

Peter Margaritis: Hey, welcome back everybody. Oh man, I'm excited for my guest today. I've known her for a bit. She's a great lady. I met her through the National Speakers Association. She's inspiring. She's motivating. Great demeanor. Always very passionate especially about the Kansas City Chiefs but that's a different story. So first and foremost, Lauren, thank you so very much for taking time out of your busy day to spend some time with me on my podcast.

Lauren Schieffer: Oh, you're so welcome. I am honored that you asked me.

Peter Margaritis: So, let's start the conversation, and I see the wonderful logo that you have in your office with the curls and the silhouette of the daughter, The Colonel's Daughter. How did it come about...how did you develop that? Even though you were The Colonel's Daughter, into what you do, into your work?

Lauren Schieffer: Well, it came through the insights of a dear friend. When I was working on my personal branding, I have been quoting my father for my entire life. I am the colonel's daughter. My father was a Lieutenant Colonel in the United States Air Force. And just about... just about everything that I teach and believe, I learned from him. And so, I've been quoting him and all of my professional life. And when I was reworking my branding, she said, you know you talk about respectful communication. Where'd you get that? I said, 'Oh my Dad.' And then I quoted my Dad. And she says, 'Okay, conflict management. Where'd you get that?' And I said, 'Oh, if you knew my father, Dad still stood six feet six and a half inches tall and was 285 pounds on his very leanest day. When the Colonel lost his temper, people got hurt. So, I had to find a better way to manage his temper and to manage conflict. He taught that to his daughters and that's what I teach all over the globe.' She goes also you learned that from your Dad. Okay, and she kept asking me the same questions. And finally, she said, 'Lauren, what do you not see?' Oh, I am The Colonel's Daughter, and that very day I created that that logo. And an interesting thing about it that to me I just love is it was very popular in the late 1950s, early 1960s, for people to do pictures that were silhouettes of their children. You know, sometimes in balsa wood or sometimes in little rocks or whatever, but it was a black Silhouette of your child. That is actually a silhouette of me. I got that, from my mother's silhouette so.

Peter Margaritis: Well, you're gonna have to send me your logo, so we can include it into the show notes and everything, so those are just listening to the podcast they can go and see this wonderful logo that you created.

Lauren Schieffer: I will be happy to do that.

Peter Margaritis: You said something that jumped into my ear, because in the world of improv we always talk about part of the baseline foundation is respect. Having respect for the person, and you said respectful communication. What's the quote your father had as relates to respectful communication?

Lauren Schieffer: So many times that I can hear it in my head on a daily basis. Dad said, 'You don't have to respect everyone Lauren Anne. You have no right to disrespect anyone. Lauren Anne.' And that quote to me is the epitome. It defines the difference between respect for and respect to. I have met many people in my life. I've encountered, I've seen. I've observed, many people in my life that, for whatever reason, maybe it's their behaviors, maybe it's the words they choose, maybe it's our different ethics, for whatever reason, I can in no way respect them. That doesn't mean that I don't make a daily choice to treat them with respect. That's the difference between respect for and respect to.

Peter Margaritis: Wow. I love that. And the thing that pops into my head is you've been in corporate America. Spent a lot of time there. I have too, and as times have evolved, it seems like there's more disrespect than respect.

Lauren Schieffer: I agree.

Peter Margaritis: How do we communicate that out, or how do we have that impact to get people to buy into the fact that I don't have to like you, but at least I should have some type of respect for you.

Lauren Schieffer: And not to you, not for you.

Peter Margaritis: That's right. To you.

Lauren Schieffer: To you. You know, boy, that's a bigger question than me because I sincerely believe that the mass media that we consume on a daily basis is not going to do it for us. Social media is not going to do it for us. Because I believe, to a very large extent that social media is a part of the rise of the problem. Because people can hide behind social media, and I'm going to use the word *we*, because we're all guilty of it. We will say things on social media that we would never say to someone's face. So, I don't think that social media or mass media is the answer. The best that I can do, and that I have chosen to do is be on a one woman mission. You know me, you know, it is my passion. Which is why that I've dug so deeply back into leadership development. Because if we can build a brand new generation of leaders that are focused on the significant leadership characteristics of integrity, honesty, empathy, compassion and accountability. What will the next 50 years of the United States look like? Because if we let go of those essential components to leadership, we are lost. So, we have to bring it back. And one mind at a time. I'm doing my best one mind at a time.

