

Ali: Hi Megan. I am so glad to be talking to you today.

Megan: Thank you for having me. I'm just thrilled to be with you and on, on your show.

Ali: I think I have used your work, um, so much with clients. Um, I just think this conversation's gonna be lovely, and before we jump in too deep down all the various channels that we can go. Um, I was wondering if you could share a little bit about, um, yourself and, and maybe what you do and how you got into this work?

Megan: Well, I, um, it's like kind of an interesting long story, but I, I'll, I'll try to keep it as brief as possible.

Ali: (laughs).

Megan: (laughs), I was a Child Support Case Worker in a little County Attorney's Office in a little county in Western Nebraska. Um, you know, in s- in small towns, it's hard to, to get, uh, you know, big career jobs and, uh, you kind of take what you can, what you can get, and what you can fit in. So I started doing child support for the County Attorney and i- instantly fell in love with it just because, you know, you can get people to agreement. So I guess I kind of had that natural inclination, um, within myself at that point.

Megan: So I became a trained mediator and, uh, not too long after I had an opportunity for a job in Arizona at the Arizona Supreme Court as the child support specialist, which was a little different than being a case worker. It was, it was more along the lines of economics and the, the, the, um, the child support guidelines and leading legislative and policy, uh, of that kind of thing.

Megan: So it was while, you know, I was, uh, leading legislative committees and, um, working with family court judges, family law attorneys, and mediators, and all of the stakeholders that comprised family law. I noticed that there was one thread, common thread throughout all of it. And that was this case called the high conflict case. And it seemed to cause a lot of people problems (laughs), um, including the judges. So the judges would get blamed and it was only the high conflict cases that were in court, and they could seem to come back all the time and they were called frequent, we, we called them frequent filers. And it seemed no one could figure them out and, and no one could understand why, you know, they really didn't seem to always put their children's needs first and they're back in court, frequently. So I sort of made it my mission, uh, because I had a business background and I was always interested in, you know, making things more efficient and processes, and so I thought if we can get this one figured out, it will really help the court system.

Megan: And, uh, so that's when I find, I came across a, a man named Bill Eddy, who'd, who was a family law attorney, who'd previously been a therapist and figured out that there was such a thing as a high conflict personality. Um, so I brought him into train Arizona's court ju- family court judges, and custody evaluators, and, um, separately. And, uh, after that, I just knew that this was information that everyone around the world needed to have. And thus High Conflict Institute was born in 2008 and we've been training and doing lots of things around the world since then.

Ali: Oh, that's so awesome. I think such important work, I think in the book. *The Five Types of People Who Can Ruin Your Life* in that book, it's, it's referenced are, it's, it's kind of like this basic knowledge of there are different personalities out there. And, and we can't assume that everybody is like, um, you know, the 90% of the people that we encounter during the day.

Megan: Right. And, you know, you nailed it right there. 90% of, of people would not behave in the ways that people with high conflict personalities do. And let me just say right from the outset that we, we are not, uh, you know, denigrating, or demonizing, or diagnosing anyone, um, with this terminology, high conflict personality. It's just a description of a pattern of behavior. And, you know, like you said, Ali, the, um, a, in a way we're trying, we treat everyone the same. We know that some people are more difficult and we use our best skills, um, with them or we just avoid them (laughs). But I, I think what's important about our work at High Conflict Institute is that we really focus on the, let's say 10 to 15, maybe 20% of the population who have a different operating system. And so we can't work with them the same way we do with everyone else. We keep trying to work with them that way, but we run into, um, a lot of problems because we just don't know the rules to their operating system. And once we do, then we can have some success.

Megan: And so that's what we do, um, every day in our trainings and in our work, is help people understand that not everyone's the same (laughs), like, you know, in school you can't teach one way to the entire classroom, because there might be that kid with dyslexia or a different learning style. So you have to, you know, make accommodations, and that's basically what we have to do with these folks.

Ali: I really love how you framed that. I have seen clients who have struggled with this, uh, or worked with clients who have struggled with this, with their co-founders, with customers like clients who lead kind of, uh, peer group type, um, formats or mastermind kind of formats. And, you know, there's always that one person or that one personality who makes it a little bit more challenging (laughs), like across the board for everyone. And even co-founders who are partnered, um, and also run a business, right?

