

Jeff Wetzler MIX

📅 Thu, Apr 18, 2024 8:32AM 🕒 1:16:08

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

questions, curiosity, talk, people, jeff, person, listening, book, conversation, curious, call, learn, grooves, coffee, reaction, tim, important, hear, thought, great

SPEAKERS

Tim Houlihan, Jeff Wetzler, Kurt



Kurt 00:00

Hey, Tim, I want to ask you a question.



Tim Houlihan 00:01

Sure What's on your mind?



Kurt 00:02

So I wanted to ask you what was on your mind when we named our podcast Behavioral Grooves?



Tim Houlihan 00:08

Okay, well, we've talked about this a bunch. So I'm assuming that you've got somewhere to go with this. And I'll, I'll play along, hopefully. All



Kurt 00:17

right. All right,




Tim Houlihan 00:18

I recall an immediate and positive reaction to the name Behavioral Grooves, because, like we were brainstorming, and it just it just seemed right, we hit Behavioral Grooves is like, man, it fits. I loved it. I thought it just be a perfect name to sort of combine this love for behavioral

science with a love for music. And we could combine the two. That Yeah.

 Kurt 00:40


So if I hear you correctly, you were thinking that the name was a behavioral science plus music thing? Yeah.

 Tim Houlihan 00:48

Yeah, of course. Right? Why wouldn't it be it's Behavioral Grooves?

 Kurt 00:52


And you also thought that I thought that it was a music, US behavioral science thing. Right.

 Tim Houlihan 01:00

Okay, I see where you're headed with. I thought that the grooves part was about music, and you thought that the group was part was about something else?

 Kurt 01:09


Yeah, I thought I thought grooves referred to the grooves in our brains when you might have habits and routines and all of that kind of fun stuff. It's like, yeah, the our behavior group. Okay,

 Tim Houlihan 01:21

so the point here is, at least at that point in time, that we didn't clarify what groups actually met, right? Yeah,

 Kurt 01:30

we both. Obviously, we both love the name. It was one of those pieces. I did feel that immediate love like you, you said, but we didn't ask each other what we thought the names meant. Right? So yeah,

 Tim Houlihan 01:44

we really missed a huge opportunity just to ask each other to find out what we fought each other men in groups.



Kurt 01:52

Yeah, you know. And so of course now, right? As listeners know, we're both happy, super happy with the name. And we still laugh when we tell the story about how we didn't ask about the name. But at the time, the stakes weren't that high, that could have been higher. And in some cases, when you're agreeing to something and the stakes are definitely higher. Anyway, it's really important that you need to ask and asking is really important. If you want to know what is on the other person's mind. Just ask otherwise you start a podcast and all of a sudden your co host starts asking music questions out of the blue and you're caught, totally off guard. Okay,



Tim Houlihan 02:31

so with that, Kurt, I just want to ask you a question. Are you ready to start this episode? Yes.



Kurt 02:44

Welcome to Behavioral Grooves, the podcast that explores our human condition. I'm Kurt Nelson. And



Tim Houlihan 02:49

I'm Tim Houlihan, we talk with researchers and other interesting people to unlock the mysteries of our behavior by using this behavioral science lens. Yeah,



Kurt 02:58

and a musical component to this episode, we get to talk to the author of a wonderful new book on successful communication called Ask, tap into the hidden wisdom of people around you for unexpected breakthroughs in leadership and life. It's written by



Tim Houlihan 03:15

Jeff wetzler who is CO CEO of transcend a nationally recognized innovation organization, and he's an expert in learning and human potential. Jeff has



Kurt 03:24

more than 25 years in business and education as a management consultant to the world's top corporations, a Learning Facilitator for leaders around the world and as chief learning officer at Teach for America.



Tim Houlihan 03:36



And Jeff is not your average practitioner. He earned a doctorate in Adult Learning and Leadership from Columbia University, and a bachelor's in psychology from Brown. Now, he's also written for Harvard Business for you kind of a non average guy, and in many ways.



Kurt 03:52

Oh my gosh, you know, that always puts us to shame but Aereo All right, we wanted to talk to Jeff about his book and about communication in general. And there's a lot of behavioral science that focuses on communication, and for good reason. The words we use the messenger who communicates them the context in which we hear or experience, the message, and medium are all terribly important to how we interpret anybody's message.



Tim Houlihan 04:19

In addition to what we take away from a message. All of those things also contribute to how we behave right, our actions and inactions are highly dependent on a lot of little variables. Jeff's book ask delves into some ways we can improve our communication in the corporate world as well as in our personal relationships. And



Kurt 04:39

we talked with Jeff about the importance of doing this one simple thing. When in doubt, ask and I think our story of what we thought about the Behavioral Grooves name, and the misunderstanding that we had of each other's understanding of that is an important example to keep in mind. We also



Tim Houlihan 04:57

talked about the importance of curiosity. A throwback to one of our favorite conversations that we've ever had on Behavioral Grooves. I was one with Kwame Christian in Episode 178 on what he called compassionate curiosity.



Kurt 05:10

quantities framing comes up very regularly in our lives, doesn't it



Tim Houlihan 05:15

Tim? It sure does Kurt just constantly so



Kurt 05:18

so with the with that Groovers we hone you sit back and relax with a two finger pour of

So with the men that grooves we hope you sit back and relax with a two finger pour of curiosity on the rocks and enjoy our conversation with Jeff Wetzler.



Tim Houlihan 05:40

Jeff wetzler, welcome to Behavioral Grooves,



Jeff Wetzler 05:42

it's great to be with you both.



Tim Houlihan 05:44

We're happy to have you here. And we need to know gotta know right away coffee, or tea, tea,



Jeff Wetzler 05:50

tea, believe it or not, I have never had a full cup of coffee in my entire life. Oh, but but you've consumed you have the smallest amount I there's actually a small story behind it. I, I grew up in a household that just always drank tea. My parents never drank coffee. And so I never started drinking coffee. I then had a roommate in college, who was so addicted to coffee, that he couldn't fall asleep at night to the point where he had to take sleeping pills at night, and then extra coffee in the morning to get to get him going. And then more sleeping pills. And the poor guy had a total nervous breakdown. And I watched that and I said to myself, well, if this is what happens when you drink coffee. This is not for me. You know, it's probably not rational, but I just I just stayed away. Oh, gosh.



Kurt 06:32

Well, Tim, have you Tim, you've had a sip of coffee, haven't you? No, never even really? Well. I



Tim Houlihan 06:39

mean, I've I don't know. I don't think I have. I'm not 100% I'm 99.5% on that. But but you get coffee fleeting, a coffee is in. You know, I like this coffee ice cream and just know that flavor. Like,



Jeff Wetzler 07:00

I do love the smell of it, though. Oh, me too. Me too. Good. And coffee ice cream hot. Alright,



Kurt 07:05

next time we're together. Tim, I'm gonna make you take a sip. Oh, no, you are going to have to ingest actual coffee to those. All right. All right. Yep. Sorry. This is supposed to be speed round. We just totally blew the speed round.



Tim Houlihan 07:20

Or a minute and a half ago.



Kurt 07:22

Coffee. Here we go. Okay, we have to get to the next question here. cookies and milk or pie?



Jeff Wetzler 07:28

I would have to say cookies and milk. Good call.



Tim Houlihan 07:31

Good call. By the way, we're all on the same page there I think is that right?



Kurt 07:38

Dependent kind of thing. I mean, a good piece of high with some ice cream on it. I mean, you



Jeff Wetzler 07:45

didn't mention the ice cream.



Tim Houlihan 07:52

So you're just implying that there will always be ice cream with pie.



Kurt 07:57

cream ice cream? Yeah, some sort of cream that anyway. Okay.



Tim Houlihan 08:02

All right. Jeff, is there such a thing? As a bad question?

 Jeff Wetzler 08:06

I believe there are higher quality questions and what I would call crummy questions. So if you're really trying to learn there's nothing that that's a bad question. But questions can be used for lots of things that are not for learning. And I would say that's not a good question.