Lauren Schieffer: And then the other thing is that we as human beings have to make a decision to... if it's about the bottom line, then we have to make a decision to do business or not do business with people that maintain our value of respect.

Peter Margaritis: Great Point. Keep going. I mean this is good.

Lauren Schieffer: What well, what I mean by that is, if I have seen someone that is the head of a company or the figurehead of a company. Here in Kansas City, for instance, there is a particular business person that made a run for Senate in 2020. And he's always kind of been viewed as kind of a jovial kind of guy in his commercials, and his company is named after him. And in his Senate commercials, he was disparaging and disrespectful to half of the electoral base. And I, and since I happened to be on that half of the electoral base, but I don't think it would have mattered, I can now choose to never do business with his company. Because if it speaks to who he is as a human being, then it speaks to the values that his company maintains. So, we can drive that with our consumer decisions as well, but we have to come back to a point where we are treating each other with respect.

Peter Margaritis: Amen. Amen. You know, I tell a story...my neighbor and I don't get along. We've tried. It just doesn't work. There's people in our lives like that. That's fine. But I do have respectful for him. He's a husband. He's a father. He's a breadwinner. He's got a job. He's out there helping, just like the rest of us. I don't have a sign in front of my yard, it says my neighbors an idiot.

Lauren Schieffer: Mm hmm.

Peter Margaritis: And jokingly, I say he took his down, three weeks ago. But there's that but there's never been that. We know we don't get along, but we do have respect for each other. I mean I was having some issues at the house that I didn't know about. He came knocked on doors that you might want to check. You got, maybe you have some water problems. And, you know, his dog was missing, so I'm looking for his dog. But we're not going out for beer. He's not coming over. But it's that level of respect, and I don't know I think it's... I thought it was easy to maintain within an organization within the Community, but I find it harder and harder because we get stuck on agendas. We get stuck in positions. Like when you're negotiating a position, I'm not moving from this position, but as the podcast is titled, let's start changing our mindset. And look and you said, the 'E' word empathy. There's a book, *Humans are Underrated* by Jeffrey Colvin who I believe was the Managing editor at Fortune magazine. And he's talking about technology and how technology is advancing artificial intelligence. Watson. But he gets to a point that because of technology, because of the world that we live in now, the characteristics that leaders need more than anything is empathy.

Lauren Schieffer: Mm hmm. I am a firm believer that the bottom line measurable of reduced attrition, increased productivity, increased profitability, will all take care of themselves. If you drive the high end leadership characteristics of integrity and empathy and accountability, with compassion and creating working environments where all employees feel valued and heard. I'm a firm believer in that.

Peter Margaritis: And this is what he said in his book, you know, we're gonna make the best leaders, as we move forward. It's not men. It's women. And those who believe in improv. That's my extra add in there, but because of those characteristics and, yes, empathy. We have to, yeah, and everybody's got you're putting yourself in their shoes.

Peter Margaritis: I don't think empathy is that. It's understanding how that person is in their own shoes. I can't put myself in some other folks his shoes because I've never been a part of it, but if I have the ability to listen to them and understand their plight, and empathize with them. I think that's a higher form of empathy that we need.

Lauren Schieffer: I, I agree, and there are thousands of gurus who will each give you their own take on what empathy actually is. It's very possible that I have... I can't put myself in your shoes if I've never experienced what you're experiencing. But chances are pretty good I've experienced something close to what you're experiencing in a different environment and, if I can put myself there, and most importantly, give you space to feel and experience what you're feeling. And I think that is, and I'm not playing men against women. It is in generalities. It is more of a feminine communication characteristic to listen for the whole message. And it is more of a masculine communication characteristic in general to get to a point where I have devised a solution in my brain and then give you that solution. Men are solution finders. Women tend to wait until they have the whole picture to devise the solution, and I think that that plays better in a leadership role. That doesn't mean that men can't learn that, and that also doesn't mean that women can't learn the skill of hearing the dot points and creating a solution. Both have their benefits.

