, is dignified, you know, just a wonderful person and would inspire others. And he really just had kind of one blind spot, which was that he just had a hard time letting go. And really fully trusting. And so, everyone liked the person because he was so honorable and good, and, and he, you know, he lived his life in a way that was inspiring. But he had a hard time trusting. And so, he'd turn things over to people. But then he would literally take it back. Take it back.

Stephen Covey: Come in and, now what are we doing? Are you sure this is the right thing? And, and take over things that he had turned over to different groups and had a youth group that he turned some things over to. They came out with some plans, and then he kind of just took over and did it his way. And, you know, his intent was good. Yeah, he was trying to make a better outcome, but people didn't feel trusted. And, and yet he had every other aspect of great leadership but had a hard time trusting. Had a hard time letting go and letting others come up with ideas, even if they were different than his, or maybe even better than his. He just had a hard time letting it go there. And so, that kind of tendency towards yes, I've empowered, yes, I've given responsibility, but boy, I'm a little frightened about where they might go with this. I'm going to kind of step in and guide and direct. And it looks and feels to the people involved like you don't trust me, right?

Whitney Johnson: So, micromanaging when we start micromanaging, that is a tell that we are not trusting.

Stephen Covey: Absolutely.

Whitney Johnson: Okay. So, question for you, McKinlee, when your parents start to micromanage, because I know they're good parents, but I'm, I'm confident there are times when they start to micromanage.

McKinlee Covey: Oh, of course.

Whitney Johnson: What do you do? You all have a little code of like, hey, trust and inspire. Like what? What do you do with each other when that happens?

McKinlee Covey: Our family, we have this, this thing that we call airport face. And whenever we go to the airport, my dad tends to get very stressed out. And I totally understand it because he, he is in charge of everything, especially when we were young. We're all adults now. But when we were young, he was in charge of everything, and he would get this look on his face that we would call airport face, and we would say, Dad, you're getting an airport face. And you could just see his jaw clenching.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah.

McKinlee Covey: And so, that's kind of become a code for our family is if any of us are micromanaging or, you know, starting to trust people less and controlling things, we'll be like, oh, a little bit of airport face coming out.

Whitney Johnson: And it works, right? It totally snaps you out.

McKinlee Covey: It diffuses the situation. If you're the one with airport face, I've totally had airport face. It totally snaps you out of it, and you're like, Oh yeah, you're right. Like, What is the purpose of what we're doing? Why are we doing this? Why are we traveling here? Why are we whatever the situation might be for me and my classroom, you know, I'll totally get airport face, and I'll have to remind myself. Similar to the green and clean story. What is my purpose as a teacher? You know, I'm trying to raise kids and not grass. I'm trying to teach my students not, not just teach them how to write an essay or to learn German grammar or whatever it might be. And so, recognizing I've got a little bit of airport face helps you step back and recalibrate and say, Why am I doing what I'm doing?

Whitney Johnson: Oh, I love that. Coming back to what is your intent? And I remember this from your last book, *Declare Your Intent*, and being very clear on what you want to do. I have to give you a couple of anecdotes. So, I, a couple of years ago, someone came up to me after I had just spoken and they came up to me, and they said, Your kids must think you're awesome. And I was like, Oh, they do, but let's be clear.

Whitney Johnson: And so, one of the things I thought a lot about, about our children is that on the one hand, they are most important truth-tellers, even more, more than our, our spouse or partner. They will call it like they see it. And that means the things that we don't do well, but also the things that we do well. Our children can see our superpowers in ways that no one else can. And which I think is important is that they see our underbelly, but our children do. No one in the world wants us to succeed more than our children.

Stephen Covey: Yeah.

Whitney Johnson: Don't you believe that?

Stephen Covey: I do believe that and feel that.

Whitney Johnson: And when they. So, when they say airport face, they're saying, I want you to succeed, dad.

Stephen Covey: Yeah. Yeah. And that is a great code. Yeah. And for me, it's, it's it is when I'm trying, I'm stressed out. And in a sense, command, and control is kind of like our native tongue. Yeah, we grew up with it. We know it. You know, we've been raised on it. And, and when trust and inspire is almost like an acquired time. You learn it and you know, when the stress is on, you go back to your native tongue. If I'm hammering a nail and I missed the nail and hit my thumb, I yell out of my native tongue. Right. And so, when I go to the airport and I'm responsible to make sure everyone's. You know, again, this is when we had these young kids. You know, I'm responsible and I get

airport face, but I'm taking away the fun and the joy of the trip when I get airport face and I'm just trying to control things. It's one thing to control the schedules and things like that. But when I start to control the kids and the whole experience and take away the joy and the fun. Being reminded of the airport face, I now have a shift. I go from airport face to loosey-goosey.

Whitney Johnson: Oh, there you go, you know. Oh, that's so fun.

Stephen Covey: It's just so that I just. I just take a breath, step back and say, enjoy the process, enjoy the ride, have fun. We're here not to get on the plane on time as much, we need to, but we want to have a fun trip together, right?

Whitney Johnson: Right. We want to enjoy each other.

Stephen Covey: Yeah.

Whitney Johnson: Going back to the story about the pastor and just this idea of the enlightened command and control, as I was listening to you and reading it and seeing myself in that story, certainly, definitely at work, but absolutely with my children, I think I think that story is such an important story because my guess is that most people that read your book, they're going to see in that pastor themselves. It's such a great illustration of like, that's us, that's most of us.

