

## Leadership

Published 8/1/23

49:46

### **Opening music**

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### **WGVU's Jennifer Moss:**

Your'e listening to Tilting the Earth's Praxis, a weekly discussion of important issues that impact civil society. With host Salvatore Alaimo.

### **Salvatore Alaimo**

Welcome to Tilting the Earth's Praxis. This week's topic is a big one. Leadership. My guests are Dr. Theresa Ricke-Kiely, executive director at the Center for the Common Good University of St Thomas in St Paul, Minnesota. Dr. Ricke-Kiely was also the executive director of the Kroc Institute of International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame. She's led a large nonprofit with over 250 employees and multimillion dollar budget. She has taught for the University of Notre Dame at the Coast School of Global Affairs and Mendoza College of Business. She also was faculty at the University of South Carolina in Spartanburg, and she holds an EdD in organizational leadership from the University of Sarasota. Welcome, Dr. Ricke-Kiely.

### **Theresa Ricke-Kiely**

Thanks, great to be here Sal.

### **Salvatore Alaimo**

Thank you. And, we have a GVSU alum, Angela Barnard. She is a communications consultant, career coach and keynote speaker. She got her master's degree in public and nonprofit administration from Grand Valley State University. And in full transparency, I did have Angela in my class, and it was great to have her as a student. She's also a certified professional coach through the International Coach Federation. And she's also a host of her own podcast. And I've listened to it and I recommend you try to. It's called the Intentional Mind Podcast, and she covers a lot of topics that are relevant to what we're going to talk about today. She has personally coached over 2000 purpose driven professionals to help them enjoy their work and make it a more meaningful impact. Welcome, Angela.

### **Angela Barnard**

Thanks for having me. I'm super excited.

### **Salvatore Alaimo**

I am, too. So, Angela, we're going to start with you. You do this full time. You speak, you coach. You help people deal with issues and challenges centered around leadership. Are there any things that stand out most for you and what you're seeing out there in terms of what people are bringing to you or what the type of help that they're seeking from you?

**Angela Barnard**

Yeah, I was thinking about this, like how to really I guess simplify it because, you know, there's a lot of issues out there when it comes to leadership and how people show up. I would say the biggest issue I see is what I would call a generation of catabolic energy. And in a nutshell, what catabolic energy is, It's the energy that feels like draining, resisting. It's what we tend to think about as negative. It's like leaders showing up with this kind of energy and not being aware that what they're saying, what they're doing, just simply how they're showing up is generating that energy in their work places. I think that's the biggest issue I see. And even as a career coach, when I'm working with people, I often hear them talk about like, you know, their leadership or their environment that they're in and they describe this catabolic environment without even like understanding what catabolic energy is. They're describing it like to a T, And I feel like that's the thing that is really just holding a lot of people back and really destroying different environments.

**Salvatore Alaimo**

So, Theresa, building off Angela's comments, you know, the body of literature on leadership. Leadership is is tremendous, right? You've been studying this topic for decades. You've been living, breathing it, teaching it there. Any of the things that Angela just said resonate with you in terms of where you see leadership going today and some of the things you're seeing?

**Theresa Ricke-Kiely**

Absolutely. And as a scholar and a practitioner, I see it on both sides. There's a lot of research on that as well as a lot of people that I come into. A lot of people that I meet that share this same exact problem. So, I think looking at my research, which is mindfulness in leadership, self-awareness is really something that we, we have a huge problem with and leaders today, they are not aware that they are maybe presenting as, as Angela said, some negativity, bringing on some toxicity, not hiding places where they they allow psychologically safe spaces for people to talk about what they're experiencing. And it's really creating a lot of movement. It's creating retention issues, morale issues, motivational issues, and really stopping organizations from successively successfully instituting their missions. So, I agree, Angela, that is something that's out there. There's not a lot of people who do intense self-assessment. They don't have truth tellers, they don't have mentors, and they move forward because people are afraid to tell about.

**Salvatore Alaimo**

So, people in positions of leadership. I guess a generic boilerplate part of their responsibilities are to solve problems, fix things, improve things, and that includes organizations, equipment, supplies and even people. So, is that outward focus? Is that inn tension with exactly what you just said, Teresa? And I guess what I'm trying to ask is, should we start with ourselves? Is that a good starting point?

**Theresa Ricke-Kiely**

I think it is. And I think people look at that outward stuff because they don't understand the difference between leadership and management. Of course, they dovetail together, but leaders are visionaries. They look towards the future. They look at how to empower people. It's a relationship with people. Managers manage things. They manage budgets. They, they manage plans. It's up to the leader to figure out who is a good manager and to put them into that role and to let them shine. But the job as the leader, whether you're a board of trustees, member on a board of directors, the executive director, the CEO, or a middle manager, your job is to try to move the mission forward by looking forward. Having that strategy, empowering people, empathizing with people, making sure that they have what they need to succeed in that role.

