

# FINDING BRAVE

with Kathy Caprino

## Transcript

### Finding Brave Episode #43

### How to Ask Questions That Build Trust and Connection in Teams with Chad Littlefield

Chad Littlefield: I can't teach any trick, any layer, any use these star questions with these words etc. Unless I share the fact that the root of the outcome of your questions, the responses to your questions are laid in the foundation of intention.

Kathy Caprino: 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*. I ask you every week, but how is it going? Are you finding that listening to this on a regular basis gives you that extra dose of bravery? I'd love to hear, and I'd also love to hear, one of my favorite comments I got was from my sister who said, "I don't know about this Finding Brave stuff, I found brave and told a woman off who was really making me crazy, and she got mad." And I said, "Uh huh, that's how finding brave goes, it's a journey and then you have to learn how to deal with the consequences of finding brave." So if you're feeling a little rock that I found it and now I lost it again, don't worry, that's the journey of every day mustering the courage you need to.

I'm so excited to have our guest, Chad Littlefield, today. Chad, thank you for taking the time, I'm so excited. Our challenge is gonna be shutting me up at 30 minutes. You said you were gonna be on my team, which we're talking about, right? You're not gonna let me ramble on and on with you for an hour. Right?

Chad Littlefield: You've got it, but I did know this was gonna be a good conversation because before we linked up here, I had this little bubbling sense of joy of like, Ooh, I get to talk with Kathy right now, so, very grateful to be on, and yeah, we'll try to keep it to 30 minutes.

Kathy Caprino: Thank you, that makes me tear up. Thank you so much. All right everybody, you're sitting down, I wanna tell you about Chad, but before I give you the bio, I maybe say this a few times a year, but I talk to a lot of people in the world and sometimes the conversation is interesting but it kind of leaves you like, okay, that was good. But sometimes the conversation, you can't get it out of your head, you're so enlightened by or maybe perturbed by it. You're something by It, and our conversation a few weeks ago, Chad, did that to me, and we're gonna talk about, there's a quote you shared that I have shared to about 30 people and maybe we'll be talking about it in Forbes, but Chad's the kind of person that when you talk with him, it gets in, in a beautiful way, so I wanted you all to know that.

So here's Chad. Chad Littlefield is the Co-founder of We! with an exclamation point, and creator of We! Connect Cards, a tool to spark conversations that matter, in 50 plus countries around the world. That's remarkable. He's spoken at TEDx, and most recently he and his partner Will Wise launched their new book, *Ask Powerful Questions: Create Conversations That Matter*. Now a number one Amazon bestseller. Hey congrats, that is amazing.

Chad Littlefield: That was a fun surprise.

Kathy Caprino: Oh gosh. Good for you, I'll have to get some tips from you, when my book comes out. All right, let us jump in, let's not mess around, Chad, you are all about the asking of questions, and you also shared with me a phrase that my head exploded about gently eradicating small talk. I was like, I would just love that. So, because I don't like small talk, and everybody knows that about me, but sometimes it can be jarring. You're gonna talk all about, what are the questions, what are the kinds of questions that it would be beneficial for us to move towards and which are those that it would be great if we could kind of move away from? Tell us all.

Chad Littlefield: Yeah. Well in the spirit of gently eradicating small talk, the first thing I'll invite for everybody listening, my invitation is to ruthlessly misinterpret everything I say from now until the end of the podcast and apply it to your own context. The reason I think that mattering, that word mattering is relative. What matters to me does not necessarily matter as much or at all to you, and so again, I want you to ruthlessly misinterpret this conversation and apply it, steal it and apply it.

Kathy Caprino: Wait a minute, I even have to understand that, do you mean you don't have to take everything incredibly literally, as I say it, listen to what speaks to you and use it. Is that what you mean by misinterpret?

Chad Littlefield: I don't know if that's possible to literally take what somebody says because we all have our own connotation for words.

Kathy Caprino: I know, filters.

Chad Littlefield: When all speaking English and people listening are hearing and processing English, I don't think that we're speaking the same language, I think that our words, our culture and our context and the way our lens and how we see the world is different and so when I use big words like connection, to you that means something else than it does to somebody else or trust, that word trust is really loaded for a lot of people and so when I just casually use that in a conversation, here's how to ask powerful questions to build relationships of trust. Whoa, I don't know that I

even want that, I've had trust broken, flag, flag, flag.

Kathy Caprino: There's like 10 things within there that make my heart race in other words. All right, so you're saying misinterpret, meaning apply it as you will.

