

# FINDING BRAVE

with Kathy Caprino

## Transcript

### Finding Brave Episode #23

### How To Take The High Road and Not Feed Hate

Kathy Caprino:

What am I going to do, to deal with these challenges in a way that's going to add positivity? That's what we need, we don't need any more negativity and hate and blame and vitriolic tearing down of human beings. We don't need any more of that. What we need is positive, affective, balanced, reasoned ways of dealing with the challenges.

Hello, everyone, this is Kathy Caprino and welcome to my podcast, *Finding Brave*. I've created this show for everyone who longs to create something bold and brave in their life, to rise up, speak up, and stand up for who they are, and to reach their highest and biggest visions. Each week I'll be speaking with inspiring guests from all walks of business, leadership, entertainment, the creative arts, and the entrepreneurial world. And they'll be sharing their intimate stories of finding brave and offer their best strategies for building your most rewarding, joyful, and meaningful life, business, and career.

Hello, everybody, Kathy Caprino here. Welcome to *Finding Brave*, hope you're having an amazing week, and you're learning and growing, and you're finding this podcast helpful on your path. I really hope that that's the case. I just celebrated a birthday, and boy it was just an incredibly wonderful weekend. And you got to love social media, where people who you haven't heard from in the longest time reach out and say, "Happy birthday." Some people don't like that, they think, "Well, if that person really cared about you they'd be in touch." I don't see it like that, it's just been wonderful to hear from hundreds of people that you haven't been in touch with on a daily or monthly basis but are thinking of. I think it's lovely, so that's what I'm coming off of.

But today I want to talk about something that's really important to me, how to take the high road and not feed hate and negativity. This idea, or my thinking on this, kind of came together when a wonderful writer Meera Jagannathan, who writes for Dow Jones' Moneyish website, she reaches out maybe once a month, once every two months when she would like some experts to weigh in on a particular issue that's tied to the news, but she knows what my sweet spots are, and she knows what I would love to talk about. She

reached out very recently on an article she was writing, *How to Take the High Road Like John Goodman and His Roseanne Response*. When these things happen, you give your own input and other experts she's tapping as well, and the piece came out and I loved it. I share it below here, a link below.

It talks about how John Goodman said, "I would rather say nothing than to cause more trouble." You got to give him a lot of credit because I'm sure he heard from a hundred media people about what he'd want to say, and he felt like, "I'd rather say nothing." In my response to Meera's article, I did say, "I believe that people with the platform have a responsibility to make a positive difference and sometimes taking the high road can be confused with cowardice, being afraid to upset your colleague or your friend by saying what you really feel." So I'm going to jump in on this and tell you my thoughts about how to take the high road and not feed hate and negativity.

I don't know John Goodman, seems like an awesome guy. I love his acting, love his projects but I would say this, I believe that you can take a stand and do it in a respectful way. For instance, another way to handle it could have been, "I've worked with Roseanne for whatever number of years it is, 30 years, 20 years. We are very good friends, we're very close colleagues, I respect her. That said, I am not behind the remark she shared. And that's all I'll say about it." I feel like there's nothing wrong with that and there's everything good with that. That you're supporting your friend, you care for her deeply but you are not behind in supporting racist comments. I don't think that causes more trouble, I think that states in a very calm, reasoned, respectful way that while I love the woman, I don't support those comments.

It was up to him to do that, but what I want us to think about is, what's going on here in our world? And I'm going to just be really honest and transparent. I've been writing on Forbes since September 2011, it's a lot of years and that is the start of when I became more of a public figure and a media person. I unequivocally can say that the world has gotten crueler, more rageful, more vitriolic, more hateful, and I think a number of things have caused that. I think everyone now can have a platform, everyone on the planet, if they have access to a computer or device can have some form of a platform, can share their views. Many people, however, haven't worked through their emotions, they're enraged, they're disenfranchised, they're unheard, they're disrespected in their own lives, they feel demeaned, devalued, and they're mad and they're rageful and hateful and they want to share that rage.