Ali: So there's like, it's the kind of compounded, um, you know, the effects of having kind of a high conflict personality in the mix of that, and you know, trying to

either navigate that on a day-to-day basis or even separate. Um, and then how do we do that just from a, from a purely point of view. Um, but there are so many ways in which, this has shown up even in, in, in our area, which is working with entrepreneurs, you know, at, at all stages of their growth. So it is, it is everywhere, where there are humans, you know, this, these skills are useful.

Megan: Yea, they are. And you know, I, I didn't, I guess I didn't mention the leap from working with divorcing, uh, clients and child support and family law into workplace, and what (laughs), you know, it was no surprise, I guess, that, you know, people who go through divorces also have jobs and they, these are relationship disorders. They have really poor interpersonal skills. Uh, not, they, they don't even know it, but they do. Um, so they take those poor skills into their, into their relationships and crater those, and then they'd also take that into the workplace, or into the neighborhood, or into their business, and, um, they really cause a lot of havoc. So let's say you have someone who is, um, on a team at, at work and it's that one high conflict personality which they're, they're blamers, um, unmanaged emotions, they have extreme behaviors and all or nothing thinking, right?

Ali: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Megan: So I always think of that team. Um, you know, I remember in business school learning (laughs), uh, about how any group of people form, and it, it starts with forming, norming, storming and performing (laughs).

Ali: Yeah.

Megan: And with the high conflict person, you're going, they to get stuck at storming and that team is going to stay in storming or the, those co-founders are going to just stay in storming. And, uh, so you'll find often that, uh, they, you know, if let's say it's a business partnership or they've co-founded some tech company or whatever, um, and you, one of them has a high conflict personality, the, the other person either has to get skilled up or else they have to take a backseat, right?

Ali: Yes.

Megan: They get skilled up and manage that relationship, which most people don't know how to do or else they get completely walked on. At the end of the day, it's not healthy for the humans and it's not healthy for the enterprise.

Ali: Right. Um, and when things are stuck in that storming phase, there's no norming and performing. And, uh, as you said, it's not good for the enterprise. And like the whole team suffers.

Megan: They do, they do, they do because, because people just don't know what to do. And, and of course all of us have a different conflict style. Um, some people are conflict avoiders and they're passive. The high conflict person will just, you know, roll over them, right (laughs). They just, they dominate (laughs). And, um, and then you have the more aggressive folks that like to explain or argue, or they might be a bit of a right fighter themselves. And that's just going to escalate the conflict and aggravate that HCP. We call them high conflict person.

Ali: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Megan: Um, so it, it'll, it will typically just stay in that phase, um, unless someone gets skilled up enough to manage that person. And, and some people do it innately, like they just have that, that special skill, but have, an extraordinarily high con- um, high conflict person is very disruptive and dis- some have, are quite destructive. Um, so you'll miss deadlines or, um, you know, uh, lose money (laughs). And that there can, there can be... They're, they're just going to cause you to lose competitive advantage, right?

Ali: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Megan: Because they take so much time and they ha- they are, they just kind of have a, uh, you know, a toxic wave over the others on the, on the team, I guess.

Ali: It definitely, um, fuels a lot of dysfunction, and it can feel without, without the skills, like, right, without A, knowing that these types of personalities exist, and then without having the skills to be able to navigate and manage this effectively, um, you know, uh, an unsuspecting, uh, person who's in the 90% of kind of, you know, non-high conflict pe (laughs) people will look at that and go, "Why can't I reason with this person? Um, how do I, like, I've been doing everything I do with all my, of relationships. Why is this not working?" Um, and so there's, there's, there's a special, like you said, there's a special skill required (laughs) in kind of like rec- a recognizing that, oh, this is what's going on and B, knowing how to really, um, go in. And like you said, how do I work with the operating system that I'm in front of here?

Megan: Right. And the, the, the issue, I guess, the, the human condition really is that we are conditioned to operate one way with, with almost everyone. But the thing with the high conflict personality is it's not obvious because they're your, you know, they're your, uh, business partner, you're their co-worker, your friend, um, neighbor that, and they don't, you know, come with a sign that says, "Hey, I'm going to be really difficult and disruptive, and I'm going to make you feel really badly and you'll, will not know what to do with me." (laughs).

Ali: (laughs).