Stephen Covey: I think it is. I think that you know, in terms of creating this trust. We really have focused heavily on being trustworthy, which is an important thing, absolutely vital. You'll never have trust without trustworthiness. But we haven't focused enough on being trusting.

Whitney Johnson: Right. This is the money shot of this book by the way. Yeah.

Stephen Covey: Being trusting.

Whitney Johnson: Trusting.

Stephen Covey: Trusting. Yeah. Because you need to be able to be both trustworthy and trusting to have trust. And maybe the bigger gap in those two is being trusting. Yeah. This pastor was trustworthy. Yes, he was not trusting as parents were often trustworthy, but often not trusting because again, we want to be smart about it. We don't want to lose control. And it's a little bit risky to trust, but it's also risky not to trust. Right? I think not trusting can often be the greater risk.

Whitney Johnson: Let's step back and then we'll slingshot forward. Yeah, let's, let's talk about the model at a high level. You said there are three major parts and then I want to come back to this trusting piece because, for me, this is really, really important. So, what's the model at a high level?

Stephen Covey: Yeah, I call these three stewardships and a stewardship is a whole, you know, a job with a trust. It's, it's a, it's a responsibility as opposed to just a right. Leadership is stewardship. It's about responsibility, not rights. And so, these are jobs with the trust stewardship that we have as leaders. And they're simple, you model, you trust, and you inspire. Modeling, trusting, inspiring and modeling is who we are. Trusting is how we lead. Inspiring as connecting to why, to why this matters. And it's that simple and yet that difficult. And that's what trust and inspire leadership is all about modeling, trusting, inspiring. And they work together. They're, they're synergistic. They can be independent, too. In the case of the pastor, his superb model, superb at inspiring, struggled with trusting.

Whitney Johnson: Trusting.

Stephen Covey: Sometimes it's the other way around, you know, someone might be good at trusting and even inspiring, but not a good model. You know, modeling is, you know, the idea of, of that to model, the behavior that we're seeking.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah. Well, and he had the moral authority, right?

Stephen Covey: He did.

Whitney Johnson: I mean, so modeling. I love one of the things you say in here is that modeling is moral authority.

Stephen Covey: It is it's your, your credibility, your essence, who you are, your ethos, you know, the Greek philosophy, ethos, pathos, logos, it's ethos and pathos. You have you have this credibility, this moral authority, as opposed to just formal authority. You know, you may have formal authority too. You know, a parent is a parent, so they have formal authority, but their real influence will be more if they have moral authority because of how they showed the way, lead by example. And you know, your kids always are watching you and, and as are your employees and others. And I share the story of, you know, we're all modeling, the question is, what are we modeling? And I was at a basketball game and McKinlee knows how he can get into the game.

McKinlee Covey: A little airport face.

Stephen Covey: Yeah. And, and we started getting bad calls by the referee, and I was getting frustrated. And at some point, I stood up and I kind of yelled at the ref, pointing my finger, yelling at the ref, you know, come on, make the right call. Only to see my four-year-old standing up, adopting the same posture or the same finger pointed out, yelling, the same, the very same words, you know, not my best modeling moments, Whitney. And but I just realized we're all modeling. None of us are perfect. But are we trying to model the behavior that we're seeking? And when we are, there's a, there's an element of moral authority that comes from that, as opposed to just formal authority, which is based upon position or role. Yeah.

Whitney Johnson: You mentioned trustworthy. How do we do that? How do we get better at trusting? Because I think if we don't trust, it's because we're afraid.

Stephen Covey: Mm hmm.

Whitney Johnson: Where do I start?

Stephen Covey: You start by recognizing that when I extend trust, I can do it with building an agreement around the trust being extended like my dad did with me on green and clean.

Whitney Johnson: Got it.

Stephen Covey: He didn't just say, take care of the yard, green and clean. He trained me for two weeks. We learned what green and clean meant. And again, I'm seven. So, you know, this is a learning process. We built in a process for accountability where we'd walk around the yard once a week and I would judge myself, evaluate myself against the standard. So, we built we created an agreement so that there was kind of some built-in control without my dad having to be controlling.

Whitney Johnson: Got it.

Stephen Covey: And so, that's what so often we are afraid that if I extend this trust, what if it doesn't work? What if they let me down? What if they don't come through and I'm responsible for the results? What if I lose control? All these things are a little bit frightening. And so, I'm presenting, trusting as we always do it, with clarifying expectations around the trust that's being given and agreeing to a mutual process of accountability. Like green and clean. Let's walk the yard once a week. Tell me how it's going. If we do that well upfront with an agreement, then I can manage myself. I can govern myself.

Whitney Johnson: Right.

Stephen Covey: I don't need someone. I don't need my dad to hover over. I'm responsible against the agreement we built together. So, there's a sense of built-in control, not through rules and regulations or policies, procedures or or or systems and structures, but through an agreement and a relationship, and context.

Whitney Johnson: So, you're a set of control trust, like you said, by giving context, by saying, here are the expectations, here are the guardrails.