### **Salvatore Alaimo**

Angela, I'm going to swing it back to you. You started talking about energy and you were the one that turn me on to Bruce Schneider's book, *Energy Leadership*. And in that book, he talks about four blocks limiting beliefs that you hold false assumptions from the past that you bring to today. False interpretations that you make and the fear that you are not enough, the inner critic or what is sometimes called the gremlin. I would even dovetail that, you know, that can lead to this imposter syndrome problem. Now he calls them blocks, not because they're building blocks or enablers. They are blocks getting in the way. So, what, what can you say about that? And what, what do you advise us to do to try to remove those blocks?

### **Angela Barnard**

It really comes back to that whole self-awareness around what is getting in the way of you showing up the way that you want to. And that requires people to take the time to sit down and think about how they truly want to be like as a leader. You know, in an organization like how do you actually want to lead? What is your vision for that? And is what you're doing leading to the results that you want to have? Because a lot of people don't have that kind of awareness like that. Haven't really thought about that. Like I think a lot about, you know, what we would describe as toxic leaders. I feel like a lot. It's not like people wake up and are like, you know, I want to show up very negative and toxic today. That is my conscious choice. You know, it's like I don't believe that. I think they just don't have that awareness that they're showing up that way. But if somebody like actually took the time to sit down with that with that person and they were open to it, they would see that they're not creating the results that they want. And it has to do with how they're showing up and all those blocks that you just talked about. I bet you if you really dive into that person and really understand that, like their thoughts, all those blocks would show up. And that's what's causing that generation of that catabolic energy. But one big one I love to. I think that everyone has, and I love to talk about is that not enough thing, you know that not enough story that's running and whether you're aware of it or not, we all have that in some way. And I feel like sometimes, let's say you're at the top of an organization, you can be running that story like, I'm not doing enough, my organization is not producing enough. My people aren't doing enough. Just something, not enough ness is showing up. And if you're running that kind of thought as a leader, you're generating that catabolic energy into that space. And I bet you that people are around you. They feel very tense just because of the energy that you're bringing in. Like you will, you can literally you can

support these kinds of leaders like you will see tension in their shoulders. They'll bring their shoulders up. It almost look like they're balled up like almost like you're ready to fight. Right. The fight or flight hormones are, like constantly running. It feels like you're walking around eggshells around them. There's a mindset of, I'm right, you're wrong. There's nothing in between. And like when they're generating that energy at the top that's affecting everybody else. And this is often where and it might it starts with that story in their mind that not enough story that is running and that's affecting how they're leading. But if they're not aware that, hey, I'm thinking this constantly, then it's causing all this destruction. It's also going to cause energy is contagious. It's also going to affect the environment where you're going to see people burn out. They're going to start to feel not enough in everything that they do. Like you're I feel like we're seeing that a lot. If you think about, you know, just what, what happened with COVID, the great resignation, you know, when everyone was like leaving their jobs, people were starting to realize like, whoa, I don't want to have a life like this anymore where I feel, like constantly burned out, drained, stressed, like they got a dose of what it felt like to for things to slow down a bit. And they had the time to really evaluate and become more self-aware. And I feel like we're starting to see some changes in the workplace as far as like really diving into like everyone's mental health and talking more about vision and showing up more intentionally. You're starting to see that. But, I also feel like there's a lot of that toxicity like still running and there's a lot of that energy, as I would say out there. And you especially see it nowadays with politics. I mean, that's and this is the thing is like that energy is very clear. It's still running. I'm right. You're wrong. That mentality, you see it in the grocery store. I always talk about this like so when shopping and let's say there's no awareness of anyone on around you, it's like I'm holding up the space. I leave the fridge open or you see road rage. Like those, those are examples of catabolic energy running. And it also like just the hateful mentality that we're seeing out there. So I know it's still out there. Like we have a lot of work to do. We need to like bring awareness to like this whole concept of this catabolic leadership. And as you were saying earlier, Sal, you mentioned about like, does it start like with yourself? And I believe that if you're not. If you're not leading your own life, well, you can't lead other people while straight up because you're bringing that kind of energy in everything you're doing. So, I feel like every organization should take like the time to really invest in like having people do that self-awareness work because everyone benefits from that.