Megan: People with high conflict personalities don't carry that sign, but if you know what to look fo- for, what the clues are, you'll fi- figure out what that sign would say if they were holding it, you know, and it's, it's basically, you're like, you know, H- uh, HCPs will tell you who they are, if you're listening, if you're paying attention, and the, sort of kind of getting back to defaults, you know, we, you and I have a default system, and we're used to dealing with people pretty much in one way, there are variations, but pretty much we have one blueprint for it.

Megan: So if someone is doing something wrong or yeah, or let's say they... You just have a question about something they're doing, um, you'll knock, knock on the office door and sit down to, to ask the question and they blow up at you. And you're like, "What just happened?" (laughs) Right. And so you keep asking them questions or dis- defending yourself or explaining, um, and they, you, you go way and then you wonder, "Why didn't that work?" You know, and it's because that's our default of dealing with the 90% of people that really don't behave this way.

Megan: So when you ex- encounter one of those other 10%, your own default system kicks into gear, and it's hard to take that step back and say, "Okay, I have to do something different here. Every time I interact with this person." And it's really a lot about being prepped, so you can change your own default, so you don't get, you know, step out landmine.

Ali: So Megan, can you help us kind of get a sense of what is the landscape here for these, the HCPs, do some of these personalities have names, how do we begin to talk about this and understand it?

Megan: There are five different types of, of personalities that, um, and this is all I give all the credit to my co-founder at, at High Conflict Institute, Bill Eddy, um, he's he, his psychiatric background, uh, being a, uh, a licensed clinical social worker working in, in psychiatric hospital has really helped him understand this high conflict personality. So, um, and kind of get it, um, boiled down to five personality types.

Megan: And, um, so the, the five types are, are, uh, personality disorders that you would find in the, you know, the DSM-5, uh, the kind of the Bible for the mental health professions. And, uh, you know, we try to keep it pretty simple and we don't want people out there diagnosing others with personality disorders, because that's not what this is about. Um, but we really, uh, it, it seems that there these five types, which are borderline personality, narcissistic, histrionic, antisocial, and paranoid, um, can have this high conflict personality.

Megan: So, but I want to give a major caveat here, um, in a warning that not everyone with one of these personality disorders has a high conflict personality. Okay. That's really important here to clarify, um, because you know, someone with borderline personality disorder, whether it's diagnosed or not, um, they already

feel really badly about themselves and um, and so, and so if they, if someone, if they are told that they're hi- also high conflict, you know, the... (laughs).

Ali: (laughs).

Megan: It's just, it's going to be really hard for them and they may not be, but what, so what is it that makes someone high conflict? So it seems to be one of these personality types that also have the component of blame. Okay.

Ali: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Megan: So not all border, people with borderline are blamers. Um, not all people with, um, narcissism are blamers. So, but those who are, and then you kind of throw in those other four key characteristics, unmanaged emotions, extreme behaviors, um, all or nothing thinking, and then, but that key, key is blame.

Ali: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Megan: So each one of these five types, you know, is a kind of, uh, I like to call it the fear-based operating system. So the borderline has a fear of feeling abandoned or being abandoned. Um, and so their brain, when, when that bridge over to logical land shuts down, they're stuck in that reactive brain. And so they, they're just so desperate for connection and, and, and they, that feeling of, of abandonment is so strong that instead of endearing themselves to someone else, because that brain is on fire, right then they kind of shoot themselves in the foot because they, all that (laughs), verbal vomit comes out in that moment.

Megan: So, uh, the, no our narcissistic HCP fears, feeling inferior, um, so when, as soon as they feel inferior and this stuff happens in like half a second, literally, um, they have to, they need to get back to their safe state, their default state, which is to feel superior. So they're going to put someone down or they're going to try to get the light shine on them. And they're going to blame someone. Um, the histrionic personality, fears feeling ignored. They really need to be the center of attention.

Megan: And if they have that blame component, making them sort of this high conflict personality, uh, that's going to be their instant thought as soon as they feel ignored and not the center of attention, they do what it takes, they blame, um, you know, the, whatever it takes to get back to that default safe space. Uh, the antisocial is, um, also kind of used, um, interchangeably with sociopath and you know, this is, um, this is a tough one (laughs). They're all tough, but uh, they're, they fear being dominated. So they, if they feel in this threatened mode, they need to do- dominate, um, to feel back to their default state.

Megan: So they're going to want to destroy you, and they will say it, they will, and they'll do (laughs), they might destroy you literally, financially, right, or, um, bodily

harm, lots of threats, but they, they, they seek destruction, um, and spending a little bit more time on this one because this, it can be really, really scary, but this is, is who, this is why we need law enforcement in the courts (laughs).