Stephen Covey: Here's the guardrails. Yeah, yeah. So, the clarifying expectations is what are we after, results. Within what parameters, guardrails? What resources or help do we have to work with? My dad said in green clean, if I'm available, I'll help you any time you want. You ask me. And then? Then the accountability piece is how will we know how we're doing against a standard of green and clean or whatever it might be. And then what's the implications? Consequences of that, naturally, that's just built right in into, in effect, an agreement. And the agreement doesn't have to be a formal written thing. It's, it's a kind of an understanding you can be more or less formal with it, but it's saying, I trust you, but we have clear expectations and accountability. We're seeing this happen through this pandemic and beyond when companies are having people work from home. Some companies have leaned into this and really done it well where they extend great trust for people, and people feel trusted. But it's not a blind trust. There's, there's expectations and accountability. There's others that have really struggled with people working from home or remotely that yes. People are doing it, but they don't feel trusted. They feel like they're just being micro-managed from a distance. Some companies have put in literally surveillance software to see what their people are doing, and it just screams distrust where they're worried about losing control. But you can through, through expectations and accountability, you can still have that in place. But it feels and looks different when it's self-governance than micromanagement.

Whitney Johnson: Well, what I just heard you say is you're, you're managing the process, you're managing expectations, you're managing a system.

Stephen Covey: And leading people.

Whitney Johnson: And leading people.

Stephen Covey: Yep.

Whitney Johnson: So, McKinlee, how do you do that in a classroom? How do you, how do you extend that trust to your students? And this process that we just talked about.

McKinlee Covey: When you talk about behavior in a classroom, the first thing that people say is, how is your classroom management? And that's the terminology that we use. And so, for me, while working on this book and these concepts, that has been a real paradigm shift for me, is to ask, what am I managing in my classroom versus when am I leading my students? And to maybe change that, that terminology a little bit to classroom leadership when I'm thinking about my students, because just like my dad said, it's not that you don't have expectations. I definitely have rules for my classroom. We have processes, we have systems. You turn your homework in here, you if you need to use a restroom, this is the system. And every teacher system will look different. So, it's not throwing that out and being like, I trust you to use your time well. Because we all know teenagers, right? They're still learning.

Whitney Johnson: And adults.

McKinlee Covey: And adults, that's the thing. Right? All of us are still learning how to manage our time and how to, you know, use our resources wisely. And so, it's not just letting them have free rein. Instead, it's like my dad said, you know, building a classroom culture with these expectations and rules that the students want to be a part of, that they agree to that they say, okay, I can get on board with, with the rules and the systems here so that I can manage myself and I can use the time the way I think I need to. And, and so that I can be part of something that is inspiring and uplifting. So, for me as a teacher, I think the number one thing that I try to do with my students is extend trust to them by communicating to them their potential and how I see them and how I view them and what they're capable of within these systems, within these rules that are important for their safety, for the safety of others, so that we get our work done.

McKinlee Covey: But to help them see that I see what they can do and what they're capable of and that I trust them to do it. And when I, when I do that with students, they rise to the occasion in ways you would never expect. Even

last week, I had a student, I just wrote him a little note on one of his assignments. I don't even remember what I wrote. And he came in this week to me, and he said, Hey, Miss Covey, that note like that really meant a lot to me. And I was like, Oh, that's great. I don't even remember what I wrote. And then he said, he's like, You know, I've never thought that, that I'm good at English, like, because I also teach English. He said, You know, I'm not a good writer, like. Last year, I just really felt like I was a bad writer. I'm not good at this. He's like, but I guess, like, I realized that I can do this. And that's literally what he said. And I was like, Oh yeah, you definitely can because he can. He's smart, and he's intuitive, and he just needed somebody to say it. And so, that's an extension of trust, right? As I say, you can do this. And because of that, he sent me a story that he's been working on right on his own and.

Whitney Johnson: Oh, interesting stories inside of him.

McKinlee Covey: Yeah. Which I wouldn't have expected from him, honestly, but he had stories in his head, and he sent it to me. And, and now I'm so excited to, you know, to read it and to dig into it with him. And that's separate from anything we're doing in class. It's just something he wanted to do, but he needed maybe a little trust to say, you can go there.

Whitney Johnson: And I love how you got choked up when you were telling that story. It's really beautiful.

McKinlee Covey: Well, he's, he's so wonderful, I mean, I love all my students.

Stephen Covey: McKinlee sees the potential and the greatness in every student, in every student. And it's who she is. And she then communicates it to them in such a way that they come to see it in themselves. And that's that story is a beautiful one. So, I think this point if I could add.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah, please do.

Stephen Covey: What I loved about what McKinlee just described is it's not just about the task, it's about the relationship. And even in trusting and the reason I highlighted the expectations and accountability to acknowledge the real world that we have to get work done. And, you know, so we, we have to have green and clean lawn and the like. And you can do it in a way through expectations and accountability, building the agreement that will actually be more effective than micromanagement or hovering over. And what McKinlee just highlighted is we also need to prioritize growing the people. So, it's not just getting the result, the outcome, because you can do that in command and control. Trust and inspire is about getting that result in a way that grows the people. And then your ability to grow in the future and get more results in the future has gone up because you built the people is what you write about in *Smart Growth*, you know, growing your people so you can grow your business, but you've got to grow the people. And, and so making growing the people as important as getting the result is what's important is what matters.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah, I want to just pull a thread a little bit harder on this. There is a duality here because in order to extend trust and I want to hit this harder because to me and maybe this is just my own experience, is that we have to be willing to say what the expectations are. We have to be willing to hold people accountable. And for some of us, some of the time, or perhaps all of us some of the time, that's tough to do. It's tough to hold people accountable. It's tough to say these are the expectations. And so, we flip-flop between, I trust you. We don't give them any guardrails. And then they go off the rails and we're saying, I can't trust you. Right. Because putting in place that accountability like you must do in a classroom, putting the place those, those expectations, it's hard to do that. You want people to like you. And so, in order to trust people, you have to be willing to extend that trust. You have to be willing a little bit for them maybe not to like you.

