

TRANSCRIPT: Be Where You Are: Leadership, Caregiving, and the Courage to Pause with Carla Davis | Part Two

Jeff Haffner: 0:00

Welcome to TCN Talks, an anatomy of leadership. This is part two of Be Where You Are: Leadership, Caregiving, and Courage to Pause with Carla Davis. And now, here's Chris Comeaux.

Chris Comeaux: 0:18

How is this year gonna shape your go forward plan? And I just want to mirror back something you said before you answer that question. Why I am. That's a profound statement. That to me tells me that in some level this year, you have gotten some level of clarity on your cause and purpose in this world. And that makes me smile because that's part of my purpose, is to help. Maybe I was a small part of that, but anyone finding that is the road less traveled, as Frost's poem was. It is the road less traveled. And I feel like it's such a need in the time that we live because they have too many people spending their life chasing things that is not in the realm of cause and purpose. And as Gandhi said many years ago, be the change you wish to see in the world. And if you want to be that level of change, knowing why you are is a pretty important thing. So I don't know if I just picked up on a straight comment, but for some reason it felt powerful when you said that.

Carla Davis: 1:11

Well, no, thank you. I mean, I think I think that's true. I think I think I've always known that. And I don't know that I necessarily thought a year away from the work would change, change my purpose. Um, it just r really reinforced it um to me.

Chris Comeaux: 1:30

Um so my my favorite quote in the world is T. S. Elliott, you arrive where you first began, but you know the place for the first time. I don't know if that that feels true to what you just said.

Carla Davis: 1:42

That's right. That's absolutely right. Um, so in in terms of my kind of go forward plan, I think um, you know, the the perspective that not being in it provided me um was perhaps some objectivity. Um, you know, that to the work and to the space itself. And I've been able to sort of think through um in these conversations and just on my own, um, what I've accomplished in terms of helping to um develop people in terms of helping to expand access to this uh care, the best benefit in all of Medicare, um, and in terms of really advancing sort of the purpose of of this and what I haven't accomplished and you know

what what things I maybe want to do differently. Um, and I want to lead. I want to lead an organization. I want to, I wanna use my gift that I think God has given me. I feel like my spiritual gifts are leadership and mercy. And if I didn't use them, I don't know why this is making me so emotional, but if I didn't use them, I wouldn't be a good steward of those resources.

Chris Comeaux: 3:00

So that is such a beautiful way to phrase it too. I mean, just the humility in what you just said, stewarding those resources. Um, I don't know if that's something you would have said. My guess is Carla would have probably used that line in a presentation because it's a great line, but I get this get the sense that it's more uh true to you, more meaningful, more weighty at this. Um so maybe for this next segment, um how did stepping away from day-to-day leadership responsibilities change your perspective on what good leadership really is?

Carla Davis: 3:32

Yeah, well, I think um in terms of that, I think that, you know, being true to yourself, just what you just said, um, being authentic to to what your strengths are and being vulnerable around what your opportunities are, um, and being in a setting that, you know, best allows you to do that, or a role that best allows you to do that, or organization that best allows you to use those gifts. Um, I think to me, um, I know for sure that's when I can be my best. That's when I can be the best leader to the people that I'm responsible for when my alignment is on. And I think that there have been times in in my career, and I'm sure in everyone's career, where you were in a role or in a company or in a space and time where your alignment wasn't on um on track. And you're not your best self. You're not your best leader. And so I think for for me, um, you know, that that was some something that I really learned during this period of time. But I also think just to kind of get back to another lesson learned from the the period, you know, caring for mom and sort of navigating, so four surgeries, three hospitalizations, four surgeries, one which was 28 days long, um, you know, and and then all of the care post uh post-discharge, post-acute, navigating home health episodes, navigating getting personal care, navigating uh physician visits and labs, you know, it it reinforced again what I know we all know, but we have this discombobulated health care system that is not connected. Um, even within the same system, it is not connected. It's not connected even within the same doctor's office or within the same home health agency, it's not connected. Um, and so I think that, you know, when I talk about innovation, there are definitely, you know, big sexy things that I would like to do. But I also think that when it comes to the heart of it, like it's actually not that stuff. It is coordination of care. It is, it is how does a clinician coordinate with the next clinician between visits? Um, and in the course of that visit, how does someone, as you know, Andrew spoke about in his last podcast, um, not just in the context of that visit,

