

## TLD with Jessica Layden

Welcome Jessica to another episode of the leadership diet.

**Jessica:** Thank you for having me.

**Pod:** Great to see you again. I want to talk to you about leadership teams, particularly what you and I are noticing with teams during 2020. But before we go to that, let's jump to a topic that's I think developing into a really important topic.

And that is the topic of burnout. Particularly executive burnout study was released last week by the global leadership wellbeing survey. 3,300 executives looking at questions on their overall wellbeing and therefore lack of wellbeing. And in that survey, 80%, as in four out of five executives said they felt they were at risk of burnout.

And two thirds of them said they were anxious at work and were carrying high levels of self doubt. Now there are big numbers. Let's start with the obvious question.

What is burnout?

**Jessica:** Good question multifaceted. Like most of these things, I think burnout is. Really different and experience differently from what people are used to in terms of what they think about stress and burnout, quite distinct.

So stress is what motivates us. We see it stress as being activating. It gets someone up, it gets them focused. It increases their level of energy. I've got to get it done. It can make them, narrow in their focus, shorter in their temper if they get interrupted. So it's a very different energy. Burnout is more like resignation.

Burn out is when we hit that point, where, if I experience an exec in burnout, their emotional tone is flatter. It's like they've resigned within themselves. It's become that sense of overwhelm, there's nothing left. It's a sense of hopelessness that there is nothing left to give.

**Pod:** So physically there's no petrol in the tank, but ,on top of that, an emotional death, aswell.

**Jessica:** Yeah. that's how it feels for me when I'm around someone like that. For sure. And it's not like that sort of hopelessness that we might experience in a depression situation, but it's certainly that feeling that there's just literally, like they have run out of resources.

That's how I find it.



**Pod:** Yeah. And is 2020 different to other years in the sense of it has COVID-19 and everything that goes with that accelerated the notion of burnout.

**Jessica:** I think COVID is the year that keeps on giving

**Pod:** so many levels, so

**Jessica:** many levels. what a perfect opportunity to explore the nuance of mental health.

COVID give continues to give us. opportunity after opportunity this year has been phasic. I think for a lot of people, I would say that, albeit there are pockets where I have certain client organizations that I work in. There've been pockets where they've had increases in engagement, largely to do with the organization remaining successful.

not needing to make people redundant and people having the resources to work from home largely and preferring that they would be in the minority across the organizations that I work in for the vast majority of organizations. I think this year has posed a series of challenges. The first of them was, when did the pre isolation time where it was, shock reaction, how do we bring together teams, but then how do we energize around that?

So the energy around it I'll be, it was. from a fear-based reaction, there was a positive energy around it. That was, clearly intentional. We thought we did. We knew what we were here to do. we were here to beat this thing and to be energized so that we could keep our businesses open so that we could keep people in jobs.

So really purposeful. And as we know that's so cohesive. The next stage I think was when we got a bit used to it. We're all in isolation at this stage, but we know after the end of that sort of new three ish month period, we all think we know that it's going to be better so we can maintain, we can be stoic.

We all did our best at, pulling together we're in this together.

**Pod:** And a lot of innovation happened during that period as a little, which is really exciting.

**Jessica:** Absolutely. And that I think was really energizing. We saw some wonderful. things happened. We saw things that people had wanted to do for years happen in a flash.

And we saw different people coming to the fore because senior execs were deployed in different ways. We saw different people on teams coming up. And so voices across the organization had an opportunity to be heard in different ways. So for a lot of people, and I'm talking about people who are. Employed at this stage, not at all, not talking about the broader negative impacts of COVID, but in those workforces there was that still sense of energy possibility we're in it together.

we can get through this then. Unfortunately, I think you and I have talked about this a bit. We got to June 30, at least in Australia where we'd been given the sense of, a few months ago.

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**Pod:** That's right. Financially. You're kicking in the world very often.

**Jessica:** Oh gosh. new financial year, 1st of July, it's all going to be great.

You're going to have beaten. COVID we're going to feel so virtuous over it. It didn't work like that. And all of a sudden we got into the sense of Oh my goodness, this could actually be the new reality. And we have no answer. We have no vaccine. We have no answer. We don't know what we're going to do.

And what do you mean? There might be a second wave and then lo and behold

**Pod:** here.

**Jessica:** And that was for me when I first experienced with my clients, a pervasive sense of stress tipping over into burnout. And so the stress previously was there. But it had been more energized and purposeful and to burn out were quite specifically, there were clients who actually truly did burn out who too were hospitalized.