Chad Littlefield: Apply it. Yeah, because nobody knows I even ... So, you and I happen to have the microphones right now, but my perspective, anytime I go in to work with a group from sitting down people, my perspective is that I am not the expert, even if I think I know a lot about a particular topic that we're talking about, I am not the expert, but everybody else in the room is the expert of their own experiences, because nobody knows their world, their situation, their projects, their challenges, their questions better than, in this case, you do, and so I wanna lean on that expertise rather than misadvise or missuggest something. So the ruthlessly misinterpreting is saying, you know your world best and so you, when I share an idea, tool, or tip, you'll know where that fits in your situation or where to apply that to.

Kathy Caprino: You're a coach, Chad, in your work, right?

Chad Littlefield: Yeah. Sort of by accident. Nothing that I signed up for.

Kathy Caprino: That is such a coaching thing, what you just did. It's crazy to me when I enter ... Here I go, it's already 10 minutes and we haven't gotten to the heart of it, but I always say to my clients, you are the expert in your life, I might be an expert in a methodology that I have developed that we will apply to you, but you are the expert in your life and that's what I need to come forward, it's so similar, isn't it?

Chad Littlefield: Yeah, and doesn't mean that there's no expertise to be shared. It just means that it's gonna be better, how you choose where to put it.

Kathy Caprino: I love it, I love it. All right, so tell us about questions. What's going on the questions today? And again, we're talking about how to build trust and connection in teams, in your relationships. So tell us.

Chad Littlefield: That's an important differentiator, because questions are used for lots of things, so if you wanna know what time it is, tools are not gonna help you, but if you wanna blow the relationship of trust with another human being, established that rapport more quickly. Those are the types of questions that me and my Co-founder Will Wise love to focus on. At the very base and the foundation of a really great and powerful question, and this is what we share, like no other tool, I can't teach any trick, any layer, any use these star questions with these words etc. Unless I share the fact that the root of the outcome of your questions, the responses to your questions are laid in the foundation of intention.

So, if my intention in asking a question is to genuinely be curious, to understand you, to empathize with you, to really just hear and get you, then however I ask my question, whatever my question is, it will be much more powerful than if I just give you a list of 10 powerful questions to build trust. Like that's not going to work because questions are the core element of human communication and human communication is messy, so, laying that foundation of intention, super important.

Kathy Caprino: I get choked up, like I'm getting teary eyed and I'm thinking, why are you getting teary eyed? I just wanna punctuate what you said. I think, and right now I'm raw because of what's going on in the US, I'm just so raw about how we don't listen really, and how we've bifurcated and we're so divisive and so vitriolic and we're not asking questions with a positive intention and you just hit the nail on the head, but I wanna say as a therapist, dealing with rape, incest, pedophilia, suicidality, I had to do so much work to try, and I think it's a tip of the iceberg thing, understand what my real intention is before I open my mouth, before I ask anything.

If I'm dealing with a pedophile, or let's say a father who beats his teen daughter and says to me, "She deserved it." I had to unpack in one second flat everything I feel about that and then have an intention about every question. If we were to do that, and if we were aware enough to go, you know what the intention about what I'm about to ask is not a good one, it's to rip them down. We'd change what comes out of our mouth every minute, wouldn't we?

Chad Littlefield: Yeah. Oh my gosh, intentions are such a fuel to the types of conversations and the outcomes that actually come out in those, because I think most often we have intentions that affect other people, but so rarely do we actually share those intentions with the people that they affect.

Kathy Caprino: I would go so far as to say, I don't think most of us actually know consciously what our intention is. I think we're defensive, I think we're angry, I think we're insecure. So the first thing is start to understand yourself, right?

Chad Littlefield: Yeah, and I think for those of us who are left brain who like click on the listicle article, give me the five tips for asking powerful questions. The practical nugget of a tip in this idea is get clear about your intention and state it to the other person, share it with the other person.

Kathy Caprino: Oh my gosh. Give me an example of this, and you're gonna talk about when to do it. If you were to walk up to someone in a cocktail party and lay it on them, they're your intention it might be like, Whoa.

Chad Littlefield: How about a story of a complete failure. I just absolutely fell on my face doing this.

Kathy Caprino: Oh, yes.

Chad Littlefield: Part of my work is going to organizations who do want to amplify a culture of connection, belonging, and trust, and to work with those teams over time to do that. So, part of that work includes workshops on teaching how to ask powerful questions and you cannot teach that from a Power Point, has to be experiential. So I'm working with this group as part of the ... We're in a three-hour session, and we did a full pause, we had just learned this tool which maybe we'll get into later about second layer up from intention of following your natural, genuine curiosity by finding something, if they're a stranger or for somebody you're just meeting for the first time, you don't have any rapport. Finding something that they're wearing, carrying, or sharing, that you're naturally curious about, and asking an open question rooted in your own curiosity.