Peter Margaritis: Absolutely, and it's recognizing those deficiencies, accepting them and trying to employ them, trying to learn them, try to understand and try to apply them in our leadership skills. And this, this is...I already hear the nails on the blackboard, but this is the way I've always done it. This is the way I was taught to me back in 1970. This is 2020. We don't manage. We don't lead in the same way as we did then.

Lauren Schieffer: Mm hmm.

Peter Margaritis: But we still have leaders who do.

Lauren Schieffer: Yeah. Yeah, you know, my husband is also really, really good. He's really good at that. He's really good at working with this team to define what the end product needs to be, and what the deadline for that end product is. And then having faith in them to get that done. He really doesn't care how they get it done so long as they get it done. He doesn't micromanage anything, and I think there's benefit in that. And it's... I say that because I'm a little bit of a control freak. Just... Just...Just a smidge.

Peter Margaritis: Well, that comes from being raised from the Colonel.

Lauren Schieffer: Yeah, probably so. Probably so. And he is not, he's like this is what we need, and this is when we need it by and I'm here, if you have questions so.

Peter Margaritis: I have an uncle, who is a retired Colonel from the United States Air Force with four kids and my Aunt, and there's a little bit of control issues there but that's fine.

Lauren Schieffer: Yeah well, at least I recognize it in myself, right?

Peter Margaritis: Right. Yeah. Yeah. It's fun to, I have some of those control issues, too. I was my father was in the military as well, so I do have some of those. I recognize those, and I go, 'Ut oh, let's not get overly control or let's find a different solution to the challenge that might be out there.' In preparation for this, you sent me your bio and I love the part in your bio where you start off by asking a few questions. And I love... How do you dump the drama and increase production? There's so much drama in the day-to-day workforce it seems to be or those people who create their own drama. Drive drama. Disrupt with drama. How as a leader, how do you deal with that if someone's on your team or within your peer group. They just love the festering create this noise.

Lauren Schieffer: Well, I think, first and foremost, the bottom line is whenever possible prevention. I often say that the best time to overcome a conflict is before it comes up. If we are creating workspaces, working environments that don't lend themselves to drama. And that speaks to another one of my core tenants, our goal as leaders, our goal as communicators, our goal as conflict managers is threefold.

Lauren Schieffer: First, all people feel safe and treated with respect, in my presence. Now by safe, I mean physically safe, of course, but also intellectually safe and emotionally safe. If you've ever been in a situation where you did not feel safe in one of those areas, I would pretty much guarantee that it shut you down, and you're not open to working with someone having a conversation with someone or resolving a potential conflict. So, unless I feel physically, intellectually and emotionally safe in your presence, I'm not working with you. I may be working side by side with you, but I'm not working with you. The other aspect of that is treated with respect, and we've discussed that. If you've ever been disrespected that memory never goes away. It's like the fellow here... the businessman here in Kansas City who disrespected me, without even knowing me in his TV commercials. That memory is never going to go away and I'm never going to do business with him. So, all people feel safe and treated with respect in my presence. Secondly, the second part is I stand my own ground. And third, I get my message across.

Lauren Schieffer: Now that's a little backward actually from the way, most people who train on communication and conflict management look at things. Most of my well-beloved and respected colleagues will tell you that the most important thing is to be clear to be understood. Well, I know a whole lot of people that are very clear in their communication and they leave dead bodies behind them as they do business. That's why I have to approach it from the other direction. I'm not willing to compromise on any of those three they have to come in that order. So, if we can utilize that as a base point for creating working environments then we can go a long ways in preventing drama.