One was in the emergency ward and this is across a fairly broad base of clients and people who. normal working life, we would see as people's being highly resilient, lots of great resources and strategies at their disposal, but the cumulative effect of trying to hold it together, I've tried to model consistent.

Purposeful leadership to give people certainty, to give people a sense that they were going to be okay when there was no one there doing it for them. So that was when I started to see for senior executives, the wheels getting wobbly and then start to fall

**Pod:** off. What are some of the symptoms that might show up just in advance of burnout?

**Jessica:** What I tend to notice is in a leader, if I deconstruct a couple of cases, this sense of. Everything is really important. Everything is equally important. Everything has to be done. And this overwhelming sense of it seems to be up to the individual to do it. So this it's almost like you think about this over very much about the self at that stage, where they're really looking to themselves to fix things.

And that over-responsibility seems to be a factor, at least as I'm thinking about certain cases here, not necessarily globally. So over-responsibility, and then it seems to become quite consuming, all the things that need to be done. And then there seems to be a tipping point and that tipping point is quite sharp.

And it could go from someone just saying one small thing, like even saying, it's okay to need to have a break. And we give them permission to in inverted commerce fall apart. So that would be what I'd be looking for. people who are really overburdened people who aren't sharing the light leadership teams that aren't working as leadership teams, but we have a couple of people on the team who are the ones who are carrying the majority of the load.



People wanting to create certainty for people in a space where there's not certainty rather than. Couching it in the sense of look, none of us really know that this is the decision that we're going with far more constructive for everyone, rather than trying to deliver certainty. Also in parallel with people having to deliver a whole bunch of really difficult messaging to the business, to the market, to their investors.

So all of that. The cumulation of those things is what leads to that point.

**Pod:** and for many leaders, of course, they're doing all that from their home. As they're trying to manage complete known experience for almost everybody at the moment, I can concur exactly what you've said. I've certainly, I've had two leaders who have been both hospitalized, for burnout related, health concerns.

And if I look at their previous week from the limited opportunity I had to look. at what they were doing or experiencing decision fatigue. Absolutely. And then an inability to make decisions on it, probably because of what you said, everything looks so important, unable to differentiate between what I need to do or what's important is what was one example?

Another example was unable to differentiate between. We are doing well over here yet. All I'm focusing on is under stuff we can, we haven't got to. And I feel like everything is bad. No matter what we're doing, everything is bad. So I an extra extrapolation of the negative to everything that was happening.

And then the third thing I noticed was their lack of patience. Which historically these two leaders I'm thinking of would have been very patient leaders, but they were at their end, they were unable to be patient with normal life events. And so for both of them, they ended up in hospital and one of them has said she had to step down from their role as a result of that.

and for the health perspective, that's the right thing for them.

I'm wondering is it that the notion of boundaries I got, I read something today and I really struck the quotation was around. we have always said, work-life balance. If there's a difference between work, life and balance. And that the author is saying, I think we're always delusional because our lives have always bled into each other work has bled into our home life and home life has bled into our work life.

And certainly given the work that you do. That's exactly what you notice is trying to help people understand that. But of course now there's physical, bleeding into everything. So there's emotional, social and physical. And I'm wondering how leaders who are looking at their boundaries are completely blurred.

How has this impacted the notion of what could lead to burnout?



**Jessica:** It's a big one. We have a life, how we segment that life, how we choose, what we focus on in that life is something that all of us could probably get benefit from reviewing a little more frequently than what we do. I think that would be the first thing I would say.

The notion of being able to segment life is. Really successful. A couple of some people can do that and some people need to work like that. But for the vast majority of people, particularly coming off the back of the context within which we're working and living now, the fusion of those things is something that we need to acknowledge.

First of all, and to really recognize. It for what it is and what the impacts of that are. So think acknowledgement is the first step. The second step is to work out, actually, what do you want those components of life to be? Let's go back to the really basic Kovi stuff back in the seventies or eighties, what are the components, what are the big rocks that you need and how do we help clients to take several specs steps back to get perspective on that and to actually make some really conscious.

Plans around what they want their life to look like. It's going to be an ideal, of course, life doesn't necessarily look like that on a day-to-day basis, but I think that's really important. I think the idea about working out what are their boundaries that work for them and their family at this point in time, recognizing it will probably be different next week and to have the flexibility and the skills.

To have the conversations to negotiate the boundaries that work for you, for your family, for your colleagues, for everyone else that needs some of your space and your time. And I think the other thing that we need to do at this time is to give people the permission to remind them. That it does. We'll begin and end with them leaders who are not looking after themselves.

