

Jerry Colonna:

Hi Pam Manfredo Curtis.

Pam Manfredo Curtis:

Hi Jerry Colonna.

Jerry Colonna:

What a delight to meet you.

Pam Manfredo Curtis:

It's the joy is mine, genuinely. Yeah.

Jerry Colonna:

Yeah. When your publicist reached out with the idea of coming on the show and he told me the topic of the book, I was extremely excited. And then I had a chance to read the book. And I got both excited and a little intimidated.

Pam Manfredo Curtis:

That's quite flattering from you.

Jerry Colonna:

The thing about *The Origin of a Leader*, your new book, is that it landed so deeply and so well for me. It's as if, especially with my first book, *Reboot*, it's as if there's two sides of the same coin. Because I think we both understand that the roots of who we are as adults really lie in the past. So take me through a little bit of your journey as a coach, and do you describe yourself as a coach?

Pam Manfredo Curtis:

Yeah. I would say that I'm a CEO coach for executive teams and top leaders throughout multiple industries, and I've done that for about 35-plus years, which is crazy. I've been blessed to work with some of the world's best leaders around, you know, genuinely. But you know, that started when I was young. It started, you know, which I'm sure for you, it it it comes before my PhD in industrial organizational psychology or my experiences in all these companies. It came from the parents I lived with; it came from the family, you know, who wanted to have real conversations. It it you know, there's I could talk a lot about where it comes from, but it started very early, you know.

Jerry Colonna:

Well, let's talk about that because as folks on this who listen to this show know, I do what I do today because of what happened to me before. Right? I coach because it's who I am. Not because it's something I turned myself into. And 'coach' to me is just a catch-all phrase for a way of being. And I sense, as I said to you even before we started recording, a kind of kindred spirit here. So tell me about your origin.

Pam Manfredo Curtis:

So as I've studied leaders around the world and globally, genuinely, I've witnessed about nine childhood environments that are very common. And they break into three groups, and there are three within each. But I've been blessed that I largely come from stable homes.

One is that I have a very strong mother. It's called the matriarchy, and I have, you know, a mother who really drove. She was quite ambitious and went to school and earned multiple degrees, and you know, just needed to fulfill, so she was a real driver, as was as am I. I also have a very loving father and mother, which is from another environment and who believed in me, set really high expectations, and, you know, said I could do anything I wanted to do. But we were surrounded by people all the time.

My mother is a school psychologist, right? So she was always tuning into like these very challenging things that were going on for people, and I was around her when she was doing that. And my father worked with flight attendants for United Airlines, you know; he was there on 9/11. You know, he took care of these amazing women and men. And they mattered.

And why there were sadnesses too, like, you know, my mother lost her sister when she was sixteen. My father lost his father and brother later. You know, but those things mattered. So there was always empathy. There was always caring about these people. I just was blessed by having a family who cared about having conversations with each other, you know, and that didn't stop with my parents.

Jerry Colonna:

It reminds me, Pam, of something many people who listen to the show know her because she continues to be an important figure in my life, my second mother, Doctor Aviva Sayers.

Dr. Sayers was a psychoanalyst, and in my 30s, when I struggled mostly with depression, and depression had had haunted me since childhood. And by my 30s, the adaptations I had developed to basically get along began to crumble. But Dr. Sayers used to always say to me, in responding to my concerns as a parent about not replicating some of the patterns, she used to say to me something brilliant: she used to say, "Just give them words. Give them words."

Meaning, give your children the ability to speak about what's going on. And what I heard from your story is with their empathy, with their willingness to do their own work, with their willingness to sort of lean into, say, the sharp points in the world at large, your parents gave you words. Is that a fair statement?

Pam Manfredo Curti:

Mm, mm. Yeah, they gave me permission to speak my truth. Jerry, for me, and I'm sure for you, just like you know, what she did for you, so many of my executives are not granted that permission to speak their truth. And so they hold it like a block. It's a secret that's so large. For

years, 30 years, 20 years, and part of you know what we have to do is give them permission to go say it out loud and confront it, right?

Jerry Colonna:

Right, right. The the the famous incident that I've s written about before is, I remember one time I was struck down by this very intense migraine, to the point that I ended up in the hospital for a week 'cause we couldn't understand what was going on. And I went to see Doctor Sayers, and you have to envision a nice Jewish lady from Great Neck, Long Island who grew up in Brownsville, Brooklyn, okay? And she would she finally said to me in a kind of exasperation, what are you not saying that you need to say?