 Kurt 08:20


Yeah. All the questions that Tim asked, are those more crummy type questions? No, we will talk about that more. So we want to get into into what makes a better question as we talked about it. Last Speed Round question. Should we is it better just to use our Spidey skills to figure out what a person is thinking? Or should we maybe ask them what they're thinking? What's the better?

 Jeff Wetzler 08:42

Let me think about that one for a second. I would say if you really want to know you better ask.

 Kurt 08:47

I was going on my spidey skills, I guess.

 Tim Houlihan 08:52

There you go. Okay, so we are talking with Jeff about his new book, ask tap into the hidden wisdom of people around you for unexpected breakthroughs in leadership and life. So, okay, so we're gonna we're gonna ask a whole bunch of questions here, Jeff, in you've been doing these and you get asked questions. But why is asking so underrated, that it needed a book?

 Jeff Wetzler 09:14

Well, we often don't even think there is a need to ask the question because we're so certain about the way the world is. And I think we are especially certain these days, we've got lots of pressures around us that quell our curiosity. But what we don't realize is that there actually is so much more that we could be finding out from the people around us than we typically find out. The premise of the book is that we are surrounded by people, whether that's our bosses or managers or the people we manage, or our clients or customers or friends or loved ones, who all are filled with ideas, insights, stories, perspectives, feedback, that if we could actually tap into it, we would both be better off, we would make better decisions together, we would collaborate better, we would avoid mistakes, we would save time, we would be closer. But far too often. And I've seen this in so many cases. They just don't tell us. And that's partly because we don't ask.

 Kurt 10:14


It is fascinating when you when you put it that way, because it is so true that we do make assumptions about what people what we know and what people have to share. So what do we get wrong most of the time about asking, does it? Are there certain tendencies that we have? Or you probably have a whole book about that that we could probably?

 Jeff Wetzler 10:37

Do you mean when we're trying to ask the question? What? Exactly, yeah, yeah. So some of it is that we ask questions that I do call them crummy questions in the book. Sometimes they're questions that are actually intended to learn something, but they are just clumsy. So we might, for example, as three questions layered on top of each other, a triple barrel question. And people that don't know which I am I supposed to ask? Or if they respond? Yes. You don't know which one they're actually asking to? Or what we might ask a question, and then state our opinion. And then are they reacting to our opinion or our questions so that we one way we get it wrong is by being clumsy and our questions. Another way we get it wrong is by actually what I call being sneaky in our questions, when we're actually disguising our own statements as questions. Have you ever thought about seeing a therapist? Or just, you know, using those questions to try to gently maneuver somebody almost the way that a lawyer would kind of lead the witness to a certain conclusion. And then sometimes we use questions to attack people as well. What the hell were you thinking as an example? And all of those are ways that we go wrong. But I would say the biggest way that we go wrong is we don't even realize we need to ask the question in the first place. Oh, my

 Kurt 11:47

gosh, yeah. Yeah.

 Tim Houlihan 11:48

You. I think it was early in the book, you talked about Nick Epley, at the University of Chicago. We've had Nick as a guest. He was his research is fantastic, about overestimating our ability to predict what people are thinking. Yeah. What's the story here? Like, why is it? Do you think that we do that?

 Jeff Wetzler 12:06

I think it's the way that we're wired. I mean, Nick Epley, I think is the is the master of this phenomenon and the research on this phenomenon. In one of his his studies, he cites a Marist poll of Americans, and asked the poll asked Americans, if you could have any superpower you would want in the world, what superpower would you want. And the top two superpowers that got named, were time travel, and reading other people's mind. And yet, as you know, as Nick document, and it's such a rigorous way, we're bad at it. And even the best advice that we tend to follow, put yourself in their shoes, that doesn't work, try to read their body language, that doesn't work. I mean, even even for even for close, close relatives, like, you know, spouses and


partners, we, you know, barely better than chance guess what people are thinking about. And so, you know, his conclusion, as I'm sure he told you from being on your show, is that there's literally only one way to read someone's mind, which is to ask them the question, that's the only reliable way to do it. And yet, we're never trained on how to ask questions.

 Kurt 13:05

And with that, so So Jeff helped me understand, do we, we, if we know that, like, hey, we want to have mind reading as one of the superpowers. And we know that we shouldn't be doing that? Do we think that we're actually better than we are, though, do we think so? In other words, do I believe that I can read my wife's body language? And I know what she's thinking when, when she gives me that look, is that and in reality, that's

 Jeff Wetzler 13:33

what the research says exactly that we that we believe we can do it and that we're overconfident relative to the accuracy of our ability to actually read people's minds. Yeah. But getting back

 Tim Houlihan 13:43

to the the quality of questions how we asked makes a difference. Yeah, right. As you're saying, there's a variety of different things that we can do that are kind of crummy, but what do you what are the things that we can do to make questions? Good? Yeah,

 Jeff Wetzler 13:57

I think the first thing I would say, is something that is a step or two back even from what is the question that we designed? Which is where's the question coming from? Is the question coming from a place of genuine curiosity or not? Because a question that is just stated in a formulaic way, or we're asking because we think we're supposed to be asking or going through the motions, people can tell, it does not come off as authentic, and that can shut people down. Conversely, if we're deeply curious if we're genuinely wanting to know, that alone radiates an energy that makes people want to share more with us. And so, in the book, we talk about this, this methodology called the Ask approach, and the first step of the Ask approach is choosing curiosity. And we can go deeper on that if you want, but I think the first thing I would say is it's got to be about where the question comes from.


 Kurt 14:48

It's really interesting. We had a guest on Cormier, Christian who talked about and he's the negotiator and he was talking about in negotiation, the first step is being compassionately curious, right? And, and I like the combination of those because what you're saying is this

curiosity is this first part, we have to be really curious. And he added the compassion on but let's dig into the curiosity part what what is it about curiosity that leads to the better outcome for the questions? Yeah,

 Jeff Wetzler 15:18


well, interestingly, if you look at the Latin root of the word curious, it actually is the same root as the word care. And so if we are truly being curious, I think we are being compassionate. And I talk about a particular type of curiosity that I think really matters for this, which I call connective curiosity. So it's not just you know, the curiosity about Russian history or curiosity I have about the tree or curious curiosity about my own life. So it's, it's curiosity that actually connects me, which means that I'm curious about the experiences of someone else, the feelings of someone else, what they know what they think, etc. And that kind of curiosity cultivates in the other person, a desire to fulfill that curiosity because they feel cared about, they feel that we genuinely take an interest in them. And I would say, it's actually rare. And I think it's become more rare in our society, to receive that kind of curiosity. And so when we offer that kind of curiosity to somebody else, it is a gift. It's an acknowledgement, it's a validation of them. And that creates a desire to connect back as well.

 Tim Houlihan 16:24

Yeah, this need for certainty seems to be almost poisonous. Yes, in our world today, and I'm, in my mind, I'm thinking through the polarization issues that we have politically, and the the desire to stand on one side of the line or the other and to identify and be positive and be and be certain about about all that kind of stuff. And to be curious kind of says, I'm a little bit of a loser, because I'm not 100% Sure, in in our world today,

 Jeff Wetzler 16:53

it is a countercultural move to choose curiosity, when we're surrounded by people who are telling us, you know, you should believe X, Y, Z, wherever you fall on the political spectrum, or any number of an issue, or when you're a leader in an organization, and you can internalize society's messages that say, if you say, I don't know, that can be a sign of weakness, to step out and actually say, I'm really curious that I want to know what you think about that. I agree with you. It can go against the grain. Yeah.

 Tim Houlihan 17:20

Let's let's dig into the Ask approach. There's, there's, what five steps, it might be worth just kind of highlighting. Some of those are just kind of walk us through the the Ask approach.