### ***Theresa Ricke-Kiely***

I really love that. Angela And I think about when you're on an airplane and the person comes up and says, Hey, if you have a small child with you, make sure you put your, your oxygen mask on first before sharing it with your with your child. I think that's the same with leadership and self-care and self-assessment. You got you got to take care of yourself first. You have to have compassion with yourself first. You've got to be aware first. And I would take that even one step further and say that sometimes we do not see the people we really are. And that could be because of the inner critic or it could be because of, of an overinflated ego. So, we really need to ask others whether it's a process of a 360 degree assessment, whether we get a true teller, whether we ask a mentor to specifically help us along, whether it's a career coach. We really need to get others opinions about how they see us. And with honesty, it has to be radical self-awareness,

and that is hard for most of us. Most of us. I think the most fragile thing in our body is our ego. And we are so afraid that that will be broken. And I would say that you shouldn't be in a leadership position if you can't take that feedback. But that's the only thing that's going to help you develop.

### ***Salvatore Alaimo***

It seems to me that so much of this and this is my bias, is that being an educator shining through so much of this is learning, learning about yourself, learning about, as Angela said, your environment, your surroundings, learning about your people, your organization. So how much does intellectual curiosity and the will to learn play a part in this mindfulness, this intention towards reflection and contemplation.

### ***Theresa Ricke-Kiely***

Yeah, I think it has a lot to do with it. Of course, I'm biased too, as a as a as a leadership professor. But I think that if you're not learning, you're, you're, you're not growing and you're rotting. And I think you constantly, no matter where you are, whether it's your first day on the job or it's your 25th year on the job, there are always things to learn. And I think if we didn't learn that without it, we probably should step out of that space.

### ***Salvatore Alaimo***

Angela, how much of effective leadership do you think involves the sharing of power?

### ***Angela Barnard***

I think that essential for effective leadership, because when you think about it from an energy perspective, if we're looking at the seven levels that Bruce Snyder talks about in his book, *The Seven Levels of Leadership*, which in a nutshell it's basically like certain amount of levels on the lower like one through three are catabolic. That's a lot of that. What we would often describe as negative or what we would describe as very ego focused. It's all about me, right? That mentality. And then as you go up and you start to hit the anabolic energy, which at its simplest form, we can think about it as like the positive, uplifting, building energy. Thinking about other people. We when perspective opportunities service right that's that higher energy perspective. Well, when you think about leaders that are that effective, they have a lot of anabolic energy. They think a lot about other people, not just about them. They're thinking about opportunity. They're thinking up. We win scenarios how what I'm doing is going to affect someone else. Now, if you have a leader that is generating a lot of catabolic energy, it's hard for them to think that way because it's an awareness thing. The higher the awareness, the higher the energy. You can just think about it as that. And when you're at a lower level and you see someone that's extremely selfish and I like being I wish he would just be grateful for all the things I wish you would think about what other people how this could impact other people. Like we all have those people in our life that we think that way about. And it's because they're thinking like that, because they don't have the awareness. It's almost like you have a ladder and they're at the lowest level, like steps on the ladder. They don't get to see as much out, right? So, they're generating this fearful kind of energy. Like even the best way I like to think about it is *Hunger Games*. If you've seen that that movie, if I always asked people this, like in *Hunger Games*, where do they hide? You know, when they're

hiding from people that are trying to, like, kill them? Right? They're hiding in the trees. They're hiding at the top part. Why? Because they feel as safe as they're. They see more opportunity. There's like they're up higher. Whereas if you're on the ground, you are like, you're looking around your shoulder. You're ready to fight, you're ready to run. It's like that kind of energy. So, it's really about like getting yourself up higher. So, as far as when it comes to effective leadership, I think it's crucial for you to be at the higher level thinking for you to have anabolic energy and what sucks. I will say this, though, is that a lot of those kinds of leaders who we tend to think about generate that catabolic energy, a lot of them are very open to doing this kind of work because they're so focused on the ego and they're so fear driven. They don't want to have other people telling them, "Oh, you're not doing this well," you know, So if that's really it, they're very high on that catabolic, I guess, scale. It can be really hard to get them to open up to be wanting to do this work. The people that want to do this work like we're talking about are people like us who have that higher awareness, who are like, let me let me sit down and hear what other people have to say. Let me learn. I see this as an opportunity, right where the one in organizations, people like us, that are seeking these things and bringing assessments into our organizations, talking about it, all of that stuff, whereas the other people they are. And the best way to get that person to want to do this kind of work is you have to target the ego that is already there that's very strong. And the way that you do that is you shine a light and say like, "Hey, what do you really want?" Because, remember they're thinking about them, what they want. Well, this is really what I want. And you can when you can show them what you're doing isn't equaling the results like that doesn't that's not happening for you. You're not getting what you want. Then you can start to like shift that perspective and show them. But it's first like someone being able to point that out. But, I will say we've done a lot of assessments with this energy leadership index assessment that Bruce Schneider created. And it's a really cool assessment that anyone can take. It's kind of like you could use it like Theresa was talking about like a 360 kind of perspective where I could do the assessment. I could ask, you know, my staff, you know, what they think about me, and they can talk about like the different levels as they gain more awareness. You get this whole report back, all of that. What we have seen, which is really interesting, is a lot of leaders at the very top of organizations actually tend to have a lot of catabolic energy. And you would like, be like, what? Like, how does that happen? It happens because that kind of energy can be such a go-getting energy. Like, people will claw their way to the top. They have no problem stepping on people to get to the very top. Even see this in politics. Right. And it's they're, they're all about themselves. We see that a lot. And then then it becomes very destructive because when you have someone like that at the very top, they're not being they're not an effective leader because they don't have the anabolic energy and they're not thinking of what's in the best interest of everyone else. They're not seeking others opinions because they think they know it all. Like you see that trend.