Pam Manfredo Curtis:

Great.

Jerry Colonna:

Right? And I know, and I love how you referenced this, so many of the people that we work with, you said it well, lack the permission to say what was really going on, both in the past, but even as a method for trying to lead within an organization.

Pam Manfredo Curtis:

Oh sure.

Jerry Colonna:

Cause really what we're talking about are how these patterns that we developed as children-survival strategies, just simply belief systems, structures- because I'm a bit of a nerd, I call them subroutines, software programs that just sort of run in the background like, you know, strong leaders don't say that they don't know what to do.

Pam Manfredo Curtis:

Mm, mm, yeah. Yeah.

Jerry Colonna:

Which, excuse me, is just BS. I mean, is this resonating with you in terms of your own work?

Pam Manfredo Curtis:

Yeah. Well, what popped for me is that I think that there are blocks that happened obviously when we were children, right? That stay with us for a long time, and there are things that happen now. And when you just said that it affects, you know, how people show up today and whether they have permission to talk about it, these blocks from today are equally important to confront, right?

Jerry Colonna:

Hm. Say more about that.

Pam Manfredo Curtis:

So I believe the biggest and most important blocks, right, occur between zero and eighteen. Like, you know, the childhood years. However, there are things that happen between managers and employees that really stay with somebody.

For example, there was a lovely man who every time he spoke, the manager told him he was an idiot, or he was stupid, or he didn't add any value. So he started...he went to another organization, and he tried to lead. And as soon as somebody questioned his point of view, he just shut down. And so he ended up losing his job because, you know, people wanted him to contribute. But it was due to how this person spoke to him and confronted him, which was really very sad. So you still have to deal with that block too. And it may mean you have to go and have a conversation with that person who hurt you, right?

Jerry Colonna:

Right. You may have to lean into that particular sharp edge that could be scary for reasons other than your origins, if you will.

Pam Manfredo Curtis:

Yeah, without question.

Jerry Colonna:

And then of course we have so many of us are are locked in. I'm gonna key off a word you used before. You described your mother as matriarchal. Or you describe a matriarchy as one of the structures, the nine environments. We're also talking about having to adapt. I might have had a healthy childhood where I developed secure attachment styles magically. And yet we do live in a society where people with less power are often marginalized for one reason or another, or there may be a patriarchal structure underway. And those are not necessarily addressed by psychoanalytically going back in time and rewiring the experience of the past.

Pam Manfredo Curtis:

I separate sometimes, for example, racial experiences from these nine environments, right? Looking at, for example, several of my clients are like biracial; they come from biracial backgrounds. Those are real and challenging things that have happened to them in their life and these environments affect them too. In my case, for these people, both are a look back. Both are looking back at how they have been treated over time. I just try to differentiate, you know, what are these common patterns that I witness in my executives in the nine versus other patterns. And we have to treat both. We have to help group both. So you know, I believe so strongly in the power of looking back, right? It's huge for me, you know.

Jerry Colonna:

I was talking to a client just over the weekend, and we were talking about one of his colleagues, someone to whom he reports, and we finally had this very important breakthrough, if you will, in

the conversation, where I said about the fellow to whom my client reports, "The challenge is he gets upset every time you want to unpack what happened because it reminds him of his inability to change the past." And this is, you know, in my view, this is a kind of conflict or toxic positivity. I'm gonna stay focused just on the future and stay less mindful of, "How did we get here in the first place?" And that may have been an adaptation from childhood, which then, in some ways, can be really powerful; it can get you through school; it can get you through some of the best circumstances. But when you start to lead and you over-index on that as a style, it can create a situation in an organization where the organization is never really confronting the structural problems within the organization.

Pam Manfredo Curtis:

Mm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Yeah.

So there are two things for me in what you said. I'll do the first, which is I'll leave the organizational structure because I don't want to lose that. So I believe, Jerry,, you would agree with me here that one dimension of psychological safety is the importance and it's the real skill of pacing when you help a person confront what is going on before them and when you pause, right? That's the real wisdom. When you go and when you don't.