 Jeff Wetzler 17:34

Yeah, I'll go through it at a very high level. And then we can dig in if it's great, if that makes sense. The first step, as we were talking about is choosing curiosity. And choosing curiosity is really about centering one question in our minds when we're engaging with someone else

really about centering one question in our minds when we're engaging with someone else, which is simply what can I learn from this person? If we've got that question in our minds, everything else flows from there. And we can talk about how to get that question or minds. But that's, that's choosing curiosity. The second thing is called make it safe. And this is a recognition that even if I'm curious, to learn something from you, if you don't actually feel safe to tell it to me, maybe because you think I'm going to judge you or it's going to harm our relationship. Or it's going to expose your own incompetence, or in any number of different things like that, you're not going to tell me, so that so making it safe is all about making other people feel at ease and interested, and making it appealing for them to actually share with us their truth, especially hard truths. You know, third is posing quality questions. And so we've distinguished earlier the difference between a crummy question and quality question, I define a quality question very simply as a question that helps you learn something important from the other person. And so just the same way that a surgeon could reach for very precise tools for this move or that move in a surgery, we can actually train ourselves on the repertoire of questions that we can be using, depending on what we're trying to learn from someone else. And so we can talk about a whole taxonomy of different kinds of questions that help us learn particular things from the other person. But once you pose a question, whether or not you learn from someone depends entirely on how well you listen to what they actually said. And we all think we're better listeners than we are. But there is a big difference between listening and hearing. And so this step is called listen to learn. And it's really about how do we take in what is the what is really at the essence of what someone is trying to convey to us, including what they're not saying, as well. And then finally, and I think, to me, this is my favorite and the most important of the five steps. Once we listen, if we are actually going to grow and learn and take action from it. We have to process what they're saying, and make meaning of it. And so this step is called reflect and reconnect. And this is all about how do we actually take it in? How do we sift out what is valuable from what is not necessary to be processing? And then how do we turn it and I talked about three important reflective turns to really squeeze the most amount of insight out of it. but it's not enough to just take that insight away ourselves. We've got to go back and reconnect with the other person and say to them, here's what I got. And thank you, and did I get it right? And is there something more I should be taking it away. And that has an enormous impact on the other person, it lets them know they didn't waste their time. It lets them know how much you value them, it gives them the chance to correct but it also radically increases the chance that they're gonna want to share with you again, no, because they see how important it was to Why



Tim Houlihan 20:26

is a wise reflect and reconnect your favorite.



Jeff Wetzler 20:29

I am a nerd and a junkie about learning. Anything, any learning opportunity, I just lights me up. And honestly, any missed learning opportunity for me is a micro tragedy. So if we've gone through the four steps, and we've actually, you know, have it right in front of us, but we don't take the time to squeeze the meaning out of it. You know, what a missed opportunity. And I think it's so possible to do if we go through these reflective steps, and



Kurt 20:54

Kurt 20:34

like to dig into a couple of these, because I think they're fantastic. The first is this make it safe. And you note in the book that 85% of people withhold important information from their bosses, and about half simply feel uncomfortable speaking up in general, and actually some what, what else did you say 60 to 80% of Americans withhold information from their doctors,

J Jeff Wetzler 21:17

can you believe that information that literally would benefit their own health? Yes, they're not it could be life or death. So they're not saying because they think their doctor might judge them? Yes,

K Kurt 21:27

yes. And so help us? How do we do? How do we make it safe for people? What? What can we do in order to make it so that if I'm a doctor, or if I'm a boss, and in in my company, or even if I'm just up here in my company, and I want people to feel safe talking to me, what do I need to do? Yeah,

J Jeff Wetzler 21:48

so there's three important strategies to bear in mind. The first one is being very intentional about where and how we connect with the other person, and to do it on their terms, and ideally, on their turf, as well. And so as you may have seen in the book, I interviewed some iconic CEOs, and CEOs are notorious for not really getting all the information from people. But I interviewed people like Bill George from Medtronic, or Henry Rosenfeld, from Kraft. And they both went out of their way to say that, in order to make it safe, they have to be very choice full about where they're interacting with someone. So I read would talk about, I'm having lunch in the in their cafeteria, not in some kind of executive lunch room, I'm going on ride alongs with salespeople in their car, to see what they see, Bill, George said, if I if I ever want to get the truth from someone, I am not going to sit, make them sit across the big executive desk for me, we're going to be sitting side by side on a comfortable couch. So a lot of it is that in my own personal experience, you know, I have a teenage daughter, and she, when she gets home from school, and I want to know how her day was and what you know what happened and all that. I asked her how was your day? What did you learn what happened? Zero, nothing. I get absolutely nothing. But if I if I follow her lead, and I go to her room at 11pm at night when she's done talking to her friends that she's done with her homework, and that's when you know, she wants to talk forever. And I get all I'm exhausted. But if I want to actually learn part of making it safe is doing it when she wants to do it and where she wants to do it as opposed to where I want to do it. Wow. Okay, so that's the first piece is where it is, you know, really connecting on their terms of their turf. The second is I got to open up to. So that means if I'm asking them to open up, I go first opening up that could be just opening up about why I'm asking the question. So I'm not just posing the question without because people might have to might be guessing my agenda, but I want to make my agenda completely transparent. Or it may also mean opening up about something that is vulnerable for me to share as well, which invites reciprocity. And then the third one, which I think is most overlooked, is what I call radiating resilience. And that's really letting the other person know, I can be resilient. If you tell me


something hard. That means I'm not going to crumble, I might get upset, or I might have reaction. But if I have a reaction, I'm not going to hold you responsible for my reaction, I'm going to take responsibility. And so if I demonstrate that kind of resilience, which can be as simple as saying things like, if I were in your shoes, I imagined I'd be incredibly frustrated. What's you know what's going on for you? That's a simple way to let them know like, Okay, if I tell him I'm frustrated, he's not going to, you know, he's not going to, you know, jump on me or crumble or whatever, because he just told me he imagined that'd be frustrating. That's one way to do it. I have a I have an investor in my own organization, who who radiated resilience by saying to me, you know, I'm assuming that once I make an investment in someone, it doesn't go as planned. And so what I'm interested in is how did it not how is it not going as planned with you? All of a sudden she's told me that she's resilient to letting me know that if I tell her things are going off the rails, that's a normal thing. Yeah. as well. I

 Kurt 24:51

love that aspect of creating the fear making the fear and taking the fear and saying normalizing it basically saying it know exactly I anticipate that you're frustrated, I know that things are gonna go off the rail. So I want to understand that now. Because if I don't that's going to lead to bigger issues and then few days, and if I

 Jeff Wetzler 25:11

do, we'll be better off to go. That's great.

 Tim Houlihan 25:13

So how do you moderate your? Let's say, you ask a question, and the person comes back, and they give you an answer. And their answer causes you heart palpitating anxiety, because it was not what you wanted to hear, how do you moderate that?

 Jeff Wetzler 25:30

So some of it is if you're really trying to learn from the other person, you do have to monitor your own reactions. That doesn't mean faking it. But that does mean taking a deep breath, noticing that this might be coming up for you, but that it's inside of you, not blaming them for causing that reaction to you. i In the book, I interviewed another CEO, Chun Hao foo, who talks about anytime someone's bringing him news or feedback, he just really pays attention to his facial expressions, and tries to continue to have a receptive facial expression, when people are sharing things with him. And again, that's not faking it, or pretending he's not having a reaction. But he knows how important it is. And there's lots you know, there's research in psychology in terms of parenting, that if parents, you know, have massive reactivity, when their kids are telling them something that puts up a huge barrier. And so Parents also need to think about, we're going through the college admission process with my son right now who's a senior, we're right in the thick of it. And my my wife, and I keep saying whatever He tells us, if he gets in, if he doesn't go in, don't have a massive reaction, just stay calm as well, because that's going to make it more likely that he's going to feel safe telling us things.

K

Kurt 26:36

Oh, yeah, I'm going through the same thing. So it's really interesting, because I love this idea of like, understanding how your reaction is. And you talked about the leaders specifically. And we've had we've had guests on before who talked about leaders get more attention? And so is this even more important? If you are a somebody who is leading people or leading an organization? Do you have to be even more conscious about how you're responding then say, if it's you and me just having a casual conversation, asking questions about each other?

