

Jerry: Hey Shelly, it's great to see you again.

Shelly Francis: Hey Jerry, thanks for having me.

Jerry: So, before we get started, why don't, uh, we just take a moment. If you could introduce yourself, give us a little bit of background and, uh, and then we'll, we'll jump in.

Shelly Francis: Alright. Well, my name is Shelly Francis and I am Marketing and Communications Director with the non-profit called The Center for Courage and Renewal. We're based in Seattle and I have just finished launching the book that I've written on behalf of the center called "The Courage Way: Leading and Living with Integrity," it's a labor of love and a really fun project.

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Jerry: Mmm. Well um, and I will own, uh that I am a huge fan of The Center for Courage and Renewal. I'm a huge fan of Shelly, of you, but I'm, uh, we at Reboot are big fans of CCR and we feel a kindred spirit, uh, between the work that you do and the work that we do. Um, and so I'm super excited to be able to talk to you today, uh, really about this book and really about ... more important about the topics that are there, because I think that there is tremendous overlap between the things that we are focused on and the things that I know are implicit here. So, um, let's, let's, let's jump in.

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Shelly Francis: Alright.

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Jerry: Um, so the book is called "The Courage Way" and um, just so we land ourselves, tell me, from your perspective, what is courage?

Shelly Francis: Hmm, courage is such a big topic that I think we narrowly think of usually as something around physical prowess or something that you have to do in the moment like, survive an illness or overcome something physical. Um, we also think of moral courage, the right, you know, the standing up, uh speaking up against power, but I really learned that courage is the energy that comes from our heart that motivates us in times of trouble, of stress, and it's like our deep inner core. It's truly like who we are when we're in those moments of courage, I believe, that's when we're meeting our true self.

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Jerry: Mmm, and, and um, when we think about courage and leading from a place of courage, you know, folks like Brene Brown have done such an incredibly important and wonderful job of helping us understand the link between vulnerability and courage. And I see you nodding and I think you ... I'm imagining like, that you feel the same kind of resonance with that. So, tell me about that link, tell me about what that means for you. Because, to be clear,

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the book is really a collection of stories, around people who have, in my parlance, stepped into their full self and are leading from that place of courage. So, um, I don't know does that have resonance to you?

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Shelly Francis:

It does, because you know, if we're saying that we're leading from the heart or leading from within, we're leading from our wholeness and a sense of self awareness where we know now only our strengths, but we also know our limits and our challenges and so we can be more transparent, we can be more present and aware of how we're bringing ourselves and how we're showing up as leaders. And when we do that, people are more likely to trust us, and we also trust ourselves more ...

Jerry:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

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Shelly Francis:

... when we're coming from that place. I think you're right about Brene Brown's, uh, connection to vulnerability, because to go to that soft spot in your heart, you have to risk being seen as potentially someone who isn't strong or who doesn't fit the model of the strong, brave, stoic leader that we see all the time. Um, but you know, there's an author that I learned about named Grana May who talked about four types of courage and those are some that I explore in the book. So, in addition to the physical and the moral, he talks about social courage and I think that's what Brene Brown is bringing to light so well, with how do we risk letting people know who we really are so that we can overcome our isolation, um, and just really be true to each other and true to ourselves.

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And then, Grana May also names creative courage, which I just love and that's more than being an artist, it's creating new visions that people can rally around, which is so important in leadership. Um, creating community, creating solutions or movement on intractable problems and um, creating versus death dealing is as we often say, "What's life getting that you're putting into the world?"

Jerry:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Shelly Francis:

So, all of those aspects of leadership are, there's a broader sense of leadership, I think, when we understand that courage can be more than just traditional things that we think about.

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Jerry:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). My, my brain is popping right now, I've got a bunch of, uh, reactions and thoughts and questions. Um, I'm really struck by the notion of creative courage, and you know, so much of what we do, uh, involves hanging out with, what I love to refer to as the pathologically optimistic

[00:06:00] entrepreneurs. Um, social entrepreneurs, um, thoughtful entrepreneurs, people who are in effect creating community and creating solutions around, um, what they see as the world's challenges, the world's problems. Um, tell me more about creative courage, what does it mean?

