



Hosted by Tom Henschel

How to Show Up

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Frustrated at not showing up the way she wants to, a leader, in conversation with her coach, explores ways to integrate her values into her behavior.

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Bravery as incentive

Chin-Sun and I were deep in a coaching conversation about [self-management](#). I said self-management allowed people to slow their reactions so they could choose their behavior. I proposed that people who are able to pause and choose get better results.

She agreed and went further.

She said, "I'm thinking it's about more than just choice. It's about values. Maybe turning up my self-management would let me show up in ways more aligned with my values."

"How do you mean?" I asked.

"Remember I said I want to speak up more? Be braver? I do. Not because I want to get noticed or compete with anyone. This is about me, my core. Being braver has become a value for me. But I don't think that's how I'm showing up. Maybe your ideas about self-management will help."

"Help with what exactly?" I asked.

"Help win the argument in my head with that voice that doesn't want me to speak up. I can imagine using 'brave' like an incentive. Because it's a value for me, it would make a good argument. 'Come on! You want to be brave, don't you?' The value would inspire me."

"If your 'brave' voice were winning more of those arguments, do you think you'd show up differently?"

"Don't you? For one thing, people would probably hear a lot more from me during meetings," she said.

"That would be showing up differently," I agreed.

She tilted her head, narrowed her eyes, and asked, "Is it really that easy?"

"To do what?" I asked.

"Just start thinking 'brave' and suddenly that voice starts winning? Snap! I show up braver? It seems a little too easy."

I asked, "If it were easy, would that make it less valuable?"

"Oh, you got me! That's exactly what I was thinking. Oh, I don't like that. OK. I accept easy, thank you very much!"

"When you think about it, Chin-Sun, it's really not easy. Maybe this one step is going to be easy, we don't know. But you've had so many steps before that haven't been easy. You've been arguing in your head a long time. That's not easy. So if this next step is easy, it's only because all the other ones made it that way."

"That's true. This is hard won. So what else is going to help me show up the way I want?"

Low-risk rehearsal

I thought a second, then said, "Low-risk rehearsal."

"Low-risk? Like texting with my daughter?"

"Exactly! While you're doing something low risk like texting your daughter, or doing the dishes, brushing your teeth, you ask yourself, 'What would be different right now if I were a little braver?'"

**Think 'brave,'
then show
up braver?
Really?**

The ultimate goal? Show up braver.

"Really? Braver brushing my teeth? Seriously?"

"Seriously!"

"Uh-uh. You have to explain that."

"Okay. So start with the ultimate goal. What is it? To be braver, right? Like when? Give me an example."

"Okay, here's one. Speaking up on the big Zoom calls. Our division president always invites questions, and I think he means it. And some people ask a question. Not many. But one of those people should be me! I've got questions. But I sit there arguing with myself about it and never take myself off mute. That's an example."

"Perfect. The ultimate goal is to be braver, like in that moment, on the Zoom call, right?"

"Right," she said.

Building muscle

"But what's the reality? The reality is you're asking your brain to do something it has no practice with. So, even if you ask a question, who knows if it will go well. I can understand it might feel risky."

"Good. I'm glad I'm not crazy," she said.

Retrieving your extinguisher during a fire is never easy.

"No, you're not. I think asking your brain to suddenly 'be brave' in a moment like that is like trying to remember where you hid your fire extinguisher when the house is burning down. You might be able to do it, but if you haven't given it a thought all year, it'll be a struggle."

"So now imagine brushing your teeth. You do it every day of your life. No big deal. Now add in thinking about being brave. You have time to wake up that part of yourself. Take it out for a spin. Get a feel for how to rev it up and what it's like to sustain it."

"I get it," she said. "So by the time the real game comes along, I have some strength already built up. Like a habit. Okay. Sold."

"I want to clarify one thing," I said. "This is not a prescription for being brave. This is a prescription for building up strength with any new way of showing up. Your way of showing up is brave, but other people might want something else, like valuing relationships. They'd follow all the same steps, just change the words."