My hope in this book, usually, like you, I love deep self-awareness, like pushing back, you have you have a different term, right? In this book, because I'm not in the room with people, I ask people to think about their life as a play, to think about the three acts of your life, and to almost get like an out-of-body experience to watch the characters in the play of those first 18 years, right?

So that you can draw your life, see the patterns, almost as an out-of-body experience as you because we all have deep compassion for the characters in shows, right? And so if we watch this, I believe that sometimes people at first need to see the patterns, see, like, maybe connections to personality data, other things, and then when the moment feels right, I can probe more deeply on the self-awareness when a person is ready. And that is there's no judgment in that. People are ready or not, you must, you must create space, right? So I hope and pray that people will just want to watch first and be insatiably curious, I say, about what that looked like, you know.

The part about systems versus individuals, people will say, "Isn't this just the system? Isn't it, you know, like we have leaders who are the heads of these systems?" So things are both like there are, yes, of course, in systems there are processes, there are roles and structures, and we operate in teams and individuals, and there's culture and all of that. And the leader of that system comes from somewhere. The leader of that system either came from, you know, homes of complexity or trauma or stable homes, you know. And that influences the way the system is led. So both are true, and we need to understand both, right? And of course, wait, like, create some safety for the leader to be able to look with it. Right.

Jerry Colonna:

I love both observations. The first is actually something; it's a good reminder for me because I can, as I will say amongst friends, go all Brooklyn on somebody and go a little too deep, a little too fast. Or in my bootcamps, I will go down, and people will accuse me of turning the high beams on. And I've just like, what am I seeing there? And that's actually a childhood adaptation of mine, because I know about my own coaching style; I know about my own experience when things were happening that I was aware of but nobody was identifying; it can make me really uncomfortable.

So your assertion and reminder about slowing down- and by the way, this is both for the coaches who are listening, because we have a lot of coaches who listen, and for the leaders who are sort of newly evangelized- they'll read your book, they'll go a little too fast; slowing down creates that safety. That's the first point, and I think that that's a really, really powerful point. So thank you for that.

The second thing, though, the piece I wanted to pick up on was the play and seeing the characters in a play. And I smiled because the analogy I use is the moviegoer. And this is actually something I've taken from my meditation practice, which is that in meditation in my Buddhist lineage we often talk about the seven layers of consciousness. And the way I like to draw that out is we're on one layer of consciousness; we are an actor on the screen. On another layer, we are all of the actors on the screen. In another layer, we're the writer and director of what's on the screen. We're also in the audience, and we own the movie theater.

Pam Manfredo Curtis:

Yes. Yes, we are.

Jerry Colonna: And so if you can take the stance of sitting in this in the theater seats and eating some popcorn and just watching the whole story unfold. And I'll use that analogy or that metaphor with clients, and I will say your task is to try to ask, because I'm a big fan of seeing it this way, try to ask as you watch the interplay in the system, what needs are trying to be met by the behaviors that are going on? Are they reaching for love? Are they reaching for safety? Are they reaching but for belonging? And if you can see the need behind the behavior and pause in your own reactivity. You might actually be able to influence the system.

Pam Manfredo Curtis:

Exactly. You know, I think this is one of the places where you and I are completely aligned. Like so many people who are, whether leaders or coaches, are paying attention to how is a person showing up? What are they doing? And how are they doing it? And to me, that's the wrong question. It's important later. The important question is why are they doing what they are doing? Always why. And like you talk about, yes, love, belonging, and safety. And I think for some competence, you know, like being seen or in control, like this is like the FIRO B work, right? Which is a psychometric instrument, right? But the need for competence and control of what's happening, you know, because they can't control it or other things, you know. I see that a lot in

my people, right? And that could be so they can belong, so they can be part of community, so they will be valued, but I see that.

So always the implications of our childhood, understanding the why, like why do we show up the way we show up? Is it values that were demonstrated? Is it I you know, my parents did or didn't provide me with certain beliefs about myself or, you know, whatever. Did I learn certain skills? Like when you work in the automobile industry, so many of the leaders worked in the garages with their parents, fixing brakes and cars, you know, like the why is so important anyway.

Jerry Colonna:

Well, I think the why- and this is, you know, in a former life, even before I was an investor, I was a reporter. And understanding the why was really, really critical to understanding what was going on. I often counsel that it's important to actually be genuinely curious. You used another phrase before around curiosity.