And you and I could, we can talk for hours on this, but who are not able to work out their needs, what we need right now, how it is that I support myself and my system. They're the ones who are going to be the ones at highest risk. And they also then unfortunately, model that down through all the networks that they're involved with their family, with their children, be it with their colleagues, be it with their team to fit with their organizations.

And that's when we really start to get into some very unhelpful cycles where we're seeing those behaviors propagated down through organizations.

**Pod:** I think that last point is it's fundamentally important is if you aren't able to, or willing to take the effort to manage your yourself, manage meaning, take care of yourself.

And in this particular conversation, no one else can do it for you for a start. But if you're in a leadership role, you're setting that model for everybody else. And eventually you'll start leading suboptimally because you haven't got to yet.



**Jessica:** Yep. It's just so true. To challenge people's assumptions around what leadership means and the sort of stoic element of leadership that some people over amplify where it doesn't allow them to access that vulnerability, to identify what they actually really need.

And to be able to ask for help. On occasion, except help from other people. They sound like fundamental human behaviors that we do, but actually a lot of people are out of touch with that. And so I think when we drill down, what sits beneath that in that space of vulnerability is the sense of self-compassion to be able to reflect upon our needs and to be able to care for ourselves.

**Pod:** Where that compassion is permission. I'm giving myself permission to these things. I've certainly had a big collision with a leader only two weeks ago around, this particular person was questioning his compassion useful, and we had a great conversation around it. And where we landed was if it gives you nothing else, other than permission.

To do stuff for yourself will enable you to be a more effective leader. Is that a good thing? And we both agreed. Yes. At that point. And this particular leader had not thought about at that point that they needed. Rest during the day because they had been, they had found themselves cause boundaries are blurred going from 10 hours a day to now working 14 hours a day.

**Jessica:** Absolutely. We use the commute time. All of a sudden

**Pod:** the commute time has gone already yesterday. Microsoft teams have introduced a thing called the virtual commute because they recognize people used to use commute time for reflection or learning or downturning. It's not happening. So now. Within their platforms, that thing called virtual commute.

and for this particular leader, it was about give themselves permission.

**Jessica:** Commission's a big part of it.

**Pod:** Yeah, I was reminded of that actually is, I, I was involved in a study a couple of years ago called the daily habits of exceptional leaders. So these are leaders who are deemed in the eyes of other people to be exceptional.

So it wasn't, this study was looking at that instead. It was looking at. What are the habits they have at home before and after work and allow them to show up to work in a fashion that other people deem to be exceptional, but that was the purpose of this study. But one of the things was the reflection time on route to work and on route home, particularly at the end of the day.

And they might have those leaders who actually took time to walk home in order to defrag almost. And I noticed in leaders at the moment are not. Able to overtly do that because there is not coming home.

**Jessica:** Yeah, it's true. And so how is it that we work with people to identify those things that they can be doing one client that I have still get stressed for work because that person is really important.

The whole thing of putting on a. So an attire. Now, most people are relatively ineffective not doing that, but for that person, the putting on of workloads they're taking off of workloads is part of that transition for other people. It's going for the walk. At the end of the day, to the yelling out to the family, works over.

I'll be back in half an hour, getting some space outside. For some people, it might be exercise for some people. It might be tidying their desk, putting everything away, people who work on the kitchen table for heaven's sake, who need to do that. But to have something that puts closure that signals to you and to those within.

The place where you're working, be it family or flatmates or whoever that you were available in a different way. That's a really important transition

**Pod:** transitioning from the end of my Workday to the beginning of my evening time or whatever that transition is.

**Jessica:** I think the challenge is though for many people now they're having to cha to transition within the Workday.

So I have a client who, homeschooling children, Victoria. Both parents are working at home, so you need to transition in and out and in and out and in and out. And that causes phenomenal amounts of stress. And to be able to have that tension that you're never meeting anybody's needs properly to be carrying that every day.

And I think that's an insidious, negative for individuals to be carrying. So how is it that we can. Help people to talk about that openly. And how is it that we recognize with people that this is a pressure happening in more households than you're aware? And if we only say, if we're giving people directives, get off zoom seriously, just get off.

Stop having so many meetings. It's nice to have the incidental meetings, but let's have we talked about it in one hour for lunch or something for people. That's great if people can do that. But how about actually really being conscious, saying, do we need to be online for this meeting? Is this actually a 15 minute call rather than a one hour meeting to be really, quite ruthless in how we prioritize our demands on other people's time?

Not just our own time.