### ***Theresa Ricke-Kiely***

Yeah, I would agree with you, Angela. And I think if any of us have ever served on a board of directors, maybe we've seen this where it's about the person and about the ego. And I know that when I'm on, on boards, I will actually say on our nametags, put the mission. And then when somebody gets out of that control or, you know, they focus on it, it's like, can you please describe to me how that supports our mission at our, at our organization?

How does that support the common good? Because it takes it away from them and puts it back on, you know, what are we supposed to be doing here.

***Angela Barnard***

And, what you just said there, Teresa, you did an energy shift. You actually asked a question to shift that person's perspective. It was like you brought them up a notch to get them to see in a different way because naturally their main default was just to be about me.

***Salvatore Alaimo***

Well, I you both of you reminded me of the fact that the importance of what James Austin at Harvard talks about, that a leader being an institution builder. Right. They put the they put the organization above self and they focus on the health and welfare of the organization to the point where they make sure they leave it in better health and condition than when they found it. But they also, if they're leaving, if they're retiring or moving on to something else, they are preparing it to continue and thrive long after they're gone. And that's all within this theme of, you know, the entity is bigger, better, more important than any one individual. But that leads me to another shifting to the dark side for a moment. In spite of laws, regulations, checks and balances, policies and procedures. History continues to give us examples. Oh, and also in spite of the largess of an organization. Right. History continues to give us examples where one person can bring the whole house of cards down. In spite of all of that. And I'm wondering what, what both of you have to say about that and why it happens and maybe what we can do to try to prevent that from happening.

***Theresa Ricke-Kiely***

I can talk about what to do to prevent it. It amazes me that one person can, can be so destructive in such a short time. It takes years to develop competent leadership and organizations that are mission focused. It does not take very long for one person to destroy it, and I'm sure there's some research on that, and I'd love to see it because it happened so fast. Well, what I think we need is more reflective leaders where we give people permission to fail and we discuss those failures. When I bring people on board to my center, it's like you're going to make a mistake today, tomorrow or the next day. You just have to admit it. Get over your ego. Move forward. It's better for us to know when to address it. Well, we do that as a team. We come back and I call it a leadership autopsy. What did we do wrong? Where did what assumptions did we have that we need to readdress? What are the issues that are out there that now we have to think differently? I think being part of being a leader is being a reflective being mindful, constantly getting that self-awareness only as a person, but as a team.

***Angela Barnard***

I love that you said that. She said because you mentioned how it it's like you can spend years trying to build an organization in a sense to be very mission focused and you can have one person and totally tear that down so quickly. And it's because that catabolic energy, that's what it is, is so strong. I think about it as like a hot air balloon. It takes a lot

of hot air to raise that balloon and only a little bit of sandbags to keep that balloon down. So, I think one of the things that we can do is become more aware of that kind of energy, being able to spot it and being able to label it. That's really helpful because then we can do something with it. We can see it in people and then also learning shifting tools, energy shifting tools like you did earlier. You talked about earlier Theresa with that Board member, you know, like asking questions in a way that shifts that energy so you can start to get rid of that. That's showing up for people, make them think in a different way. And the other thing is like really creating environments that are more of what I would call that in about like environment where people feel open to seeing how they really feel and they're not because like if you create an environment where people have to feel like they always have to, you like be perfect, or that ego is really strong, like they're because they know that someone will think, you know, say something negative to them, that they missed something, a meeting or whatever it is, versus like the environment where you feel like you truly can be yourself and you can be like, Oh, I feel really dumb. I don't know what you just said or like, you know how you're really thinking versus pretending that, you know, like that's all about energy that's in that environment. And I've noticed with my career coaching clients, this is one of the most common things I hear people say. Mind you, I'm working with people who want to lead their environment and they're all very service-oriented people. I would say a lot of them have a lot of antibiotic energy or they went they went pursue coaching because it takes that kind of level of awareness to want to be better right, to actually pursue coaching. So, anyways, what I hear a lot of them say is I don't feel like I can be myself, like in their environment, that they're in the work environment. I feel like I can't, you know, if I do say something, no one's going to take it seriously. They listen to me. I just can't like see how I really feel, Like I feel like I have a mask on. It's because you're in an environment that's generating a lot of catabolic energy and that doesn't create this psychologically safe environment. So if you're an leader and you're listening right now, one of the best things you can do for your organization is to create an environment where people feel like they can be their true selves and express how they're really feeling and they can fail. They can shout out the opportunities that they're seeing, all of that stuff.