J

Jeff Wetzler 27:12

I mean, I think I think it applies everywhere. But I do agree that leaders have more eyeballs on them, leaders have more formal authority. And with that formal authority can come fear as well. And so leaders are more insulated from really hearing what needs to happen. I know, I've had that in my own leadership experience where I have missed out on really important things, because I didn't make it safe with people as well. But I will say, I think this it also really applies to somebody who is in the more junior position with their manager, because a lot of times managers and I have been guilty of this myself, at times, don't give all the feedback, right. And sometimes that's and that really hurts somebody who's in a more junior position, because they are they don't perform as well, they don't have the chance to learn and grow. And so I think it's actually equally important for the person in the junior position to be making it safe for the manager, to say, I need to want to hear what you have to say whatever it is, I want to hear it as well. Yeah. And I know even with people who work for me, sometimes I'm an admin just in a rush. And I do have thoughts and feedback and observations, but I'm just rushing from one thing to the next. But if they say, Jeff, what is one thing I could have done better? All of a sudden, that tells me they want to hear it makes it safe for me, it pauses me and I'm far more likely to contribute to their growth and development. So

K

Kurt 28:26

so a couple things there. Right? So one is that as a junior person, you can actually help in that process by asking questions, like you just said, and then as you were talking about you give a really good story at the beginning of the book to about one of like, you know, first managerial kind of position, and you had this feedback, and you just were leaving, then you ask the person at the end, about how they, how they react to how he felt to this. And it was different than what you had anticipated. I want to talk about that story a little bit. Yeah,

J

Jeff Wetzler 28:56

yeah. And I think it's a perfect example of one of the kinds of questions inside of step three of post quality questions, which is a question a strategy that I call request reactions. And so often, we just say our view, or we give some input or guidance or whatever. And we assume, well, if they disagree, they're going to tell me, or, you know, if they if they have an issue with it, I'll find out. But they're thinking they must not be interested in my view. And so they don't tell us. But if we simply, you know, so in this particular story that we're talking about, I was, you know, I was giving guidance to, you know, one of the people that I was a new manager of, I thought I

had just given him some very clear, helpful direction he was going to run, you know, and but I had just been trained to ask this question, what's your reaction to that? And, you know, when you first start posing new questions, it can feel a little stilted or awkward, but I just said, I'm going to push through that. I'm just gonna ask the question. All of a sudden, he said to me, I found myself completely deflated by what you just told me. And I thought to myself, thank God I asked that question, because, you know, I wasn't happy to know that he was deflated. But I knew he was gonna be deflated, whether I knew it or not. And so I think, at least now I know about it, then we could debrief, what was the miscommunication that we had we cleared it up, we got on the same page and things worked better. And so this question of, what's your reaction to what I just said? How did that land with you? What might I be missing? What am I overlooking? Is there a downside to what I just said? Any, any version of that request reactions, I think is one of the most overlooked strategies that we can use to really learn what's going on for somebody else,



Tim Houlihan 30:29

we can think of lots of experiences that we've had in our life. Well, let me say this, I can think of lots of experiences that I've had in my life where asking a question yielded information that I was completely not anticipating it brought new light. And you tell a story about an Uber driver. Yeah. And that I found just riveting. I think I think Kurt's on the same page there, because it actually happened in Minneapolis. So can you tell us a little bit about that? And how, how asking some, basically getting beyond your own assumptions change the dynamic dramatically?



Jeff Wetzler 31:02

Yeah, I saw I had just spent a week actually in the Boundary Waters of Minnesota,



Kurt 31:07

beautiful, beautiful area, well, you



Jeff Wetzler 31:09

know, a wilderness trip with a set of very close friends that, you know, we get together every summer. And we had just spent a week really, you know, asking each other questions and sharing each other's lives. And I was, you know, walk coming off of that trip, I was just reminded of how much there is to everyone's story and all that. And so I was on my way to the Minneapolis Airport, that Uber pulls up, and on the you know, on the bumper sticker of the Uber is a flag of the symbol of the thin blue line. And then I look at the driver, and he's wearing a hat and it has that same flag as well. And in the circles that I have run in that flag is a symbol of a values clash. It's a symbol of things that you know, lots and lots of people that I know that I that I hang out with would say, is anything from insensitive to scary to racist to, you know, a whole number of different kinds of things. And so I look at this, and I think to myself, Oh, my God, I'm gonna get in a car with somebody who have all these things that, you know, that my community would say is the case. And honestly a little bit afraid for my own safety as well as a

Jewish person, because there's some associations with that, too. And my immediate instinct is to just take out my phone and start catching up on my emails. But I and that's, of course, the safest thing to do. But I thought to myself, you know, what, I just realized, I just spent a week, you know, reminding myself that you can learn a lot from other people, and there's a lot that's going on for you. And so I just said to the person, you know, can you tell me about, you know, what's your experience? What's what's, what's, what the hat What, what's behind it, are you part of the police force, and you know, there was a lot of traffic, thankfully, because we actually got to have a very long conversation. And what I learned was an incredible story of this person's own life themselves as a as a former police officer, their fiancée, as a former police officer, their cousin, who actually very sadly, was murdered by a gang in LA, their time as a corrections officer confronting people that they had arrested, but also their deep belief in dignity, and in treating people with dignity and in community policing. And even when arresting someone often giving them, you know, one more cigarette before they go to jail, you know, go into jail, all these kinds of things, a truly compassionate person. And I said, Well, you know, what do you think about defunding the police and the call for that? And I got a very receptive answer. So you know, that's an interesting position, but what would happen if you know their house got broken into who would they want to call, you know, and so I got, I really just got a 360 degree, very textured understanding of someone that all I had originally do it done was just write them off as a fly. And I actually walked away feeling grateful that we have people in our country who are serving, you know, and protecting communities with the kinds of mindsets and attitude that this particular person had humbled that I was making some of the wrong assumptions connected to this person. I didn't walk away saying I'm gonna buy a house like that for myself. But boy, did I do it? Did I learn a lot? And did I ended I, you know, feel like closer to someone who otherwise seemed as, as you know, the other.

K

Kurt 34:07

And I think you bring up a really interesting perspective in this, the idea that we make those assumptions based on surface kind of attributes about All right, I've actually judging that person as an individual, because I see something, they're wearing a certain type of clothing, they're having a certain bumper sticker on their car, etc. So what can we do? Because just like you, I mean, my initial response would have been probably looking down at my phone, you know, and being safe about that, as opposed to posing the question, are we doing too much of that as a society? Do you think? I mean, is there a way that we can ask people and have these conversations to understand them better? And is that something that we should be doing?

J

Jeff Wetzler 34:51

I believe it is. I mean, I think what you just said is a perfect illustration of how we get stuck in what I call the certainty loop, where we see a tiny little slice of information, we select that out of many possible things that we could be paying attention to. And we select that through the filters of our own pre existing assumptions. And all of a sudden, we just race all the way up to conclusions. Those conclusions reconfirm our initial assumptions. And we get the sense of here we go again, and we don't even know that we're doing because the whole thing happens in split seconds. And so it doesn't even occur to us that there is any other way that this person could be or that life could be, etc. And so that's how we stay certain. There's some ways to interrupt that. And there are, you know, in that chapter on choosing curiosity, I talked about curiosity questions that we can inject. So first of all, if we can notice that we're doing that, we

can ask ourselves what other information might be going on in this situation, maybe this person is also a brother or a father, or maybe this person has some other thing that I can connect to, etc. But also asking ourselves, what's another way to interpret what I'm seeing right now, it doesn't have to be the story. I'm telling myself the other kinds of story. There can be other kinds of stories, we can be saying to ourselves, how can we use the emotional reactions that we're having, which often shut down? Curiosity as a cue to remind ourselves, or if I'm feeling really triggered, that's a moment I need to get curious. And so rather than just giving into our emotions, that can actually be saying, let's use the emotion to remind ourselves that this is a moment to get curious as well. And then we can enlist other people in our lives to help us see what you know, who, whose voice is not being heard right here? How can I actually surround myself with some other people who will provoke me out of my bubble, and to be thinking about different different ways of looking at a situation,



Tim Houlihan 36:32

I love the way that you express this idea that when you feel triggered, that's a signal to get curious, how do you do it? How do you or maybe just never get triggered? All the time? It doesn't even apply? I wouldn't be here. But if I was, right, so how do you deal with it? How do you how do you make that, whoa, wait a minute, I can feel it welling up in me, I'm going to do something different. Yeah,



Jeff Wetzler 36:56

I'll sort of, say, my enlightened way. And my, my mere mortal way.