Ali: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Megan: Is to stop their behavior because they, they don't stop. Um, and they will lie when they know they can get caught and they will really confuse you because they, they present with charm a lot of times and um, they're, can be pretty awful. And then the paranoid personality fears feeling betrayed or exploited. And so they're super hypervigilant, um, and, and really expect people out to get them and, and all of that. So they, they all then react in this way of blame all or nothing, extreme behaviors and unmanaged emotions.

Ali: I wonder if it will be worthwhile to kind of talk a little bit about how do you, how do we identify this conference, the other 10%?

Megan: So, um, my co-founder at HCI, um, Bill Eddy came up with what he calls the WEB Method. He's big into acronyms and have-

Ali: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Megan: I know some people think it's, it's kind of dorky, but there's a reason for it. And it's because, um, when we're around someone with this type of personality, we can be emotionally hooked, because there are things going on between our brains that we don't realize are going on. So I kind of think about it, like Wi-Fi, you know.

Ali: Yes.

Megan: Your, your amygdala and my amygdala are communicating when, by listening to each other's tone of voice, uh, looking at each other's body language, hand movements, facial expressions, and it's putting us on alert. If, if you know, the amygdala thinks we're in, in danger.

Megan: So the Web Method is, uh, listening to their words. And like I said, the people will tell you who they are, and they'll do this with their words, and with their stories. So, um, their words wa- might be things like, oh, "you don't care about me, you've never cared. I feel disrespected. You disrespected me. Um, I demand respect," uh, they'll use words like abandoned, acknowledged. I need you to acknowledge me. You betrayed me, just pretty s- strong, things like that.

Megan: And, and people who are into a high conflict of course will say these words as well. But what you're doing is listening for those in combination with blame. Are they... Because HCPs focus on the target of blame. So are they blaming people constantly? And are they always in that victim role? Now, the, the th- the thing

here that's kind of nuanced is all of us blame, (laughs) you know, be- because of, hey, we, we think we're, we're not at fault in a lot of situations. And so we might have that argument and, and defend ourselves, um, and say, it's someone else's fault.

Megan: But the high conflict personality, they feel wronged a lot. And they feel that it comes from someone outside of them. They don't realize that this is their own internal distress, and while they feel really upset in the moment, and so they lash out or they, you know, um, blame someone and, and it's just a pattern. It, it's, it's who they are. They keep telling you blame, blame, blame (laughs).

Ali: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Megan: And it, so it may sound pretty normal in a story with a, you know, with anyone. But if you listen long enough, uh, you'll find out if it's a pattern or not, and if they take responsibility. So it's the words they say. Um, are they all or nothing? You know, like, "I'll never speak to her again." it's kind of interesting once you start listening for, then you hear it and it's... Watch a lot of reality TV and you'll hear it a lot (laughs).

Ali: (laughs).

Megan: It's a great training ground, believe me. So that's the words. And then, um, emotions, um, you pay attention to your own emotions, right? Do you feel like you like this person very quickly or dislike them very quickly? That's a red flag. Uh, do you feel charmed? Red flag (laughs).

Ali: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Megan: We think of the term high conflict personality as something that comes to us, kind of, ah, ugly, but a lot of times it presents first with charm. It's just part of the deal. Um, and then, you know, do you feel afraid or, um, like you're in your own fight or flight, those are things to pay attention to. And then you watch their behaviors. And sort of the bright line here is if the behaviors of this person are things that 90% of other people would never ever do, then you may be dealing with someone with a high conflict personality, right?

Megan: So it's, it's 90 thi- percent, uh, things that 90% of people, other people would never do. And then they make a lot of excuses for it. So you ask yourself, are they, may, you know, listen for any excuses about any behaviors they had that were really strong. Like, you know, I hit that person's car because they were, they were so awful to me (laughs). Right.

Megan: Or I destroyed the hard drive on, you know, the company computer, um, and it was somebody else's fault, right. So it's just all these little excuses. So that's the,

that's the main way. And I... Honestly, if you just listen and pay attention, that's the main thing because they will tell you.

Ali: Yeah. And I think, um, the other important thing you, you really kind of hit on there was charm can be such a part of that. Um, and like you said, these people don't come out wearing the sign that says, "Hey, Hey, watch out for me I'm high conflict (laughs)." Right? Like they come across as like incredibly charming, and the relationship can be like kind of nice for maybe a brief, brief period of time before things start getting really weird, and you start kind of scratching your brow going like, "What the hell is going on right now?"