Pam Manfredo Curtis:

Insatiable curiosity. Yeah.

Jerry Colonna:

Insatiable curiosity. It's the curiosity because we can turn that why into kind of a heat-seeking missile of guilt. Why did you do that? Is different than why might he have done that?

Pam Manfredo Curtis:

Yeah. Yeah.

Jerry Colonna:

Or why might she be needing that in this moment? Why might I be having this physical reaction where I wanna run out of the room because I don't like what's going on?

You know, the phrase I often use is radical self-inquiry, and the way I define it is it's the process by which the masks that we wear are slowly and compassionately stripped away so we have no place left to hide, and even from ourself.

In fact, it's most important to begin to understand that if we carry power. And I will acknowledge that as a white cisgender straight man, I have power that comes to me not because of what I've accomplished or even what I know, but because of a societal structure. If we have power and we are unwilling to do that work, we are more likely to do harm.

Pam Manfredo Curtis:

Yes. Yes. Without question. Let me go back just for a second because I think it's important for our leaders and coaches as well. You were talking about how being for Brooklyn, you know, like that you might go right at things and want to bring tough issues out right away. Leaders want to do that too.

And I love to bring truth out. Like I'm a tough love kind of coach. That's what I call myself. I just think that psychological safety, everyone, please, everyone, think about this. It starts with warmth, it starts with two-way vulnerability and a smile. Like, I absolutely believe that anytime you know, like you meet somebody, smile. You know? There's something about what you're feeling about the situation. Be warm, be interested, be curious, you know, like come on everybody, right? And you're building this trust.

And it drives me crazy when people say it takes so long to build psychological safety. No, it doesn't. No, it doesn't. You can do it when you're just real. When you're real, and you smile, and you're yeah, this isn't fake. I wanna, I wanna get to know you, Jerry. I want that. So, and I believe that if you do that quickly, then you hit them hard. You hit them because you care about them. Right?

Jerry Colonna:

Right. And because you've established that connection, you've established that rapport. Now you dropped a phrase in at the top of that that I want to circle back to. You talked about two-way vulnerability. And let's talk about that in terms of both the leader and also in terms of a coach, 'cause I'm because I'm feeling my fellow practitioner here and I'm loving it.

Pam Manfredo Curtis:

Yeah. Yeah.

Jerry Colonna:

Okay. So here's something I will often say, because a lot of the folks I deal with are, you know, probably grew up watching Masters of the Universe, He-Man television shows. I'm kidding, but not really. And that word vulnerability scares the bejesus out of them. I love you, Brené Brown, but the word I often will substitute is honesty.

Pam Manfredo Curtis:

And what does that mean to you? What does that mean?

Jerry Colonna:

Honesty can feel vulnerable. If I honestly open up, like before we started recording, I shared with you that I was a little late because I had had a phone call from a family member who's in distress, and it was a little distracting, and you graciously, wonderfully just sort of responded to that like one human being to another, which immediately created a deep emotional rapport. Now, I could have just, excuse my language, bullshitted my way, and just, you know, leaned into things and said, nope, I've got my list of questions, I've got my notes, I read the book, you know. But instead, I was real.

Pam Manfredo Curtis:

You were real.

Jerry Colonna:

And you were real in response. And if the listeners are hearing anything positive out of this conversation, it's because we created 30 seconds of psychological safety for each of us.

Pam Manfredo Curtis:

Yes. Yeah. 'Cause I told you too how I felt entering this conversation, right?

Jerry Colonna:

That that that's right. And all of a sudden there was this groundedness, and that's what I would say when I when I'm saying honesty. It's not as opposed to dishonesty. It does relate more to the word real in that way.

Pam Manfredo Curtis:

Yeah. If I may just stay on this 'cause psychological safety is so so very important, right? So a few things. One is absolutely be real about where you are. Like when I saw your face, I saw like tension around your eyes or tightness around your eyes and a sadness in your, you know, around your lips, and I was worried about you a little bit, right? 'cause I had been listening to your podcast, and this energy is crazy. It's so fun, right? So, and equally, I felt so I think the honesty to me is: what do we see? If we hold up a mirror about somebody, like what is happening? And what do I what are the little pieces? Like with honesty, because you and I work with teams, we work with individuals, we work on culture, right? Sometimes you have to, you know, put your toe in the water. You have to do just touches of vulnerability two-way.