Kurt 37:04

Probably associated with the mere mortal way, a lot more,



Jeff Wetzler 37:07

via enlightened way, is actually just starting to train yourself to notice it. And so that, you know, in all the ways that I think, especially in recent years, we have, we have come to understand how mindfulness can help us separate stimulus from reaction and give ourselves a pause to inject a question mark in there. And rather than just, you know, acting on our anger, is to say, Oh, I'm noticing that I'm angry. Now, that's a reminder to do that kind of thing. And that does take some work in practice, and whether journaling, or therapy, or coaching or meditation, there's a whole bunch of different modalities for how we can do that the mere mortal way, is to get a friend to help. All right, you know, I have, I'm very, very lucky in my job to have a co CEO in my organization. And when I kind of race up to, you know, my own judgmental certainty about why did this person who works on our team not do this, etc. My partner Ilan, will say, hey, you know, you seem a little worked up about this. Is there another way to look at the situation? Right now? And, you know, I think, curiosity, I've learned this from a mentor of mine. So MacArthur, Curiosity is a team sport. If we want to get curious, we don't have to do it all by ourselves, we can enlist our friends and colleagues and partners to help us get curious. And if

we invite them to actually do that, it makes it easier for them to just say, yeah, here's one of those moments, I think you're worked up. Now. What can you be curious? How could you be more curious?

K

Kurt 38:27

I'm really interested, just because you talked about your CO, you know, CEO, right, as you're as you're doing this. And so in a work situation? I would, I would assume, and this is an assumption, right? Because, again, I'm trying to model some of this, that that being curious at work is probably a positive thing. So is this something that in work situations, our listeners should be trying to instill and get their CO their peers that are working with them to maybe form a curiosity circle, or some sort of way of building this 100%

J

Jeff Wetzler 39:03

There's a number of different things that can, you know, that teams and organizations can do to build curiosity into the workplace, you know, in my in the very first place that I worked, literally hired for curiosity. And so at the end, I didn't know this at the time, but at the end of our job interview, after like five or six different people we were interviewing with, and panels and performance tasks or whatever. What they did is they had someone give us critical feedback. And as candidates, we didn't know that this was part of the whole routine. And so I got a whole bunch of critical feedback. And my initial reaction is, I guess I didn't get the job. And they're being nice enough to tell me, but what they were really doing was to see, am I curious about that feedback? Do I ask them to do to tell me more to learn more or to get defensive about that feedback? So some of the ways we can actually engineer the culture by who we bring in and screening for that kind of curiosity. But there are also other practices like in my current organization, we do something called two by twos which is that every quarter, anybody who works closely together, gives each other two pieces of positive feedback and two pieces of critical feedback and also shares to self reflections and positive feedback and critical feedback. And that kind of builds in natural curiosity because I'm like, I now want to know, what's your two by two for me, and they want to know, what's your two by two, etc. And it just kind of clears the air of anything that might be building up. And normalizes that kind of, you know, we're going to be asking questions that each other and learning from each other. There's



Tim Houlihan 40:26

a part of the book where you talk about nine tips on how to tell people, you know, how to tell if you're really getting the right message here. And one of the things and some are pretty intuitive, you know, like, Listen, you know, ditch the distractions, these, these are great. But the eighth tip is back off to move forward. And I love that you, first of all, that you kind of have this perspective. And can you talk about that when that was at least one of my favorites, but maybe you could also talk about one of your favorites. Great.

J

Jeff Wetzler 40:56

I'll talk about, I'll talk about that one. And then I'll jump to one more. That one is a recognition that even if we want to learn from someone that doesn't mean that we have the right to

and even if we want to learn from someone, that doesn't mean that we have the right to continue to grill them as an Inquisitor, until we get what we want. And in fact, it's important to respect their boundaries. And sometimes people are not yet ready to share what it is that we need to hear or want to hear. And so if we're asking them questions, or a follow up question, and we, you know, get the message from them, that that's enough. And you can test that explicitly by saying, you know, if you want to stop, that's completely fine. If there's more you want to share, I'd be interested to hear that. But if you get that, you know, that's all I got, or I'm ready to stop. It's important, both as an ethical and respectful thing to do. But I often find that later, some will come back and say, you know, I'm ready to talk about that. Now, I find that especially true with my kids, but also true with people in the workplace as well. One of my other favorite ones, actually, I'll just say two favorite ones, because I just think they're so powerful. One of them is called paraphrase and test. And this is just, you know, so overlooked. But it's the simplest thing to say, Let me paraphrase what I think I heard you say, Did I get it right? It does so much, it slows down everybody in the conversation. So we can all take a breath, and have a chance to think invariably, I have missed something, when I paraphrase it and check it, it sends the message to the other person, I care enough to know if I got it right. And that creates a signal of value, but it also invites the other person to keep going and say more. So that's I think that's, that's just such a concrete and easy thing to do. And then the other one, I would just say, is just this, pulling the thread, just just pulling the thread and saying, what else? Is there more? Can you say more about that? Because so often, the most important thing that someone has to say, is not the first thing that they say. But if we stop at the first thing they say then we move on to the next topic or the next question. We've literally missed it. You know, there's a term that clinical psychologists have for this, which is called the doorknob moment, you know, they'll have like 48 minutes of a psychology set of a therapy session, the person is walking out the door about, you know, about to hold the doorknob, and then the most important thing comes out. And then they say I'm leaving my wife or you know, this is that of getting investigated by the government. But it's, you know, it's not it's not the first, second third or 10th thing that they've said, that really matters. And I often find that at work, you know, what I'll say to people, you know, what, do you think we should do? Whatever? And then they'll tell me, and I'll say, and what else? And is there more and is there, and I'll tell you, you know, when you're done, feel free to stop, but I'm gonna keep asking you is there more until you tell me that's it. And it's like, the last ideas is often the most creative idea of all. And so I find that a really valuable technique as well for listening.

K

Kurt 43:34

Oh, man, that that is just absolutely fascinating. Because too often in my, I've seen this happen, right is is that you don't do that the paraphrase and you don't ask what else and you just go on, you just move forward through what's going on. And it comes up, like a month later, or a week later, or at some other point where all of a sudden, it's like, Why didn't you tell me about this? You know, when we had the conversation last week, and well, you never asked and so or I thought we talked about this? Well, no, I thought we talked about this again, as, as we talked about at the beginning Behavioral Grooves, right? The name, the Tim and I agreed on, we had two very different versions of it. And so yeah, it's very, because we, because we didn't ask we didn't Yes,

J

Jeff Wetzler 44:22

yeah. Yeah. And that is that I love that story of never forget that story. And that's that also sneaks to another question strategy and post quality questions which I call simply clear up


speaks to another question strategy and post quality questions, which I can simply clear up confusion. And that's just literally, you know, asking the other person. What do you mean when you say that word? What do you mean when you say group? What do you mean when you say we should grow into this market? Any number of it's incredible how often we define things differently than somebody else. And just by pausing and saying, How are we each defining this term? somebody on my team recently said, can we just make a glossary of our key terms for this organization? Because that way, we'll know we're using them in the same way and it was That's a very productive exercise because it revealed that we were actually thinking about some things in a different in different ways from each other

 Kurt 45:05

well, and corporate speak is so amazingly just again, it's so obtuse. And so the the ability to interpret it in multitude of ways. Yeah. So I love the idea of creating something like that. My last question. I know, Tim is itching to get to music here. But my last question, as podcasters Tim and I are asking questions all the time, and you talk about posing, you know, you know, good questions, right. If there was one helpful hint that you could give us as we are crafting our questions, this whole, like, big line of questions that we have, what would that one hint or tip be for us?