Shelly Francis:  
[00:06:30] I just love the idea of creative courage because it's a sense of finding what's true for you and connecting to your meaning and passions from, from inside and you know, it's ... I think there's a piece of paradox in creative courage, is how can you see the challenges and the reality of the challenges and the hope and the vision that you can sense is possible and not get stuck in the cynicism, or the overwhelm, or the burn out, but stand somewhere in the middle that we call the Tragic Gap. I know you've talked about the Tragic Gap before ...

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Jerry: Right, this is [crosstalk 00:07:00] yeah, this is Parker's view of this place between, where I like to think of it, I've heard him describe it as, "The world we know is possible, and the world as it is." And this very difficult spot of standing and that place ...

Shelly Francis:  
[00:07:30] Yeah, and it's so easy to do that black and white, either or, um, thinking about problems or thinking about where you are and fall to one side or the other, but if you add some third point somehow, of um, a conversation or a new idea bringing people together, suddenly there's more space to have that conversation, and you can create something rather than, um, give up on problems. So, I think that's the creative piece, well I've heard Parker talk about creativity a lot and for me, creativity is one of those things where I want, um, to be rejuvenated. It's, to me it's something that gives energy and then we have energy then we, it just builds on itself.

So, if I as a leader, bring my heart, and my energy to create something new, or to create a sense of possibility, then it feels like it creates that vacuum that brings even more people in so that we can move forward together.

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Jerry: Mmm, so there a ... there's a , there's a movement that I hear you describing and a movement almost like an orchestral movement which is, um, begins, in a sense, with knowing oneself, um, understanding one's own possibilities, one's own limitations, one's own strengths, one's own negative attributes, one's own positive attributes and I use those terms loosely, what we often refer to as a kind of radical self inquiry. And then from there, there's a kind of integrity that's called forth which is inner and outer of alignment, which then allows the ability to step into the Tragic Gap, and so we stand there between ... with our wholeness if you will. And then, from that place, we begin to see what is possible and we begin to see the world as it truly is, its brokenness, its wholeness, its resources, its capabilities, and its impediments and its obstacles, all of it, and then we choose to act.

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[00:10:00] Based on the stories that you have collected, based on your own experiences, have I just described "The Courage Way?"

Shelly Francis: Mmm, I think you did. No, um, I love that your company is named Reboot.IO, because the IO for me reminds me of inner and outer.

Jerry: Ahhh, we never thought of that! We always thought it was input-output.

Shelly Francis: I know!

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Jerry: But that's great! I love that! Nicely done Ms. Francis.

Shelly Francis: Well to me, you know, I have, I've played a lot with the graphic image of the Mobius Strip.

Jerry: Yeah.

Shelly Francis: And with the sense that, you know, when you take that flat piece of paper, you only, you can see one side or the other, but when you bring those ends together and twist it, you get a Mobius Strip where it's all the same edge, it's all the same piece. And the leaders that I interviewed in the book, you know,

[00:11:00] whether they were conscious of it or not, when they would talk about how they were aligning themselves with who they are and what they do. They would run their hand around in this horizontal figure eight, which was really to me ... you know, it looks like the infinity symbol ...

Jerry: Yes.

Shelly Francis: ... but my theory is, you know, that infinity symbol is really the Mobius Strip.

Jerry: Yeah.

Shelly Francis: Um, and I love the idea that it only has one edge, um, and we talk a lot about you know, for years I've heard people talking about, "What's your growth edge?" Like what if your growth edge is this Mobius Strip of needing to, to um, not just look at it as paper, but put yourself on it and imaging yourself on a Mobius Strip walking it or sliding down it or hanging on the edge by your fingertips.

Jerry: Yeah.

Shelly Francis: Um, what does it feel like when your, you go inward and really look inward at your life, but you keep moving, you keep moving forward and you come back out and you bring what you learn out and then at the end of the day, or at the

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end of a deep breath, you realize, "Oh, this outer world is taking a toll on me, I need to go back inward and integrate what I'm learning, what I'm feeling and fortify myself and come back out."

[00:12:30] You know, so it really is a movement and that could be a movement within 60 seconds, um an hour, a day, a lifetime, you know the seasons. But it's that constant, um, breathing in and out that we do in the micro scale and then that big macro scale of being in our life and being in and of the world at the same time.