although we have tons of opportunity there, but there's so much care that is being provided outside of that hour long visit? How do we think of that? Um, and how do we not think of that? How do we think of what we think of as after hours? Um, how do we think of ourselves as 365 um, you know, days a year? Do we actually think of ourselves that way? Do we think of care planning that way, or do we sort of standardize how we care plan? And most patients get this regardless of the fact that we're we really are called to be here and paid to be here 365 days uh a year. So I think um, you know, experiencing that from a personal perspective just really kind of helped me underscore my go forward. You know, I want to make that stuff better. It's gotta be tighter. It doesn't, you don't need to call the office three times for the same thing and not get a call back for three days. Like that experience of our care shapes how people get it in the future, shapes who gets it in the future. And I think we have a chance, you know, and again, with our work, we only have one chance to do it right. I think we can get better and better and better at at that.

Chris Comeaux: 7:37

I'm so glad you said that. Um, thank you for um bringing us back to that podcast that Andrew did because he is so brilliant. That was probably the hardest podcast interview I've ever done because he's so brilliant. And like that was actually one of my follow-up questions I wanted to ask him that I never got to that you just spoke about, because the visit is one component that needs to your point, there's there's levels of complexity and improvement we could do in just that. But then stepping back and you know how the IDG in interacts with one another and the care planning, just thank you for calling all that out. Um, you know, and the other thing I'm just reflecting on that I want to just mirror back to you, the fact that you've gone through this year, you've seen that in healthcare as a whole. I imagine it probably is a side to you that should I just go fix healthcare as a whole. But you planning on coming back into this space, I don't know, it just does something from my heart at an affirmation of just your belief that there's still so much that we could do here.

Carla Davis: 8:30

Yeah. And you know, um, you and I have talked about this, uh, about sort of the evolution of the hospice benefit. And there are certainly things that I think um could change or evolve that could help more people get care. But it's a pretty amazing benefit as it was designed by my mentors and your mentors um, you know, over 40 years ago. And there is so much that we can do within the structure of the current benefit, you know, today. And I think that, you know, we let's do what we can do today to do better and to do more. Um, and then let's work together to figure out how we can continue to build on this incredible foundation to help more people and then to help them better and maybe earlier.

Chris Comeaux: 9:21

Well, incredibly well said. So my concern for you, although I I feel like you, but I think this will be a good question, is that you could gap year and then Carla just goes right back to maybe pre-Carla, maybe with a couple adjustments, but are there practices, habits, rhythms that you've developed during this gap year that you believe leaders and you yourself should build intentionally into their lives?

Carla Davis: 9:45

Well, I think you kind of nailed it earlier with the the conversation about the sabbatical um and the Sabbath. Um, and figuring out, I think, the right balance between being intentional with your schedule, which I think I've I've sometimes moved into reactionary and not as much in intention. And I think um figuring out that balance with the balance of sort of um making sure that you also have time to breathe and to think and to read and to reflect um and to just be um so that each informs each other. Um I think, you know, I've I've I've still got to do some thinking in terms of how do I schedule all that. And I think you do a great job of of scheduling all of that. Um, but sometimes it isn't even the scheduling of it. It's identifying it in the moment and and allowing yourself to change pace. Um and, you know, so I I I definitely want to to to do that going forward. Um, but I also think that part of what I learned, in addition to sort of the fact that this is my calling and and I want to do this work, is that God made me who I am. And I am a highly productive, highly energetic, frenetic person. And I can lean on that um and and be proud of that.

Chris Comeaux: 11:14

I'm so glad you said it. And then there's, I'm gonna mirror something back in you, push back if you're if you think I mischaracterized this. Part of what you're talking about is there are some innate gifts that you have, our listeners have, but sometimes when you go through a transformative experience, they get redeemed at a different level. Like sometimes we think, well, that bad thing of me, you throw the baby out with the bathwater, but maybe there's a better version of it on the other side, what I would call a redeemed version. So, like, you know, the the future Carla may not be sitting on the beach drinking a little umbrella that that because I think we think that, oh, well, that that bad thing, maybe there's a better version of someone who could really get a lot of you know what done, right? But the but the right things done, and maybe done with more joy and more impact on the people around them and not just like I have that horrible thing. I don't know if it's exactly like yours, but I could get a lot of you know what done. And sometimes I will just grunt through it and the people around me are negatively impacted. There's a way to get things done that's probably more efficacious for everybody involved, including being more gracious and kind to myself. Does that feel true to what you're you're learning?