Stephen Covey: Mm hmm. Yeah. Your goal. Is not necessarily to be liked. All of us want to be liked.

Whitney Johnson: All of us want to be liked.

Stephen Covey: Yes, but it's more important to be trusted than to be liked. I was with a coaching staff of an athletic team and, and, you know, there's a lot of coaches that sometimes talk to players and they want to be liked by the players. So, they tell them what they want to hear. But, you know, there's only so many spots on the field and only so

many people can be there. You can kind of overpromise to people in the name of being liked and make kind of grandiose promises and then not able to deliver on it. So, you're liked initially, but at some point, there's that comeuppance.

Whitney Johnson: Then you're not trusted.

Stephen Covey: And now they say, I don't trust what I'm hearing them say. So, it's more important to be trusted than to be liked. And that's also a paradox for some. Sometimes people say, well, which is it? Are you going to hold me accountable, or do you trust me? No, the accountability is part of the trust. I can trust you. And I do trust you because we have built in an agreement that includes accountability.

Whitney Johnson: What are some stories, one or two stories of leaders that just exemplify this?

Stephen Covey: I heard this personally from Indra Nooyi, former CEO of PepsiCo, just retired, extraordinary leader. When she was named the CEO, she went to India to visit her, her mother, her father had already passed away, but her mother was still living. And they went there. She went there. And while she was there, they had a big gathering, a big celebration that Indra was now the CEO of a Fortune 500 company. And all these people came over to Indra's mom's house. And Indra was there. And Indra told me the story, that every person would go up to Indra's mom and just congratulate her and praise her for raising such an amazing child who had become a CEO of a Fortune 500 company. And, and Indra said, but not a word to me. No one said anything to me. They all went to my mom and praised her. And Indra saw what that did to her mom, it just thrilled her. And she was so proud and everything. And it didn't bother, Indra that they weren't coming to her. She liked she liked that they were going to her mom. She came home from that experience and said, I'll bet other parents would like this. And she then adopted a process where she began to write personal notes and letters to the parents of her executives. To the parents, to the moms, the dad. Praising them for raising such a remarkable daughter or son that was part of her leadership team and why she loved that daughter or son of theirs because of the value, they brought to the business and to what they were trying to do and, and how they must be phenomenal parents to have raised such a beautiful son or daughter. And she wrote as many as 400 of these letters. And it was an extraordinary act of caring, of concern, and of gratitude to the parents. And these parents. They haven't been praised for their kids maybe ever or since they were young. And, and so they all just.

Whitney Johnson: And sometimes may not have merited much praise.

Stephen Covey: Merited.

Whitney Johnson: And yet she gave them that gift.

Stephen Covey: Felt this connection. It was a gift. And not only did the parents love it, the executives loved it, too, because their parents were so happy. Yeah. And, and it was just an, just a simple act of caring that was inspiring for everyone involved. It's just a, you know, you can it's in the little things that you can inspire through caring and through a sense of belonging and purpose. Indra did that. Our mutual friend, Doug Conant, he, he writes he's written 30,000 plus personal notes. Wow. That was during when he was at Campbell Soup. I bet. I bet it's double that now. And whether it's you know whether it's note writing or some other way of conveying this, McKinlee gave the example of writing a note. There just it's just a demonstration of care and of concern that can inspire people. Yeah.

Whitney Johnson: So, what have you done recently to do that?

Stephen Covey: Well, I've been doing that with my *Trust and Inspire* book.

Whitney Johnson: Um-hum. Yes, you did! You wrote me a lovely note when you sent me a copy of your book. So that was. That was very purposeful, huh?

Stephen Covey: It was very purposeful.

Whitney Johnson: Say more. Say more.

Stephen Covey: I'm sending out a number of books to people, and in the process, I'm using this as a chance to express my appreciation to them. For their influence in my life. Because many of these people have been trust and inspire figures in my life made a difference for me. And I'm thanking them, acknowledging them, but also trying to see and recognize and affirm their greatness, their potential, and how it's impacted me. And, and I'm trying to model what this book is about and, and, and a better kind of leadership that is so needed in a world low in both trust and inspiration. So, I'm, I'm, I'm trying to.

Whitney Johnson: I felt that actually when I got the note because it was, because it was an extended, you know, it was clear you had taken the time to write the note. And in that moment, I felt special. Yeah. So, it, it worked.

Stephen Covey: Oh, good. Well, my intent was to thank you because you were so kind to provide a beautiful endorsement. To read it, give feedback. And I was so grateful and wanted to acknowledge it. But also, to acknowledge you for, you know, the magnificent work you're doing and, and this whole idea of, of how we've got to disrupt ourselves and change starts with us. It's inside out, and we grow our people. This whole S Curve, it's just beautiful. It's impacting the world.

Whitney Johnson: Well, thank you. And, and I did feel seen, so I think that's a lovely, a lovely thing. All right. So, any other stories, McKinlee is there another story that comes to mind for you that you'd like to share?