So, we did a full pause, and invited everybody to leave the room that we're in and there were tasks where I was to build rapport, build a relationship of trust with three strangers using this tool and come back and report. So you can imagine when we give that assignment to the room, there was all sorts of responses and reactions, lots of them are rooted in doubt and fear, and

this is talking about finding brave. In that moment everyone is faced with, whoa, how am I gonna do this? Do I wanna do this? So, I'm never willing to preach or share something that I'm not willing to practice myself and so, like every other time that I had done this before in workshop, I went out, I was like, I might as well run an errand if I'm gonna do this to be a good facilitator and leader in this moment.

So I went down to this convenience store to run an errand, grabbed my item and as I was checking out there was a cashier who had bright colored tattoo. She had bright colored tattoos all over her chest with a lower cut shirt on. I'm thinking, like brilliant colored tattoos, just like art. I am so curious, and so I walked up and I was like, I have to ask, I'm so curious, "What's the story behind all these tattoos?" And she looked at me and she said, "I like the colors." Which was a big metaphorical, "Screw you, get out of my face" response, I did not build a relationship of trust in that moment.

Here's the fun thing, we get back to the room and all the students, all the participants are like, energy is totally different, everybody just had all these crazy experiences and we're about to go unpack and debrief all of those. This one student says, "You have no idea when you guys said that we're gonna do this, all of my body said, no way, I am not interested, I'm gonna go walk outside and sit on a bench for a while. But I figured, fine, I'm gonna find my ..." He didn't use this language, but he found his brave in that moment. And he said, "If I'm gonna do it, I might as well run an errand. So I'm gonna go down to this convenience store, I'm gonna grab something, and as I was checking out ..." Right, those of you who can't see, Kathy is leaning back on the chair right now.

So he goes down to the convenience store and as he's checking out, he sees this cashier with bright colored tattoos all over her chest, lower cut shirt, and he looks at her and he goes, "Wow, I'm so curious, I just have to ask, how annoying does it get when people ask you about your tattoos?" And she goes, "Oh my gosh, you have no idea, blah blah blah ..." Totally opens up, shares, there's this guy who was just in, asking me the story of my tattoos, like he was buying ... Just totally unloaded. He—

- Kathy Caprino: He did it.
- Chad Littlefield: —built a relationship of trust with her in that moment. So my question to, everybody is processing those two stories, is what's the difference?
- Kathy Caprino: What is the difference?
- Chad Littlefield: What's the difference between my failure and his success in that moment?
- Kathy Caprino: Can I guess?
- Chad Littlefield: Yeah, I love that. Yeah.
- Kathy Caprino: He wasn't asking her to do a diatribe about her life, he just assumed, which can backfire, but he assumed that that is going to elicit a lot of questions and he got on the same page with her empathically that, that's got to be a pain in the ass.

Chad Littlefield: Boom. So you said, and you said it afterwards, how did he assume that? He was able to take off one of his own shoes and step into one of her shoes and say, what must it be like to be standing in this one place as hundreds of people go by you and you have this huge like glowing sign on your body that provokes curiosity, thought, stares, whatever it is? And he was able to empathize. So the difference was empathy. I was like, oh, I teach this, this gonna be easy, clock down. I was like, yeah, —

Kathy Caprino: You got it good.

Chad Littlefield: —you say a phrase like, I'm just curious before you connect with somebody and it shares your intention in that moment. That's a place where intention wasn't enough to have that impact. Because my intention was very positive, my intention wasn't to invite a spill your soul on the conveyor belt, my intention was to just make a small connection as I pass by and ran my errand, but that wasn't—

Kathy Caprino: Another question that's even deeper here, do you think it's possible, it'd be really interesting. I have two colleagues, the behavioral science guys, Joseph Grenny, David Maxwell, they would research something like this. Do you think it's possible that there's also bias that you could have said the same exact thing, that maybe this guy has a look that she would resonate with or an unconscious bias that would make her go, oh yeah, this dude, I think there's stuff going on that we're not all in control of, wouldn't you agree?

Chad Littlefield: Majorly, yes. I think that in addition to that bias, there are some biases that may be so strong that no matter how we show up, that interaction is gonna go differently. So you could have somebody who had darker skin than both me and that student had, go in ask the same question, same positive intention and if that woman had had really bad experiences with somebody with darker skin that the response may be guarded already, because the words don't matter, if the words are being filtered and another example of even though we're speaking English, we're not all speaking the same language because we have a filter and all of what we hear gets passed through that filter.