 Jeff Wetzler 45:46


I love personal I appreciate that question. I think that's a great example of a question that's called that I call invite ideas. Okay. You're, you're essentially inviting me to share an idea. And I think, you know, having been through this five guests now, I love the questions that you asked. So I don't try with throw in new questions. But I think I would probably point you to the listening and say, once somebody answers that question, maybe give them a chance to say, and is there more? And is there something else? And is this the right thing we should be taking away from what you from what you just said? Because I think that will invite more things out of people. What else do

 Tim Houlihan 46:20

you have to say about that? Well,

 Jeff Wetzler 46:21

exactly.


 Tim Houlihan 46:25

I'm being sarcastic, right? But but at the same time, Jeff, thank you, thank you for that feedback, we relish it, let's just let's just put it that way. In the section, we said we were talking about tips. And in that section, you make this comparison about listening to music for the for the first time. And you said you know, there's this lovely analogy of that the the unskilled ear

basically kind of hears just all the instruments and all the sounds at the same time. And it's all just kind of jumbled, but to the skilled ear, they start going well, this is what the base is doing this with the drums are doing this with the keyboards are doing things, things like that. Do you think that in general, we're listening to conversations with generally unskilled ears, Jeff?

 Jeff Wetzler 47:08

Yeah, I mean, I am a recreational musician at best, I can't fire guitarist or whatever. But when I take the time to actually listen for the percussion, and the bass and the vocal, etc, I enjoy a piece of music so much more, because I can really appreciate each of those different dimensions and then appreciate how they come together. And the same is true, and we're listening to people. And so in that chapter on listening to learn, I talked about three lenses or three channels to listen through. One of them is content. So what are the words? What are the what are the messages? What's the data, what's the information that the person is conveying? That's where that's where I naturally default to. And I think where a lot of us are, you know, if we get any training and listening, it's listening to the content. The second is listening for emotion, what are the feelings that are being conveyed? And we might hear that through tone, or through body language, etc. You know, per our conversation earlier with Nick, hopefully, we shouldn't assume that we got that right. But it's something we can be listening for, and then checking and testing with the other person. And then the third is action. What's the person actually doing? Maybe they are repeating themselves. Maybe they are coming back to the first point that they made, maybe they're asking lots of questions, maybe they're speaking indirectly, maybe they're making lots of requests of us. Those are all different examples of behaviors or actions that they can that they're taking, that we can be listening for, or observing in a conversation. And so typically, we either listen through one channel or as a, as you said, Tim, it just jumbles together. But we can actually train ourselves to listen through each of those different channels. And then ask ourselves, what's the relationship between the three? Is there congruence between the words that someone is saying the actions that they're taking the the emotion? If not, that's interesting, how can we listen, inquire into that as well. And we get just dramatically more information, where we can train ourselves to listen through those three channels, and then put them back together.

 Tim Houlihan 48:50

You also gave the example of Rick Rubin, the great producer, in talking about how He suspends judgment. And I was curious if you've had that experience yourself, have you? Have you been in a position it just felt for some reason, as I was reading, it just felt like a very personal kind of a comment.

 Jeff Wetzler 49:10

Yeah, I mean, I think as, as a fellow human being, I am, you know, I am a judgment making machines. I constantly am rushing to judgment. There was a recent situation, literally the last couple of weeks, where we had somebody on our team, who was considering leaving the organization, and my co founder, and I worked really hard to try to, you know, help him see why it could be good for him to stay and be good for the organization stay, and we wrote him some long notes of theft and things like that. And then we got absolutely nothing back days

and days went by. And that was a time when I had to, you know, I had all kinds of feelings that were kind of bubbling up, why is this person not responding? What's going to happen to the etc. And I just had to say to myself, You know what, it could be anything, just suspend the judgment. Stay open. Don't judge this person for their reaction or lack of reaction in this case, and and stay curious. And as a result, I felt I was much more receptive to getting back what what we ultimately got back. And ultimately the person just said, I was really just processing it. I was reading it, rereading it and thinking through what you had to say. And it wasn't any of the other things that we were rushing to judgment about. And it's, it's not easy to do that. But I do think when I can get myself into that space, I'm calmer too, because curiosity can kind of compete with with anxiety and kind of push that anxiety out of the way.



Tim Houlihan 50:27

I love that. Okay, let's do you've been preparing for this. So we want to know, if you've got a year to yourself on a desert island. What two musical artists catalogs are you going to take with you?



Jeff Wetzler 50:39

Well, first I thought you were gonna ask me if I was gonna, you know, wanted to hang out on that desert island my favorite actor or not? I was debating because I really had to I have to compel yet. But you know, I'm self compelled by by either one of those possibilities. Well, we've got to hear that what's what's your actor would be Jason's two decades because Ted Lascaux is my curiosity hero. And I think there's so much on that show that we can learn about how to lead through through through curiosity as well. In fact, on my I've written a trilogy of blog posts about what Ted Lascaux can teach us about question asking and learning, which is on my blog, but I just such respect for what we can learn. But I also just love music I constantly have music on in my life, and I and it was hard to pick but I came down to Paul Simon and the Indigo Girls. That I would, I would take with me. Yeah,



Tim Houlihan 51:28

yeah, I think that's a fantastic combination. Why, why Paul Simon, and why the Indigo Girls?



Jeff Wetzler 51:34

I mean, so the Indigo Girls have just been are something that my wife and I really share in common. She loves them as well. You know, we do lots of I play the guitar with thing together. She used to be in an acapella group. And so she moved her song in the acapella group was Galileo. Okay. One of my favorite things to do is to play the guitar and have my wife sing Galileo, but you know, they also have a song whose title is all that we lead in. And I considered, I considered actually having that as the opening kind of quote for the book, because the verse the lyric goes, we're better off for all that we let in. And I just think in many ways that sums up the message of the book as well. Yeah.



Tim Houlihan 52:14

Well, we could talk for hours about being campfire guitarists, I've always considered myself a living room guitarist first, actually. Campfire guitar a second, but certainly had my rounds around there. But that's fantastic. Okay, so you've got two artists that you would definitely take with you to musical artists that you would take with you if you had a third who might go along. Who else what else?



Jeff Wetzler 52:42

Then we start to go into some of the more like, you know, indie. So I was I was thinking about Joe Crookston. I don't know if you know who Joe Crookston is. He is an amazing singer songwriter. He's got a song called Georgia. And there's a verse in the song that says, Georgia, I'm here and then it goes on to say, it's a broken and cruel and a beautiful world. And he just kind of repeats that, that kind of Chorus throughout the song. And I also think that there's just deep wisdom in you know, in that way of being able to see all all aspects of the world as well. And I would probably also take Dave Carter and Tracy Grammer, I don't know if you know them or not, but they are amazing kind of folk singers as well. They have a song called gentle arms of Eden, and my daughter's name is Eden. And so we love we love seeing that together as a family as well. Jeff,



Tim Houlihan 53:34

it is such a pleasure to have you as a guest on Behavioral Grooves suite. We hope you'll come back. Thank



Jeff Wetzler 53:39

you. I really enjoyed this conversation very much.



Kurt 53:51

Welcome to our grooming session where Tim and I share ideas and what we learned from our discussion with Jeff have a free flowing conversation and groove on whatever else comes into our questionable brains. Oh, yeah. You thought I was gonna say something different. I didn't Did I did. I did too. And that's usually how I work.



Tim Houlihan 54:12

But the slides on unconscious at work, they're



Kurt 54:17

well, asking us about questions, right. It's questionable mind. Do you get to ask questions when you're asking? Yeah yeah that's that's really the basis of of I think what we talked about what

you're asking. Yeah, yeah, that's, that's really the basis of, of I think what we talked about what Chaffetz this idea that, you know, we have to be as we talked about, we have to be compassionately, curious, and you have to ask questions. Yeah, it



Tim Houlihan 54:41

was a great conversation. I mean, I've really, really enjoyed talking with Jeff. Really, it wasn't just like, oh, it was kind of fun. It was one of those really lovely learning in you know, sessions to just the way he frames thing is just really thoughtful.