McKinlee Covey: I coached a men's volleyball team, a volleyball team in high school, so I got to this new school. It was my second day there. And like, do you want a coach? Which all teachers know this happens all the time. You're coach stuff, you're like, All right. So, I jumped in. I was like, Sure. So, on the second day of school, we had tryouts, so I didn't know any of these students, and I had this great co-coach who had been there for a year. And she's like, you know, these were people on the team last year, including this kid Leo. And during the tryouts, he was just kind of like goofing off and being immature. And my family loves sports. My brothers are college athletes. I'm definitely not, but I act like I am, like I'm very intense when it comes to sports. So, I was like, I don't, I don't know if I want somebody that's so laissez-faire on the team, right? Like we want need commitment. And so, I was like, you know, I don't think that it's the right fit. And she was like, you know, my co-coach is so great. She's like, Yeah, well, like, if you feel that way, but, you know, we told him. He asked me like would, would Coach Covey consider talking to me about that? So, he approached me.

Whitney Johnson: So, you said no.

McKinlee Covey: Yeah. So, I said no. Like, let's not put him on the team. And so, he came to my co-coach and asked her like, would Coach Covey reconsider?

Whitney Johnson: So, he advocated for himself, oh that's impressive.

McKinlee Covey: So, he totally advocated for himself. So, he came to me, we had this meeting, and he said, I know you don't know me, but I, I love volleyball. I'm good at it. And I think you should give me a chance. And, you know, this was the third day I had known him. And so, you know, I told him I had expectations, and I made them very clear. I said, look, this is how I feel about people on the team. That's how I want our team to operate. And if you can do that, if you're on board with that, then let's do it. And he said, I'll totally do it. He, you know, he joined the team, and I just, I can't even, like, comprehend now that I ever felt that way about Leo, because he is just the funnest, most engaging, energetic, and dedicated player, I think, that I've ever coached. He, you know, joined the team, and instantly started to, you know, lift everybody's spirits. Definitely so inspirational and exciting and engaging, and then took it to the next level. He started doing game film for us and keeping our statistics and just became honestly the model player, and I think he always would have done that, but I needed to extend a little trust to him. But he, in turn, extended trust to me. You know, he reached out to me and asked for this chance. And because of that, you know, he just became one of our stars, a leader. He ended up winning Male Athlete of the Year at our school the following year and was such like a model and guide too. We had new freshmen coming on the team, and they loved him. He just took them under his wing, trained them. You know, just this example of what happens when you, when you trust people, and they return trust to you of what's possible.

Whitney Johnson: And you told them what the rules were.

McKinlee Covey: Yeah, the rules were very clear. I had high expectations, and he, he followed up with them. You know, I never had to talk with him. In fact, I'd be like, You need to leave the gym. Practice is over. And he'd be like, Oh, just like five more or five more hits or whatever, you know?

Whitney Johnson: Okay, I'm going to sidebar for 2 seconds or not sidebar but digress because I think there's something really interesting in there too of reinforcing, which I don't know how this fits into the framework, but just the fact that he was willing to come to you and advocate for himself. What do you think? I mean, because so many high school students, so many adults won't do that. What do you think? What happened that he was willing to do that? Do you have any thoughts?

McKinlee Covey: A couple of things. Number one, I think my co-coach, Catherine, she's amazing, played a role in that, in that she, you know, he approached her first because he already had a relationship with her. So, having a trusted adult he could turn to. There was already trust there that she had built. So, he felt like he could do that. And then I think if, you know, Leo, he trusts himself. He had; he had a lot of confidence. And that's part of the reason why I was like, I don't know if you're the best fit, but he had confidence in himself and his ability to do it. And so, I think, you know, those two things, if you have models of trust like he saw in my co-coach, Catherine, and then in himself, he was able to find that spark of confidence.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah. So good. Okay.

Stephen Covey: Can I just add a little.

Whitney Johnson: Yes, please. I love this. I love the editorial.

Stephen Covey: This is proud Dad a little bit.

Whitney Johnson: Please go for it.

Stephen Covey: It was in Leo all along, and he was a good, talented player all along. What McKinlee did as coach was helped him see that he not only was a good player but could become a good teammate and a good force for good as a leader on the team. And he saw something in himself that he maybe hadn't seen before. He knew he was a good player, but he thought he could just goof off. He was so talented, and she said no. To be on this team, it's not just about being good. You also have to fit the team culture and lift everybody else. And she brought him, she brought out greatness that was in him that maybe he didn't know he had that type of greatness. He knew he was a good player. He didn't know he was a great leader and became a great leader. And that's why the subtitle of the book is How Truly Great Leaders Unleash Greatness in Others. And so, I'm proud of McKinlee, as a truly great leader that saw his potential and unleashed it.

Whitney Johnson: So, this is where you say thank you, Dad.

McKinlee Covey: Thank you, Dad.

Whitney Johnson: Okay. Stephen, do you have another story of a leader that you'd like to share?

Stephen Covey: Yes. Sheryl Batchelder amazing person. She's a friend of mine and but she became the CEO of Popeye's Chicken, you know, the franchise and the biscuits. And, and, and before she came in, it was more like traditional command and control. And they'd had four CEOs in a seven-year period, just kept turning it over. There was massive distrust at the time between the franchisees and the Home Office. There's no synergy. There was tension, acrimony even, distrust. They weren't doing well, weren't growing. That's why they'd gone through multiple CEOs. She was actually advised by some folks, don't take this job. It's not a, it's not a good job. But she went in and what was amazing is that, you know, she's a trust and inspire leader. She modeled, she trusted, and she inspired. But it all started with modeling. She, rather than saying, look, our franchisees have got to do these things to change, it

was what do we need to do and what do I need to do so that our franchisees will trust us? And, you know, because it's very easy when it comes to trust to say as soon as they change, then we can build trust. And she said, what do we need to do to build trust with them? And she, she listened. She went out and listened. But more than listened, she heard what she heard she then acted upon and, and did it.