Megan: Right. And a lot of times those people are your, um, you know, high producers, high earners, um, they bring some special skill to the company that you can't find elsewhere, or it would be really hard or challenging to find elsewhere or cost you a lot more, right, whatever. Um, so you're kind of s- stuck and um, you know, that can, uh, be challenging, but at the beginning they probably came in, either overly loaded with charm and you like them a lot (laughs) or they came in just playing it very cool and seemed very, you know, reasonable and rational.

Megan: So it's a good idea to take some time to see if that charm is real because there are charming people who are not high conflict, and if they are really, you know, charming it's, it can be a nice thing to be around. But for HCPs that's, that's usually just at the beginning or when they're meeting someone new.

Ali: I have to say that when I reflect upon my own experience, um, you know, I came from the upper Midwest, um, Wi- Wisconsin and uh, uh, in a very suburban, uh, safe, pretty n- non-threatened kind of, you know, life.

Ali: There wasn't really a lot of big dysfunction in my family. I always joke that my family puts the fun and dysfunction because we kind of have this kind of like normal. When I left home, and then started, you know, just growing up and, and becoming an adult in, in the world, like it, I, I would encounter these personalities, whether it was, you know, around the community or, um, you know, dating or, you know, in business situations, um, whether it was, you know, clients or, or partners and, um, and it was always so con- confounding to, to me, so I was like, "What is this? And why do I feel so bad right now? For me to encounter from my, my nervous system to encounter kind of some of these personality types, like it, it really threw me off and I had to learn, um, I, it, felt like I had to learn so much about what was actually happening on kind of, uh, like almost psych 101, right? Like what was that, what was that chapter I missed in psych 101? Where we (laughs), you know, we didn't cover ... we didn't cover high conflict personalities,

Megan: High conflict people are really increasing (laughs) in society.

Ali: (laughs).

Megan: Um, especially over my lifetime, it's, it's, it's really grown. So, um, it, it, it can be quite shocking to come across folks like this, and, and I think you use the word confounding and it's, it is it just like, what on? Why? What on earth? So there's your, there's your sign, right there. There's your red flag that I, I don't know what's different about this person, but there's definitely something different.

Ali: I think reasonable is a really, um, it's a kind way to say it.

Ali: There's a passage in, I think it's the BIFF book where, um, it speaks to, you know, you can do BIFF, even though there's a part of you that would much rather respond completely differently (laughs), right. Like you would much rather, rather let the lesser angels of your nature loose on this person (laughs) and react from that place, right. Um, and yet you're only gonna get a high from that for 20 minutes. And, um, and so, um, you know, the, you know, reacting that way isn't gonna work, and being reasonable, isn't gonna work. So it's like, what, what are the tools we have for actually, um, uh, you know, really working with this in a very clear, um, concise and kind way.

Megan: Hmm. Yeah. And you, you nailed it about, you know, we don't want to always (laughs) respond in a nice way. We, we, because we're human and, and we're, we can be reactive, you know. These are, this is all stuff that's going on between your brain and their brain. And they're, they're bouncing off of each other. So when that other person gets upset, uh, the, the, you know, the bridge from reacting brain to, um, problem solving brain gets shut down, and they're just stuck in this reactive mode, and that's where the blame and the all or nothing, and the unmanaged emotions and extreme behaviors come from.

Megan: Well, what happens then in that moment for them is their, you know, their brain's all fired up. They, they look angry, they feel angry. Uh, their tone of voice probably is coming across angry or condescending or loud. And your amygdala picks all this up and says, "Whoa (laughs), problem." And shuts down your bridge to your problem solving brain, and now you are emotionally hooked, and a little fired up, right. And you might have your heart, your heart rate goes up, you feel that, mm. In your gut and you want to, you, you're in your reactive brain. So it's very much part of being a human to react when we're in fight or flight, when we're under that kind of stress.

Megan: But you have to step back in that moment. And, and the way I've, I've started speaking about it is when you have a strong feeling, that's the time to step back and reassess, Okay.