They haven't worked through their emotions enough to be effective communicators, all they're doing is spewing venom. Most people on the planet haven't had communications training, so they don't know the difference between using your words as a weapon and using your words differently. They just don't know how to do it, and they don't frankly want to do it, they don't care. So many are using their words as a weapon, and it's because they're in so much pain. That's what's going on, and they want to hurt other people, wounded people wound people, hurt people hurt people, they want to lash back. There's another thing that I feel is going on, on the internet: you're blind, you're not really seeing the people that you're hurting.

It occurred to me, it's a little bit of a tangent but when I was training as an American family therapist, we learned of a study called the Milgram Experiment and it happened in 1963, and I think it was Yale, I'll link to a write up of it. The scientist was interested in researching how far people would go in obeying an instruction if it involves harming another person, Stanley Milgram was his name. He wanted to understand, because this was not long after World War II, how easily ordinary people could be influenced into committing atrocities because an authority figure said to do it. It's a long story, I won't bore you with all the... It's not boring at all, it's fascinating but I won't give you all the details.

Basically, he set up a fake study where he recruited ordinary people and had certain criteria for who the pool was of the participants, and then he had actors or people who were complicit on the other side with what was going on. So these people were told that they were teachers. They drew a random straw that made them the teacher and they were paired with someone else who was the student, and the student was, in fact, an actor or someone who was going to create a certain experience. This ordinary person was told... I think it was a set of words, that they were giving this other person and they couldn't see the person. They could hear the person but not see the "student."

They were told that if the student gets the word wrong they were going to initiate a series of electric shocks. The teacher, who was the research participant, saw that there were, I think 30 levels of these shocks, and they saw them labeled to small shock, to the highest voltage, which in fact would kill somebody at the highest level, I think was 450 volts or something. What happened was, unbelievably they would initiate these shocks even when they heard the person, who was an actor and they didn't know it, scream and pound the wall and beg to stop. Then finally fall silent, as if they killed them. 65% of the participants continued to the highest level of 450 volts, and all participants continued to 300, which 450 would be fatal, 300 would cause severe damage.

Milgram's conclusion was, ordinary people are likely to follow orders given by an authority figure even to the extent of killing an innocent human being. Obedience to authority is ingrained in all of us, from the way we were brought up. Why do I bring up this horrific... and it's been controversial the way he conducted it. There's been people who've debunked it, but what I believe and what I think we're seeing is, when we can't see the person face to face who we are hurting, who we are tearing down, and calling, "You look like an ape," or whatever it is. There's millions of these comments every single day online. When you can't see the person you're hurting, you're freer to commit an atrocity. I really think so, a spiritual atrocity and maybe others. You're just not seeing them as a human being, you're dehumanizing. It so awful.

Where do I want to begin here with this? So Brené Brown, who is one of my favorite authors, shared at her talk, I think it was early January, at the National Cathedral in Washington. She said something like, "We started to hide behind our ideological bunkers with people who hate the same people we hate." I just fell off my chair when I heard that. I think she couldn't be more right. Especially in this country, in the US, we have totally lost the ability to calmly, rationally discuss politics or other emotional issues. We've lost it, we've just lost. We don't know how to do it. Worse than that, we lump everybody who doesn't agree with us, we label them, and we hate them.

You know what I'm talking about, you know how it goes over dinner when you're sitting with someone who's in a different party as you, Republican, Democrat, whatever. Most people can't even get through the meal without screaming and shouting. What's happened? I really do believe that what's happened is, and I'm not going to get political here, trying not to. But I believe that our leadership today has uncorked a very dark energy in our country, one that is not respectful, one that demeans people, one that dehumanizes and devalues people. An energy that's all about winning, and all about... I'm going to be political, make America first. You can't make America first when you're demeaning everybody around you, it's just not possible. It's the wrong way to go, it's damaging, it tears people down, it's the wrong way to go.

There is so much in the headlines today that's making us sick, sad, and helpless. People are using their voices with rage and blame. What's interesting is, we've learned, I learned in therapy training that when we are full of anxiety, full of pain, full of confusion, blaming someone else is a way to discharge that anxiety. It's not a healthy way, because all you're doing is releasing it, like out a funnel, but you're blaming someone else for what you're experiencing, and that's never going to address, it's never going to deal with it. You have to look at yourself, and how am I managing this anxiety? How am I managing reading the headlines every day and having a heart attack, or high blood pressure watching the headlines? What am I going to do to deal with these challenges in a way that's going to add positivity?