Stephen Covey: And she and so she, she, she listened first. She demonstrated respect for what she heard. And then, she took steps and actions on it to deliver results around the things that she could. And began to demonstrate that she and the home office could be trusted. And when, when they started to earn that, then people felt better about the relationship. And then she showed she extended trust to them at a time where people were saying, you can't trust the franchisees. She said, No, we're going to we're going to first be trustworthy, then we'll be trusting. And she totally transformed this relationship to where they went from a very low trust franchisee-franchisor relationship. To maybe the highest in all of franchising in terms of surveys where they measure the level of confidence and trust between the franchisees and the home and the home office, at like 95%. Wow. This extraordinary trust. And she even told her investors, Wall Street. She said, you need to know something, this took courage, you're not my first priority. My first priority is to build a relationship of trust with our franchisees because I believe if we do that, you'll also be well served. But know this, you're not my first priority. It takes a lot of courage as the CEO to tell, you know, you know, the whole idea of shareholder value is everything.

Stephen Covey: Right. But this new concept of the corporation. Right, which is really it's all stakeholders. And she prioritized the franchisee as the highest valued stakeholder at that time because it was broken. And modeled the behavior, extended the trust, and then inspired by her, her acts of caring or demonstration of caring and a belonging. But also, she connected people to purpose and the meaning of the contribution. Turn this around. They went from \$11. Their price is \$79. They increased their market share from 14% to 27%. They built this high trust. When there's high trust with the franchisees, the home office can announce we're going to do something. Then people, they get to choose to do it or not. They follow, they do it. They implement the programs because they trust, the what they're trying to do, and they've had extraordinary success. She's a great trust inspire leader who's also she's also a good model of that it's not just this soft, warm, and fuzzy. You know, sometimes people think command and control is trust and inspire the opposite. No, the opposite of command and control is abdicate and abandon.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah.

Stephen Covey: Trust and inspire is a third alternative where you know you are authoritative without being authoritarian. You're strong without being forceful. This is Sheryl Batchelder. She's very strong. You can have control without being controlling.

Whitney Johnson: Do you say that in the book, the opposite of command and control is abdicate and abandoned. Do you say that?

Stephen Covey: No. It's an insight that has come to me since writing the book.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah.

McKinlee Covey: Yeah.

Whitney Johnson: Isn't that interesting that that happens? You're like, oh, how come I didn't think of that earlier? So, the opposite of command and control is abdicate and abandoned. And we're saying no, trust and inspire.

Stephen Covey: Trust and inspire is a third alternative. And, you know, here's another way of saying it. If command and control is hands-on, maybe excessively hands-on, and abdicate and abandon is.

Whitney Johnson: Totally hands-off.

Stephen Covey: Hands off, completely hands off. Trust and inspire is hand in hand. It's with. We're doing this with each other. You know, command and control is what I can fear, what I can do to you. That's the authoritarian.

Whitney Johnson: This is I punch you.

Stephen Covey: Enlightened is its transactional exchange. Kind of fairness in an exchange matter, which is fine but not inspiring.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah. And the abdicate and abandon is you pull your hand away.

Stephen Covey: Pull your hand away. It's complete laissez-faire of, I'm not, I'm not leading anymore. I'm completely hands-off to the point where there's no leadership. Whereas trust inspire is truly hand in hand. It is a with what we can do together with each other. I'll bet you have had people in your life who you would describe as a trust and aspire leader. That believed in you, had confidence in you, extended trust to you. Brought out the best in you. I have. Hopefully, McKinlee has, well I know she has. It may not be me, but certainly many. And I'd ask our listeners, have you had someone like that too in your life? Yeah. Whether it be a family member, friend, someone at work, a mentor, or coach who believed in you. Trusted you, inspired you. What did that do to you? You need to be managed that know you're inspired you. You rose to the occasion. You could govern yourself. And so, if you reflect upon that. It's a great place to be. We all want this. Trust and inspire is what we all want. So, I would just ask now. For whom could you be that kind of person? Pay it forward?

Whitney Johnson: Exactly.

Stephen Covey: What if we were to ripple this out?

Whitney Johnson: So, Stephen, when you consider your model of trust and inspire, which part of this does McKinlee do exceptionally well?

Stephen Covey: Yes. Model, trust, and inspire. The truth is, he's really good at all three, but I'll highlight one that she is extraordinary at inspiring. And, and by the way, in this model, trust, and inspire. Inspiring is the third one, partly because when you model, that inspires people.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah.

Stephen Covey: When you trust people, that inspires them. So, you're already halfway there.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah.

Stephen Covey: When you're just doing the first two stewardship modeling and trusting and she's a great model. And she, we've heard some stories of she's very trusting.

Whitney Johnson: Yeah.

Stephen Covey: And that inspires. But in addition, inspiring others is a learnable skill. It's not just for the charismatic. We sometimes equate charisma and inspiration and think, Well, I can't inspire. I'm not charismatic. No, everyone can inspire. It's a learnable skill. You inspire when you connect with people through caring and belonging. And nobody is as good at connecting with people as McKinlee. Through caring and belonging. And she always creates this, you know, her caring is real, it's heartfelt. It's at one-on-one level. And how you build that trust and that caring and connection with the one actually can help build it with the many. Because people will see that maybe you'd do the same for them, too. And she does that. She, the trust and the care, the compassion she shows to the one student actually does it with the many.