**Pod:** In one sense. It's easy to talk about the pervasiveness of burnout in it is because it is becoming more pervasive. It is less easy to talk about what are some of them, the tactics we can do to manage that. I read an interview with the founder of Headspace recently, Headspace being one of the mindful naps that's taken around the world potential project.



I have another one called a mindful leader, which was talking about a few weeks ago. They've got 70 clinical trials running right now, and 20 peer reviewed studies on the use of their product. And two stats hit me for frontline workers using four meditation sessions of 10 minutes. Each reduces stress by 14%.

Now let's stress 30 days of a regular meditation or mindfulness type practice in one of their studies reduces burnout by 32%.

**Jessica:** It's amazing. It's a

**Pod:** phenomenal piece. And that talks to what is the practice or tactic that I, as a person, therefore, as leader can implement for myself. And in this case, this is a 10 minute process, 30 days in a row.

I know you talk about too. Fabulously worded hypnotizing, chickens and walking puppies as two umbrella topics for simple tactics, they've always grabbed my attention because the names are just brilliant. What is hypnotizing? Chickens are? What is walking puppies as a tactic?

**Jessica:** Many of the senior execs. We work with Carrie, even in times that aren't, COVID times they carry with them an elevated level of stress of overcommitment.

And so what I use is a huge amount of humor and simplification with my clients. I have a very strongly Reverend street. And so I think it's

**Pod:** important.

**Jessica:** I think it's really important that we just normalize that the world is complex. We are all making it up when things get difficult. Let's make it really simple.

And I think giving my clients permission to make things really simple is something that they are extremely grateful for because someone says to them just stop. And we're just going to be like a puppy for a few weeks. So your job for the next two weeks, we have our session is to get lots and lots of sleep.

And then we will work on strategies for how they do that. It's you're the little puppy. When you first bring it home, get lots of water. Ate really good food and get some basic exercise. Now you do not need to be done at the gym, lifting weights with a trainer, but something that moves your body regularly throughout the day.

We're just going to do that for two weeks.

**Pod:** So you don't mean them to run around the house doing cushions?

**Jessica:** No, I don't know. We'll ping on the carpet, it's a sense of just make it simple. Make it as simple as possible, like





**Pod:** drink water, basic exercise

**Jessica:** and some good food, And now the other part that we don't work on with our puppies, they do puppies do provide it.

They provide that, warmth and social contact, but that's the other part that we would add in, but it really is trying to make it as basic as possible for people just to go. Just stop and do this because sometimes the most senior executives, the people that we always assume have it all together.

actually not sometimes never does anyone ever have it all together. And so someone who can stop and reflect back and go, Hey, this is what I'm noticing. Let's just simplify. And let's see what happens as a result of that. So that's one thing. So it's either hypnotizing, chickens, that whole thing, just.

Shut the system down and make it as simple as possible for someone to step back to their most effective. Cause it's a stepwise process and it requires ongoing vigilance. We never hit it and stay there. It's always constant vigilance, constant tracking. And so when we've got clients or leaders that we're working with, who.

Aren't curious about themselves, who aren't that interested in building their self-awareness and self-monitoring, again, it becomes another watch out for us. How is it that we make it safe for them to do that reflection and to do that work. And so I'll draw on models that make it feel as simple, as accessible and normal as possible.

And it always starts with the physical saying that it's just quickly, I will say that. I have been delighted to see over the years, the number of clients who take up a meditation practice this year has certainly been an accelerator of it. And I think it's good. It's not the panacea to cure all ills, but any strategy that gives some of the chance just to sit for 10 minutes a day.

And learn to build some of these habits around watching thoughts, creating a bit of a space for themselves to create further optionality, I think is brilliant. And equally, I guess today we're talking about the individual, but I think equally we need to recognize there is a limit on strategies. We need to look at the entire system here and possibly this is another day, but.

We need to look at what we're creating in organizations and how it is that we make them places that are human, not overly focused on having everyone in roles that are so stressful.

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I greatly appreciate it. I know you've been talking recently about the notion of amplifying the human focus in 2021 and beyond. I want to come to that in a few minutes. The notion of walking puppies or hypnotizing chickens is a way of going, let's break this down into the real basic tactics that always work such as.

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9

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Drinking, lots of water, sleeping getting good. Night's sleep being eight plus hours a night, eating good food, going for an exercise, be it a walk or whatever, and then build up from there. What I love about that is if you are anywhere overwhelmed, it takes away the decision criteria from you. I can go out for a walk.

