

Dorianne Cara Weil, Dr. D | From Adversity to Insight and Beyond

- Good evening, everybody. Tonight, it's my great pleasure to introduce Dorianne Weil, Dr. D. Dorianne Weil is a clinical and organisational psychologist in corporate, hospital, and private practise. She's an internationally recognised inspirational and respected speaker, expert in personal development and human relations. She has addressed over a hundred thousand people and facilitated workshops in 57 countries. Entertaining, dynamic, and knowledgeable, Dr. D is a household name who regularly hosts her TV and radio shows and is quoted in the press and print media. She was also the media psychologist for the famous Oscar Pistorius trial in 2014.

Dorianne hosts her own podcast "Thrive with 'DrD'" which focuses on understanding and navigating life's journey. This podcast has been recognised as new and noteworthy with episodes released every Thursday on Apple platform. She also hosts "Coffee & Connect" where she interviews theatre luminaries around the world. Dori was awarded South Africa's Most Influential Women Lifetime in Business and Government. She was awarded ABSA's Lifetime Achiever Humanitarian award, as well as the International Rotary Paul Harris award.

She's patron of the Tomorrow Trust and Professional Speakers Association Education Hall of Fame inductee. And most importantly, she's the mother of 23-year-old twins. Dori, my dear friend, is an outstanding psychologist, a brilliant speaker, and the most unique and talented person. To quote Nelson Mandela, "Dori, I don't know if you are aware of the hope and inspiration you offer and the difference you make to so many lives. Dori, thank you for the great contribution you make to building our nation." What an honour, Dori, to have the great man himself celebrate you. I now hand over to Dori to discuss From Adversity to Insight and Beyond. Thank you, Dori.

- Wendy, thank you so much for that wonderful introduction and I still do feel moved every time I hear that quote from Nelson Mandela. It was a very, very valued, unique and special relationship to me. And I must say that your relationship to me is also unique and really, really valued. And I want to just tribute you with three characteristics, Wendy, because they relate very much to where we are and to a sign of the times now and exactly what we need. First of all, your ability and your wish and your strong desire to connect people as evidenced by this Lockdown University that you've started. But it's not only that, online, when you meet people that you think are interesting or funny or can add value to other people's lives, you just are so enthusiastic about introductions and wanting to share them.

And the other characteristic is to do with your abundance and with your sharing. We're not only talking about resources, we're talking about knowledge, and we are talking about a generosity of spirit that has always been characteristic of you. And these two things to do with connection and sharing are very much what we need and some of which we see now. No nothing joins people more than a shared emotional event. And going through this Corona made me always say it doesn't discriminate. I know we're in the same boat. We're actually not in the same boat. We

might be in the same storm, but certainly, in South Africa, we're in very different boats.

But the extent to which people have shown that kind of wish to connect, a recognition, of that we are in the same storm has been amazing. People have stepped up, they've shared, they've come up, they've done whatever they can in terms of services or whatever. And being in it has definitely connected people. And the last characteristic that I just want to mention about you, because it's what is happening now and we pitched for it really right now, is very, very much to do, not only with abundance but with innovation and with creativity.

You know, we have gone through a kind of a somewhat of a mourning process. We used to always talk about global warming, which we still do, but now we're hearing quite a lot about global mourning and mourning happens when there's loss. Now, we've lost the world that we knew it and it was quite as we knew it quite certainly. We haven't really been able to see or to formulate what's coming up or the new world in the future. There's been loss of jobs, loss of money, loss of predictability, loss of routine, loss of physical context, especially, loss of contact in general. Even though we've got Zoom, it's not the same.

You can't really feel that filling up hug from your child or many people don't experience that kind of joy that we used to always take for granted and didn't focus on, sitting around the table and having a family meal or going to your place of worship and feeling connected 'cause you're all in it together. So there's been tremendous loss of many, many kinds of loss and going through the kind of grief cycle globally and individually, people have dealt with it and are dealing with it differently. We think of Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and her grief cycle where she talks about denial. Well, there's definitely been denial. You know, in the beginning it was, look, this isn't going to be so bad, it'll be 21 days of lockdown.

You know, I don't know why people are making such a fuss. If you look at the statistics from different points of view, it's really not much more than the flu and people were talking like that. So there was quite a lot of denial in the beginning. And then when there was a recognition that, look, you know, this is something that we've got to deal with. There was one of her other stages that she talks about very strongly and that's anger. It's not fair and out of, anger often happens when people feel out of control, you know, why is this happening to me? There's been a lot of anger that spills out against authority and against the government.

And then, of course, there's sadness, you know, and in terms of the losses that we've experienced, and most particularly, in terms of uncertainty and eventually, and that's why I'm wanting to talk about not only the adversity part, but the insight part and the harnessing some lessons to kind of get into post-traumatic growth and avoid post-traumatic stress, is it seems that we've reached the level of acceptance, lots of us have. These stages happen differently. So I'm talking generally where there's a kind of a level of acceptance that we have to adapt and we have to come to terms with the fact that it is a new world, at least for a short period of time. And we can't sit back. We have to be creative, we have to be innovative. And that word that is just coming up in every single conversation, panel, webinar, discussion that I've been involved in, is

pivot. We have to pivot.

So even in businesses, if we know our purpose, we've got to do it differently or redefine our purpose or change circumstances. And Wendy, I just have to tribute you with this because you know, you were ahead of the game just with this and starting this Lockdown University. You kind of realised that you're not sitting back and waiting for things to calm down and change. You brought that creative spirit that we've seen in everything that you do and your ability to innovate right into this and into our lives with connection and with sharing.

So the acceptance that we're going through now, gives rise to new ways, a new and innovative ways of doing things. And I'm only wanting to talk about all of that part now, coming into the acceptance. Of course before, there was the feeling that it was too soon. You know, be positive, be positive, or stay positive was at the end of every single WhatsApp and every single email that we would receive. And to a lot of people, that meant, "I can't talk about the fear, I can't talk about the anxiety, I can't talk about what this uncertainty, this huge springboard of uncertainty is doing to me." Everybody just says, "Be positive and stay positive."