Lauren Schieffer: Secondly, and, and this is not something that that not a specific question that I have prepared for so I'm shooting from the hip here, but secondly, we have to look at what we're looking for. What we as leaders are looking for, and what our team members are looking for. And ask ourselves, am I looking to be right or am I looking for a right result? And those are two different, very different directions. You were talking about position. This is my position. That's a positional communication, as compared to a principled communication. If I'm looking... if I set aside the need to be right, because I am looking for a right result and furthermore the right result happens...doesn't matter who was right. I mean now only you can decide that on any given moment. That's about picking your battles. That's a whole another conversation for us. But a really reflection and as a leader, if I have a member of my team, who is consistently creating drama that I might structure, a conversation with them asking about their motivations and what's important to them, and what matters to them, and how can I feed them what matters to them in a manner that doesn't create drama.

Lauren Shieffer: I don't know if you're familiar with there's Dr Stephen Cartman came up with something that is called The Drama Triangle. Most people that that train on conflict management and resolution are familiar with The Drama Triangle. And there are three key players. You have the persecutor, you have the victim and you have the rescuer. And an interesting thing about that the persecutor says 'I'm right you're wrong deal with it. I'm Okay, you are not okay.' The victim feeds on not being okay. They say, 'You're right. I'm wrong. You're okay I'm not okay.' And the rescuer, their message is 'I'm okay, and you would be okay honey, if you just did what I tell you to do. This is how you fix it. This is how I'm going to fix it for you.' And they feed off of the perceived accolades of having jumped in and saved the situation.

Lauren Schieffer: But the interesting thing about those three is that each of them needs the other. A persecutor has to have a victim. A victim has to have a persecutor and is always looking for a rescuer. And the persecutor needs the rescuer for camaraderie. Can you believe how not okay this victim is? And the rescuer has to have a victim to save and has to have a persecutor to create the victim that they have to have to save. Which means that if any one person walks away from the behavior that is creating the drama triangle, the whole thing collapses. And the reason that I bring that up is because, if we can have a conversation, if we've identified the person on our team, where all this drama is centering around, and if we can have a conversation I mean not as nuts and bolts, as we just discussed. It's a well-crafted conversation to find out what they're getting. What in the drama is feeding them? How do we feed that in a different manner, which could potentially pull them away from the drama triangle and suddenly, the whole thing collapsed and there's zero in the office again. But that's the job of a leader.

Peter Margaritis: Right. I'm gonna have to look up his work because I'm fascinated by The Drama Triangle and what you just described, but it also takes me down another path. There are folks who are self-proclaimed conflict avoidant.

Lauren Shieffer: Mm hmm

Peter Margaritis: But they're in leadership positions.

Lauren Schieffer: Mm hmm. And I have worked with many of them. I've consulted with many of them.

Peter Margaritis: How do you get them to accept the fact that conflict is there. Don't avoid it. Get in front of it, not wait till it's too late?

Lauren Schieffer: Well, part of conflict avoidance is a victim behavior. But the primary factor, I have discovered in my experience in doing consulting the primary factor in a conflict avoidance is 'Oh my gosh. What if somebody doesn't like me?' And there's a difference between being liked and being respected. And if we can build us a level of self-esteem, you know, you and I have talked about my two pillars of serenity and success. You have your left pillar is your own self-esteem and your right pillar is a daily choice to treat people with respect. It's that self-esteem factor that's missing in most people who are conflict avoidant. Now, I'm not talking... I'm not saying that it's normal and natural to run and race into conflict, but if it's there and you don't deal with it, it builds and it grows and it festers like a boil. So, it has to be dealt with and the avoidance shows a lack of self-esteem, so we work on building the self-esteem. So, they understand that if for a moment in time, someone doesn't like me, it doesn't change my value as a human being, and could potentially build stronger respect to me in their eyes.

Peter Margaritis: Interesting because this is something that happened in my career at one point in time. I was working in public accounting. I'd been out of it for number of years. Came back to it and was working. And I was not there, technically. I was technically incompetent. I'll put to you that way. However, I could communicate and they would want to put me out in front of the clients. But it got to the point that I was so technically incompetent, people wouldn't even look at because they thought stupid would jump off of me and on to them. And I mean, I'm in my late 30s-early 40s and I'm watching, I can see the dynamics playing out, but the person who reported to never say anything to me about it. So, I walked into the office closed door, and I said, 'We have to have this conversation. I see what's going on. If you want to fire me, fire me now.' But I wasn't really my room to push that conversation, but I know that things are being said behind the back, and maybe he'll just go away. And unfortunately, in the world of public accounting, what I grew up in, I still believe it exists there today, that's kind of that same mentality as relates to conflict avoidance. Maybe that they're not going to like me. I don't like to hurt people, but it's not standing up and saying, 'Let's just have this conversation address the issue we're all adults here and then come up to a solution.'