Jerry: I, I, I love your depiction of that. First of all, we are going to steal Reboot.InnerOuter. Reboot your Inner Outer, so just watch that in our marketing material, that's fantastic. And, I love the fact that you pointed out something that we may have been working with unconsciously and not aware of, so that was really powerful. And I love the way that you describe this movement, and I bring attention to the fact that, you talked about, in a sense, when the world feels too much with us, and I think of that words with palm ...  
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[00:13:30] the world is too much with us, that the place we go for strength, the place we go for nourishment and replenishment is inside. And you described it beautifully, "at the end of the day, at the end of the breath we go inside," and in a sense to breathe again.

[00:14:00] Um, and if I may, can I expand upon that? Um, the outer part of that Mobius Strip, in a sense, is what I see so many of our clients, perhaps even so many of our listeners of this Podcast, struggling with. The truth is they struggle with both, but out of their fear, out of their sense of, uh, their perception of themselves is being deficient in some way or another. They measure their outer performance against an idealized view, and the result is, I think, that not only are the inner and the outer out of alignment, but I'm gonna go to your subtitle here, which I always think is the most interesting part of the title of the book. Leading and Living with Integrity, and that mapping of the two, you know where the inner and the outer are in alignment with the two sides of the Mobius Strip are in fact one side, that for me feels like a definition of integrity. Does that resonate?  
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Shelly Francis: It does! I love playing with this idea of the Mobius Strip with you, because, um, as I was really studying it during the book writing process, I was thinking, "What is the, what is the key to trust or courage?" And you know, when you twist that paper and you put it together, that's the, that's the line of integrity that you cross in a way, to go from inner to outer, and that the glue at that spot is trust. And so, learning to trust your inner self, your true self and learning to trust other people and community and what's out there in the world, that's what puts it together and enables the flow from inner to outer, is trust. And so I think courage takes trust.  
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Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Shelly Francis: Integrity takes trust, but we have to, we have to build up the trust in ourselves and who we are and knowing who we are really well and like you said, the wholeness of who we are. Um, and then trusting that we're not alone and we need other people, and trusting that, going back to creating community, that to have a community that you can trust, and to trust even a capacity to build community across lines of difference. That's when leadership gets larger and our hearts get larger and possibilities get larger as well.

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Jerry: I, I love that depiction, and once again if I can elaborate on that ... um, because as a coach, one of the things that I work with, that we work with, is clients will come in and they will say, "There's not enough trust in our organization." And they think of it as a goal to achieve ... "I have to get to that place," and so what I will take them through is in addition to pointing out the, in my view, trust is the outcome that, uh, grows out of our behavior. I then point out that there's actually two sides to that, which is to act in a way that is trustworthy, and to act in a way that is trusting.

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Shelly Francis: Mmm.

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Jerry: Right? And it's this, it's this movement again, here again we have this inner and outer. While if I act in a trustworthy manner, in a way in which I have earned the trust of those around me, chances are really high that I have been acting with the integrity of inner and outer alignment. I have been leading from that space of courage and vulnerability that two sides of the same coin, in a way where I am consistent in my behavior. Where my outward expression is a manifestation of my consistently voiced values, where even when I inevitably, as a human being, fail to live up to those aspirational values, I earn it.

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That then creates this ability to be trusted, but there's a corollary to this, which I think you need, which is, that I can then trust with those around me will, um, as our dear teacher Parker will point out, um, that those around me will talk, will point out to me when I've been operating say, from my shadow, or operating from a place of compromised integrity. Does this land with you?

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Shelly Francis: Yeah, to have those people that you can trust to be honest with you at times like that is so important, um, that you have built up a relationship where you can have those kind of hard conversations and take it to heart but not take it personally, maybe, so to speak? Um, one of the things I learned, um, in my book research was around relational trust, and we had a program that was piloted in elementary schools based on work that goes way back to the 80s. Um, and they named four aspects of trust, relational trust specifically that were really fascinating to me, because what they named is that, how I trust

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[00:20:30] you is, while it is as much about how you behave, it's also my perceptions of how you behave. And I may have biases and assumptions that are untested, but that are influencing how I react to your actions and behaviors.

So, these four, these four concepts are: personal regard, uh, professional respect, competence, and integrity, and um, can I say just a little bit about each one?

Jerry: Please.

Shelly Francis: Personal regard is: if you're my boss or somebody I work with, do I have the sense that you care about me as a human being?

Jerry: Mmm.