So having negotiated part of the journey and entering into hurt first stage, and there's another stage which I will talk about later, but entering into hurt first stage, I think that we are in that kind of stage of look, there will be, this isn't going to last forever, we are going to get out of it, but right now we've got a time when things need to be done differently and this time is here to stay. So this uncertainty, which has really been generated, you know, some of you who are on the call I know must have listened to the wonderful presentation that Simon Sinek did this week on a huge, huge panel.

And many of you know his work and a lot of what he says is, "Look," you know, "it's not so different," some of what he says not so different to what we've been to be through before. You know, each challenge appears like it's the first one. It appears like the new one. We've been through huge things before. The advent of the internet, which just killed lots of businesses and made things, made us do things differently. But I can say that I have seen this uncertainty manifest in huge ways and in different ways. And some of it came about when I was dealing initially with doctors who were preparing to be in the front lines.

And in talking to these doctors, they were saying things like, you know, "When we go through the doors of the hospital and our eyes connect, we can see that fear that's in each other's eyes. We have to do this. There's no alternative to winning. It's our calling and it's our purpose and we will be here and we'll get on top of it, really no matter what." But one was saying, you know, "This is different." "I was at 9/11 and as traumatic as it was, the thing that was really different was, first of all, you couldn't get sick." So the fear of catching anything and being incapacitated or worse or getting sick certainly is new, very new in this kind of crisis and the uncertainty about it.

Also, he went on to say, "Look, even in that trauma, we knew what we were dealing with quite

soon. As traumatic as it was, we knew about the number of people. We knew that it wasn't going to last. We knew how the incident came about and there was a degree of we have to mobilise ourselves and deal with it." But there wasn't the same kind of springboard of uncertainty or unpredictability that they were telling me was the huge thing that they were dealing with. A new virus, didn't have any kind of benchmarks.

And they had to deal with the fact that they're doctors, right? They had experienced, people were looking to them, even calling them heroes. One said to me, "I don't want to be called a hero. I don't have a cloak, you know, and I don't have magic powers. Sometimes, I want to be recognised with the fact that doctors, we are stepping up, but with people too." And so behind closed doors, they were talking about some of the feelings that they were experiencing, which were actually reflections of the feelings that were unleashed in all of us.

And they were to do with not only the confusion but you know- and it's kind of served as an incubate beta. If you were anxious before, people went into panic. Even in terms of relationships, if you were in lockdown, in a relationship where there were challenges or perhaps space that wasn't clean and big, unresolved issue, elephants in the room, you know, all of that was made manifest and worse. People had to be very careful about whether they could use it to clear the air. And developing a new kind of connection with time and space or whether it was too risky to deal with it because it would explode.

And so whatever people were feeling or going through before on an individual basis or on a relationship basis and on an, even societal became magnified. The divisiveness, the differences that we very well know that exist in South Africa, you know, some people, it became very, very highlighted and just, in your face, and exposed, and made us recognise things in a very new way. So these kind of feelings became recognised and sometimes took over in people. And what I do want to say is that having a range of emotion was and still is of course, a normal reaction to a very crazy and uncertain situation.

It wasn't the feelings in most cases that were bad or wrong or unexpected or indicative of weakness or shame because of some people it wasn't only having the feelings, it was feeling bad about having the feelings. How can I feel like this? You know, I'm in a really good situation. I must just douse them down, shove them under the carpet, and pretend that they were not there. So some of it was, it's a normal feeling to an unpredictable real situation. And from that point of view, there was something that put and is something positive that has been happening at this time. Mental health, which has always carried a huge stigma, sort of not spoken about, people were ashamed of it for something you somehow couldn't see.

People felt weak, they felt inadequate, their family felt blamed, you know, admitting that they were people in their family who weren't coping too well. I've been noticing that some of that stigma is dissipating. We're in a mental health pandemic, not only a health pandemic. So everybody feels more entitled or hopefully to say, "Listen, I'm having a bad time sometimes. I don't know how to cope sometimes, I get scared sometimes."

And there's a thing that comes in with this called comparative suffering. You know, a lot of us were feeling very guilty about saying these kind of things because you know, if I said for instance, I was really upset that my son who had worked for four years, you know, passed his degree, done quite well, was looking forward to his graduation, wasn't going to graduate, I would cut myself off in my head and say, you know, "You can't say that." What about the homeless people in Hillborough? Or what about the starving children?

You've got it much worse than you. And this whole thing of comparative suffering really is quite interesting because there's an idea that suffering is sort of finite. You know, almost like slices of a pizza. If you give yourself three there're going to be five left to care and worry about other people. It doesn't work like that at all. David Kessler, who has taken on the work of Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and added another stage called meaning, which has to come after the first five have been really negotiated, always says, "You know what?

The greatest loss is yours. Don't be ashamed of owning your loss." And if you deal with it and pull yourself up, you will be replenished in terms of the degree of caring and what you can offer to other people. So that was something about that. So in terms of these feelings that we've all felt, how do we, what do we say to the doctors because they feel them too? And what do we say to ourselves? Well, the first thing is really counterintuitive. You know, what we say usually is, look, you know, it'll go away in the morning. It's just a stage that you're going through.

Let's shove it under the carpet such that our emotional carpets start looking like the Alps after a while. And actually what really works in a far better way is the recognition and leaning in and owning and naming the feelings. So what we say is, if you can name it, you can tame it. If you feel it, you can heal it. Now how does that work? No, these aren't just good words, it works well. And I know Dennis and his talk also referred to this about recognising and owning your feelings, works on a physiological level as well. Because if you don't recognise these feelings and give them a name, you're operating from your amygdala or from your primitive brain and the danger of these feelings building up and overwhelming you becomes greater and greater. And when they do overwhelm you, it's a reaction rather than a response.

You're going to fat, flat, sometimes freeze at a time where you've got to be focused and make good decisions. And these feelings which build up and overwhelm you will be heard. They knock very loudly on your emotional and behavioural and physical door. So what happens is that you start developing symptoms, which maybe you don't even relate to some of these unrecognised feelings that need to be dealt with. Things like migraine headaches, lower backache, appetite problems, sleep problems, feelings of being disconnected, irritated at the drop of a hat, which isn't usually because of the event that's happening, it's because of the build up of everything that you're worried about and hasn't been recognised and really dealt with. So these feelings really, really demand to be heard and recognised.