Lauren Schieffer: See, and so many things went through my mind when you were discussing that scenario. The first of which was in a situation where you recognize that you were technically incompetent than it is your responsibility to shore that weakness up in yourself. My second thought was to have the hutzpah to walk into your boss's office and say 'Look you see it. I see it. I don't know why you haven't addressed it.'

Lauren Schieffer: But to me, the biggest thing is a lack of leadership if someone is recognizing that there's a technical incompetency to then put together a development plan. And say, these are the areas of technical competency that I would like to see you grow in and by this time. So much to unpack, just in that scenario. Oh, my goodness.

Peter Margaritis: I know. I look back on it and the person I reported to, I believe, recognized it and wanted to do exactly what you said, put together a plan. However, the conflict had gone on for a while that most people in the office in leadership wanted to put together a plan, but those are the powers to be didn't want to. I was dead to them, I guess, is another way of putting it. And which is fine, and I left and I have no animosity. It's a great story. I learned a lot. I still communicate with a bunch of people within and even some degree, even to the person who report to, because I do have respect. But those little situations occur in a lot of different environments, not just in public accounting but there's and it just doesn't want to just tell me. I know I'm trying to get that knowledge but it's during... let's just say it's tax season. And there's not a lot of time to learn, when you've been thrown into the fire. So, that's we're going to work on the development but it's... I know that's not unique thing that happens out there, I love the way you laid it out in those three pieces.

Lauren Schieffer: It's not unique. I had a consulting client that I walked away from. I quit. I quit the contract. I'm probably in 2019. You know, 2020 is a blur, so it was 2019. And I had spent a year with their supervisors once a month, and that had caused me to recognize that the challenge was in the executive team and their inability to hold themselves accountable for what they expect, and therefore you can't hold the supervisors accountable for what you expect of them, and therefore the supervisors can't hold their individual contributors accountable. So I put a year in working with the executive team, and that brought me to the realization that the real crux of the rot was the Executive Director. So, I put together a development plan for the Executive Director, and I spent six months watching him refuse to do it. And communicating with the Board of Directors once a month. And then, recognizing the Board of Directors unwillingness to make a change at that level. And I laid out for the Board exactly what I thought the dangers of continuing with the status quo would be for their organization. And they were unwilling to make a change. And I was frustrated enough to walk away from the last 20,000 of that contract. And I said to the Chairman of the Board, I said I've come to the realization that all the members of your Executive team would walk over my dead body to maintain the status quo. Therefore it's not the best use of your \$20,000. You need to invest it elsewhere. But you know if it doesn't it...I believe everything starts at the top. Everything starts at the top. So again, that goes back to principled or positional.

Peter Margaritis: So, as you're describing the story, and a few others, one word keeps popping up into my head three letter word...Ego.

Lauren Schieffer: Oh. Well, in that situation honest to goodness it wasn't ego. With that particular Executive Director, it was a lack of self-esteem. It was a of a terror down to his toes that someone wouldn't like him or that he would make someone mad, and he would have to deal with that.



Lauren Schieffer: There was no ego there at all. Because every time we sat down together, I would lay out what had happened over the last month and he'd be like, 'Yeah I know I didn't handle that well. Yeah, I know I should have done a different.' And no there was no ego there at all.

Peter Margaritis: Wow.

Lauren Schieffer: So, it's not always ego, a lot of it is yes.

Peter Margaritis: A lot of it is.

Lauren Schieffer: A lot of it is across the across the corporate board, we can say that.

Peter Margaritis: Yeah, but. I don't know you're talking about a little for an organization and the lack of self-esteem is very contradictory within itself, and how somebody would get to that role. I'll ask this one question was it a family business?