Ali: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Megan: So that strong feeling might be your heart rate has increased. You have that feeling in your gut. You feel that zinger when you get that email or that text or whatever, um, or when that person speaks to you in a certain way, or pre, you

know, causes this problem, you... Most people will have a strong feeling for that. And that's your sign to say, "Okay, I'm emotionally hooked or I'm afraid. I, you know, I feel like running from the room. I feel like (laughs) hiding under the desk, or I feel like fighting. I feel like saying, 'Screw you, um, we're, we're gonna hash this out.'"

Megan: Those are all the things you don't wanna be because you're, you're, you're reacting. And even if you're not trapped in your reactive brain, you're, you still have access to problem solving. You still might be in your default of doing things the way you do with everyone else. And you just can't do that with, with HCPs and you have to adapt and use different skills. And one of those is BIFF that you mentioned. So should we talk about BIFF?

Ali: Please. I think BIFF is one of the handiest things ever, I've handed it to my, the woman who cuts my hair. I've (laughs), I've given it to like so many people in my life, and it's-

Megan: Aw.

Ali: And it's immediate, it's like immediate relief for the high-conflict personality.

Megan: It is. It's so amazing when people see, see it, try it in action, see it in action. You know, I do a lot of, of, like coaching, um, others to, to use BIFF and they'll send me an email they've received from some, from some, uh, you know, someone in their life that probably has a high conflict personality.

Megan: This is where I see people get hung up. They think they need to respond to every email or text and you really don't. Um, and if you do respond, you know, people think they have to respond to every little accusation, and personal attack, and allegation, It's a lot of blame, all or nothing, personal attacks, all that. And so it's human nature to want to defend against all of those when someone attacks us personally.

Megan: So try to keep it as short as possible So BIFF, B is, uh, brief, is it two to five sentences? It needs to be short. Why? Because if you give them more, they'll have more to react back to and argue back with. And the point of a BIFF is to stop the communication (laughs), to stop the back and forth, and the, you know, so is it brief? Um, you, you, you scale it down by then looking at, you know, is it informative? That's the, I, is it informative? Meaning am I being defensive? Am I arguing? Am I being snarky? Um, or am I just focusing on straight information?

Megan: Because here's the problem, as humans, we really want to defend ourselves when someone said, you know, like HCPs, make personal attacks about your weight, your height, your education, lack of education, your status, your job, your level at your job, whatever right.

Megan: So you have to just ignore all of that and realize this verbal vomit, don't take it personally, you don't have to respond to it, defend or anything, because it's just going to give them more to, to come back at you with, right. So just cross out anything like that, that you have in there. And then you look at it, review it to make sure it has a friendly tone, right. And then firm, do you close it firmly? Meaning, uh, saying something like, "Have a good weekend."

Megan: Now, sometimes, a lot of times you need a response from them. Like you need them to give you more information or whatever. So you don't wanna, want to leave it with, um, just an open-ended question. You want them to, you want to give them options so that they have to focus on a choice. What this does is makes them think instead of emote. Um, so if I ask you a question, right, do you want to go on Friday or Saturday out to dinner? What do you do? You think. You're like, "Okay. I have to think of my schedule. Friday, I cannot be available Friday. I'm doing it Saturday." That whole thing is thinking and that, when you're thinking you're calmer, right.

Megan: And so HCPs need a lot of structure. And so that's how you BIFF your email, and then you BIFF it again, because you will, you might be emotionally hooked still and have something still in there that is going to cause problems.

Megan: So it's really, like you said, it's an amazing tool. Um, if it, it'll bring so much peace to your life.

Ali: Yeah. Yeah. Um, isn't the tagline for the High Conflict Institute, the missing piece, P-E-A-C-E.

Megan: Yep.

Ali: Yeah. And that's how I'm thinking a lot about. About BIFF just has a simple tool. It, it, it really is, um, a missing piece in, in so many communications and, um, in our ability to stay, um, in our wise adult self and to not get hooked, emotionally hooked, um, I mean, that takes work in and of itself. And, um, but again, it, it, when we're able to do that, um, once we see what we're up against and we're able to take that stance, um, you know, we can really, we're able to stay with ourselves, we're able to stay so much more clear about what, what is their desired outcome here and, and what really needs to happen? And it, it helps you kind of [inaudible 00:42:27], um, like you were saying, the uh, the verbal vomit, you know, those emotion-

Megan: Yeah.

Ali: ... emotionally charged things that, okay. Yeah. Someone said that it's coming from their reactive brain, but that's not what we're going up for here. Like, we just need to know if we're going out to dinner Friday or Saturday (laughs).