Kathy Caprino: I'm even thinking, unfortunately, gender. If a woman came up and said that to me and a man said it, I would think he might be hitting on me, I don't know that I'd immediately go there. So I think what's ... Maybe a bullet here, bullet point is, do your best, but what comes at you from another is more about them than you. Would you agree with that? That's what we learned in therapy.

Chad Littlefield: Yeah. Much more reflection and I think it's probably helpful to look at and own your own contribution, but to not swim in it and feel guilty because of it.

Kathy Caprino: You have a great way with words, man, love it. Don't swim in it, it's so good. All right, what else do we know? Tell us more when. Talk about the positive social risks you mentioned about. Did we just talk about that? I don't think so.

Chad Littlefield: No. They have this term, positive social risk was, so the way that I even got into the work that I'm up to now, six years ago I was invited to give a TEDx talk on this topic of positive social risks, because of an organization I had started whose mission and focus was to challenge ourselves and other to take positive social risks. I was invited to give a talk to unpack this, it's part of the

reason that we love being in conversation with each other, Kathy, because at the heart of positive social risk is Finding Brave, is the element of ...

What stuck out from, I shared a story in that talk of being on a bus to go pick up a family member in Boston, which is I grew up an hour south of Boston and my wife and I live in Asheville, North Carolina now, but south, north very, very different places, so I'm in Boston and it's just cold, it was packed, there were probably 50, 60 people crammed into this bus and not a single person was interacting with each other even though they were four inches away, which isn't necessarily a bad or good thing, it was just an observation that, this is kind of weird, we all have these lifetimes of ungoogleable experience that we carry around and we're in this setting so close, so intimate and there's zero interaction.

I just tested, if there's any place to test whether a positive social risk can have profound effects in your life, it would be here. I looked down at this guy who was wearing a hat that said, the Jason Project on it. Following that tool that I briefly mentioned earlier, following my natural genuine curiosity by finding something that somebody is wearing, carrying, or sharing and asking an open question about it. I turned it on and I said, "Hey, this is a little bit odd, but I'm really curious, what's the Jason Project about?" And this dark, cold bus just turned into this like bright, brilliant, not for everybody else, but for me and Henry—

Kathy Caprino: It's magic.

Chad Littlefield: For me and Henry in this moment, he just lit up and he just went on this whole diatribe about, what the Jason Project is and how he worked with Robert Ballard, the dude who discovered the Titanic and this connection was made. Henry still sends me a Christmas card every year and I have a piece of artwork in my house from Henry that he created since he's a photographer. This connection was made because I took the social risk of being shut down and rejected in that moment because Henry very much could have said, I worked here once or I got it at Goodwill or whatever.

I think the risk part though, and the point, the reason that it's such a valuable concept or like language to have in mind, is that the actual risk of a social interaction like that is almost always lower than the perceived risk of that social risk. And gender and time of day and location and there are all these factors and contexts that play into that, and so it's an over simplification to say, but—

Kathy Caprino: My head is exploding, I mean we need to do like a three-hour workshop on this. I wanna ask you two questions. I wanna say something and ask something. One thing I've noticed, I'm living in an apartment now and I haven't lived in an apartment for 30 years, and I have a dog. The experience of connecting with strangers when you have a dog is about as different as you can get when you're not walking a dog. And I think that what's interesting is I think that having the dog is the instant connection, and maybe even the instant trust, when you got a dog and he looks pretty funny and, instantly, so I think in some ways we bypass, we're already talking about people share with me and I share with them, I'm actually here, I've just recently divorced, whatever. So, number one, do you find that, that connection and trust the process through it can be bypassed with something like that?

Chad Littlefield: Yeah, and I think that's the reason that we actually teach it in the book *Ask Powerful Questions*

that we talk about the idea of finding something that you see in the current environment. Because I wouldn't say that it's necessarily only the commonality that, oh, we both have dog. Dog owners share this overlap of understanding the world. I think that in the same way that Henry who put on the hat was at, Jason Project, when we wake up in the morning, most of us don't look like what we do at noon. We choose to put things on our body that in some way represent who we are and so it's a safe pathway to a deeper conversation, because Henry chose to put that on, and chose to display it publicly, he knew that he was gonna be on a bus in Boston, and so with the same way the dog, I think it says, or at least dog owners make assumptions about a person about who they are based on the type of dog they have, based on the way they're interacting with the dog, based on if they're slipping on their sweats walking the dog.

