



JIM HARSHAW JR.

Revealing Failure as the Path to Success

Success Through Failure Podcast

Action Plan Episode #181

Sheila Heen

Today I bring you Sheila Heen. An expert on managing difficult negotiations, Sheila is a lecturer at Harvard Law School and a founder of Triad Consulting. Her corporate clients include Apple, Unilever, the Federal Reserve Bank, Pixar, Novartis, and numerous others. She often partners with executive teams, helping them work through conflict, repair working relationships, and make sound decisions together. She's the author of two New York Times bestselling books. *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most* and *Thanks for the Feedback: The Science and Art of Receiving Feedback Well*. She's also spent the last 20 years with the Harvard Negotiation Project, developing negotiation theory and practice. Sheila has appeared on shows as diverse as Oprah, The G. Gordon Liddy Show, NPR, Fox News, and CNBC's Power Lunch.

Quotes

"I didn't get into the place I thought was like the be all end all, and things so far have turned out pretty okay."

"When we write down things we want to say, we go into a conversation setting ourselves up to do a lot of talking and very little listening."

"Receiving feedback is actually a distinct leadership skill and if you get better at it, you can actually take charge and accelerate your own learning."

Jim's Quote

"We often approach difficult conversations with a mindset that we're right and this other person is wrong."

About How to Approach Difficult Conversations 09:25 - 10:30

I think the biggest thing that I have learned is that the very first negotiation I need to have is with myself, my own internal voice, what I'm really thinking and feeling. I want to negotiate my own internal voice away from being super-focused on what I'm right about and explaining it to you, to being a little bit curious why we see this so differently or how do you see it. We each have pieces of the puzzle that the other one doesn't have. So if my first purpose in the conversation is 'Let's just get these pieces of puzzles on the table and see what it looks like and why,' that is usually a pretty easy invitation for you to take. I come at the conversation really differently just by making that internal shift in my mindset and also in my purpose for the conversation."

About Emotions in Conversations 21:19 - 22:55

Often, our instincts say 'If I am frustrated and angry and feel betrayed or guilty or hurt etc., that's certainly not going to help the conversation. So I basically have to box up those feelings and keep them out of the conversation.' the problem as human beings is we can't keep them out. If they are there, emotions will leak out particularly through tone of voice, body language and even in email. You can tell through email that there's some feeling, even if you can't necessarily tell what it is. When you try to keep the emotions out and it's leaking in, that is actually the definition of passive-aggressive where you're being polite and professional but the frustration is leaking out. So the advice is actually counter-intuitive. You're better off putting the feelings into the conversation but doing so by simply naming and describing them rather than being emotional."

About Negotiating With your Self-Doubts 29:19 - 30:17

"I'm 50 years old and still, there are times I'm about to go on stage and I think, 'This audience is full of incredibly smart people. I know nothing about their business. What the heck am I doing here?' And then I think to myself, 'Okay, I'm having a little identity thing. I have spent the most time thinking about this topic probably than anyone in the audience. And if that's not true, then we're going to have a really interesting conversation and I'll learn a bunch of things.' So I'm negotiating with myself about who I am and who I need to be in the next hour or whatever it would be, why I'm there and what happens if this doesn't work the way I think it will work."

About Sheila's Failure 35:48 - 36:38

"I was so bad at speaking at this conference that they canceled my friend who was supposed to be speaking next year. I look back at that and think maybe that is just what it was going to take to get my attention because I could no longer pretend that

speaking was the same thing as training but faster. It shook my world hard enough that I got serious about it, 'Speaking is just another animal and I need to let go of what I think I know start from the ground up.' So I set a goal and I spent the next year learning speaking by talking to another friend of mine who is a theologian who teaches preaching for Catholic clergy. Like a five-minute homily, how do you say something meaningful and connect with the audience in five minutes."

Action Items

1. Think about what are the difficult or important conversations in your life that you are avoiding.
2. If you got curious about why you're having such a hard time with someone, can you imagine a conversation that is worth having?

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