So that's the first step. And knowing that many of them, as I say, are natural reactions to this

hugely very difficult and unknown and uncertain situation that we really have been living with. So some people ask when I talk about that, but you know, what about real mental health problems? Problems where there's a diagnosis? And I have said that people who were prone to certain conditions before might develop them through isolation or through confinement. I mean, we've seen the increase in women abuse when people couldn't go out, have a drink or play a round of golf if they were able to in that situation, this kind of build up that was taken out.

There's been an increase in some countries in the divorce rate as I've said. So how do you know when it gets to the point of, I've just been saying, own these feelings and they're normal, when it becomes, where you need to say, "Look, I'm not really coping with this and maybe I need to reach out and to ask some sort of help." And there're plenty of centres, plenty of people who are available to offer that help. And there're two conditions, two criteria really that I think are quite important. The one is a duration. In other words, how long has this been going on for? Has it been more than just a couple of days? Is it something that's pervasive? And the other is extent. And the extent of it often means I'm unable to function properly, I can't, I feel disconnected from our relationships.

Many people are working at home or taking up hobbies or taking up old passions off the shelf and they talk about being just unable to concentrate either on their work or what they're doing and they've lost that kind of sense of self. And if that goes on and it goes on for too long, that might be your real sign. And then something that I think that many of us have been recognising and I hope embracing is the real, real importance of self-compassion and taking care of us. We're doing it very much physically, hopefully, in terms of recognising the importance of exercise, good nutrition, sleep. In Dennis' talk also, and I'm sure that he's on this call as well, he spoke about stress and clearing the air in terms of stress.

Many people really recognise the importance of a routine, knowing and having some predictable thing that you're going to do every day, but really the self-compassion is more important than that. I've seen people who say, "I'm going to do lockdown and I'm going to do lockdown properly, which means I will lose 10 kilos of weight, exercise three times a day, learn a new language, possibly a musical instrument as well, develop that skill that I wanted to do, clean up my whole house and tidy up from top to bottom and I'll put the same pressure on myself in doing that as I have and I will have some fun and watch five series of Netflix." What self-compassion is, is being able to listen to your own drumbeat.

The other day I did a very short TV insert with a breakfast show and they said, "Look, what we want to know is how do you handle the 3:00 PM slump?" And I said, "Just allow yourself to slump." In other words, if you have a low time of the day at 3:00 PM and you need to take a time out, maybe have a power nap or do that meditation or take a break from what you're doing or whatever it is, why is it that we can't say that that's okay? If we are able to. Once again back to the doctors, sometimes they can't, there's the next person and the next person and they have to suck it up. And I'll talk about how they have to deal with that and how we have to deal with it afterwards. But most of the time if you know you have a low time of the day, you can say, "I have

a low time of the day and this is what is going to help me."

So very often, all of us, but I might say in this case most particularly, most especially women, have been reared as nurturers and caregivers. We want to look after, we want to please. Those of us who've got households of little kids who need attention or we're doing homeschooling or partner that needs to be really looked after, find this idea quite difficult to say, look, you know, you have to take care of your children's mother otherwise you're useless to them. Or you have to take care of your partner's partner or you have to take care of your colleague's colleague.

In other words, what I'm saying is if you don't take care of you, what happens is there's often an unexpected and unintended result and that result is that you build up resentment to the very person or people that you're trying to be nice to. So I'm here to say that every time you say yes, when you really mean no, there's a little bit of resentment that kind of builds up and it's gotten very little often to do with the other person. The other day I spoke to someone you know who said, you know, the smallest thing happened and she absolutely exploded in my face and started talking to me about what happens, what happened three years, five months, two days ago when I was terrible to her mother.

And I said to her, "What are you talking about?" You know, I think that you wrote scripted, directed and starred in your own movie. I don't even remember being there. And that's because we very often say, don't rock the boat. It's not important, it will go away. Let's just be nice. And if you don't deal with it in an honouring way of the other people as close to the time as possible, the chances of that kind of emotional buildup and burn out and so on are really much greater. So please don't forget, you know, it's kind of like being on an aeroplane where they say put on your oxygen mask first before taking care of children or anyone else. You have to be all right and you have to be able to breathe, and you have the responsibility of making sure that you do that for yourself in a calm and in assertive way without building up to be aggressive with other people.

Just to say, you know, I would appreciate, I would like, can we talk about that, this is important to me, aren't always going on. And of course, after self-compassion, let's talk about other compassion. Now, let's talk about the importance of empathy. And what I said is that people have stepped up in an unprecedented way and come to the form. But empathy in itself is incredibly important. You know, empathy is a very special way of listening to people. It's listening between the lines, it's listening to the feelings even if you haven't had the same experiences. It's understanding what someone is trying to tell you and being with them and not being an echo chamber. You know, so many people want to do one-upmanship.

Well, let me tell you about me, my situation, very much worse. You think you've got it bad? Well, you know, you should share him or her or what's going on in my house. See, you don't want to be in that kind of situation. Some of it is talk, some of it's small talk, some of it's a bit of that, I'm not saying, but when you want to connect with people in a way that is going to make a difference, you listen to them properly with your heart, not just with your ears and you hear what

they're saying. And I also want to just bring in some on the medical side of that.

You know, there's huge resource, everybody, on the healing power of support is one very recognised cardiologist who used to be the dean of the University of Irvine in California, quite instrumental in the development of the stent. And he wrote a book, his name is Dean Ornish. And he wrote a book called "Love & Survival: the Scientific Basis of the Healing Power of Intimacy." And in that book, which was years ago, long before COVID actually, he spoke about the power of support. And people who had love in their life were people who got sick less often, factually, and got better more quickly.

Obviously, it wasn't the only factor. But he found that it really was a factor. And I must clarify this because he didn't mean a partner necessarily, only in terms of a life's partner and having someone, you know, what he meant and it was something that Sigmund Freud also said at the turn of the century when he was interviewed and they said, "Hey Dr. Freud, you've spoken about crazy people, neurotic people, psychotic people, dysfunctional people, what would you say about healthy people?" And he said three things. He said, "They all have someone to love, they all have something to do and they all have something to look forward to."