All these things play into the safety of like we're information sharing. We haven't said a word, but we've already had a whole conversation based on just seeing each other. Which is, I mean, bias falls into that conversation, okay.

Kathy Caprino: Of course. All dog people are dog lovers, and we're awesome. Gotcha. Now let me ask you this. This might sound a little woo woo to folks, but also I would like to hear your thoughts on, sometimes I get an urge to approach someone and talk to them, where I'm like, well, that's an interesting urge, okay. And if you take it to the most extreme degree, I think I mentioned to you, I have met with and spent time with Lorna Byrne in Ireland who sees angels. She believes and I believe her that she sees and talks to angels and she says that the angels tell her, "Go and talk to that person, sit down and have a conversation." So if you pull it back from that extreme that she really believes she's getting divine guidance, do you feel that we in your work that sometimes we are and we don't have to ... It's not a religious thing, it's our intuition. Do you believe that our intuition can sometimes tell us, go and make a connection there?

Chad Littlefield: Yeah. I think that, and I can, if anybody who's listening tends to be left brained and is in this place right now, like, whoa, Whoa, whoa, Whoa, whoa. I-

Kathy Caprino: She just took it out, took it out of the realm of, I was just taking a social risk.

Chad Littlefield: Yeah, well I think speaking to that though, I tend to fall into that camp, but I also very much believe that there's intuition and also get strong senses or urges or intuition to go talk to somebody or share something specifically that. I'm like, I don't know where this is necessarily coming from and so I love to talk with both right brain and left brain people because I think that there's an argument on both sides for this drawer, this connection between somebody. But yeah, I mean in terms of the woo woo thing, like my wife and I just got back from camping in the Blue Ridge mountains last weekend and looking up and seeing one of the arms of the Milky Way Galaxy standing up there. I don't care how literal or scientific you are, go stand outside, look across the ocean, look up we do not understand everything on the planet, in the universe.

So is it possible that as human beings, there's something that gives us a nudge to go talk to somebody? Totally, and I think people who are so sure that there's not, brings about more questions for me in how they came to that place of certainty in a world that we are surrounded by so much uncertainty, which is part of the reason I like questions because we get to fill in the blanks of that uncertainty.

Kathy Caprino: Oh, I'd love it. One more question then I'm gonna let you talk more. I'm an extrovert and people know if they've read my Forbes post, my son is an introvert. I was not aware of my bias towards extroverts until something happened to him in his college experience that was to me, flat out bias against introverts. I'm guessing that a lot of what you talk about and suggest and teach, an introvert might go, wow, oh gosh, no. And an extrovert might be, "That's a little risky, but yeah, okay." Do you see a difference in what you teach and how you teach it with introverts and extroverts?

Chad Littlefield: I should be interviewing you, you asked all the good powerful questions. It's such a good question and it's such an important question to unpack and I think the way that I can best answer it is three weeks ago I got back from speaking at a conference, and when I say speaking it's always interactive and so there's We! Connect Card things, like give everybody a card and invite everybody in your conversation. One of the first things that I do when I lead a question swap, conversation swap like that, is to invite people to reframe choice for people in the types of conversations they have, and so I acknowledge the fact that when I say we're gonna get into a conversation, half of you like energy up, you're ready, you just want me to stop talking so that you can start. And half of you are like, Oh, this guy, Chad I see what's happening here, oh boy.

Kathy Caprino: Fight or flight, like AAAHH! Get out of here, man, what happens?

Chad Littlefield: Being able to acknowledge both of those and to say, in what we're about to do, reminding people that you always have a choice in how you engage in conversation. When somebody asks you a question, I could ask you, what is life teaching you right now? And you could answer that with, actually the room's a little bit hot, I probably should've turned the thermostat down or like took off a jacket. You could also say, based on what's going on in the world right now, I'm feeling all this impact and this is what life is teaching me, and both of those would be true. I think reminding people that we have multiple sources of truth, we have multiple responses for any one question.

I was at this conference that I spoke in afterward and this happens every single time that I work with a group is, an introvert or multiple introverts will actually come up to me afterward and say, the first thing they'll say is, "First of all, I'm introverted and I never go up and talk to the speaker after a session." And so they're taking a risk just to do this.

Kathy Caprino: That's a compliment, that's so great that they do that with you.

Chad Littlefield: The second piece they said is, "I so appreciated what you brought, and who you were on stage because you assumed the social risk for me to have conversations, because as an introvert, it's not that people just drain me, period. It's that small talk and talking out of obligation, because I'm in front of somebody, that's draining, but my gosh, when I'm with a good friend and I get into a deep conversation that keeps us up until two in the morning, I'd gladly stay up until three."