It doesn't require membership to a gym. Just requires walking. Yeah,

**Jessica:** it doesn't end. when we get into higher levels of that, when we move beyond the first stage of that, one of the things I get people to do at the next level is let's make list of the things that you love. Let's make a list of the things that give you joy, that lift your mood and lift your spirit and stick it on the fridge so that when you feel overwhelmed, you never have to make a decision because it's there and you just pick a number and go number four, whatever number four is on this, I'll do that.

And I think this thing that you're talking about here around this decision making, how is it that we make it simple for each other? Because it's really, we make a lot really complex and I hate to go back to it, but no, there is not one right way. Something that worked for you today may not work next week.

So how is it that we overall build out our wisdom, our cadre of tools and resources and our readiness and comfort to be able to select amongst those things. And I think that's what we add value to our clients because we, this is where we live. We live in that space of creating options and creating strategies.

**Pod:** I had to revisit my studies in positive psychology to remind myself of some basic options. I farmers over the last three months, I've been almost daily obsessed with watching a non Australia country and its political system. And just observing that and, going to bed at nighttime, looking forward to reading the news, as soon as I wake up in the morning.

And of course it's all bad news. It's one drama followed by another drama. And I find myself having to switch off some of those notifications just cause it was. Constant bombarding of bad news. And I noticed some of my friends and clients who were in Melbourne for the last few weeks in lockdown, they talk about having to turn off the daily reminder of COVID cases.

And what was the daily total today, et cetera. And we know from positive psychology, that if you're going to keep exposing yourself to bad news, that is the attention level is looking for the bad news in the environment

**Jessica:** it is. And people often ask so unconscious about the inputs. So when you get peer to really pause and think about, who are the people that most influenced your thinking, what are the sources it's often quite revealing to people to recognize, Oh, I'm seeing how this could be related to my mood and to the vagaries in a mood.

Yeah, exactly. That I think, the political situation is a classic news reports. Anything that gets beyond our control, it really does not, is it helpful? Or is it harmful simple questions like that to bring ourselves back to

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10

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**Pod:** one last, tactic here that, is not new to this conversation has been around for a long time, but the idea of gratitude as being a precursor to positive sense, and how do you accelerate your gratitude often comes from doing good for other people noticing or observing or helping other people.

And the amount of folks that have shared that similar day with in the last few months, who've come back to me that are going. I've instilled it every single day. I'm doing just one thing for somebody else. And it might be simple as, I bought a stranger, a cup of coffee for whatever it is, but their report back is I just feel better.

Yeah. And that's a good thing.

**Jessica:** it's a great thing. And to do something for someone else. It momentarily takes our focus on ourselves, as fascinating as we might be. We're not that interesting, really. And to put our focus somewhere else where it can actually be a cause for a positive impact. Why wouldn't you,

**Pod:** So we've been talking about individuals and across individuals scared to get to become a team. But what have you noticed about leadership teams specifically over the last few months in terms of the journey they've been through and where are they now in that reactive sense to the world around us?

**Jessica:** Highly variable. The teams that I think have got through it most positively by any registration, team effectiveness, other ones, I think where their businesses have been more largely unaffected or in fact accelerated through this process because when things are going positively, what a surprise, it makes it easier for us to cohesive as a team.

The teams, I think that are struggling more. Or whether it's change even more so than, what we're all expecting at the moment. And The struggle I think for teams is we don't see each other and new people come onto the team. They've never met anybody. They've never seen anybody. We don't necessarily have very good skills yet for inducting people, onboarding people in a way that feels meaningful.

That feels very human at the moment. And the other part of it is, old team theory would say, whenever we bring a new person into the team, we reshape the team. We need to revisit our purpose, come together around that. And that's not happening because there are so many changes.

And so I think they're the things that teams are struggling with a sense of disconnection. A sense of many of the leaders focus has been down the organization through their teams, trying to come back to creating certainty for their teams, but no one's doing it for them. And some organizations bring them together as a group of peers as well at the senior exec level.

But most of them I think are having a. And needing them to really focus on their area more. And so that team mean at senior exec level. I see is happening less now that the crisis navigation isn't happening in the same way. Yeah.

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11

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**Pod:** So what's the potential impact of that going forward?

**Jessica:** Multiple?

I would prophesies again, I think we will see less likelihood that we're going to pick up the stressors that we're each experiencing. We'll probably say. More fragmentation of organizations, worst case scenario would be getting back to more siloed orientation. I think that it transmits down the organization where people see them, that their leaders aren't working together as much, and that their leaders probably aren't as available as a cohort as much.

And so that creates its own stories down through the organization about what's really going on. Does it impact trust and people's belief in. That top 10 purpose? probably. And I think going into 2021, I think we're going to have a lot more challenges on the horizon. It's not things aren't going to be in inverted commas better.