But for someone to love, he didn't mean as having to have that life's partner. It means someone who would have your back. So if you were in trouble in the middle of the night, it was someone, some connection, being part of a tribe perhaps, your people, these are my peeps, my tribe, my sense of community who care about me and who are there for me. And sometimes it's not a lot of people, sometimes it's a few. And you have these, what we call COVID conversations. COVID conversations seem to be longer than we used to have before. They seem to be more open and more vulnerable and people sharing more intimately 'cause they need that kind of connection than we did before.

They're more connecting kind of conversations. And so, you know, I can talk for myself when I say that, you know, it has sort of acted as an incubator, maybe a magnifying glass. When I talk about this issue, you know, I do think of myself because now, of course, we're on Zoom, I'm on Zoom with you now and in a little while I will look to the top right of my screen and I'll see the window that we all see that says, Leave Meeting and I'll press it and then, you know, I won't see you anymore and yet there was buildup to it. There's always some anxiety every single time. And what I'm noticing in this connection with me is that I'm very fortunate that I have my twins here, they're here, but essentially, they're in their rooms, they're doing their own thing.

If I go in there, they'll say, "Oh, Mom, yes, the webinar, how was it? Was it great? Did it work well?" Or they might be a, certainly, it's not that they're just interested, but what I'm missing is that kind of availability of someone who turns around and says, "Geez, I was waiting for you to end. How did it go? I know you were anxious about it, tell me about it." And you and many other people in the call knows, actually in June, very, very soon, that seven years ago now since I lost my husband, and just over this time, needing that kind of connection, I'm feeling it in a stronger and sometimes more exaggerated way as we all do, the certain feelings that we were aware of

before where they've become incubated. So I think the thing with empathy is incredibly important. We are wired for connection. Human beings are wired for connection. So the importance of saying, you know, how's it going, making the core, keeping in touch is really valued beyond what we really realise and essential for us right now.

And the other thing that related to that statement of Freud that I want to say about or speak to, is he spoke about something to look forward to. You know, I will call it sort of mindful or realistic optimism and it's essential. And I want to make the- besides it's a characteristic of all successful people by the way. It's not just essential for now, you know, your kind of beliefs, you see the glass as I know you always do, Wendy, as half full and not half empty. No one knows enough to be a pessimist. So if you see possibility in your life, you act possibility in your life, you become, you know, you act as if you, and help to create the circumstances that you want.

So your actions, your beliefs create your actions, your actions create your results. And often those results when stretched out over a lifetime are what become your destiny. So all of this be positive, be positive. Honestly, I think it's got nothing really to do with optimism. The be positive often means don't recognise your feelings and for goodness sake, don't talk about them. And don't talk about being vulnerable. You know, you've just got to be strong and you all hold hands and sing Kumbaya and you know, gallop off into the sunset instead of doing what I've suggested. So the positivity sometimes isn't interpreted properly, you know, and it serves people to disconnect whereas optimism is a belief.

When Freud said something to look forward to, he said, if he really meant, however bad things are now, can you see a light at the end of the tunnel that might not always be the lights of an oncoming train. You know, is there some kind of hope and belief that this too shall pass? And when I talk about this, I've got to mention two people, you know, the one was Viktor Frankl. Well, of course, I be, I can mention we spoke about me deeper. And another one who I had quite a lot to do with at the time was, well, afterwards, was I used to have meetings with Ahmed Kathrada and then I asked him how they survived, you know, all of those years, Robben Island.

He said, you know, "We were still fighting the struggle just from a different place." You know, we knew, we just believed in what the outcome would be. And of course, Viktor Frankl, you know the story that I'm going to talk about unto you, you know, he came here once, it was many, many, many years ago. And I was very new, very new, trying to do some public speaking on the speaker circuit and had the privilege of radio, listening to him. And he looked at the audience, he kind of surveyed the audience, which for me felt like quite a long time. And I started panicking and thinking, "He's forgotten these lines. He's not sure how he's going to open, he doesn't know what he's going to say."

And then he just started speaking and he said, you know, "The reason that I survived the concentration camps was you, I've never seen you before. I've certainly never met you before, but in my dreams, I said these words a thousand times." And he went on to talking about that belief that he was going to get out of there and tell the story was the one thing that holding on to

that belief was what made him resilient and they could never take that away from him. And that was the power of that kind of belief. He was also the person that made us not give way to, or helped us understand not to give way to that kind of primitive brain and be overwhelmed by reacting instead of responding. One of his famous, famous pearls of wisdom was that "Between every stimulus and response there's a gap. And in the gap, there's the choice."

So when people are feeling overwhelmed by the feelings and you can say, just go into the facts. What are the facts? Stop. See a big red stop sign in front of you, just stop, stop catastrophizing, stop the runaway train in your mind of what if, what if this is going to happen? I'm not good enough, I don't have all the answers, you know, I feel inadequate, I'm starting to panic and I can't make decisions. You stop, you move from that primitive brain into the neocortex of the brain, the adult or survivor part of the brain where you can respond instead of react. And you create that gap that he was talking about between stimulus and response where you can think.

So you can immediately calm yourself down and say, "Stop, you ruminating, you catastrophizing." Get into the present, survey the fact, and quite a good question if you can at the time you say, what would I tell a friend if they came to me and saying, you know, what if, "What if I never get to see or I don't get to see my grandchildren for the next year? What if I never do this?" What if I had someone say, I've got a 93-year-old mother who's in isolation, you know, and she already had predicted so many negative things about it.

And it's interesting, you know, this prediction of the negative, it's also kind of genetically predetermined trade that we have because it was built for survival. We can see danger, you know, back in the day in the caveman man days, and there wasn't the flight or the fight or the freeze, we might not have even survived. And so we still have a tendency to catastrophize but somebody put it very well to me the other day, they said, you know, "The negative thoughts are like Velcro, the positive thoughts are like Teflon. It's kind of harder to hold onto them."

So we have to have strategies of saying, "This isn't happening, it's not now. And how do I calm myself down?" So that belief of this two sharp cuts that optimism that propels us to go on and to see that flame and to know that we are going to be able to light that flame again is not false positivity. It's rather realistic or mindful optimism. That's how I like to behave with it. So if we go now from kind of talking a bit about the adversity into the insight, because it was from adversity to insight and beyond, often you have conversations, not only me, I have conversations, we all do. And sometimes we say, well, what have you gained from this?