### ***Theresa Ricke-Kiely***

And I would suggest you can even do that by being a role model. So, starting off a meeting like if something hard has happened or there's some kind of shift in the organization or the community starting off a meeting and you as the leader saying, this is how I feel today and being honest and open and vulnerable, showing that you also have some of these same struggles gives others permission to move forward with that.

### ***Salvatore Alaimo***

Should we if we are in hiring and we are in a position to hire someone, should we put more attention towards these soft skill sets, the mindfulness, the acculturation, the empowerment, These it seems I'm still sensing we're focusing primarily on technical skills and knowledge and experience, all of which we all would agree are very important. But does this beg that we should focus more so on these other skill sets, too.

### ***Angela Barnard***



Oh, my goodness, I'm so excited you asked this out. So I was going to jump out of my seat because earlier I was thinking about this is like, you know, you get someone in an environment that we talk about that one person that can ruin everything. We can spot that energy in people when we're hiring so that a lot of times we can prevent them from even coming into that. The team that we created that we worked hard to build this kind of environment around this positive environment by simple things. Like I was thinking earlier, Sal you were talking about that like when someone just I'm paraphrasing everything but like. But this higher energy perspective, they're always thinking about other people. And even when they leave an organization, they're thinking about what happens after they leave. So, I like to think about it as if I was trying to interview someone and I'm looking for anabolic people to bring to my team. I might ask something like, tell me about how you left your last role. What did you do to prepare to leave your role? And if I heard things like, Oh, I had like, for example, example I did when I left, one of my last roles is I had a whole binder created of like what the next person can do with, like screenshots and like pictures of like all detailed out. And you could tell very quickly the way my mind fed it, like it's beyond just me. Like I'm thinking about everybody else too. What happens after I leave? That's an example of spotting that energy in an interview. So, there's certain things that you can ask that, will they will answer in a way that you can read the energy. Now, if they were saying something like, Oh, you know, I didn't that wasn't a good fit for me. So, I ended up giving my two weeks notice and I just went and pursued another job. You might want to dig in a little more and see what really happened there, because it sounds like maybe that person might have a lot of avoidance. That's a big thing that I see with from my career coaching clients that the catabolic energy shows up as avoidance. There is a problem and instead of leaning into it and figuring out an opportunity or a way to solve it, they're like, Avoid, run, run. So, think about it. What are they going to do then when you're working with them in, a problem comes up. There's a pattern of avoidance that's happening. That's a pattern of catabolic energy running. That's a catabolic way of leading is avoiding because that's never going to get you the results that you want.

### ***Theresa Ricke-Kiely***

Oh my gosh, Angela, you are so on point. When I teach young leaders about leadership, it's it's about how do you deal with discomfort, How do you deal with on what you are going to have to deal with conflict. You're going to have to deal with it every single day. And do you do it by avoiding and running, or are you somebody who is going to lean into it, take on that discomfort? That's part of mindfulness, self-aware. How do you manage that? But you're going to have to deal with it. So it's all it's all about. How do you manage that? Asking questions. Asking questions during that interview. You know, give me an example of how you dealt with conflict. And you're absolutely right. You can immediately see that if they want to run, I don't want them part of my team is they're not going to have any kind of conflict, even when it's innovative, even when it's preparing for the next shift.

### ***Salvatore Alaimo***

There isn't a day that goes by that I don't personally observe, hear about in conversation, read about, see on various electronic media examples of bad leadership or leadership gone awry, engaging in either illegal or mostly unethical actions. So, we know that there are forces in tension that distract and pull people away from what the three of us might

agree is, quote, doing the right thing. In the nonprofit sector, resource dependency is extremely powerful. We have to get dollars to do our mission, and we're scraping and fighting for every dollar, every day. And that kind of dominates our psyche. In government, it could be political aspirations or simple bureaucracy and policies and procedures that are dominating our psyche. And in business, it could be the for-profit motive that's dominating our psyche. These things are maybe pulling us away. So, my question to you is, in spite of those tensions, is doing the right thing really as difficult as it seems to be portrayed? Or is there something else going on?