I think we're going to have to work through some enduring difficulties and we really need top teams to be cohesive and equally open. To the amazing array of voices that they have down through their organizations as well. And I think that's going to be challenging if those teams aren't really clear on what their purpose is and that purpose is we've found out this year, it can change day to day.

So how do they stay nimble? How do they stay adaptable? How do they stay in conversation when they're working virtually? If there's one thing at that team level, it will be. To continue to challenge each other. Are we leading through conversation? What are the courageous conversations we need to be having now?

What do we need to be talking about that we're avoiding those sorts of habits and practices as a team and reviewing it at the end of whenever the team comes together, I think are going to help to bridge, to a slightly better, more cohesive team in future.

**Pod:** To your earlier point February through to may of 2020, there's a whole lot of fantastic work done by many leaders of teams on POS are fast and needed sudden reaction to the crisis.

And how do we manage to move from an all in one building to work from home done very well up by. I would imagine lots of leadership teams moving to, we can now innovate in ways that we haven't done before. fantastic. Yeah. And as you said, astounding, some patients, I was talking to Dan Fleming from st.

Vincent's hospital network. Recently, he was going to come up in a future episode of this podcast talking about a major innovation that's in Vince's hospital network that in six weeks was typically would've taken 12 months before now and was just serviced a part of the market that they service in a way that they had never done as fast it's extraordinary leadership on many levels.

But as he said, Ariana was moving towards by July one, we'll all be back to normal. Yeah. And that's not the case I was thinking recently around. So what does this team purpose mean for your teams going forward? And two different stories emerging from this one leader I spoke to recently who in my view is one of the best leaders I've ever met, talked about.

The 2020 has clarified for her. The leadership team only has three things. One is clarity, give clarity to the organization. Number two, communicate by decisions that are made or decisions we have yet to make. And three cascade learnings as fast as we possibly can. I thought how simple as that, but how brilliant is that?

Now she landed on those three things, through many experiences and debates and dialogues and an earnings. But nonetheless, I think those three things sum it up. And if Alicia team is able to. Gather around those make sense for themselves of what that means for their nuance. I think it'll go a long way to working together in a more cohesive way going forward.

**Jessica:** It's really interesting because I agree with you. I agree with you on the three CS that you've outlined it. And the thing for me that I'm picturing them is how is it that we make. The ground upon which we do those things. One that gives trust because that's what I think is going to be what determines how we go forward, because this new way, and you were aware of working this speed at which we're working.

I think it requires that we offer more trust and. In the way people work in how they choose their work. And that to me is an important part of that. It's almost like the soil within which those behaviors need to exist.

**Pod:** Yeah. Trust is not a physical thing. it's a, it's an enabler of a lot of things, but without, it's not the things that often don't happen or don't, so you don't happen anywhere near as well.

**Jessica:** Yeah. Yeah. And if we don't know what they are for each of us, because trust, isn't a blanket thing, it's not. One thing for us that we both agree on. So I think through that element of conversation and communication, I think we don't want to underestimate the importance of having trust front and center.

What builds and what breaks trust for each of us going forward.

**Pod:** I sat in the conversation with Alicia, Tim recently in the industrial sector. And they would, they did a timeline of here's all the things that happened in 2020 that we had the deal with as a leadership team. But on top of that, they went, let's look at all this stuff that.

We knew where we had to do with yep. And then let's look all this stuff that came on expectedly on top of all of that and how we dealt with it. And then the goddess let's give ourselves a score out of 10 of how we did within the limit of how well we did as a team in leading in all of that change. Yeah.

10 out of 10, meaning we did the best we possibly could with the constraints that we had. I, we couldn't change COVID as example, but what I loved about the conversation was let's say the land of that. I think they said they landed at seven out of 10. I can remember what the number was. They then had a conversation.

So who I was not an eight, why was not a six? And that became the great conversation because it allowed. Surface was what actually, here's how he actually made mistakes or for, in my view, for us to be an eight out of 10, that situation I would have needed X from you. And you didn't give X nor did I know I needed it before that and allowed a great competition to be head follow.

I'll go look at that team and go, I don't know where they were. Seven, five, six, our time who cares, what they have done now though, is they have learned from us in a way that they wouldn't have done without that conversation.

**Jessica:** There's so much in that example, I think for teams to look at it, that simple thing of, taking our learnings and taking our experiences and sticking them up on a board and mapping them together and talk about what really went on for me at the high point, for the low point.

I think that's a really powerful teams technique to be working on. We can talk about that another day.