That's what we need, we don't need any more negativity and hate and blame and vitriolic tearing down of human beings. We don't need any more of that, what we need is positive, affective, balanced, reasoned ways of dealing with the challenges. How do we take the high road then? What we do? I'd ask you some questions here. First of all, how do you want to deal with the frustrations that you feel in our country here in the US, or if you're anywhere else listening? Do you want to deal with hatred, do you want to deal with your frustrations with hatred, with tearing people down, with calling them names or do you want to do it with kindness, peace, with calm, balance, reason, empathy, understanding, compassion? Do you want to make it worse, or do you want to make it better?

A few things we can do if we want to take the high road: Michelle Obama was quoted in this article by Meera that I love, in that her remarks in the 2016 Democratic National Convention, she shared that, "When they go low, we go high." I love that, I love it. I, for one, don't want to go low, when someone goes low at me, and maybe someone will when they hear this. I know some of you have heard this story, a while ago I posted a video on and then... a Forbes post on what is feminism, why do so many men and women hate it? Holy crow, I want to tell you the hatred that was thrown at me, and the C word, you talk about Samantha Bee saying the C word. Two people said, "Shut up, you dumb blip." You can fill in the blank. I mean the hate, and not just from men either, incredible hate which, when you've studied this as a therapist, as a marriage and family therapist, it's all about communication theory.

What's the metaphoric meaning of the words, what's the power dynamic being revealed, it's all about communication theory.

The interesting thing is, when someone comes at you with that much hate, sadly what they don't realize is what that shows about them. They think they're being strong and powerful by saying that, but really it's so clear who they really are, and what they're going through, that they would say that kind of thing to someone else. How do you want to deal with your frustrations and fury? I mean, we all have it. I think we're all pretty worked up here in the US. How do you want to deal with it? Do you want to be known as someone who elevates the conversation, or shovels it into the mud. If you want to take the high road, and don't get me wrong, I really am not saying be a coward. I'm not saying don't be forceful, don't be assertive, don't be confident, don't state your powerful views, not saying that.

I'm saying there's a way to do it, where you have elevated the conversation, you have made someone think, you have educated, or you have enlivened, that's Maya Angelou... wow, what a beautiful spirit! She said, "People will remember not what you say, but how you make them feel." That is so true, and when you've gotten slam-dunked, now not slam-dunked, slammed down, you're hurt terribly by how people are being so cruel to you, that's what you're going to remember, not the comment. The comment is not even going to get through, it's the energy of hate, that's what's going to happen. I promise you, the energy of hate doesn't instruct. You're never going to get anywhere with that.

What do we do to take the high road? I'd say this, don't jump into the fray just because you can. An example of this that I'm a little ashamed of, when Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie announced that they were splitting, the whole world was rocked. When they first announced it, all the news of it, all the backstory hadn't come out about what exactly happened on the airplane and et cetera. I won't go into it. But I wanted to write a piece about why we're so devastated when celebrities part. I wrote it about them, I don't know them at all. Don't know them except the way you know them, watching their films or reading their interviews. But I wrote from a perspective of, what it is to follow a couple and invest yourself in their lives even though you're a complete and utter stranger to them and always will be, and then what happens when we as the stranger looking into their lives, watches a marriage break down in that way and how it makes us feel, even though we don't know them at all.

I wrote it and I was going to post it on Forbes, and I asked my producer and she in her infinite wisdom said, "Yes, perfectly fine piece but it's out of your swim lane." That means I'm known for covering certain things, women's issues, leadership, confidence, empowerment, gender issues, not celebrity marriages. She said, "It's probably great for your own platform but probably not here, because you're not covering entertainment." I was later so grateful, because I read it again in a few days and I deleted it. Why would I be jumping and talking about that and adding to the fray? It's just to my point number one, don't jump in the fray just because you can. What good would that have done? Nothing.

The second way to take the high road, is don't hate on people who don't think like you. I mean, this is not easy for me and not easy for most people that I know. I'm one political bent, and as you know I'm quite liberal. When you're with a different type of thinker, it can be challenging. The question I have for you is, can you feel what you feel without feeling hatred for this person?