Megan: Right, right.

Ali: Yeah.

Megan: And it, it's, it's a, it's a hard thing for people to do because one, they, uh, many people believe that this person knows what they're doing.

Ali: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Megan: Um, they absolutely don't, this is their operating system. It's been developing their entire life. It feels very normal and natural and necessary for them, right.

Ali: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Megan: And the necessary part comes from the brain. You know, it, they're kind of in fight or flight. So it's a, it feels very necessary for them to make a personal attack or to send that email right now, or to burst into your office or call you, and berate you, and scream and yell at you, and (laughs) all of those things. So you have to get, um, get UN unhooked and, and look at it sort of as a, you know, if you're helping, if you're helping someone, let's say at a, you're volunteering at a, a school that, with special needs children, you adapt what you do, right.

Ali: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Megan: Because you know that they can't, and that's really the hardest part with HCPs, is we are the ones who have to adapt what we do, because they can't, because they don't know. They don't know (laughs), they're having a problem. Um, they don't know a better way to relate. This is normal to them. And, and so, you know, and I guess one thing I would caution is to not assume that it's okay to tell someone that they're high conflict, you know, if you're in the middle of an argument with them and (laughs) you say, "Do you realize you're a high conflict personality? I, I heard about it on the podcast once." (laughs).

Ali: (laughs). I'm glad you're bringing this up. This is my next point that I (laughs) wanted to make sure we talked about.

Megan: Yeah. Yeah, you've really fit the bill for exactly what... Um, um, so don't do that because it never goes well ever because they, they, you know, how would you like someone to tell you that your operating system is flawed and you don't believe it, right? They absolutely have no clue. So you just avoid all of that, and instead you focus on what you can do. You know, they're going to take you back to some past old wound, some old complaint or gripe, and you just get them, you know, give them a little ear. We haven't talked about EAR yet, but that's give them a little EAR statement, which is empathy, attention and respect.

Megan: Um, you know, which can be three little words. Tell me more. Oh, that sounds hard. That sounds frustrating. And then you move along into something that's a, a, uh, thinking activity, you know, like getting them to focus on a choice, asking them a question. Um, but you start it with EAR first and this is where most people get it backwards. Um, we want, we think we can just keep talking, arguing, defending, explaining, moving into the project, the discussion and you, but first you have to give a little EAR when they're upset, or-

Ali: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Megan: ... when they're blaming, or emoting you just, yeah, that might, that, that would, that would probably be a frustrating situ- situation for me too. So, uh, do you have any proposals about how we should handle that? What options can you think of? Right. So you've just shifted now from giving them EAR to calm the reactive brain and, and then ask them questions to get them shoved kind of into problem solving brain.

Ali: The term landmine kind of comes up when, when I think about those scenarios and, um, and even these, you know, these types of personalities, it's like ha-navigating this is, is like, how do I avoid as much as possible those landmines? Or if one goes off, how do I know what's happening? And just pull out my resources from my quiver of, okay, I just need some, some ear, some E-A-R.

Megan: (laughs).

Ali: And some (laughs), and some BIFF, some B-I-F-F. And, um, and you know, you can kinda get through that, like pretty well [inaudible 00:49:18], you know?

Megan: Yes. Yes. And it's, it's interesting because I think people often think that there's this, you know, big magic secret that is huge to dealing with folks like this, because the feelings we get around them and within ourselves are huge (laughs), right.

Ali: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Megan: And it's, it's really some simple little, little techniques if you're confused and don't know really what to do, just go to EAR every time, right or BIFF if, and so EAR is really for, for verbal communication and to calm them. And then, you know, I call it calm before think. So it's calm with the capital B, the number four and think, and this, if you get this drilled into your own brain or, you know, put a poster on your wall (laughs).

Ali: (laughs).

Megan: It'll, it'll help for you to remind yourself that you've gotta get this other person calm using EAR, using EAR statement before you get them thinking and problem

solving. And that's the, it, so it's an opposites world, and this is, this is, that is the magic key, key. That is the secret, right there. So this is a world of opposites. And so you have to do the opposite of, with them that you would do with everyone else, and what you might feel like doing, because you might feel like rip them, you know to shreds-

Ali: (laughs).