**Pod:** Going into 2021. My sense is for leadership teams to be successful in 2021 is going to require a little bit of back to basics and get the fundamentals humming. What are you thinking of when you think of fundamentals for a leadership team and leaders in a leadership team? And if they're ready, if they're able to come back in January and put these into place, what might they be?

**Jessica:** Be really clear on what our focus is and for how long. So work out what our purpose is, and what's the time constraint around that. Be really clear about each person's role on the team and what we need from each person. The real reason why they're there, what they're build, what they're at is so good team theory, and then I think too, Carry forward in our learning, the sensitivity to individual needs to be able to flex with how we work with each other. I think those things will be really important in terms of team functioning. I love the three CS that you were talking about with your client before. I think that's a great framework to look at and to be able to communicate consistently down through organizations, what we know and more importantly, what we don't know.

And what we're making our decisions based on recognizing that everything could change in a heartbeat because no one really knows what's going on. So I think they're the sorts of practices, but I think a gentleness would be nice to take into the next year, actually bit of gentleness and a bit of kindness because.

People have never gone through. none of us have lived through anything like this and I just have this hope that through all of this, we allow ourselves to stay open to what it is to build organizations where people can thrive. And it sounds a bit cliché, where you can actually show up as fully you.

And imagine if we took that into. The year where we recognize that everyone's so phenomenally quirky, but if we allow people to work from that and we trust them to bring their best and to contribute in the way that they're meant to the goals that we have as an organization, I just have a feeling that it will help us to shape organizations that are nice and that over time become more robust and more effective.

**Pod:** Alongside that I would add clarity from 2020, I hope will look like in 2021 for village of team is what meetings are we in? And what meetings are we just going to say goodbye to? Because we don't need them. And if we are in them, do they have to be an hour? Can they be 45 minutes? Can it be 25 minutes?

Can it be a 10 minute phone call, but get refer more skills and Ruth, and I think rootless is part of being kind and kind to ourselves and our organization by being of where we spend our time

**Jessica:** and to take the double step. Think about, should I be there? But then to have that more holistic stuff going, should they be there?

When am I going to put this diary meeting in for you? Do we really need to do it this way? Is it a five minute phone conversation or is this where we need to come together on zoom? Have a long conversation to do that. And that's, to me, there's that mutual aspect of the restlessness because everyone is exhausted and.

Who wants to carry that feeling forward into the new year. We want people to come back to work refreshed, however they do that. But to be able to carry that sense of refreshment and rejuvenation across the year, the worst is when we get clients back to work and they're two or three days and I'm going okay.

So if you still got that holiday feeling that like her apart did it at the door and yet how often does that happen? What would it look like if we. Had that as part of our intention going forward for 20, 21 and beyond to keep that feeling of a, the whole person and all of their. Complex needs. And as part of our model of organizations yep.

**Pod:** Given all of the wisdom you've developed experience and even share with us today. And we know we haven't shared all of you wisdom, looking back now at the 35 year old version of you, what would you not be telling that person?

**Jessica:** Undoubtedly, it would be to share. Ideas strategies, experiences like we are today, but to have been doing that much more publicly from back then, because I think like anyone who does, who's been doing what they do for a long time and who does whose work is an extension of who they are, if that makes sense.

it's so intrinsic that I just think everybody gets it and everyone knows it, but I think. that's always gotten the way I'd be putting ideas out there, probably talking more about what's possible or writing whatever. So it would be just to go there, just stop editing, stop worrying that someone else has said it before and put it out there

**Pod:** podcast somewhere and

**Jessica:** join some podcasts.

**Pod:** I'm going to ask a question, Jessica, and I ask this of everyone. if I'm nothing, I'm a music person. What is your favorite song or your favorite band? Can't

**Jessica:** tell you how stressful I find this question

**Pod:** out there and all that,

**Jessica:** because it says, we talk about multiplicity of selves.

Each of myself has different songs that they love. So everywhere from. those classic songs that I would love from the sixties, a whole bunch of music as period. My. Love to go. Dancing self is extremely partial to all disco. I love any song that I can belt out, singing at loud volume while I'm driving or when I'm going around the house.

Cause everything can be turned into a song. And then I have songs that I don't know that you just love like Florence and the machine who's got the love and David Bowie, Early work station to station would have to be one of my favorite pieces.

**Pod:** You love that song. And I haven't heard in a while, so I think we'll have to grab both Florence and the machine and every Boeing for the show announce and say, these are two of Jessica's.