Whitney Johnson: Right.

Stephen Covey: And then, she also connects people to a sense of purpose and meaning and contribution for their lives. And so those two things, connecting with people through caring and belonging, connecting to purpose, to meaning to contribution. Life is about contribution, not accumulation. It's about mattering, making a difference.

And she instills that in those that she comes in contact with. So, she's great at all three stewardships, but she is inspiring.

McKinlee Covey: Thanks, Dad. That was really nice.

Whitney Johnson: So, what about your dad? What would you say about him? That something that stands out for you?

McKinlee Covey: So, my dad is great at all three of these, but for me, I'm going to go back to modeling because, you know, you were talking about moral authority. My dad walks the talk. He practiced what he preaches. And I think that is what makes what he preaches so relevant, so timely, and it feels so, so sincere and real because he practices it. I, you know, I have the luck to have grown up watching my dad as a model. So, I've seen him in every situation.

Whitney Johnson: The airport face.

McKinlee Covey: The airport face, good and bad, you know, in high-stress situations. And, and while he's not perfect, he is so consistent in who he is and the choices he makes, and then how he treats other people. He is a model of trust and inspire. I have so many friends and my siblings have friends and, you know, people in our neighborhood who feel so trusted by him and inspired by him and will say things to me, you know, randomly about that and how important he makes them feel. And I think it goes back to, he models the behavior he wants to see in people, but not, not because he has ulterior motives. That's who he is. And his intent is to trust people and to inspire people. And that, that model in itself is very inspiring. And I know growing up I definitely felt that, and I still see that and getting to work with him in the way he treats employees and colleagues. And it's just it's really inspiring to see the model and, and it gives him the authority to talk about these things because he lives them. Something that he said about his dad, I'll say about him, as good as he is in public, he's even better in private.

Whitney Johnson: As we were talking today. And we've, we've covered a lot of territory. What are some insights or connections that came to mind? Ideas that a-ha that you had as we were talking? McKinlee, I'll have you go first, then I'll give you the last word.

McKinlee Covey: Something that I, you know, I've been thinking about a lot. And just through this conversation, I was thinking about my fellow educators, whether it's admin teachers, people, school staff, people who work in the building with children the last few years with COVID and everything have been really, really difficult for educators. And I think one thing, you know, with all of the there's all these systems that they've had to learn going online and back and forth. The thing that stands out to me and that I'm reminded of in this conversation is to focus on your relationship with your students first and foremost. It's all about trusting them and seeing the potential in them. You know, I when I think about my students, and I'm not perfect at this either. But when I think about my students and what they're capable of and I realize that some of them might not know that and a lot of them don't know that, and that you as an adult in their life can be the one that sparks that in them to be a champion for them to show them you are capable of so much. And when you do that, you know, when you communicate potential and help them develop it, then you know, so many possibilities arise out of that. So, for me, I think that's, that's the takeaway from today is treat people according to their potential, and they'll rise to the occasion.

Whitney Johnson: I love that. As we were having this conversation, we didn't actually quite hit that, but that's kind of what was bubbling up for you. It's like, okay, yeah, I need to make sure that I keep doing what I'm already doing. Just do more of it.

McKinlee Covey: Yeah, absolutely.

Whitney Johnson: What about you, Stephen?

Stephen Covey: I kind of sensed that this idea of trust and inspire. It's aspirational. It's what people want. It's what we all want to do. Our listeners, we all want to be more trust and inspire, no one wants to be command and control, micromanaging. We all want to be trust and inspire so, that's our intent. The intent of most people is good. And then we want to do this. It's just we're on the journey and we've been, we've, you know, it might be that this was our

native tongue command and control. And, and so oftentimes, our style gets in the way of our intent. But I think most people's intent is good. That's what we're describing, trust and inspire is what we all like to experience and what we would like to have others experience with us. Getting there is sometimes then that that journey is maybe the challenge where our style sometimes gets in the way of our intent, be it airport face when I'm under high stress and pressure or be it that I revert back to more of an excessively hands-on approach of, you know, hovering over people, micromanaging something like that. But it's never my intent. And so, the insight for me is that we are not our style. We can choose to re-script and, and, and to change our style. We're not a program. We're programmers. And we that's why we need models of trust and inspire, models who can become mentors.

Whitney Johnson: Have you said that before. We're not a program we're programmers.

Stephen Covey: Yes.

Whitney Johnson: Okay. You got to say that more.

McKinlee Covey: It's in the book.

Stephen Covey: It's in the book that, that's you know, because one of the barriers is that people say, well, this is who I am. I know this, and this is what brought me to where I'm at. But as Marshall Goldsmith says, what brought you here won't take you there. And in this new world, maybe command and control has been okay to date, but it's not going to work anymore going forward in this new world of work. But we can re-script. We, we're not a program, we're a programmer. Let's write the program. And I think people want that. And it's just a matter of how do we do it? How do I do this and not lose control? And so, I'm trying to lay out there's a process, but you can do it. I think people's intent is that.

Whitney Johnson: So, you were reminded today of just kind of double-clicking on the intent is positive. And so, you're helping people walk through here's, here's how you do it.

Stephen Covey: That's right. I'm trying to help people match their style with their intent. And I think that oftentimes our style gets in the way of our intent. But I'm assuming good will, that our intent is good. Most people's intent is good. But we may have a style issue.