You know, have you learned anything from this? And indeed there are amazing things. I wasn't one in the beginning for all of these emails of saying, you know, "Thank you Lord for this amazing learning opportunity" when people were in dire, dire distress, it felt too soon. So let me just refer to that last stage of meaning that comes after acceptance. And it was one interestingly enough that Elisabeth Kubler-Ross didn't write, it was one of the colleagues who you can Google for David Kessler. And he approached the Elisabeth Kubler-Ross Foundation and he also approached her family and said, look, you know, they knew that he'd been a lifelong

colleague of hers and had worked on some of these stages of grief together.

But it was only when he lost his own son who was killed tragically at the age of 21, where he said, "There's something else. There's got to be something else that comes after the acceptance." And I think that we're beginning to enter into that now. And he called it a sixth stage. And he called it meaning. He also cautioned us not to start saying, you know, it's been two months since my last or a three since all financial devastation or major move to another country, you have to leave the security, the friends, the borders that you knew and recreate yourself. You know, that it was, it had to kind of reveal itself.

The meaning had to evolve, you couldn't just grab it. It had to evolve and reveal itself to you. And so what are people saying now? And can we find meaning in it? And I believe that it's we, the meaning is revealing and the gates and the task really, it's harder we hold onto some of this meaning, we miss due process. So what happens? The first thing is there's definitely been a priority shift. People have said they've looked inwards instead of outwards. They've become more human beings instead of human doings, instead of chasing their tail and being on the treadmill of life for one thing to another that kind of stop, take stock, re-examine your goals, where have you been? Where am I going? How do I want to spend my energy from now on? What is really important to me? Have I left my values?

And these are kind of introspective questions that has come from kind of a quick hold that was forced upon us suddenly, you know, without asking for it. But we're beginning to sort of deal with things differently. So there has been that kind of priority shift that, that definitely has happened. A kind of new feeling of gratitude, by the way, I just want to say something about priority. Nearly everyone says their priorities have become the emphasis on relationships. They were before, but they didn't live them so much before. So with a priority shift has become, has emerged a kind of gratitude sometimes for people that were always there, but you didn't see, you didn't really see before, kind about just evaluating of relationships of all kinds, have taken on a different kind of path than they were before.

And sometimes when I think of it, going back to the 9/11 traumatic event, it was also some research after 9/11, which I thought was quite powerful. What the researchers did is they called up as many of the families who had lost a loved one during that time that they could. And they said to them, did you receive a final phone call on that faithful, faithful day with the age of modern technology then? Many had. And then they said to whoever had answered the phone from the family, "What did your loved one say?" And what just asked, I thought was just sort of so in your face and revealing is that every single person said exactly the same thing. Every single one said exactly the same thing.

There was nothing to, there was nothing about the willis in the door or, you know, it was just what you had time to say what was so important at that time. And that was the opposite, you know, that I'm saying that I love you and that became important. We don't live our lives in crumbles all the time, thank goodness. You know, we're not on that brink all the time. But I think

that this, what this has done is I think that it's made us feel the importance of those kind of connections and be overwhelmingly, much more grateful for them. And I hope that when you value that for yourself, you also know that other people in your orbit, value it from you to them. It's maybe one of the things is to not forget the importance of that when we will and we do go back to our very, very busy lives. The other thing that people have just gained insight on in looking inwards is they say, they're not so bad. I'm quite strong person. I have resilience.

You know, a lot of people have, still have and had huge, huge anxiety about their businesses, having lost their businesses, having to retrench people, lost a lot of money thinking that they'll never get through it. And I'm seeing people who are really on the brink you know, very, very much on the brink. Come think of a couple who are very successful businesses at one stage, managing with support, with the healing power of support and emotional support, obviously, when it's possible, financial support, and saying, "Okay, I can do this, I can do this differently." And so people are saying, you know, I have a strength, I have a resilience. This isn't my first rodeo. Yeah, I have had other challenges before and these were the strengths that I mobilised before that I was out of touch with them with now and I'm finding them again.

So kind of an awareness of being able to problem solve, get through stuff and be resilient. Interesting other things that have revealed themselves. You know, as business people often and as entrepreneurs and as people successful, we are taught things like, you know, 5% of what happens to people is luck, fate or circumstance. If you take care of the 95% brother, that 5% will take care of itself. Be in the driver seat of your life. Make it happen. Take control. If the circumstances suck, change the circumstance. That's Jordan Belfort, by the way, who also posed this quote, just change the circumstances. When I can tell you this has been very humbling because no one who had the magic wand who could just change the circumstances. What you could do is begin to cope within the confines and within the circumstances.

So what people are saying is, you know, I have a new humility now about what is and what isn't under my control. I thought I could do everything. I can't make this go away, or if one of my family has become ill, I can't even see him, nevermind, make them better. That was the other difference that the doctors were saying that they had to step up to become a family member when families were usually around during times of sickness. And most especially, of course, you know, closure. And these doctors were asked to kind of do that and often under circumstances where they were in isolation too.

So their tribe became each other, sometimes even more than their own families. 'Cause there was a recognition of you know what I'm going through, 'cause you're going through it too. So there was this kind of feeling of, look, I've got to get a proper balance between in life, between how much is under my control and when do I stop, when do I stop and do what people very spiritually orientated or surrender, surrender to the process. And people are developing their own way, very much their own way of saying, look, you know, I can do this, I can do this, which is incredibly important and I won't give up and I'll not stop trying.

But then there may be a point were saying, "Look, I need to believe that I'm partnered by something that's bigger than me." Can I call it universal energy? Can it be the Lord? Whatever I believe in, I remember Wayne Dyer once talking about this, saying it doesn't matter what you call, call it your needs if you want, you know, whatever. But you are not going to be in control of absolutely everything. And how do you handle that? 'Cause then you kind of set acceptance that you go as far as you can and there's a different sort of balance that a lot of people are really recognising.