Lauren Schieffer: It was a very small town. It's not a family business. He had been with the organization for 38 years, and was very close to retirement. And I think that was the issue. I think that the Board was unwilling to shake it up so close to his retirement. I think that was the issue so I decided that I've never been one to show up once a month, just to collect a paycheck knowing that I am not having an effect and I'm not moving the needle. It's just not in my nature, so I told him it wasn't the best use of their money.

Peter Margaritis: And I bet you they appreciated the honesty and in that comment to them, and I know the CFO really appreciate it, because it's actually 20 that he can write a check on. But they had to, I mean, they had to... I would make this assumption that they viewed you in a different light when you did that, from what they've been viewing you because they know a consultant doesn't want to take this and stop the contract early? That's The Colonel's Daughter.

Lauren Schieffer: See but shouldn't that be a baseline for all consulting?

Peter Margaritis: Oh, it should be a baseline for all consulting.

Lauren Schieffer: You know if you're not getting a measurable improvement, if you're not moving the needle at all, then you're not worth being paid and you should recognize that and walk away. It wasn't a good fit it. It doesn't make you a bad consultant or the client, I mean. I love the people that I worked with. They work really... They're in healthcare and they work really, really hard, but I wasn't the right fit for them. Maybe five years from now, after they have new leadership in there they'll come back and ask but um. But I think that should be a measure of all consultants, if you recognize that you're not having a positive effect just showing up for a paycheck is unethical. I believe.

Peter Margaritis: I was, I was thinking, the same thing and really not having respect for your client.

Lauren Schieffer: Mm hmm. Yeah.

Peter Margaritis: I'm just here for the paycheck.

Lauren Schieffer: Yeah

yeah yeah interesting.

Peter Margaritis: Yeah, yeah, Interesting. I just have to say this, we could turn this into a three or four podcast series. I mean this has been some wonderful conversation. It has open my eyes on a lot of things and getting to hear it one on one because we've talked over the years, but never to this degree, and I'm so... my eyes are open wide and love the stuff that you do. So, as we, as we wrap this up. And those who are listening what's the one big takeaway from what you've discussed that they should apply every single day.

Lauren Schieffer: If you could wake up, based on what we've discussed... If you could wake up every day and solidify two things for yourself before you start the day. The first is I have value because I exist, and are therefore worthy of merit. And secondly, I make a choice today to treat all people with respect, whether or not I like what they think, say or do. I choose to treat them with respect, and doing so does not in any way diminish my value as a human being. Indeed, it solidifies it. If we could stand on that platform as we start every day and every exchange that we have with other human beings, what change would that have on America in general, not just your business but on America in general. That that would be the overarching takeaway I would want.

Peter Margaritis: We are going to do something with that and I when I say that we will be providing some social graphics to help promote but we're going to use some of that and social graphics because of that those are great takeaways that we also employ.

Lauren Schieffer: I have a graphic for my two pillars of serenity and success. I'll send it to you.

Peter Margaritis: Okay. Please do and what will add that to it as well. I can't thank you enough. I love this conversation, I am looking forward to when this comes out in a couple weeks. How can people find you?

Lauren Schieffer: Well, my website is [laurenschieffer.com](http://laurenschieffer.com). That's the best way to find me. I have a couple of three books on Amazon. If they want to reach out to me individually, it's very easy it's [lauren@laurenschieffer.com](mailto:lauren@laurenschieffer.com). That's the best way to get in touch with me. And I would love to come back and talk about significance, if you want to do that at some time.

Peter Margaritis: You had me at I'll come back again.

Lauren Schieffer: Oh great.

Peter Margaritis: I'd love to come back again.

Lauren Schieffer: This is so much fun.

Peter Margaritis: And I will make I will make a note on it. Significance.

Lauren Schieffer: Difference between success and significance.

Peter Margaritis: Perfect. Well, when we finish we'll look at the calendar and get you back on for that one.

Lauren Schieffer: That'd be fabulous well.

Peter Margaritis: Thank you so very much. I've enjoyed the conversation I know my audience will, and I look forward to the day that I can see you and not behind the computer screen Which is hopefully sooner than later.

Lauren Schieffer: Yes, thank you so much for having me.

Peter Margaritis: Welcome.