Carla Davis: 12:24

Yeah, I think on on both sides of it, the redemption. So I think, you know, um I'm proud of who I am and what my DNA is and how much um I can get accomplished. And and um, but I also don't want to have that experience where my mom feels like she has to slam in two hours worth of conversation into two minutes because I'm gonna jump on a call. So I've got to figure out, you know, that that exact balance. Um so I think that's very true.

Chris Comeaux: 12:56

It's interesting. I'm reflecting on that because I know my mom would say the same thing about me as well. Um, and you know, they're 24 hours in a day. That's the very interesting, that's the great level of all of us. And it's not necessarily he who gets the most task or she who gets the most task in the day wins. Maybe it's the most impact around you. So it's it's using that time. And you said something. I don't know if you meant it intentionally, but I felt like you were alluding to almost a rhythm throughout the day. Like there might be a time to turn it up and a time to turn it down, almost like that oscillation, which world-class athletes, those who perform at the highest levels. Um, we had a guest on, he went and studied at the Human Performance Institute in Orlando, and he's bringing that into the workplace. That, you know, if you look at a Michael Jordan or someone like that, you just think, man, they're dunking the basketball every second. There's an oscillation. They know when to bring it up and when to bring it down, when to bring it up, when to bring it down. And maybe that's kind of what you're alluding to that maybe this kind of, you know, a new amazing level of performance, figuring out how to do that oscillation throughout the day.

Carla Davis: 14:00

Well, and I think it's not just throughout the day, it's what you said. It's throughout the day, throughout the week, throughout the month, throughout your life. So you have to figure out sort of what that that pattern needs to be, um, and how long the, you know, each phase needs to oscillate.

Chris Comeaux: 14:19

That's so cool. And I'm just thinking as you were saying that, you know, that's why we have weeks, we have months, we have seasons, all of that wisdom of nature kind of all around us, which quite often I'll bring some of those into my leadership lessons. Well, maybe what we're just poking on is what you would say to some of this, but I bet you'd add more. If you could bring, I hate to say one, let's say one, two or three transformative lessons from your gap year, but back into the workplace to help teams thrive, especially in a caring profession like hospice, what would it be?

Carla Davis: 14:51

I'm gonna actually keep it simple. It's just be present. What does that mean? I think be where you are. Be who you are, be yourself. Um, you know, don't be thinking about the thing you didn't do right before or the thing you've got to do after. Um, just be present with the people that you're with.

Chris Comeaux: 15:14

So are you a Nick Saban fan? Do you know Coach Saban?

Carla Davis: 15:18

Uh well, I do. Yes. Um, yes, I am a Nick Saban fan.

Chris Comeaux: 15:21

I'm a huge Nick Saban fan.

Carla Davis: 15:22

I'm not an Alabama fan.

Chris Comeaux: 15:23

Just you and me both. So we're 100%. Because people go, why do you like Nick Saban so much? I'm like, I don't like Alabama, I'm an LSU guy. But when you see world-class performance and excellence, that is that is actually one of the quotes that I've kept in front of me this year is be where your feet are. Um, because that's so flipping hard though, Carla. Because you know, you get we got teams going off, we got emails going off, I got a meeting where I'm supposed to be, got a crisis burning somewhere. How does one be where they are when you've got all these kind of sensory things coming at you?

Carla Davis: 15:53

I think back to um a CNA I had at my first job. So I was probably 24, and I'm an administrator. Like I don't even know how I ended up in this place, 24 or 25 in Greenville, South Carolina, Emily Gomez, and she's uh no longer actually with us. Um and I had a list, I was worried about my list. She came in, she asked for some time, she was um needing needing something. And so I just sat down with her and we talked, and she said, she said, I'm so sorry to interrupt your work. And I said, You are my work. And I think, like, even then, how much that meant to her. Like, she talked to me about that for 20 years afterwards, that one little moment. If I can just remember that, like that's the heart of it.

Chris Comeaux: 16:46

You know, it's so funny you say that. I actually put this in my book and I was self-revelatory about it. I have staff still that come to me this day. We had a complaint survey in our inpatient unit. They'd been already having it was a horrible year for that unit. Some

of that was outside of their control, some of it we should have improved. And so I just walked over because I I literally could almost feel the negative energy from the building. Walked over, I still could picture it like in frame by frame. I walked through the front door. Every nurse at this station just looked at me. And I just, it's like it was a moment of truth. And I just looked at him and said, You guys got this. And and that to this day, there was like that moment was so profound. And it was like, really? Because but like all this pressure, like, please, Chris, solve this for us. And I just like looked at him and said, You you got this, and from a confidence standpoint, and sometimes it's those moments, right? That maybe we didn't plan to become the most profound leadership lessons in some respect going forward. Right. So, you know, one thing I I kind of wish you were gonna work on the whole healthcare problem thing. I didn't tell you I was gonna ask you this, but are you gonna still try to work on that one at some level or use your sphere of influence to kind of influence it from that perspective or a bit of both?