Patience, we've had no choice. We have had no choice but to develop patience, we have to. We can't accelerate it beyond what we can accelerate. And I can tell you what I've found with that. You know, I've lived in the same house and many of you had the pleasure and honour of having you to my home. And so you know what I'm going to talk about. You know, that I've got, I'm very fortunate to have a beautiful outdoor area and a patio. Do you know that I've never seen it before this? When I say I haven't seen it, I've seen it to make sure that it's clean and tidy and organised. And every time I've gone out there, most of the time it's in because there are other people, been because I'm entertaining or hosting someone.

And yes, we will have drinks on the terrace or whatever. Ask me how many times I went outside into this beautiful place. So grateful, fortunate to be in with my twins and just sat in the winter sun. I don't think I even knew that there was winter sun. I thought winter was cold and it didn't really matter because you had a jersey got in your car going to the next place, whether it was social or work related or whatever. Being very enlightening and seeing things differently, appreciating things differently, feeling different kind of gratitude.

Notice it because of being in a place where the world has slowed down and having to reinvent it differently and hopefully realising a lot, a lot of things in the process. And the last thing that I want to talk about is, you know, we often say to each other, face reality, face reality. You've just got to deal with, you've just got to deal with whatever. "It is what it is," is a phrase that we hear very, very often. Yeah, I've come to question a little bit of that through just thinking about myself and talking to a lot of people and saying, you know, what is reality? You know, we used to think, reality with things that we absolutely believe were not possible. You'll never do that.

You won't be able to achieve that. You know, that's too ambitious. Don't be so presumptuous. Just deal with what you have to deal with and get on with it. And I'll tell you what reminded me of saying that reality isn't always reality. You can create another reality for yourself is that, I think it was Dennis or one of your wonderful talks, it was Dennis who last when he spoke, just reminded us of that famous story of Itzhak Perlman when the violins, the violin string just snapped in the middle of a concert.

And I don't know who was on that call who were here in the audience, but the story without kind of being too repetitive was, was just focused on the world famous violinist, Itzhak Perlman, who was struck with polio when he was a child. And so he walked with callipers, you know, on his legs and people who followed him, and of course, he has a huge, huge following, recognised

that there was going to be a ritual every concert and those concerts were booked out, you know, months and months in advance. And this particular concert did take place in New York, was at the Avery Centre Lincoln Auditorium in, yeah, Lincoln Auditorium in New York City. And a lot has been written about that day for real good reason because the whole ritual started as usual. You know, he would be in the wings, the orchestra would take their position, the audience would hush down as he would start, you know, laboriously getting himself to his position in front of the orchestra, one step at a time.

And then he would sit down, he would unbuckle his callipers on the one leg and physically pick up his leg, put it across the other one, and then bend down, position his violin, nodded the conductor, and then the conductor would start to play. The audience would be extremely reverent about this. They knew the ritual. By the time this had taken place, you could hear a pin drop, absolutely silent every time with this kind of air of anticipation. And he would start with this nod to the conductor. The conductor, this particular time started conducting the most beautiful piece. Think it as a, it was certainly a violin, something, I can't really remember which one. And he started to play and as people recalled, it was quite a short time into the concert, a very short time when they heard this, you know, almost like a gunshot.

And the audience didn't know what happened. They thought, you know, "Whoa, you know what has happened?" They looked around, you know, just full of trepidation and anxiety. And then they realised what had happened. It was one of the strings of his violin that had snapped, you know, as we saw from that video. And then what happened was in reality, so that's just what I want to talk about. You see, they knew, for sure, the sophisticated audience, the conductor knew, you know, you know, I know, certainly Itzhak Perlman knew that it was impossible to play the violin with three string. You just couldn't. So they didn't know the reality was he either had to change it, was he going to walk off, would someone bring him a new instrument? And it wasn't in their realm of imagination to imagine or to witness what happened after that.

And what happened is that he just looked at the conductor and nodded again. And the conductor just shrugged his shoulders and looked at him 'cause it wasn't reality, it couldn't happen. And he looked at the conductor deliberately and nodded at him as if I'm being serious, you know. And the conductor started conducting his orchestra. And when you hear the accounts of the music that emanated after that, he had to recompose the piece, he had to modulate it. They witnessed notes that they had never, never heard before. And new memories, melodies, I mean, and it was just kind of absolutely mesmerising and connecting, as I said in the beginning, when you share an emotional event, you don't have to speak.

You just knew that something amazing was happening in that moment. And afterwards when he ended, they stood up as if there were one person and applauded and applauded and applauded, couldn't control it. And then he just lifted up his bow, you know, and he did something that he's never done. He spoke to the audience and he said those words that were, oh, you know, on that video. And it's sometimes up to the artist to play with everything you have. And then sometimes it's up to the artist to play with what you have left. But what happened from

that is that there was so much that emanated from it. And that famous statement that is so apt for now is, is your music still inside you?

You do not leave this Earth or this world with your music still inside you. And I think that what's happening in terms of let's try and encourage post-traumatic growth, instead of facing, which we might post-traumatic stress, if you don't deal with these things properly, it is often the question of, can you create a better and new reality? What skills have you learned during this time? And don't leave the Earth with your music still inside you. And Wend, thank you very much because you are just such a shining example of that. You know, you hold yourself up to all of us so you're a model. Appreciate it. Thank you very much.

Q&A and Comments:

Q: Thank you, Dori. That is absolutely outstanding. Absolutely brilliant. Now we have, we have many, many questions. So we're going to go a little bit over time if you have the time you don't mind. Can you comment on some strategies on how you can help deal with the rumination and blaming?

A: Sure, I think that what happens is, once again, we all have the tendency to do it. You know, our heads can be like a real runaway train. And these thoughts that just kind of stick in our mind, take off. And what happens is they start controlling us instead of us controlling them. And so as some of the strategies are, as I say, I like a bit, get to talk to my kids, they would say, "Oh mom, don't talk about the big red stop sign again," because I have been saying it to, just when you feel that you out of control and that panic starts to rise, you are reacting, not responding, you are coming out of that kind of primitive brain.