***Theresa Ricke-Kiely***

I think we can think of a lot of examples where people don't want to do the right thing because they're afraid of losing their job and that that's, that's part of your character. I think moral courage is a skill that is lacking in today's leaders. They're afraid to speak out. They're afraid to speak out because they may have unhealthy donors in the case of the nonprofit sector, or they may be afraid of the stock market. You know, shifting and not supporting, supporting their bottom line, I think, is something that we need to get back to. It's easy to talk about ethics, but until you're the person in the chair managing the risk, it's, it's difficult to understand.

***Angela Barnard***

And it's like when we talk about doing the right thing. It's like we all we all have an idea of what the right thing is. But, you know, it's so it just like someone else might be like, I am doing the right thing, you know? And we might be like, No, you are clearly not. So it's hard because it just depends on the person, like what is the right thing. And, you know, a lot of situations are so black and white. It's like that gray piece. And that's why I feel like it's really important as to be an effective leader. Like you were saying earlier, Sal is like too. It's not don't leave those kind of decisions just up to you. Like even if you have the main power, you're the main person to make that decision. You definitely need to bring other people in because I feel like most decisions are not so black and white. There is not a clear right thing to do, you know? And I feel like a lot of times you see people feel like they have to carry that weight on their own. I've even seen that with people I've coach, you know, as leaders in organizations where they're like, I'm just so stressed out because this is happening in the organization. And I had to make a decision around It's really hard and it's like, I want to be like, well, pull people in, like seek the wisdom, you know, gather, get your wise counsel in your community like this is going to help you and you feel supported. Like it's not all on you to make that decision. It.

***Theresa Ricke-Kiely***

And accept that there might not be closure, there might not be one right answer. And again, you have to feel okay with that discomfort as a leader.

***Angela Barnard***

Definitely, let your ego down to say that, you know, I'm like and actually say I'm not really sure or, you know, this is what we've came up with. And just like it's all about communication, too. The other thing is I've noticed a lot well, as the communications, because there's a lot of issues around communication, like people are not very clear.

That's the biggest thing I see is like a lack of clarity around what they want or their expectations. And they get really upset when other people are not doing what they desired, but they don't communicate in a clear way. That's something someone told me. I forget who it was, but they said, You know, when your expectations are being met that back and like ask yourself, was I really clear around what I wanted to happen? I've learned this since I just I've just created an AirBnb and I've learned that you have to be so clear about when you say no large gatherings are no no parties. You have to be very clear what that means. Like some people think, well, it's not a party at 35 and my family members and we're just chillin', you know, on the deck. We don't we're not getting drunk and crazy. So, it's not a party. So, like, like I'm like, wait a second. So, I've learned a lot that like being really clear is important as a leader. So, when we're talking about effective leadership that's something a lot of us need to up our game on is like clearly communicating what it is we desire or what we want to happen.

***Theresa Ricke-Kiely***

And again, sometimes that means that somebody else has to step in again, your truth teller to say, I don't think that that was very clear and I think I'm clear all the time. But my staff will tell you, No, no, you're not. But we created an environment where people can step in and ask the question, if I'm not clear.

***Angela Barnard***

And you know, what else happen is I think some of us because I've noticed this in myself, where because I have less self-awareness and where my catabolic energy can show up is around how I'll say something and I'll be like, Well, that was that very clear.

And it's almost like purposely didn't make it very clear because it was like a fearful thing of letting them then decide what I was kind of saying, I don't know I just noticed that show up in myself because it also takes courage to be clear about like, this is what, you know, I desire or what I want. Like, I've just seen that show up and I've been catching it with my clients a lot lately where I'm like, you know, coaching them around career stuff. And I would say like, okay, so you're saying this is a salary you need. Like, that is what you need. Then you need to be clear that this is the salary not being like, you know, we maybe could move this. Like I just see a lot of that and it's like, let's be really clear because otherwise you're generating that catabolic energy of confusion. So that's just something to consider as leaders.

***Salvatore Alaimo***

So, I want to ask you, both of you, a question based on what I see and how leaders are often measured or valued. A lot of data metrics, a lot about performance. It could be sales, it could be some sort of numbers driven outputs. And I'm wondering if that forces leaders to focus on those things. And I'm going to ask you a question at the risk of a generalization. Do you feel, based on your observations, that we should move beyond just in numerical outputs for our work as leaders and being valued as leaders and focus maybe a little bit more on transformation, outcomes, impact.

***Theresa Ricke-Kiely***

I think impact is really important to understand what you're doing. So many leaders focus on simple metrics and doesn't get to the why. Why, why are we here? What is our mission? How are we making sure our mission is realized effectively? So, I think absolutely we need to look at longer term goals, which may again be beyond my lifetime here or my, my part here. And that ego, as Angela keeps, keeps talking about, is so strong that sometimes we want to look at short, short term goals, not the long term impacts of what our organizations can provide for our employees and our communities.