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Shelly Francis: Do you know about my life? Have you asked about my life? Um, do I feel like you care? Professional respect is: do I feel like you honor me and my contributions to our team just as I honor the difference, different pieces that you bring to the team? So it's recognizing that we all have different gifts that we're contributing and we respect each other for that. Um, the third one is competence, and I thought this was pretty interesting, is that, do I think you have what it takes to do your job?

Jerry: Mmmm..

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Shelly Francis: And, you know, sometimes we feel like leaders get promoted beyond their, uh, principle, you know, beyond their abilities to work, but if you look at it from the leaders' stand point, and what if you're not trusting your team that you've hired to do the work that you wanted them to do. Are you questioning their competence and is there something that you as a leader are not doing training wise or whatever to make sure they have the competence and the ongoing learning. I think that's an interesting twist to the concept of competence.

[00:22:00] And then integrity is, you know, all the things we think about integrity. It's not only the ethics, but do I have the sense that you're reacting on the best behalf of the people we're serving? You know, so in schools, are you making decisions for the sake of the children or if it's in business, are you making decisions on the basis of the stakeholders and shareholders or the people that were really trying to serve in our customers?

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

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Shelly Francis:

So, when you put all that together, it comes back to, "How do I perceive what your doing, and the only way I can actually know what's true about that is for us to have honest conversations back and forth and really relate to each other," and that takes time.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Shelly Francis: But that's a huge piece of what can happen when people are self aware and owning their stuff, and willing and inclined to have conversations and interact with each other.

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Jerry: Mmm, I, you know, uh, your phrase about it, bringing back, coming back to open honest conversation reminds me of something my partner, uh, Khalid Halim, often says, which is that, "All problems in organizations are people problems, and all people problems are communications problems." And so, what we're really talking about is that, an essential element of courage, of leading with courage is the willingness to have open, honest, agenda free, vulnerable, truthful conversation.

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Shelly Francis: Yes, and so the practices that I think that you would probably use at Reboot too, are um, we have some practices we call Touch Stones, and the three that I found were the stickiest for the leaders that I interviewed were a Touch Stone called "When the going gets rough, turn to wonder." Um, and that means, I wonder what that person's thinking that's pushing their buttons and you try to step back and be nonjudgmental about it. Or, I wonder what they just said, why it's pushing my buttons, but you take a moment to pause and the second one is the idea that you're not, you don't always have to be here to fix, or save, or advise another person, you can just listen. And you can really shift your relationships with people you work with if you're just there to support their growth rather, or help them find their own inner wisdom rather than just quickly fix and advise.

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[00:24:30] Um, and then the most powerful one is the idea of open-honest questions, and how can you ask questions that don't have an agenda or don't have a sense of, "Oh, can we just get them to say what I think they need to say or see what they need to say?," but really, help them find their own answer. Um, and all of those, those three things, especially, I think create a good conversation, can create a really good conversation if you, especially if you practice it over time.

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Jerry: Yeah, I, we do very much link into the Touch Stones and Circles of Trust, which is what you're referring to, and uh, which is part of the deep and profound work for The Center for Courage and Renewal. Um, uh, given that our realm of audience tends to be entrepreneurs, we also find that the non-fixing approach is one of the most difficult pieces. Um, and I wanna be gentle around that, I

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think that, um, so many leaders come from, uh, aspirationally high achieving backgrounds where they did well in school, where they did well in their early careers, where they are now being, um, whether they want to or not, they're being called in effect, to fix constantly.

- [00:26:00] And then for us, is, uh, elders who encourage a pause in a process, to simply step into a place and say, "Hey, you know, no fixing!" Well, there's another opportunity, which is to recognize and honor the ways in which fixing has served them well, and the way it's probably an overused tool that is no longer sufficient. And, um, and that there is a different way, and when we're talking, you know, you and I are nodding 'cause we kind of have a short hand when we say fixing. So, lets, let's just hang out with that for a moment.
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- [00:27:00] As a parent, in order to manage my anxiety, uh, from the moment of my children's birth I stepped into fixing. Um, and often times it was needed. A diaper needed to be changed at three o'clock in the morning. Um, uh, a skinned knee needed to be kissed and bandaged. Um, a diorama needed to be built, right? A textbook needed to be run over to school, right? Um, and then as we grow into adulthood as we grow into the fullness of ourselves, um, we become fixers in school and fixers in ... and our competency gets measured by our ability to solve problems, to see and solve problems. But then, we find ourselves running out of fixing, we find ourselves as I often will point out to exhausted clients. Do you ever sit there at night and say, "Why the heck can't anybody make a decision without me?" And then we go back and realize, "Oh, I've been stepping in, I've actually been complicit in this process."
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- [00:28:30] Uh, and so, the invitation to not fix takes courage. Or accepting the invitation to not fix takes courage. Um, just as, uh on the colleagues side, the letting go of the expectation to be fixed takes courage. Right?
- Shelly Francis: Yeah.
- [00:29:00]
- Jerry: So, and then the last thing I would say is the other Touch Stone that I like is to "Allow Silence." Because I actually think that there's a correlation between not fixing and allowing silence.
- Shelly Francis: Mm-hmm (affirmative), the spaciousness.
- Jerry: The spaci- ... because to not fix means I have to sit in the place of it being unfixed, and uncertain and unsure of the outcome, and that feels an awful lot like a conversation that has a lot of silence in it. Does that resonate?
- [00:29:30]
- Shelly Francis: It does, and it's funny that you mention that Touch Stone, 'cause we've had so many conversations about it in the past, I think year or so, especially around, just the word silence versus stillness.