Whitney Johnson: Like the pastor.

Stephen Covey: Right, exactly. You know, but we are not our style. That's right. And we can change our style.

Whitney Johnson: Any final thoughts, McKinlee first and then Stephen.

McKinlee Covey: I would just echo what my dad said is that I think for, for listeners, you know, you might be feeling, you know, oh, can I do this? And you can. This is a learnable skill. This is something you can practice in small steps. You can practice trust; you can extend trust in small ways and to different people and see the results and practice and get better at it. And I think, like my dad mentioned earlier, you don't have to be the super charismatic, amazing natural leader. Everybody is a leader. Everybody you are with your friends, with your family. And so, you don't have to have a position. You don't need to have natural skills. If you have the desire and the intent to do this, you can learn how to do it. It will take work, but it's possible, and you can apply that in every part of your life.

Whitney Johnson: Excellent.

Stephen Covey: Stephen Yeah, I would kind of build upon that and say that. The key to becoming a trust and inspire leader, is to first become a trust and inspire person. So, in every part of life, this is kind of how I view people. I want to, I want to see the potential and the greatness inside of people. And if I see it, then I want to develop it and unleash it. If I don't see it, I'm not even aware of it sometimes. So, the idea of a growth mindset, yes, I want a growth mindset for myself, but I want a growth mindset for others. To see what they can become and to see myself as first a person who trusts and inspires in my relationships in any interaction so that I can have that ripple effect in just a community setting and a family setting. And if I'm a trust and inspire person, then I can also become a trust and

inspire leader where I maybe have more influence. The ripple can be greater. In a sense, it's a, it's an inside-out progressive approach. But in so doing, I think we can become transition figures in the lives of people and literally impact people in a way that could actually change the trajectory of their life. I don't mean to be overdramatic about it. Sometimes, it's just, it's just a nice interaction, other times it literally gives people a vision of themselves, of what's possible. McKinlee's student.

Whitney Johnson: Like the student and the writing.

Stephen Covey: That's right. I can do this.

Whitney Johnson: The transitional moment.

Stephen Covey: Yeah, that's a, she's a transition figure in that person's life when they see something that they didn't see before and may not have seen. And that's going to affect actually their whole trajectory. These small things can have big impacts. And actually, I like what McKinlee said, that it can be a bit overwhelming that I need to be perfect and all this. You don't. You become a trust and inspire leader by becoming a trust and inspire person and looking for the opportunities to see the potential and release the potential instead of try to, instead of not seeing it, or containing and controlling it. It's a mindset. It's a paradigm. And it's a more complete and accurate, and relevant paradigm of people of who they really are, a more accurate map of the territory. Yeah. And, and, and to see the territory for what it is that people are whole people, human beings, body, heart, mind, body, heart, mind, spirit, see them that way with great potential. And when you do that when you start with that, then, then you can act upon that, but you can't act with integrity outside your paradigm. So, start with your paradigm of how you view people and how you view leadership. Leadership is stewardship. People have greatness inside of them and their whole people. If you start with those two beliefs, it changes your world, and the behavior follows.

Whitney Johnson: McKinlee, Stephen, thank you.

Stephen Covey: Thank you.

McKinlee Covey: Thank you. Whitney.

Stephen Covey: Wonderful to be with you.

I loved spending time with Stephen and McKinlee. Here are three takeaways. Number one, being trusted is the most inspiring form of human motivation. Stephen and McKinlee brought three generations of stories to prove this point. When Stephen's dad set up a green and clean system for the lawn, Stephen didn't execute. But instead of giving up or micromanaging him, his dad gave him the space to rise to the task and to take ownership of it. As you heard, this was not only motivating but incredibly formative. Likewise, when McKinlee wanted to live abroad at 13, instead of shutting her down, her parents sat her down and mapped out the parameters of what trusting her with this responsibility would look like. It empowered her to make the best choices while she was there, and the experience, in turn, set her entire career in motion. That's how powerful trust can be. But it's not easy in business or especially in parenting. Which brings me to these next takeaways.

Number two, manage things lead people. To quote McKinlee, "Nobody ever says, I love the way my boss managed me." It's time to change the structure and the language around these things. Command and control is more and more antiquated. But as Stephen says, management is still important. We need to manage processes, systems, and assets. But people are not an asset or a resource. They are people. And if you want to benefit from their creativity and autonomy, don't micromanage. Energize them with that cycle of modeling, trust, inspiration.

Number three, it's more important to be trusted than to be liked. As we talked about in the interview, blind trust is not the answer. Trust requires judgment and, more importantly, clear parameters for what success looks like. In other words, accountability. Keeping people accountable is hard. We all want to be liked by our teams, but as Stephen and McKinlee explain. Being well-liked but letting them down is far worse than the alternative, whether in business or parenting. But you can have both in the long run if those parameters are well defined. And remember, it's about not only being trustworthy but trusting of others.

For more from Stephen M. R. Covey, listen to our prior conversation, [Episode 211](#). For more on the topic of trusting others, listen to Liz Wiseman on her best-selling book, Multipliers, [Episode 102](#). And on being trusting as a parent, listen to Brooke Romney, [Episode 280](#). Thank you again to Stephen Covey and McKinlee Covey for being our guests. Thank you to you for listening. Thank you to our producer Matt Silverman, audio editor Whitney Jobe, production assistant Stephanie Brummel and production coordinator Nicole Pellegrino.

I'm Whitney Johnson.

And this is Disrupt and trust yourself.