Maybe you share a little bit about like, we do this thing called check-in. What am I thinking? What am I feeling as I start this conversation? Pretty innocuous, right? Like, pretty start. I may share a little bit about some personality characteristics of me that have no judgment. I may share a little bit about what I think some of my strengths are, or weaknesses are. Whatever. It's not, let's go tell each other our full life story, right? Like, so there's a wisdom of knowing that you have to also help people slowly bring their truth in. But I think you and I shared equally with each other about what was happening for us in that moment, you know?

Jerry Colonna:

I think it did, and I think it created an emotional, empathetic bridge over which we were able to carry the load of the intellectual work that we wanted to do, which was to really talk about these issues. And what I'm what I think we're both drawing out right now are lessons for our clients or lessons for those who are listening. You know, Reboot's version of that check-in is something we call red, yellow, green. And we use a traffic light analogy to describe where we are. Because in our experience, sometimes people even lack the words. Thank you, Dr. Sayers, to be able to name the feeling. And you know this: "Fine is not a feeling," to quote you, right? So they lack the ability, but they tend to be able to tell you what color they are, especially if they've been socialized to not talk about the content. So I can just say I'm red, but I don't have to tell you that I had a fight with my wife last night. I can, you know.

Pam Manfredo Curtis:

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. I get it.

Jerry Colonna:

And in the same thing, if we are leading a group, we as facilitators will participate in that. And almost invariably, to mirror what you've been saying, I will say something like, I'm tense right now because I really want to do a good job for you folks. And you know this work is so important to me. And I carry that.

Pam Manfredo Curtis:

Everything. Yeah, I hear it in you. Yes, for sure. I hear that very, very strongly. I do encourage people to learn how to create psychological safety for others, like at a deeper level. It's in Act Three of the book. And psychological safety is a term that's been around a long time. But there's just it's it's not a checklist, it's an actual it's a big skill. It is how people have real conversations with each other. It is the secret sauce to having that, you know.

Jerry Colonna:

So, so I've got a practitioner-to-practitioner question for you. In my experience, a lot of my career has been spent with folks in the tech industry. So let's acknowledge that for a moment. Tech and Finance. And there was a time where, and Google led the charge on this, there was a lot of interest in psychological safety, and the worm started to turn, if you will, a few years ago, where empathy became a sign of weakness. And we are still battling that, despite Brené's very successful campaign to sort of make us friendly with vulnerability. When you, practitioner to practitioner, encounter that kind of reticence, what do you do?

Pam Manfredo Curtis:

Yeah, it's a great question. It's quite frustrating, by the way, for me. But it's like it's really like, are we talking about human beings or technology here? Right. So one of the things I find in that community a lot is it's all about speed. It's all about how quickly can we go? And also just what are the results we're getting, right? And when you work in the human space, it requires slowing down. It requires like stepping back and having real conversations with each other, right?

So I think a lot about what is the space that my clients can control, what are their worlds, what are the strengths that they pull from their childhood experience when they were younger, which can be about, yes, having real conversations or engaging in conflict in big ways, you know, like with certain people. But I...the ones who are successful meet some of the speed demands while also raising their standards around what they say it like they tell the consequences of what won't happen if we don't, like, focus on the human being, right? But it's just really frustrating, and I think we're all trying to figure it out, honestly.

Jerry Colonna:

Right. I, you know, I'll tell you the way I approach it, and I think, not surprisingly, there's some similarity. I will often work backwards or reverse engineer from a definition of success. When I

encounter that resistance, I will say, okay, what do we want to define as success? Because behind it is a behind the rejection of, say, empathy, behind the rejection of psychological safety still remains the fear that if I waste time worrying about how you feel, I will fail.

Pam Manfredo Curtis:

Mm. Mm. Mhm. Yeah. I like that.

Jerry Colonna:

Okay? Because that's the message that they receive. And so if we go back and we look at the success, and I say, okay, so is success at this firm only defined by return on investment? Is it only defined by EPITA? Or is it defined by how you got there as well? For example, is it defined by involuntary turnover? Are you losing your best people?

Pam Manfredo Curtis:

Yeah. Yeah.