It's that distinction between conversations that really matter to an introvert that are about ideas or unpacking things that are important to them in their life, so differently received than chit chat and small talk.

Kathy Caprino: Oh gosh, I love it.

Chad Littlefield: As I said it's part of my role when I'm working with a group I see actually I'm focused on and excited to create an opportunity for deeper connection for introverts. The extroverts can handle themselves on their own. I'll set up a question swap and they're like, sweet.

Kathy Caprino: And then you can't shut them up. Oh, I love it. So let's go into the small talk piece. Is that important for us to hit on? Can we, because you'd mentioned eradicating gently small talk. Can you tell us about that?

Chad Littlefield: Yeah, so the phrase, so I got clarity recently on a semi silent retreat to the middle of nowhere, that I really meditated, thinking on this question, why am I on this planet? Not what's the mission of the organization, but why are you on this planet? If there might be a higher purpose, why is there?

Kathy Caprino: Did you get that question asked of you or you chose on your retreat to focus on that question?

Chad Littlefield: Person who was facilitating the retreat had given us a handful of questions as there was that, —

Kathy Caprino: Why am I on the planet?

Chad Littlefield: Why am I on the planet? Very, very much to my surprise, I heard crystal clear language that I am here to gently eradicate small talk. The word gently was bold and emphasized in my brain there because to almost all people when you say, let's just get rid of small talk, they're kind of on board, but then when you're actually at a bus stop and you need to connect with somebody or hear, check me out, then reality hits and you're like, well, I'm also not gonna actually hop into a deep soul-filled conversation with somebody that I have two minutes to spend with and never gonna see again.

The gentle part is important to me, but I have been serving in general, in people's own way of defining small talk generally even asking an audience of a thousand or 2000 people, not more than 1% of any group I've asked this question to, will raise their hand when I ask, "How many of you really enjoy and love small talk?" There are some, there's that 1%, and so I usually say find each other and chat in that way and that's not —

Kathy Caprino: Have a small conversation.

Chad Littlefield: Yeah. So that's one level, recognizing that there's actually a gap in the types of conversations that fuel people and that people love and the ones that we're actually having on a daily basis, because we all, myself included, find ourselves in conversations that we're like, I'm having this conversation, but it's not necessarily about something or the process doesn't matter to me in this moment. And I think that that's okay to acknowledge, but part of the eradication is, when you look at anybody that you look up to, any wise teacher you look at Buddha, Gandhi, Jesus Christ, pick any influential leader, spiritual, or otherwise, philosopher in the world, and try to find any instance of them going up and asking how the weather is. Try to find it.

It just doesn't exist, these people that are known for changing and shaping the world, they have a gift in a way of creating conversations that really matter, moving from small talk to big talk and cutting to the heart of what matters.

Kathy Caprino: Don't we have to say we don't know what Lincoln and Gandhi and you know Martin Luther King did at the cocktail party or the dinner with family.

Chad Littlefield: Totally. So it's possible that 15 minutes before Abraham Lincoln's most famous quote, the Gettysburg address or whatever, it's possible at 15 minutes, he was, shooting the breeze with the person that was leading him up to the stage, whatever.

Kathy Caprino: Who knows? That's neither here nor there. All right go ahead. I cut you off.

Chad Littlefield: No, I appreciate that because I think what you're doing is infusing something that I also do and need to be reminded to do, which is give small talks some love, even for the 99% of people that say I don't love it, to acknowledge its place and its purpose in our own interactions and conversations. Because there are some times, and I would say though that this is where we get into nuance. I would say that "small talk," that helps us, quote small talk, that helps us get to know somebody or builds that relationship of trust with somebody, may actually be a conversation that matters because it's moving us toward that more real, more transparent, more open, more realistic, —

Kathy Caprino: And I need to ... We're over, but I'm not letting you go. I need to say this to my group, Wilton singers, I sing regularly in a group that means the world to me, 50 people age, 82 to 22. There's a lot of small talk after rehearsal, we have drinks and snacks, but I want to say this. I love these people and pretty much every one of them would take a bullet for me even though I don't see most of them except once a week on Tuesdays. But the small talk I do think keeps you in the fabric of their life. You knew that their child just went to college. "Oh, how's Sally doing at school? Did it go okay?" It's small, but it's keeping us tethered. What do you think?

Chad Littlefield: I wonder. I might disagree with you. They're small, you're calling small talk and in-

Kathy Caprino: Okay, we do need to define that. I was starting to think, okay, what is small and what's the word that you used that is the opposite of that?

Chad Littlefield: I think the way you just described it, just chatting about where kids are going off to school or what's going on with—

Kathy Caprino: That's not small talk?