### ***Angela Barnard***

You know what just came up to my mind is I remember when I worked in mental health, I was running the quality improvement program for our county mental health agency. And I remember we did a lot of measuring around numbers and we didn't look a lot at impact. And I remember when some of the clinicians would give me the like what they were measuring with our goals were it was like things like let's reduce hospitalization by 25%. And this would come from someone who was like. They're actually just so out of line with abortion because it's like what they were in charge of was actually admitting people into the hospital that needed services. So, it was like, why are we measuring that? So I think a lot of times we can get carried away with numbers and it's like, what is the overall impact? Because for that example, it would be like if people for you guys, based on your role in your job, if someone truly needs to be admitted to the hospital, that's what you guys are here to do. You know, given your role itself. So, it's not a proper measurement, but it was just so numbers focused, it didn't make sense. And I think I've seen this a lot in other organizations I work with where we're just like we measure stuff and they just, you know, how list the numbers, but it's not tied to the, the clear vision that they want to have. And like, are they actually creating the results that they want to? I think everybody needs to do that, even in our own personal lives. Like, I'm a huge advocate of having a vision, but not just having a vision evaluating like, are you actually creating the results that you desire? Are you? And then I do think sometimes the numbers are important, but it's not just about numbers. You can't just leave it at the numbers. We need to see. Like, first of all, are we measuring the right numbers and then what is the true impact of our actions? Is it leading to that? Are we becoming more of the kind of organization or the kind of person that we want to be? I think that's a huge problem in leadership. Two is this lack of intentionality and instead just focusing on look at what we do, you know, versus like, is it truly making an impact? You even see this happening with organizations now that just truly annoys me is like this concept of let's get behind certain political agendas so we can be like, look at what we do, look at what we support, look at what we wear. I'm on the outside being like, I want to know more about the impact that you're actually making in people's lives. You know, not what side of the fence you're setting on or whatever. You know,

### ***Theresa Ricke-Kiely***

I do want to name that. That sometimes is hard for some of us, you know, what is the impact? How do we do that? I mean, Sal does this for a living as an evaluator. He comes up with theory of change and logic models to help come up with impact. It's not always easy in every business to do that, but it's a thought exercise to at least try to come up with beyond. You know, this is how many people came through our organization or

received services or, or, you know, had high satisfaction. It's worth the exercise to go through and to actually look at longer term impacts and what that what that means for individuals.

***Angela Barnard***

Yeah, it definitely can be so challenging. And like I feel like it takes a lot of work to really sit down and really think. And sometimes things we know aren't easily measured, like we always can't throw numbers to them, but it's worth like having the conversation like where is there evidence? Because either way, there's always evidence in some form that we're moving forward on making that impact. But we see so many organizations, especially in the field, the nonprofit sector, which like hurts my heart because like that are really not measuring their results and, you know, taking the time to really think about how to truly measure that impact.

***Salvatore Alaimo***

So, both of you mentioned a key term. You said long term. In fact, I think I've heard long term mentioned several times. I'll have to go and check the transcript later. But. So I'm seeing a lot of short term mindedness out there, you know, like Angela and you too Theresa. It seems like we all three of us have this hobby where we observe human behavior as a sideline right, to our regular work. And uh, I see just an ocean of short-term mindedness, you know, get as much profit as we can, as fast as we can, get the clients in and out, get the students to graduate as fast as we can. And, you know, I could go on and on with many examples. Should leaders start to shift some of that and try to be more long term if they're truly going to be effective?

***Theresa Ricke-Kiely***

Absolutely. I think we all need to be more strategic at our thinking and think about, you know, what happens after we leave and how can we make sure that we are still contributing to human flourishing, whatever that means for our companies.

***Angela Barnard***

Yeah. You know, a story that just popped up in my mind that relates to Sal. I remember you in grad school. So little side note story. Sal, you're not only my professor in multiple classes, you're also my personal advisor, like through grad school. So anyways, I got to hear a lot about what people thought, even what people thought about you Sal. So, I remember one time, bottom line, thinking they were so frustrated by you because they said they wanted they had like they were taking, I want to say like 21 something nuts, 21 credit, something not through grad school, but they're working full time and they were trying to rush, you know, check the box, just be done with it. And I remember they said that you said to them, what are you doing? Like, don't you actually want to learn? Like, don't you want to be intentional about this process? Like, why are you trying to rush through this and like, just check a box, you know. This was like years ago and I think a lot of things have changed since then. I almost feel like it's worse in my mind. Like back then it was more of like we were starting to be the check the box kind of people that showed up and we were like, Let's just get this degree, check the box and move on with our lives. I almost feel like it's worse now, and I don't know how maybe you could speak to that

then. You know, back when I graduated from grad school in 2014. But I feel like the way things are now, everything is fast, You know, every like if we want food, we don't even have to leave our house. Someone can bring it to us. Instead, things like we get so frustrated. When I was freshly the other day on my Google wouldn't upload and perhaps I get, you know, like this is like what? Our brains are getting trained for that immediate instant gratification. And I feel like we really got to watch that because that's a huge barrier in making a true lasting impact when it's all about the short, quick stuff like that doesn't create those results that are really good results. You know, it takes time to create something amazing.