Carla Davis: 17:56

Yeah, I mean, I'm I I still want to be a part of conversations um at the you know, um national level on on all of healthcare. But I think if we can start to get end of life care right and more right and more right and earlier um and and and make that great, it can be an example for how all of our healthcare system can can work. So I hope to do both from my perspective on the world. But I do think that um sometimes if you take on too much, nothing gets accomplished. And I wanna, I wanna be great at this. I want us to be great at this. I want to transform into life care in whatever communities I'm fortunate enough to get to help serve.

Chris Comeaux: 18:47

You you probably heard me, and I think I misquoted the author. I went back and looked, it was Arnold Toynbee, T-O-Y-N-B-E, B-E-E. He went and studied all the civilizations of human history. And he said, this is the number one indicator in whether they survived. It's what did they do for the old and infirm that couldn't do for themselves? And that I would just mirror, and I have a feeling you're going to use that quote again. And so you think about, you know, as a country, we ain't doing so good. We can't talk to each other, blah, blah, all of our issues. And so maybe by focusing on this beautiful sphere of influence, it may have repercussions we wouldn't even know.

Carla Davis: 19:21

Yeah. And I, and I I didn't say this earlier, but I have chosen to partner with Cressey and Company because their whole mission is to improve healthcare in America. Um, and they have such a long history of of innovating to be able to do that. And I'm excited to do my little part.

Chris Comeaux: 19:43

Carla, final thought. But you take it, take the microphone as long as you want. Final thoughts.

Carla Davis: 19:48

No, I mean, I think that you and I both are blessed to get to continue this work that you know our mentors sort of laid the foundation for. Um, and I'm grateful to get to do it with you.

Chris Comeaux: 20:03

I'm glad you said that. I've used the quote many times that we have stood upon the shoulders of giant because one of the early the matriarch of the hospice that I was a longtime CEO of Four Seasons, she told me that quote. And and she I almost felt like she was giving me a mantle when she said that. Like we were the ones that kind of create that Four Seasons Hospice was born in her living room over soup and sandwiches. And Four Seasons is a beautiful organization doing great work in Western North Carolina today. But what is this is kind of our crucible time. What will they say about us? Um, I don't know if you know this, Carla. I have a son now working in hospice, which does my heart well. I mean, our kids grew up in the volunteer events and the children's bereavement camps and the tree of lights and all that, and to see one of them choosing at least right now, although he also sees a lot of the challenges as well. And that that next generation, well, they look at us and go, and you, the guys that really didn't at that crucible moment, what did you do with that? Do you feel that same weight? Or am I overstating where we're at right now?

Carla Davis: 21:08

No, I think we are. And I think that, you know, you're not really a leader until you've developed leaders who've developed leaders, who've developed leaders. And so I think that that that's the role that I can play is to help continue building leaders like your son, um, you know, to to to take care of us.

Chris Comeaux: 21:30

That's so good. Any other final thoughts before we let you go? This is thank you for doing this. And I know you were a little reluctant because this was very personable to you. Um, but there were so many pearls. So thank you for doing it first off from me to you. I think when you're gonna go back, there's gonna be some really cool lessons that um who knows whether how they just kind of came out of you. And so I hope it's a gift back to you.

Carla Davis: 21:53

Well, thank you for making me do it.

Chris Comeaux: 21:56

All right. Well, I can't wait to see what you do as you go forward. We're tired listeners. We thank you. We want to make sure you pay this show forward to your friends, your coworkers. Make sure you hit that subscribe button. And at the end of each episode, we always do a brain bookmark. It's usually a quote and a visual. We're going for a thought product, like a brain tattoo. So it literally sticks in your brain. Again, make sure you subscribe. We're going to make sure in the show notes we include the things that we talk about. And if Carla's okay, we're going to actually include her email address as well. So thanks for listening to today's show. And here's our brain bookmark to close it.

Jeff Haffner: 22:29

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