You're not seeing the gap that Viktor Frankl spoke about between the stimulus and response in which you can choose. So you feel out of control 'cause you can't choose. Now the minute you stop and you say, "What are the real facts here? Am I projecting myself into something which hasn't even started happening yet? How do I manage, often that talking to someone works, how do I calm myself down? Who will give you a kind of another perspective? And how do I get from the future, future catastrophizing and ruminating into the present where I'm governed by what's happening now?" And one of the ways that I think is quite useful is if you weren't you, if you were a good friend of yours, what would you be telling them?

So there's a fine difference between allowing people to have their feelings and listening to their feelings, as I said, but also being able to say, "Now, hang on, hang on," you've got binocular vision. Binocular vision means you're looking through the wrong side of the binoculars. You're maximising the negative and you're not even seeing the positive. If you're going to do that, let's give credence to both sides of it. What is really happening? You know, let's examine it. Let's get back into the moment. Let's look at the facts. And I think that if you recognise that you're ruminating or catastrophizing, awareness is the first step to change. As I say, when you name it, it's the starting of taming it.

Q: Thank you. Another one. How can we help others when social distancing is making it more difficult to see the mental and emotional burdens that our friends and family may be carrying?

A: I think that the reality, we talked about it is, it is harder. You know, its social distancing is harder. I mean, people are wanting to make the distinction and making it sound better to say, let's not talk about social distancing, you know, let's talk about physical distancing because we still can have social and distancing and social togetherness through connecting by these wonderful means that we have. I don't buy, you know, property, I know what this question is. It's not the same.

You know, sometimes you feel it. I feel it quite a lot with kids where after you've said, "How's school, how's it going? Tell me about it," conversation isn't easy and it doesn't flow and it's harder to get into people's heads on Zoom, or on sort of not only their heads, their hearts on WhatsApp. So it is harder and I think that you do feel distant, but I think that it doesn't mean that you give up. First of all, I would level with it to say, you know, "I want to feel more connected with you. I feel a bit distant, I'm not sure what is really going on."

You know, "just tell me how that was," instead of only saying what you did, rather talk about what the experience was like. You know, what did that mean to you? How was it? And know the kind of questions to ask without feeling bombarding or intrusive, but showing a lot of interest and being vulnerability is very important. Authentic vulnerability really, really does lead to close connection. You know, it's, and vulnerability, what does it mean? It means, I can say that I'm with you. I can say that I'm finding this tough, I can say, you know, I just wish you were here that I can give you the biggest hug.

And I do feel like that, Wendy, I wish you were here so I can give you the biggest hug and just thank you and it's hard and I miss you, but just let's, you know, just tell me about it and what does it like and what you do. And so I wish that I had a better answer than that, but it is one of the things that we have to, we can be sorry that we have to deal with what we deal with and we can say what's in our hearts and that we're missing people, but it is what we're dealing with at the moment.

Q: Have you been disappointed and how does one deal with disappointment during this very difficult time without creating resentment?

A: Sure. That's a big question. You know, I think I'm not sure, maybe the person who asked the question could expand on it. I think there're lots of disappointments that we have to deal with. You know, even being, you know, whatever your situation is, even if you were certainly being isolated, I think it's more than disappointing. It carries more weight, you know, it is isolating, it's lonely. And I think once again, you know, to be able to connect in the best possible way and to be able to, and also one of the things that we were talking about before can you project into the future, not in ruminating or catastrophizing way, but just, you know, geez, you know what I would

love to do when we can travel again or when I get out of here, or when I can see you again my, you know, my beautiful grandchild or whatever it is, create a bit of a kind of a future fantasy of anticipation.

How do you deal with disappointment? I think just acknowledging it and in most cases, trying to understand what caused that disappointment and what is very important, which I didn't really talk about, is I spoke about it a little bit about having clean space. Clean space with yourself. So what I've seen, by the way, maybe some of you, is in the most surprising way, I'm kind of thinking of very specific examples. People have had fallouts over nothing, the ripples, that they've kept, they wanting to clean the space, they will reach out. They're recognising that too much pride causes too much pain.

This pride issue is really nonsense, honestly. It's much, much, much more important to be happy than to win. We've been disappointed about relationships of being let down or you've got an assumption which might on, a story that you're telling yourself. It might not even be based on true reality. You might want to take the steps of having what you call courageous conversations. I was disappointed with that. You know, I still think about it. I've never really got over that. I need to unpack that with you. I need to clear the air with you. I need to tell you the facts as I see them and the story that I make up about the facts to me and the emotions that I feel. I want to understand it better from your point of view.

But what I do know for sure is I miss you and it's a chance, you don't know the outcome. It might be worse, but one thing for sure is that people can't hear what you don't say. So vulnerability is a huge risk, it's not taking a chance, without knowing the outcome. There are no guarantees. But you know, if you don't try, the answer is always no. So I'm imagining the disappointment is disappointment in relationship, but there could be other disappointments as well.

Q: Thank you, Dori. Could you give us tips for monitoring our own mental and emotional health and resilience?

A: Sure, look, I think that, you know, even in conversations that I've had with you, you know, you are kind of keeping, I mean, that is who you are and other people will find ways of doing it according to their personality. But one thing that you highlighted for me, in one of the conversations that we had, was about the importance of your own routine. So I think that that is monitoring yourself, you know, saying what is important to me, not only what I should do, it's not only good, bad rap, wrong, should, shouldn't bust myself, can cannot. I have to, it's also what I want to do building that in. And you know, when I think of a routine which might be kind of similar to what I remember, it involves some sort of exercise usually, it involves some sort of time out, it involves some time for connection, it involves some time for kind of tasks or work. You know, whether it's organising your university, which is a big, big thing, connecting with speakers or people who you haven't spoken to or whatever. But really what I'm saying is, is routine really helps. The physical things, which I alluded to, just alluded to, Dennis spoke about in much more detail and they really, really do help, you know, this taking care of yourself is to do