Megan: ... or whatever (laughs), or running out of the room. So, um, just rely on, on, on ear, you know, in verbal communication and, um, BIFF for, for written and that'll get you by. It, really, like you said, it's, it can be that simple. And I, I... We wanna make it a lot harder, but the hardest part is just remembering to do it.

Ali: Yeah. Yeah.

Megan: Absolutely. You know, we've trained lot, a lot of people over the years and people read our books and, you know, take our courses and all kinds of things, but what it, that gives them the understanding and the knowledge. And, you know, it's kind of funny in the first hour, and then after an hour, and a half of training we will take a break and people, many people come to us and say, "Oh wow, this is really, you know, I understand my, you know, my, one of my employees now, or my manager now." Or they say, and they usually say, and now I get my family member. And now I understand what's going on. I had no idea all this time. So they, they get this level of awareness and they, and understanding, but you really have to practice, practice, practice, practice.

So here's the thing, setting, HCPs need those around them to set limits and have boundaries more than anyone in the world, and yet they're the people we set the least limits with because we're walking on eggshells around them.

Ali: Yes.

Megan: So um, and, and setting limits can be anything from you, you need to know how, you know, let them know how you're to be contacted when you can be contacted, um, what isn't appropriate and you, you use EAR to do it, just use EAR for everything (laughs).

Ali: (laughs).

Megan: Um (laughs), and it, it helps it keep it from being personal. You know, you write it into your policies, um, that kind of thing. And, um, you just make sure that when they bend the boundaries and they try to go outside of your ethical limits and of your organization, um, you've got to make sure that they don't.

Ali: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Megan: And stop them.

Ali: Yeah. So in the workplace, this becomes like, reprimandable behavior adjustments like this is, this is a need, uh, for just order, order in the, ho- how we operate within the organization. As I'm hearing this, I'm also, um, very cognizant of, you know, outside the workplace, you know, whether it's at home or with a, uh, like a narcissistic sibling or something who's cons- um, abusing boundaries or yelling at you or for what, you know, or, or, you know, some other know family situation or even partner, right, like divorcing a HCP, like it's, it's not easy.

Megan: No, it's, these are the, these are the hardest, most destructive damaging, soul crushing relationships (laughs) you will have. Um, uh, and it, and it really depends on your, your, your own conflict style, your personality type and, and what you've been through in your life, right.

Ali: Mm-hmm (affirmative),

Megan: Did you have a trauma background, if you do, you know, you may kind of curl up in a ball and let this person abuse you (laughs). Um, or you may, may have created a real fighter, fighting spirit in you, and then you're willing to engage with them all the time and that, that will just escalate it. So you need to study it and understand it. And, um, whether it's at work or at home, because, you know, we get, and I'm, I'm sure you hear this from clients, your own clients is, these are the folks that we dread. We, we have a, a knot in our gut driving to the office (laughs).

Ali: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Megan: Having that phone call with them is just, and, and it grows and grows, and you're spending so much time with this person, and it, it can be pretty destructive and damaging. And, you know, I, I think for people who are in that situation. Learning these skills helps, and it's not a bad idea to go get a little extra help. If you need to talk to an EAP, go see a therapist or, you know, a life coach or someone who can just help you get right again.

Ali: Yes.

Megan: Because here, because here's the thing. HCPs are crazy making (laughs). They make us think we're the ones with the problem, right?

Ali: Yeah. Yeah. And you said something, you know, mid conversation about these types, it's that they can't do it themselves and we need to be able to do it. And if our own traumas are getting, inflamed, uh, and we're engaging, or we're not clear about where we are and what our own boundaries are, um, you know, in this relationship or, or how we're contributing to the dynamic, um, things can go south really fast, even in terms of our own experience of things. Without

that personal self-awareness, you're gonna, you're gonna step on the fly tape that is an HCP relationship. And then, uh, without attending to your own stuff, you're gonna feel like you, you're the problem. Um-

Megan: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Ali: And you'll probably end up in the floor and fetal position at some point.

Megan: (laughs), right, right, it's so true. I think the information we provide we'd love to share this information. We'd love people to know it because it really is next level. It's kind of getting cracking the code with people you haven't been able to figure out. And, um, that's what we love to do. And so we, we, we really believe strongly that every organization needs to know this information.

Megan: I think every company, every organization, every, everyone who deals with people, who needs to have this information and practice it.

Ali: Yes. I agree.

Ali: Thank you so much for hanging out.

Megan: It's my pleasure. I could talk about this stuff all day, every day.