Jerry Colonna:

Or is it defined by poor customer satisfaction? Right? I mean, what are these metrics? And then, for a little bit extra juice, I will say things like, let's imagine that you've worked hard for the next 10 years and you have created a successful business. And it's this culture, this toxic culture. And your children came to work. How would you feel? And if you pause, your definition of success is violating the personhood of some people. Because everybody who walks through your door is somebody's child, somebody's parent, somebody's sibling, somebody's spouse.

So how do you want to be seen as a CEO? How do you want to be right? Right? And so, by pulling those things together, what I will often say is, it's like, look, gears mesh and can move really fast, but if you throw sand in those gears, they will bind up. Whereas if you throw grease on those gears, and a grease could be, hey, let's just take a minute and say, how are we doing?

I had a shitty weekend. Okay. Nothing for me to do to solve that. Nothing for me to do to fix that. Just know that if my response to your product description is short-tempered, it's really about the stuff I've been carrying for the weekend.

Pam Manfredo Curtis:

That's really wise, Jerry. Really, really wise. I'm seeing what you're seeing in me, and my own response is I'm dealing with this a lot right now. And not quite adept at, like, what's gonna really move it. I like your suggestion a lot.

Jerry Colonna:

We're both acknowledging that it's a hard time right now.

Pam Manfredo Curtis:

Really hard.

Jerry Colonna:

You know, you know, to come out with a book that brilliantly, lovingly, intellectually grounded yet emotionally available, because that's what this book is. Speaks to some of the core reasons why those who hold power, consciously or not, inadvertently or not, struggle to lead well. To come out with a book at this time around that, you know, you're swimming upstream in that way.

Pam Manfredo Curtis:

I know. Yes. You are absolutely right. But I choose to work with leaders who are so hungry for it, right? There are systems that I am in that, like, they are not just doing this at the executive level; they're doing ten thousand leaders, you know, like over years. You and I work with leaders and companies for like ten years, twenty years, whatever, like you know, who are so invested in this and see the power in it. But we have a lot to learn.

Jerry Colonna:

That's right. That's right. I'll tell you a quick story, because my client was very public about this; she wrote an essay about it on LinkedIn. Recently, I went to visit a client, and I work with the CEO and president. They're a brother and sister, respectively, and they manage a meat processing company down in Texas. And you know, as a former vegetarian, to go into a meat processing plant. It was an interesting experience. But they gave me such a delightful tour of both plants, and also I met a number of their leaders. And I asked the question, because we were talking about culture and success and what it means.

And I asked the question about how you would feel if one of your children came to work at this company? And this young man raised his hand, and he said, I'm here because my mother used to work. My mother works here, and she got me the job. And I laughed, and he said, Yeah, I started working when I was a- I think he was like a late teenager. He was now in his, I don't know, late twenties. And he'd moved up the ranks, and the company was running one of the plants. And then he said, yeah, and I have a daughter, and if she came to work here I'd be really, really proud.

Pam Manfredo Curtis:

What did you do? Yeah.

Jerry Colonna:

And, you know, to me, what a hallmark. This is a company that is profitable, growing, making a meaningful difference in the lives of the communities in which they are operating, providing the means of economic mobility and prosperity to their employees, creating conditions whereby parents invite their children in because it's a good job? I mean, why do we build businesses if not to do that?

Pam Manfredo Curtis:

Yeah. Yeah. Of course. Of course. I love when I hear the community piece of all of that, right? I

love hearing all of that. Yeah.

Jerry Colonna:

Right, right. So, so I will say this to my kindred soul, my kinfolk, my sister in arms: don't lose hope.

Pam Manfredo Curtis:

We have to keep experimenting. I think it's always about experimenting and partnering with our leaders to let us experiment together. You know, like, not to say my way is best or your way is best, but let's try some things. And if they fail, they fail; we'll try something else. Right? We have to do that. We have to do that.

Jerry Colonna:

That's right. That's right. That's right.

Pam Manfredo Curtis:

But I hear you also, your pieces about what are your goals, what does success look like really, and how do you want it to represent your future life and whether your kids will come here.