emotionally with what are the thoughts that come into my mind and dominate my airtime before I go to sleep every night. What's taking up airtime? Usually, those kind of worries if they come into your space again, means that you've got to do something to clean up your space between you and you and not keep it murky or between you and other people in your life, which requires courage. Huge amount of courage as I said, to do that. But the other things, taking, we know for absolute sure that there's a huge amount of research that shows our physical and mental health are related, they're absolutely related and that's why it's important to look at ourselves holistically. I don't always do it in the way that I know that one would like to do it. I try to do it, but I mean, it does involve looking and being mindful about what you're eating. A lot of people saying that they're just, you know, putting on a lot of weight around that, other people are taking better care. It involves good sleep, which I'm not paragon of reaching for, but you know, there's a lot to be- The research actually says that we need seven hours of sleep at night. There's a lots of research, about don't look at screens before you go sleep. Arianna Huffington wrote a book on it in a very, very big, on no screen time, an hour before. There are physiological issues that happen as a result of too much screens. People are talking about their eyesight. I see a difference in the eyesight. I mean, not all, but it's also the brain stimulation. Can you calm yourself down? So, you know, exercise, sleep, nutrition are important for taking care not only of your physical health, but your mental health as well. The other part, I've already said, find your tribe. Find your tribe. And it can be a tribe of one who is not going to play one-upmanship or be a big noise that will make it worse or listen to what you're feeling and respond to you and be there for you in an inviting kind of way. And you do it for them or for other people. From a mental health point of view, as I say, once again, it's not rubbish. It's almost like science is caught up with what we've known for a long time, but now it's scientific thing, it's not rubbish. And also don't call yourself selfish. It's such a- you know, selfish means at the expense of other people. It doesn't mean taking care of myself. Honour yourself and listen to your own inner drum beat and just cut yourself some slack a little bit and I think those are the things that you've got to focus on in monitoring and taking care. The monitoring, when you see that you're getting out of control or too anxious or sad or withdrawn or irritable to the point of it not being appropriate or whatever, those are signs that you have to do something differently. Otherwise, you'll either act out in terms of aggression, act in, in terms of a depression or burnout.

Q: Thank you, Dori, I'm getting, there's one more question. I think I'm going to take one more question. Will we see huge increase in PTSD and how do we recognise in our friends, colleagues, employees, et cetera, and how do we deal with it?

A: I think it's a very important question and I think sort of it was, I didn't really address that and it might have been implied in the title because what I'm hoping is that we prevent PTSD by recognising our feelings, you know, honouring them, taking care of them in the way that we've said, know the journey that we're going through. Know that awareness is the first check to change, getting the support that we need from us to us. There's a lovely saying, "Take care of yourself like you would a younger person that you love." You know, you think of if it was my child or my daughter or my grandchild, without forcing them to do this or this or that now, I would take care of them differently.

So look after you, I've said all of that. PTSD comes when people have been through real traumatic events. It maybe they've just had to deal with because they have to financially or because they're a doctor and here's the next patient and the next patient without having enough time to kind debrief sometimes with other people or even having enough time, but still, when the whole thing is over, re-experiencing that trauma again or having it not go away, they often triggers for PTSD, the sight of something, the sound of something, the smell of something, the quick memory that comes into your mind, which elicits the whole experience, reliving the experience, especially the emotional side of it.

So I think that it's likely that we might, I think there's still some PTSD in our country as a result of the struggle that we all went to. I've been approached sometime, it's how do we deal with, it means it's a huge question like as if I'm going to have the immediate answer. How do you deal with the psyche of the nation? Well, the thing is, you know, the TRC, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission created a platform where perpetrators could come and talk about and other people could hear. So there was an acknowledgement and the word acknowledgement is really, really important. Acknowledging what people have gone through and what they feel.

And that's why for those of you who listened to Lord Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks on this very platform, he spoke about less PTSD in Israel. Do you remember? Than what's happening in the States. And I was really interested in that because the country feels like a family more and the soldiers are kind of recognised and acknowledged for both what they've done and for who they are, for their emotion. And so, you know, they dealt with, not only through the experience, but when they come back. There's an expectation of those kind of memories that are still there.

The cellular memories that kind of come up and people don't make you feel, "Oh, well it's over, let's move on and get on with it." We might see it in front, in certain groups, particularly frontline workers, but not only, people who just had to get on with the massive retrenchments and you know, one said to me, "Look, it's not me. I don't even recognise it. I'm not lying, I don't do that, but I've had to do that." So they've had to behave very uncharacteristically and the trauma of that could be lasting. How do we deal with it? It's this word acknowledgement.

You know, people are talking a lot of huge amount. It's dominating, the first, you know, you wouldn't even know now if you turn on some of the channels, if there is a health and a mental health pandemic going on on some of the news channels that that's been dropped suddenly. And it's and I'm not saying it's not realistic or necessary, but there's a focus on everything else that has taken precedence right now. And you know, in listening to what people are saying and what can you do, the first stage has to be just acknowledge it. Hear one and be like to powder keg that, you needed a spark or something to happen. The reaction isn't only for that one horrific murder. The reaction is for people who feel essentially not acknowledged or heard.

So the spark was just the spark for the whole thing that absolutely exploded. And when I heard

a conversation about our situation in South Africa, I think his name was Paul van Zyl from the TRC said the one thing was that he tried to create platforms of acknowledgement of the experience and the distress of people where they could heal, heard, and remorse. Remorse, we need remorse. We need people to say, "Look, we get it, we really get it." And not only say it, but act it. So those are some ideas and I hope that we don't see overwhelming PTSD because I hope that we are recognising the importance of dealing, navigating this landscape and dealing with such the best possible way, but I think we'll see some.

- Dori, thank you very much. I'm going to actually just end with a comment from Dennis. He said, "You touched on healthcare workers who are on the front lines literally risking their lives. Not all of them are psychologically equipped. I think we need to stop dealing with this at medical schools, hospitals, and just within the general system." So thank you, Dennis, for your comment. Dori, thank you for the most outstanding and insightful presentation. This is a difficult time, a very, very difficult time. But I want to say to all our listeners that we are now a community. We are a tribe. We are here for each other. And, Dor, the moment we press the stop button tonight, I am going to be on the other end of this call calling you to say thank you, my dear friend, my darling friend and my mentor. And my, Dori was actually my supervisor 34 years ago.

- Oh, my goodness.

- She was a- She was a senior psychologist only a couple of years older than me at the hospital and she was my mentor and she trained me. Dori, thank you from all of us. Thank you for an outstanding presentation.

- Thank you, everybody.

- Good night, everybody, and thank you for listening.

- Good night, everybody.

- [Wendy] Night, night.