### ***Salvatore Alaimo***

So kind of continuing with that, I think I want to close with this question because I want to add everything you've been talking about has been very rich and thorough. And, you know, we probably could have a whole weekly series on this discussion. But I want to I want to ask you, when we think about how leadership impacts this ideal of civil society.

When we think of people in positions of leadership, how fragile and how delicate it is, what they're holding in their hands, because their decisions and actions are impacting the lives of others. And it could be a customer. It could be a patient if you're in health care, could be a student, as you were describing, Angela, in higher education or a k-through-12 environment where someone in human or social services or in how the police and fire serve their local communities, we can go on and on with examples. What can we do to make leaders stop, pause, and realize that their decisions and actions impact the lives of other people? They are important and that maybe they ought to be a little bit more careful or thoughtful in how they in how they enact their, their leadership.

### ***Theresa Ricke-Kiely***

I think there has to be an organizational attention and intention on that.

You you get results from what you pay attention to and what you're rewarded for in your performance evaluation. So how do organizations start setting that up? Again, I'm going to stress at every level, it's important at every level that people that people do that. So, attention and intention to, to make that happen.

### ***Angela Barnard***

Yeah, I think too is. People need to be more engaging presenters. Can I just keep it real? Because like even a lot of like we collect a lot of data, especially in the nonprofit sector. I'm like, hopefully we do, but like presenting it, you know, sometimes people present, Oh, I have the annual report or whatever it is, and everyone's like snoozing and falling asleep and they don't care. They don't they're not attached to what that actually means. They're not asking questions about it. You know, and I also feel like so it's about how people are presenting that information, but really make creating a culture of where we really dive into like what does that actually mean? And is that actually creating the results that we want and that everyone's aware of what the vision is to like? How many organizations are we a part of where people don't know what the vision is and what we're really working towards and what role they play in the overall vision? I see that as a huge issue too, but I want to share a super quick story. I remember working for our mental health and one of the things and the guy that was in charge of all the data, he was gone for a vacation. So, they're

like, hey, and can you look over the data? And I was like, I don't really know what I'm doing, but I'll check it out. And right away I noticed that the results, they were saying that 95% of people that would seek out mental health treatment were seen within 14 days, 95% of people. And I was like, this isn't true. And I in some cases on 98%. And I was like, There's no way this is true because my sister was in charge of the clinic and she was like, there's like a three week wait list. There's so many people they're not getting in. You know, some people call us the other day, it's been several months. They haven't gotten it. And I was like, What is going on here? So I started asking questions about it. And long story short, I ended up finding out that I brought it to the board and I was like, this is, you know, I think this is off. And we came to find out that there was numbers, that people were just fudging, just putting random numbers in and they weren't. And this is the thing is like, how am I the only person this data has been presented where ever how am I the only person that has questioned this when a gazillion other clinicians work. Y'all are aware of the constant calls we're getting, you know, the waitlist, all the thing. No one questioned that mind you, they were presented that report was given to them on a monthly basis. Everybody was aware of it. But then once I started diving in, I'm like, Do you realize the impact of this? I know you care about the numbers, but do you realize this can mean someone that truly needs mental health treatment is not getting it? This could be the same person like I had to communicate and put in perspective. Like this could be the same person that could go shoot up a school system because they didn't receive any help. They wanted help. They tried to reach out. No one helped them. And then now it's like X months down the road. Like that's an extreme case, but that's the reality of it. So when I brought that up, then people are willing to look at it. But my, my struggle with this is like this was data presented on a regular basis and no one question it. So one, we need to be more engaging presenters. And two, we need to be actually asking, is this data representing the like? Is it truly representing what we want to happen? Is it leading to the results that we want? We need to ask those kinds of questions.

### ***Salvatore Alaimo***

So, great tips for solid, effective leadership, which we know impacts the lives of other people and the human experience. And leadership certainly plays an important role in civil society. Dr. Theresa Ricke-Kiely, executive director at the Center for the Common Good, University of St Thomas. Angela Barnard, Communications consultant, career coach and keynote speaker and host of the Intentional Mind Podcast. I want to thank you both for a wonderful, engaging discussion.

### ***Theresa Ricke-Kiely***

Thanks for the opportunity, Sal.

### ***Angela Barnard***

Thanks for having us.

### **Closing music**

### ***WGVU's Jennifer Moss***

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**Closing music fades.**