Jerry Colonna:

That's right. And at the end of your time, what is the legacy that you want to leave behind? What is it you want to leave behind? And to be clear, you know, I'm a former venture capitalist. I understand the balance, the value of a good balance sheet, a strong P&L, good EPS. I get it, but if we look at that as the end and not the means to an end, if we look at profitability and a good strong container, not as the reason we go to work every day, but as the mechanism by which we then can bring magic into the world. A cool new product, a service that impacts people's lives, economic mobility, and prosperity for people...you know, one of my friends, David Hieatt, resurrected a denim jeans wear factory in Cardiff in Cardigan, Wales. And, you know, the thousand or so people who live in that village, two hundred, three hundred got new jobs. I mean, why do we work?

Pam Manfredo Curtis:

Mm-hmm. Make lives better, right? Give them employment. All of those things. Of course. Of course we do. Of course we do. I'm thinking about a few things, but you wanted to talk a little bit about referent power, right? Did you not?

Jerry Colonna:

Yeah. Yes, we did not want to lose sight of that. Tell me what that means, and because power and the power dynamics really flow through everything here, don't doesn't it?

Pam Manfredo Curtis:

Yeah, yeah. Well, you started this conversation talking about the human being, right? Is where we both start, and that is foundational and really important, right? This is not only about creating

great leaders, but it's also about being a better human being, and it's cyclical with each other. And so there are many different types of power, and it's been well researched: whether it's position power or legitimate power, you know, all those the what people believe give you authority, you know, like, but that's temporary, right?

What we have found is what I have found is the referent power: who I am as a human being, who I am as a character, what my values are, how I show up in conversation, if I'm real, if I'm not, you know, if I'm a great listener or not, if I speak my mind, that that's really who people want to be around, if the people who build trust, the people who have genuine good values that they want to be in conversation with.

And so this is largely about building your referent power. And I think that while you have to understand your childhood and the implications of it so you can clear it, you then talk about how do people with big referent power actually create that? Whether that's creating psychological safety and having real conversations that are intimate, and then engaging in conflict and giving each other feedback to make each other great. Right? Like, for growth because you care about people. these are these are skills that you can learn and evolve, but it's the people who look at their life closely that are the ones that will transform, and it will stay in place for a long, long time. Right.

Now you asked me a while ago, like, why do this now? This is like an uphill kind of battle, you know. Part of, you know, there were two people in particular who were pushing me for a long time to write this book, give it away, tell people what it is. But really, it was my daughter was going off to college, and she was the third of my kids to leave. And I was thinking about what is meaningful before I die, right? Like honestly, like what would be valuable before I die? It's to share with the people, right? Everyone, what I've learned with these characters in my life, you know. And I know it's really hard. I know this work is really hard to do, but I also wanted to put it in the hands of people because of our times, like how do you have real conversations? How do you, you know, use the strengths you have? How do you overcome the blind spot for you personally? Start with yourself. Control what you can, you know. So I hope and pray it brings you know, relief, joy, and competence to the people who, you know, it gets in the hands of, right? And those things.

Jerry Colonna:

There's a thank you for both observations and the additional sharing and really the context of the why. You know, I relate to all of that, and you made reference to something I say often about being the ancestor my descendants deserve. And I think you are, with this book, being the ancestor your descendants deserve. You know, if we take what we've been saying about our clients and about the leaders with whom we are privileged to work, and we apply it to our own lives, what is it that we are going to leave behind? You know, in a world where somebody can, you know, I want to create a book that's just like Pam Manfredo Curtis's book and have ChatGPT write it, my lord. Right? In that world, what we do and your effort with this book matters, because it makes that difference in the world at large.

Pam Manfredo Curtis:

One of the things you're making me think about, I mentioned this briefly. One of my clients who I adore, his name is Tom, and when his daughter was going to go off to college, he started thinking about, you know, have I shared all the lessons I need to share, you know, before she goes. And you know, several people do this. This is I've done on my own, but it's to share, like, if our listeners today even think about what are the twenty-five lessons I would want to tell my ancestors? What are the things that I would be that would be lessons for my kids or grandchildren? What is my legacy of what I've learned? You know, try to write those. Try to even say those. You don't have to write a book, but those twenty-five lessons, you know, I wanted to capture my hopes in here from my kids, from my grandkids, you know, over, right?

Jerry Colonna:

Yeah. Well you you you did a magnificent job, and I wanna thank you for doing that work, and I wanna thank you too for coming on the show. You know, like so much of what we do, everything is a labor of love at this point, and these kinds of conversations are also labors of love. So thank you.

Pam Manfredo Curtis:

Thank you.