Can you... I don't even want to say hate their beliefs, forget hate. Can you disagree vehemently and still find a place in your heart to be respectful, to allow them the decency, the expression of human value that you want? That I don't agree with you, and I don't agree with the beliefs and the values and the ideals you're espousing but you're a human being, and from that perspective I'm not going to hate on you.

Don't tear people down, don't do it. Disagree in another way. I think it was in my podcast episode about how to speak up that I mentioned this, but there was a wonderful role model for me, Ann Dobbs, who ran market research for the company I was working with, and I hired and helped execute those, but she would always say in front of, in the beginning of every focus group, "It will not be allowed, the tearing down of others' ideas." You will not be allowed to do that here, that's not what we're doing, every idea has value. I'm asking you to phrase it as a build on an idea." And that just really was so wonderful and stuck with me, because even if you hate the idea that just came before you, let's say I'm commenting on Roseanne Barr's racist comment.

I hate racism, but I've got to say what she did opened the floodgates for us to look at how much racism exists in our country, and how much unconscious bias we have. In that way, what comes after is a build on what came before. In that way we've got to be grateful, because it's making us talk about things we don't want to talk about. What else can you do? Can you engage in compassion and use words that build bridges rather than set an explosive to them? When you build on ideas, you'll say something like, an end between two thoughts not but. You might say, "I think that's very true, Cathy," and let's say before you were listening to this podcast you might say, "But what I have to say is I don't agree with..." Well, you can say this, "I think that's very true, Cathy, and I'd say I don't agree with..."

It's not either or, so use "and", not "but," because "but" negates the whole thing that you just said before. "You're a beautiful girl but you can lose 20 pounds." Well, that's all the person's going to hear. The "but" negates everything that came before. Stay away from absolutes. I learned this in therapy training. When we're mad, "You never take out the garbage, or you always make me feel like I'm the last person you care about." Whenever you hear people talking in absolutes, you know they kind of come unhinged emotionally. It's never, never or always. There's always gray matter. Another thing people do is, "All Republicans do this, or all Democrats do this, or anyone who believes in blip believes..." It's not accurate, there is no way that it can be that absolute.

When you do that, you're demeaning people, and you're kind of missing the nuances. If you want to take a stand, I'd ask you to muster as much respect and consideration as you can. Now, let's take Roseanne Barr's comment, we may have zero respect for that comment, but she's a human being. I really believe that every human being on the planet deserves a modicum of respect, they're a human soul. Many people who act in vicious, awful ways are troubled and broken. If we're going to heap our hatred and our rejection of them onto what's already happened to them, that's made them feel so disenfranchised, and so hateful to other people, then how is that helpful? You can say forceful things without adding fuel to hatred.

Ask yourself, when you're about to whip off something on Facebook or Instagram or Twitter, "Am I adding anything valuable to this conversation or am I just wanting to hear myself talk?" And if the person were sitting in front of me, would I say it exactly that way? I'm sure you wouldn't. If Roseanne Barr were sitting right here and I were doing a podcast with her, I'm sure I would say things in the most balanced way I could. I'm sure I would try that, I might say something like, "What everyone's objecting to is, I think, that you thought that that was funny. Just tell us how your mind works, in what way is calling a woman an ape funny?" And she might say, "Oh, come on look at 50 other Don Rickles, 50 other, 100 other incredibly renowned men and respected comedians who tear people down for a living." And she would be right.

She would be right, I mean take a look at Don Rickles or many others, who that was their MO. We might be able to say to her, "Got you, do you think that that's, now is the time and place for that kind of humor? You think that that's actually helpful?" And if she says, "Yeah, it makes people laugh." Then I think at a certain point you just have to agree to disagree, it's different values, and that's the other thing I'd love to talk about. When we see all this stuff on Facebook and Twitter, do you really think you're changing someone's opinion? You're not. You can't really argue over the dinner table about values. I think that that's where we're stepping into our different ideological bunkers, and I think that's really everything we're talking about. Political differences and religious differences and ideological differences, it's about what you value.