Kurt 54:57

So this is a Good. All right, we're gonna talk inside baseball here apologize listeners, but I am super excited to talk with the big names that we get on on the podcast. Those are the ones we get excited about, you know, it's like, oh my gosh, we talked to a Nobel Laureate, we get to talk to, you know, this researcher who have, you know, Zimbardo who like when, you know is like all these crazy people that are just fantastic. But we also get to talk to these people who I had never heard of Jeff before this, not that I probably should have. But that's, that's beside the point. But I haven't. But man, the insights that we get from many of our guests that are just well beyond anything that I would guess it's just amazing to me, it's like, we get to talk to these really bright people that we would have never never had the opportunity without this podcast. Yeah.



Tim Houlihan 56:01

Done check. Because if we called up Jeff wetzler and said, Hey, Jeff, we just read your book, would you mind spending an hour just talking with us? You know, I know wouldn't it be fun, just have a conversation about your book and go like, I'm sorry, I'm really busy by



Kurt 56:18

the time you add, you ever made that they don't do that anyway. But who are you Behavioral Grooves? Is that that music and behavioral science Podcast?



Tim Houlihan 56:31

But when you when you say no, we're gonna record it for podcasts, like sure, like, this is fantastic. You



Kurt 56:38

know, it's great. And, and so hopefully, listeners, hopefully you sorry about the inside baseball there. But hopefully, you get the the benefit of us being able to talk to these people. That's that's the idea. Hopefully, we have good enough conversations for you and that we ask the

right questions that you would have masked?



Tim Houlihan 57:01

Okay, so where do you want to start this grooming session? That's



Kurt 57:04

a good question, Tim. I



Tim Houlihan 57:06

think you're asking masking. Masking. So



Kurt 57:10

this is so the key piece on this if, for me the takeaway from the book, and from this conversation, a couple different things. The most reliable way to know what is on someone else's mind is what Tim? How what how do we how do we do that? to



Tim Houlihan 57:27

survey them to and to put them through their facial



Kurt 57:31

expressions and see the micro expressions to understand Are they are they feeling happy or sad? Oh, no, it's



Tim Houlihan 57:39

it's understand their birth order. Oh,



Kurt 57:41


or Hi. Well, I thought it was their their sign. Right there is are you Capricorn? What are you? Well?





Tim Houlihan 57:49


Is it like a Western sign that your western Zodiac or your your Vedic Zodiac that you rely on?


is it like a Western sign that your Western Zounds or your, your Yeah Zounds that you rely on.
Okay,


 Kurt 57:57
so you just knew I have no idea even what a Vedic Yeah,

 Tim Houlihan 58:01
because there's nine different so which one do you rely on? I

 Kurt 58:07
learned something. I learned something with you every time I talk. No, it's you have to ask. Oh, that's it and just ask them what's on their mind various different pieces. And I think it's really, the problem is that we don't ask Yeah, we assume and we don't.

 58:24
Yeah, yeah. Because,

 Tim Houlihan 58:25
because why? Because we want to look smart, because we think we already know what's on somebody else's mind. And Nick, Emily's work does a great job of pointing this out about, you know, you and I, I think both of us got engaged with Nick's work because of the the commuter study on how your day goes after you talk to a stranger on the train. And it's fantastic. It's it's really just a fantastic thing to get engaged with someone who we don't know who we don't know what's on their mind. And to simply ask can be a really rewarding thing for us, not just informational, not just improving the amount of information that we have for decision making, but it can actually just make us feel better.

 Kurt 59:11
Yeah. And so for our listeners, we talked with Nick Eppley, back in episode 287. Yeah. Wow. And so, you know, we talked about that study, when it's why talking to strangers is actually good for your well being so fantastic. Yeah. And I think the interesting pieces you said, it's like, why don't we ask people, right? It's like, we want to look smart. And we think asking questions. We've been trained, rightly or wrongly, from from early childhood, that asking questions about feelings and different things isn't always the easiest or best thing to do. And so it's hard. It's it's a very hard thing to just ask and I think that's really an important aspect of what you know, Jeff. Just trying to say is we have to overcome that fear. And we have to be able to just get out there and



Tim Houlihan 1:00:06

ask. It's not as hard as we think it is. I think



Kurt 1:00:09

that that's a good point. Right? That's a very good point. Yeah.



Tim Houlihan 1:00:12

And this is a strange thing about the human condition is that we think it's going to be really difficult or that, of course, they're just whatever question we're asking someone that because we already know the answer, it's just going to confirm what we already know. So why even ask? And we're missing out? I mean, a psychiatrist, have been known about this for a long time that just just asking the question allows us to talk about something in a way that might reveal some new information that we hadn't anticipated as the asker.



Kurt 1:00:46

You know, what's interesting, and we talked a little bit before this is, you know, obviously, there's the time of we have to ask other people the questions. But there's also this part, I think that is unsaid, and I apologize, Jeff, if this was later on in your book, and I just passed over it. But we have to, sometimes it's about providing the questions for people to ask, in other words, like, I want to be asked question, right. And, and nobody's asking them for me. Right? And, of course, and I go, Whoa, nobody's asking me this. Well, no, of course, they're not they don't know what I'm thinking. Right. They don't have that they. So you know, it's like, sometimes you have to ask somebody to ask you a question. Yeah. And



Tim Houlihan 1:01:35

this, this kind of gets to two things. For me. One is our, our desire for certainty, right, that we have this natural tendency to prefer certainty rather than asking and finding out something that we don't know, or don't know how to deal with. And we've, we've covered certainty with some really great guests. We talked, we talked about certainty with Debbie Sutherland and Episode 324, Nathan and Susannah, for embracing, like, great, maybe like world famous conversation with with Nathan and Susanna. And suddenly,



Kurt 1:02:11

because we had three of those conversations, just



Tim Houlihan 1:02:13

to get to one episode,



Kurt 1:02:16

the technical difficulties,



Tim Houlihan 1:02:19

Episode 345, by the third time, we



Kurt 1:02:22

have a pretty good conversation, you know, maybe that's what we need to do with all of our guests. Well,



Tim Houlihan 1:02:25

I, I wouldn't mind that actually, I'd love to have multiples. But I think that certainty is one of the things that we really can struggle with, and this desire for certainty



Kurt 1:02:36

are a cool career. Glinsky I forget what episode he was in. Another piece on that Peter Atwater on how to map to success if you let go of certainty. That was episode 366. So yeah, one of your favorites, Brian Lowry. Right? Yeah.



Tim Houlihan 1:02:54

The psychologist turned philosopher.



Kurt 1:02:59

Philosopher people, man. All right. All right. So obviously asking, I think is a big part of what Jeff is trying to get at and different pieces. But I think there's an underlying piece too. And this is we we've talked about this before, is shoes, curiosity. Right? Yeah.



Tim Houlihan 1:03:17

That his his Uber driver experience that that story is fantastic. In the book, he covered it a little bit in our conversation. And it reminded me, my personal story, Katie, and I moved to Charlotte, you know, a year and a half ago. And we're new in the city. And we're just trying to meet people, right? So on a dogwalk, I run into a guy a couple of times and say, hey, you know, is he

says his wife's an artist, let's go up to dinner. So we meet up for dinner, and Katie, and I asked them questions for about an hour and a half while we're eating dinner, and they did not reciprocate in any way. And so after an hour and a half, I kind of looked at and said, Well, you know, but let's just get the tab and, and, and steal nothing from them. And then I kind of glanced at my wife say, Well, look, we've got other things to do tonight. We're we're moving on. And they said, Oh, that's great. We should do this again. You know, we need to learn more about you guys. Yeah, we just spent an hour and a half where you could have asked us one question about us. And they didn't they missed a huge opportunity to learn about us. Yeah.