**Jessica:** Cause I can't pick.

**Pod:** Thank you so much for joining us today as always, it's a pleasure to chat with you and to hear the wisdom that you have to impart as well as the very practical. Tactics that people can take and deploy. We'll have to have you back for lots more conversations, so you don't have to edit and you can share your ideas.

**Jessica:** Thank you. Loved being here. Lots of fun. Thanks Pod.

**Pod:** Hope you enjoyed that conversation with Jessica Laden. I regularly talk to her and. Go away inspired or at least having found something new to think about in a way I hadn't before. And when I think about this podcast, this strikes me, there's at least four or five great ideas that are worth repeating and summarizing.

At the individual level, her symptoms of what it could become burned out, really struck me as being important to underline reiterate the sense of everything is all important. And it's all



up to me, which then becomes an overly focused sense of me in myself is the first major symptom that's worth recognizing, but then it leads to it's.

All the responsibility that only I have, which then becomes consuming for me. And eventually, as Jessica said, there's a tipping point, which is very sharp. And so they are the symptoms to watch out for, in yourself, or indeed your colleagues. When you notice you are others being overwhelmed. The other area that she talked about, which is not a new topic by any means, but 2020 has put a whole new lens on to this.

And that is this fallacy, I believe, but I've work life balance. Any leader I've ever met, who is very successful in leadership is able to understand that life is life and their work and their home life bleeds into each other and always has. But what 2020 has done is. Put a non segregation in a physical sense.

Many of us are here. We are in October, November. Many of us are still working from home sometimes out of choice, but sometimes not. And when our loved ones are also working from home, there is no physical separation between home and work and all of my life. And one of Jessica's notions is now is even more important to have a conscious plan at your life level.

I E. Consciously stopped to look at what is it I am wanting to do with my life, not necessarily at an existential point of view, but in terms of what brings me joy into my life and how do I have a plan or at least a default list to go to the sits on the fridge that when I want to segregate my work and my personal life, I have a list that I use regularly.

To remind me of what brings me joy and plan for that, the leadership point that she's, that she underlined really important. It was no one has, can do it for you. if you don't do this for yourself, no one else can. And as a leader role modeling how to lead yourself during times of stress is really important because ultimately if you don't do that, You will end up leading suboptimally and then the team you're leading will follow that trajectory.

So how do you consciously take some time to plan and execute what's important for you in your overall life? Given the restraints and the unusual nature of 2020.

perspective. What I loved about what Jessica said today was as a good reminder of team, a theory, and that is when any new leader joins a leadership team or indeed any team, a, the team slows down to the level of capability of that person until they come up to speed in terms of speed to competency. But also if you're sitting on the leadership team, it is worthy to take.

And maybe it will be a short time, but revisiting the team purpose so that everyone recalibrates with this new person who's joined that team and they get on board as quick as possible. So it could be a short conversation as part of your weekly or monthly meeting, or it could be a dedicated conversation that you sit as set aside for that.



But how do you remember to revisit that conversation on team purpose? Every time a new team member joins and with the speed of 20, 20 and beyond, how do you have that conversation regularly anyway, because a sense of team and its purpose can often fluctuate and change. And then the last thing that we talked about, which I think is a really great exercise and conversation for any team to have is the notion of less review.

2020 and how we lead together. And the steps that Jessica and I outlined in that are number one, on a piece of butcher paper or any kind of board outline over a timeline, let's say January to June and then July to December, all of the major changes that are coming in 2020 that we knew then step two. On top of that list, adding changes that came into 2020, that we were not expecting, came knocking on our door.

And chart those then step number three is in a different colored pen. Ideally let's chart all the different emotions that we experience over that timeline, all the positive emotions or the scary emotions or the negative emotions at an individual level, a team level, family level and neighborhood and society level, because 2020 has had all of that.

Let's get them onto the chart and then step back and review. So what does all that mean? Then step number four is on a scale of one to 10, 10 being the best one, being the worst within the perimeters of our influence. I E our leadership at our best, within the constraints of what we can do. Let's give ourselves a number.

How well do we go? And then the last step, whatever the number was, why was it not another number or why was it not a 10 or a nine? Why wasn't not a three or four and have that conversation because it's in that conversation that the learnings come out and the learnings are where you and the team can embed down for future crisis, our future existential situations.

Here's how we do well. And here's the areas that we need to keep the Nene to make sure that we keep improving as a team, because if we don't do it, nobody else will. Thank you for listening to another episode of the leadership diet. We hope you enjoyed it. Head over to [www.thedishofdiet.com](http://www.thedishofdiet.com), where you can subscribe to the podcast, to our blogs and retrieve the show notes.

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Thank you.