“So is this something I could share with my team?” she said.

“Sure, it’s a process for showing up as more of whatever you want to be.”

She asked, “What was that question you said I should ask myself?”

Questions to play with

“What would be different if I were a little braver right now?’ That one?”

“Yes. So that’s what I should ask myself when I’m brushing teeth, making dinner, whatever?”

“That’s one. There are lots of questions you could ask yourself.”

“Like what else?”

“What would a brave person do right now?’ That’s a fun one to play with. Or, ‘What would I think, or what would I feel, if I were my bravest self right now?’ Those are two others.”

“I like the very first one. I like them all, but the first one fits me best.”

“Why’s that?” I asked.

“It feels the most expansive. It allows for anything. You don’t know what’s going to change. You just know something *can* change. You know what this reminds me of?”

“What?” I asked.

“I’ve always noticed life changes. Like, ‘Oh, now I’m in middle school,’ and the world would look different to me. I used to call it ‘looking through the lens.’ One of the biggest times it happened was after I got married. Suddenly I was looking through the ‘wife’ lens or the ‘married’ lens. I’d be seeing the world in my old, normal way, then, suddenly, this lens would flip down in front of me. I’d think, ‘Oh, that’s right! I’m married.’ And my view of the world – and myself *in* the world – changed.”

“Did changing the lens change how you showed up?” I asked.

Naturally fierce

“I’m sure it did. I’m not sure how. I know I showed up differently after I had Diana. She was another big lens shift in my life. Suddenly I was looking through the lens of



**What would
be different
if I were
braver?**

'mother.' I showed up differently, for sure."

"How so?" I wondered.

"When she was an infant, I was fierce. Don't get between me and my baby. No problem being brave there! But that never felt like a choice I made. It felt like a primal instinct. A lot of the time it still is. But being braver now is a choice I'm imposing on myself. It feels a lot harder."

"Can you carry the fierceness from the 'mom' part of your life into this current part of your life?"

"I've wondered that. I've asked myself why it was so easy then. And why is it so hard now?"

"What's the answer?" I asked.

"I don't have one," she said. "That's what's so frustrating."

"The idea of carrying over behaviors stirred up a memory in me. You used to have the idea of a looking through a lens? Well, I used to have a little mind game I played specifically to help me transfer behavior from one part of my life to another."

"Tell me," she said with relish.

I took a breath, thinking back. "I was timid as a kid. I never liked being timid. I didn't want to be timid, but I was. As I grew up, I controlled it a little better, but it never went away. Like you, I did a lot of arguing in my head, which is how this mind game developed."

Survival at stake

"I used to imagine I'd been dropped down in a country where I didn't know anything about anything. I couldn't even recognize the letters in the alphabet. The only thing I knew for certain was that if I wanted to eat, I had to figure it out myself. If I wanted a place to sleep, I had to figure it out myself. And the timid part of me was not going to help me.

"I would look down on myself in that world and ask myself, 'Is 'timid' going to drive your actions? Because if it does you will not survive!' What I knew for a certainty was that I would do what I had to do to survive. When my life was on the line, I knew I

A mind game for being less timid

would abandon ‘timid’ and be bold on my own behalf. So I’d say to myself, ‘Hey, if you can banish timid there, you can banish timid here. This isn’t nearly as scary as that.’ Picturing myself as bold in that imaginary world helped me be less timid in the real one.”

“Huh! Maybe I could tap into that old fierce part of myself,” she said.

Chin-Sun practiced being brave around her house, when the stakes were low. She found it quickened her pace. She also found herself laughing more often. Her ‘brave’ lens changed how she showed up in [The Look & Sound of Leadership](#).



Core Concepts

- How you ‘show up’ is a reflection of your values
- To integrate values, make them part of your everyday thinking
- Think about your values in low-risk moments
- Allow your values to shift the lens you look through
- Carry your values over from parts of your life where they’re more natural

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