 Kurt 1:04:28


Isn't that it's it's fascinating, right when you get into those conversations and and people don't ask you questions. Yeah. What does that do? So we have that fear, as we talked about, like, asking questions makes us look stupid, but in those types of situations, not asking questions makes you look stupid, actually, you know, makes it so that we are as likely to you know, want to have another conversation with you. Yeah, that we Eat, as humans like to be asked about us about how we're doing, what is our background? What do we like what we don't like all of those things. And so again, going back to the Uber driver, right, and remember when we were in Pittsburgh, and we had we were at, I think Carnegie Mellon, and we took the lift back to the hotel. And we met the jazz bass player. Yeah, the jazz bass player, who was one of those fantastic conversations. Yeah, you know, and I've had more than one of those in Uber lifts. And it's always kind of interesting, because I used to have those a lot more, it feels like, this is probably me just projecting out on this. But I remember like, getting into those. And I'd always ask because it's feels different than an Uber or Lyft. It's like, oh, have you been doing this long? And then we get into conversation and various different things. And recently, in my conversations, I get into him, and I ask, and I don't get like the answers, like, obviously, they're not reciprocating, they're not they're not responding, just shuts me down. And it's just not the same type of ride anymore. Well, it's because

 Tim Houlihan 1:06:15


you're really just not that nice of a person. And they don't like you.


 Kurt 1:06:22


But that was before as well. So it's better back then. I don't know.


 Tim Houlihan 1:06:28


It's odd, isn't that there might be a trend there. There's something that strikes me about the well, there's actually Okay, so two little things about the the curiosity thing. Jeff said that curiosity and has the same Latin root as care, which is koora. And I think that it's always kind of great to think about how our words come about, and that when we think about curiosity, it's a form of care.


 Kurt 1:06:53
Oh, my gosh, I


 Tim Houlihan 1:06:54
cool. It's a it's

 Kurt 1:06:56
a wonderful shift. Right? So again, I know people, like get nervous about asking questions and different things. But when you think about it, you're just showing care. Yeah,

 Tim Houlihan 1:07:08
it's like emotion, and motivation. And those two words share move ra as a common Latin root meaning, meaning movement. Emotion is a movement. It's an action, I think it's kind of cool that we have that stuff. The other thing that I want to say is that Jeff said that if you feel triggered, that is a cue for curiosity. He said, train yourself to notice it. And that is a really important thing. Because I'm sure that none of our listeners ever get triggered by anything. They're super calm and relaxed. And I never

 Kurt 1:07:46
do. I don't know what you're talking about. But

 Tim Houlihan 1:07:50
as soon as it's I just want to pay attention. I want to be aware of that. Because if I feel that sense of being triggered, that is the cue to get curious. Ask the question, Why am I being triggered? What's going on here?

 Kurt 1:08:05
It's a great little heuristic. All right. I feel triggered, what's going on? I need to figure this out. And the best way often is asking right and asking questions. So what else Mr. Houlihan? There has to be some other really insightful thing that you

 Tim Houlihan 1:08:24
came up with about listening. How about the listening side?



Kurt 1:08:28

Why would we ever want to listen? Come on, because it's



Tim Houlihan 1:08:31

wonderful. And it's important. And La



Kurt 1:08:35

la la, la, la, la La, Allah. Oh, I'm sorry. What are you saying? So well, in



Tim Houlihan 1:08:40

doing a little digging, I found a paper written by Paul Rankin in October of 1928. In an English journal. Kind of, Okay,



Kurt 1:08:50

a little trivial. How amazing. You are freaking amazing. A 1928. Article. Okay. Yeah, keep going on



Tim Houlihan 1:08:59

about the importance of listening because the spoken word is used more than the written word to communicate. And so it kind of got me thinking, okay, 1928, I can imagine that the spoken word was more common then, than the written word. But today, you know, with screens and things like that. I was a little, I was a little concerned that we'll wait, maybe we're not so dominated by the by the spoken word today, maybe we're dominated by the written word. So I found the gong research labs in 2016. analyzed,



Kurt 1:09:31

what is that from the gong show? No.



Tim Houlihan 1:09:35

Legitimate, legitimate research firm. Okay. And but they analyzed 25,000 sales calls, and they said the most, most successful calls were the ones where the salespeople listened to at least 50% and 57% of the time. So



Kurt 1:09:51



Kurt 1:09:51

more than half close to almost, you know, 60% Yeah, right.



Tim Houlihan 1:09:55

Right. So, so, there may be a you know, there may be some Some shifts and and gone published a whole bunch of really interesting little stats,



Kurt 1:10:05

do you know that share, share some of those with us,



Tim Houlihan 1:10:08

there's a couple of ones. First of all, active listening is identified by 64% of HR professionals as the most critical leadership skill. I



Kurt 1:10:17

have out that that I actually that's a really important in that it aligns with my own personal experience working with leadership teams, I just as we talked before, this just got back last night from a leadership off site that I spent the week at in Florida, with Florida, wonderful Florida, love Florida. And but part of this was working with the leadership team of like, they're going through a major transition, they have a they it was a recently acquired merger acquisition, and leadership now has new new team members underneath. And, you know, there's this initial push that is like, Oh, the transition talk, and then it's like back to business as normal. And and part of what we talked about is no, you still have to ask your employees how they're feeling. And you have to listen to what they're saying, and what they're not saying. Right? That's another big piece. Because as a leader, you know, they're gonna only tell you, you know, what they think you want to hear often. Right? Right. Not every time but often. So these are, these are listening skills are important, right? Yeah. This is like the



Tim Houlihan 1:11:36

15 high ranking leaders from a fortune 100 company, fortune 50, fortune 50. Company, how would you assess this is, since we're not naming the company, how would you assess their asking and listening skills?



Kurt 1:11:52

Average,



Tim Houlihan 1:11:54



Tim Houlihan 1:11:54

at best, wow. And



Kurt 1:11:56

again, varies right within the individuals within there. And this is a piece right with with leadership teams, oftentimes, you become a leader, not always, because you have great people, or communication skills, but because you are an expert in your field. And that is how we promote within this. And so you have a subject matter expertise, and you need to practice and learn these other skills. And as much as we would like to think that organizations and particularly, you know, larger organizations are adept at this and understand this. What I found is that they don't, you know, is they often don't they, we we go about and status quo of how it is. And they're just people are left to their own devices of being able to, or a self serve, development, right. It's like, you got to go out and search for these things, as opposed to having that being helping them to do that.



Tim Houlihan 1:13:06

And yet, part of these factoids reveals that actively listening increases productivity and collaboration by up to 25%. Yeah, so that that's kind of a big deal.



Kurt 1:13:18

And so from that research that you pointed out, I'm looking at your notes that says employee satisfaction has been shown to increase by 30%, after managers go through training in active listening, that that's surprising, but it's in some sense, and it's not in others, and it's just really crazy. So yeah, and yet,



Tim Houlihan 1:13:42

and yet, 96% of people believe themselves to be good listeners.



Kurt 1:13:47

I'm in the top 10% of drivers as well. So you know, there you go. Yeah. It is really interesting. And I think, Jeff, you know, in the wisdom that he had in kind of writing this book, and in our conversation, really points out that, hey, asking those questions is important. But we also have to listen to know what questions to ask.



Tim Houlihan 1:14:13

That's it. That in some ways, right? That's so simple, and listeners are probably going, duh. That's, that's okay. As long as we don't pass up the opportunity to act on it,



Kurt 1:14:28

though. They think listeners are always going down with our show. You and I are talking so how about we wrap this up?



Tim Houlihan 1:14:36

Okay. There's a lot more than we could talk about a lot more questions we could ask each other probably aren't, aren't there.



Kurt 1:14:44

You are correct. I could listen to you forever. And just to kind of, you know, make all these questions would come into my brain, but we need to close out this conversation so Groovers can go on to other conversations and ask and listen to other. Okay,



Tim Houlihan 1:15:03

I agree with that. And we hope that you'll take away some of Jeff's tips and put them to use this week.



Kurt 1:15:10

Yeah, there are so many ways we can improve the richness of our life experience, but we can't do that all all day every day. So just pick one maybe one day this week and choose to listen with curiosity have some compassionate curiosity is Kwame Christian says a bit more than you have in the recent past. Let's do that this week. I like



Tim Houlihan 1:15:31

that. I like that. I'm with you. I'm gonna I'm gonna give that a try. Kurt so thanks. Thanks for that encouragement. And, and with that Groovers we hope that you take this tall drink of curiosity and listening skills, of course and use it this week to help you go out and find your groove.