Chad Littlefield: I would say it's not small talk only because you just shared it's really important and it helps me stay connected and in the fabric with people. To me that's a huge value add in that conversation and so we could unpack this further but if a conversation adds value to both parties, then I would say that it matters quite a bit if it doesn't—

Kathy Caprino: For the practical people, small talk is what's the weather? A lot of wind today, what else is small talk?

Chad Littlefield: You said, at the very beginning you were very nice and affirming that we had this conversation that we're really stuck with you and you were thinking about any other conversations that you're like, oh, that was nice. Any conversation that you leave with a shrug and like, "Oh, that was nice." And in a year from now you won't remember it, I wonder if that does matter, I

wonder if that is small talk, if that conversation might be for a number of reasons, so.

Kathy Caprino: Okay, I have more questions but not —

Chad Littlefield: It's the beauty of nuance, so we could talk about this forever.

Kathy Caprino: Oh, yeah, it's nuance. All right, so where were we on, what were we talking about?

Chad Littlefield: This is the perfect sign of a conversation that matters is you lose continuity, you get into a flow and everything that's bothering you outside and I think that's part of the process of a conversation that really sticks or is important to somebody else. If you forget where you were, what was happening, and you're totally focused on the other person, what they're saying, their ideas, who they are in the world, that's cool and that happens pretty rarely in a world where we're so connected with our thumbs and yet so much more disconnected than historically we have been face to face and with each other.

Kathy Caprino: I know where we went, I totally agree though with you on when I'm with friends, I could be in a hut, I don't even remember what city I'm in. I'm like, "Where were we?" But small talk, gently eradicating it. Do you have some tips for those practical people taking notes? What do we do if we want more meaningful, valuable conversation, which I think most people want. What do we do?

Chad Littlefield: Two quick ones in review of get clear about your intention and share it with the other. Second one is follow your own natural, genuine curiosity. People know when you are not being curious, genuinely curious about something and asking questions because you read it in a book once or something.

Kathy Caprino: Or you are filling up time for you to go to someone else you wanna talk to, right?

Chad Littlefield: Yeah, oh my goodness. How many times have you been in a conversation that it kind of ends a little bit and then somebody says, "So." And there's this pause and this rekindling. Yeah. So that genuine curiosity, huge one, then the second one for people who like really concrete stuff is, and this will hopefully make some people angry. It is, ask questions that only begin with the words how or what. Particularly the angry part is, and when I'm teaching this in a workshop, I'll write the word why on a piece of paper and I'll rip it in half and crumple it up and throw it in the corner and I wanna, it's not because I don't like Simon Sinek and the idea of start with why has nothing to do with finding your purpose and sharing your and getting clear on showing your purpose.

Kathy Caprino: Can I guess why you don't like why?

Chad Littlefield: I would love that.

Kathy Caprino: In therapy training, we learned that "why" puts someone on the defensive that they have to defend.

Chad Littlefield: Yup.

Kathy Caprino: That doesn't feel curious, it feels like all right, why the hell do you think that? Now I gotta

defend.

Chad Littlefield: And you could be really curious, your intention could be curious. You could be totally present, but when I asked somebody why are you late and they just showed up five minutes late, what were they already thinking about for 10 minutes on their way there rushing? They were thinking about their defense of why they were late in that moment. That's one way.

The second way that I love even more is for any of you listening that have kids or once were a kid, and you're walking around the world and you're three feet high walking around the world, what question were you asking? Why? Why? Why is the grass green? Why is the sky blue? Why? Why? why? Why? This deep curiosity, and so as we were growing up our neural pathways of asking why are so well developed that on the flip side we've also been asked so many why questions that we've just gotten really good at defending, justifying, giving the quick response to those questions and so just by applying the tool only ask questions to begin with, how or what, actually is just a little brain trick or hack to rewire your brain to ask more deliberate intentional questions. Because you go to ask a why question and you say, "Dang, I listened to that podcast that Chad Littlefield, and I need to reel it back and I need to rephrase it as a how or what question." And almost every why question—

Kathy Caprino: So, can I dimensionalize that?

Chad Littlefield: Yeah.

Kathy Caprino: I think my kids who ... My son is a senior in college, my daughter is out of college, but both of them hated questions when they were a senior in high school. What are you choosing? They hated anything having to do with that, but if I said to someone, "Oh, why'd you choose University of Delaware? That sounds a lot more than why, that's like a judgment, that's like ... But could one say, if I was really concerned with how did they do it, could I say, "Oh, I'm so interested in how you made your choice, given that there were five schools that you were interested in. Can I learn more about that?"