Jerry: Mmmm ...

Shelly Francis: [00:30:00] And, um, you know, finding your inner stillness and listening deeply for what comes up, what can burble up out of your inner wisdom when you take the time to have that spacious, um, pause. Um, but there have been objections to the word silence too, because in a different context, there are marginalized people who have felt silenced.

Jerry: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Shelly Francis: [00:30:30] And its ... there's a distinction, and we're not talking about that, um, that that's definitely power dynamics and racialized society all of that. There's a lot of reasons why silence could trigger somebody to um, reject even the idea of the value of silence. Um, but if we can, if we can emphasize the stillness or the spaciousness or the listening quietly piece, um, then you can have a moment to experience that kind of silence and I think it takes a special kind of, um boundaries that get in place in the circle of trust with trusted facilitators to hold that space safely so that you can experience, "Oh, this is what that's all about."

Jerry: [00:31:30] Yeah, I, I love the fact that you're having that discussion, and I love, I really resonated with the word stillness. I would offer that there, perhaps, might be a space for, for some language that speaks to the non verbalized experience, because I have found whether it's with coaching, or in group work, or just simply being in relationships with, uh, humans, other humans, there is a dialogue that is occurring even when the words are not flowing. Um, and sometimes words and actions come from a place of fixing and changing, and sometimes they come from a place of healing and holding, um, and I think slowing down and allowing intentionality to rise, um, may be the call that, uh, creates more opportunity for creative expression for genuine authentic expression to arise.

[00:32:30] Shelly Francis: Yeah. I love that you used the word "intention." Um, that goes inward again, um in that concept of paying attention with intention, um it helps you be present.

Jerry: [00:33:00] Well I often, I often joke I mean, the folks that listen to this, uh, Podcast know very well that I'm a Buddhist. So, Jerry's gonna talk about Buddhism again! Um, the Four Noble Truths include ... the Fourth Noble Truth is what's known as the Eightfold Path, and I find it fascinating that among the steps in the Eightfold Path are Right Livelihood. But the one that I find most intriguing, is Right Intention.

Shelly Francis: Mmm.

Jerry: And Right Intention, uh, you know we have to be slippery 'cause ego is really awesome, and it's super powers, and it can convince us that we are operating out of our Right Intention. Um, and what I have found is that stillness can provide a window into our truest intentions, which then enable us to make conscious choices about what intention we are working from.

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Shelly Francis: Yeah, yeah I think about the ego and the soul stories that we tell ourselves. You know, the ego is all on the resonate, but the soul stories are the truth of who we are is whole human beings, and when we can see that in ourselves and seeing it in each other is like, that Namaste ...

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Jerry: Yeah.

Shelly Francis: ... bow to each other.

Jerry: Yeah, indeed, indeed. Well I, you know this has been, uh an incredible conversation and so many of the themes resonate with the work that we try to bring forth in the world and, um, I am super proud to know you as a friend and to know you as an author. Um, and I think that you've done, uh, a deep and profound service for the center, for The Center for Courage and Renewal, but more important for those of us who seek to lead from a place of integrity. even as we struggle from our own brokenness.

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Shelly Francis: Well that's the wholeness part isn't it?

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Jerry: That is.

Shelly Francis: Well thank you so much, it was really fun talking to you today.

Jerry: You too, thanks.