You're not really going to change that person's mind by you spouting at them how wrong they are. Do you think I'm going to change Roseanne's mind by me spouting that, "I think what you did was devaluing a human being. And you might think that's funny, but I don't and I don't think the world wants it anymore." But that's a value, I'm not going to change her mind and she sure as heck is not going to change mine. How do we take the high road? I'd love your thoughts about this, how do you take the high road when someone's tearing you down? And that's another thing, taking the high road when you're in a nice secure, little comfy situation is one thing, but when I got attacked by doing this video, and this Forbes post, and even my daughter said, "What did you put it on YouTube for, Mom? Put it on Forbes or LinkedIn where there's more of a protective mechanism in terms of its structure, because you can't hide who you are, you have to, you know, really reveal who you are.

I find that LinkedIn is much more respectful. I don't mean that people don't disagree, they disagree a lot, but they say it in respectful ways that I can listen to. In fact, often when they disagree I've learned something about how I communicated my idea in a way that was a little erroneous, or I said the wrong word and how they interpreted it was not what I meant, but often it's because I chose the wrong word. It wasn't a perfect word for what I was trying to say. But yeah, she said, "Mom, take the darn thing down off of YouTube, it's just trolls, hateful trolls," and that's really true. But I was saying that, it's one thing to take the high road when you're not getting your butt kicked, but when people are saying the worst, most horrific things that no one's ever said to you before, it's very hard to remain balanced and take the high road, but by gum, I believe that's what we need today.

We need discipline in ourselves, we need to emotionally regulate ourselves, we need to, when we're furious, to find a healthy way to vent that, not tear another person down. If we're going to get through these years with how our country is behaving, then we have got to brave up and find brave. We've got to find brave in ourselves and breathe and regulate and manage our emotions and manage our words so that every word that you say, you've thought about it and you've chosen it. If the person who you're attacking or disagreeing with is sitting right in front of you, you could look them in the eye and you could say it. If your child was sitting there listening to you, you could turn to them after that conversation and not be ashamed. There's a nice way to leave that.

I know I've become my higher self for my kids more than even for me, I want to be a good role model and one thing I learned in therapy training, kids will do as you do, not as you say. You can talk to them till you're blue in the face about how they should act with respect, but if you're not doing it, that's what they're going to role model. They're going to use you as a model. I know that there have been so many times when my kids were little and even now, 20 and 23, what's about to come out of my mouth is a green, hairy toad that's going to hurt somebody, if they heard it, I will take it back and not say it, because they're there and I don't want to be that person.

If you can't do it for yourself, think about the role model you're serving as. If your children could see you writing this, would they be proud? I'm going to leave you with that thought. I really would love to hear; how do you take the high road? And if you don't, if you say, "Screw the high road." I'd like to hear why. Why do you think the low road is the right way? I'm not being facetious, I'd love to know why you think that taking the low road and slinging mud and letting out your rage is actually helpful, either to yourself or to the world, and doesn't even matter to you to be helpful. I'd love to hear it all, but please let's see if we can do this respectfully, if you don't agree with what I'm saying, you can have at it, you can let me know and you can comment wherever this post is. But do it respectfully please.

Do it in a way that you will be proud of and your children would be proud of and anyone who watches and listens to you would say, "Yeah, that person knows how to educate and then enliven and enrich a conversation." All right, my friends, let's do this, let's change it, let's be our higher versions of ourselves, let's turn this around because it's a nasty, nasty place to be right now, I think, where we are in the world. And boy, wouldn't it be something if in our generation we could actually with our own hands and our own words and our own hearts turn it around? Why not? Why can't we?

Thanks for listening, and give me your comments, post comments under the podcast wherever I share this, which is on Instagram. I hope you'll follow me there, it's all Kathy Caprino, Twitter, Kathy Caprino, LinkedIn I've got a huge following there, and I'd love to add you to it. Kathy Caprino there. Facebook I'm at Elliot Communications, that's my company name. Let me hear what you think, high road or low road, which are you going to take? Thanks, my friends, have a very brave week and I will see you next time. Bye now.

Thanks so much for joining us today, and please don't forget to check out [Findingbrave.org](https://www.findingbrave.org) for more programs, resources, and tips. And tune in next time for your weekly dose of *Finding Brave*.