Chad Littlefield: Yeah. Oh my goodness, every single why question can be reframed as a how, what question that has a little bit less judgment and a little bit more opportunity to build a relationship of trust, rather than invite the person to defend their choices or who they were or whatever in that moment. Yeah.

Kathy Caprino: That's so good

Chad Littlefield: That's an obvious, right?

Kathy Caprino: It's so practical. I mean, I hope your head, everyone, is exploding with, oh my gosh, every question I ask is why? I mean it takes work. It might even take you as a therapist when they said, "know why." So I'm like, what? How am I gonna do that? It takes work to frame it differently. I mean, you might pause, you might ehem, but it's okay because it will bring about amazing change in how people respond to you. What else? We're over our time. What's the final thing? Oh, please give me the quote about listening.

Chad Littlefield: Yeah, so we talked about this whole thing of asking questions, but if you're good, actually I care

about listening so much that I keep a giant ear next to me on my desk, because when I'm on a video conversation with somebody, so often it comes up, but I think the root of just about every argument is that somebody doesn't feel heard. Really heard. I also have yet to meet a person who doesn't have a desire and a very deep level to be heard, and seen, and understood in some capacity. Sometimes there's some fear around that, but in general there's such a profound... So that quote that I love from Alan Alda is, "Listening is being able to be changed by what the person says."

- Kathy Caprino: Gosh, dang it. It's a beautiful one. You and I talked about it earlier and I immediately went, but wait a minute. I'm a political affiliation, I'm this, I'm that, no one's gonna talk me into this or that. And you said, no, no, no, let me clarify. It's not that I'm willing to have my deep ideals and values to be changed in one conversation, but how did you instruct me about what it means? What do I need to be willing to be changed about?
- Chad Littlefield: I think if you're willing to be changed about your perception of that person, the other side, their perspective, —
- Kathy Caprino: I mean, I think we've got to make that a billboard.
- Chad Littlefield: Maybe we should.
- Kathy Caprino: And put it in every highway and every city because we in this country, I feel have lost that.
- Chad Littlefield: Oh Man
- Kathy Caprino: That makes me cry.
- Chad Littlefield: If you're listening and wanna sponsor a billboard that has that quote on it I'm in and —
- Kathy Caprino: Alan Alda, I featured him in Forbes and I have his great book. He trains on communication, given his incredible acting experience. He'd be overjoyed to see us do that. Anything else, Chad, where do we learn about you? Where do people who wanna hire you, just tell us, shamelessly promote. What do you offer organizations, teams, individuals that they need to know about and where do they find out?
- Chad Littlefield: Sure, thanks for the generous question. So for those of you who also are like, wait, I listen to this podcast because I wanted a list of questions, you can go to [weand.me/ideas](http://weand.me/ideas) and there you can get, if you want that list of questions that really tend to build relationships of trust, you can fill information out there and I'll pop in your inbox in a video every once in a while with a, "Hey, here's a tip on how to amplify connection, belonging, and trust in your own organization." So [weand.me/ideas](http://weand.me/ideas).
- Kathy Caprino: We'll link to that below, no worries. I just wanted to hear you talk about it.
- Chad Littlefield: Cool. Yeah and then if you're a reader, get this book, *Ask Powerful Questions: Create Conversations That Matter*, which goes into way more depth and unpacks and has lots of rich stories of connection and 25 other tools and ways beyond what we've talked about today, so that's a big one.

Kathy Caprino: Oh Chad, thank you for the work you do. I feel like every organization needs you. You got my endorsement, I think we all need help and if you've been a trained therapist you learn a little of this, but we all need it, and we all need to remember it and live it more and I love your first tip. Let's just gain awareness of our intentions, and be honest. That takes bravery, because we don't wanna look at how. Yeah, I really actually don't wanna support that person and I pretended I did.

Thank you, Chad. Come back again so we can unpack one of your favorite words, I think. Let's unpack this more, come back again, will you please. Thank you so much and everybody, I hope you're inspired, this doesn't take a million steps it takes one step first, well, it takes a few more than that, but we would, Chad, isn't this true? We would love to hear when you try these tips, can you write us under the podcast or where I post it on my Facebook *Finding Brave* page or on Instagram or Twitter and we'll have your handles listed too. We'd love to hear. Oh my gosh, I did it and this is what happened and if you were challenged by what came at you. Then we'd love to help you through that too, right Chad?

Chad Littlefield: Would love that

Kathy Caprino: Thank you.

Chad Littlefield: A tiny act can have profound effects, so if you take that tiny act, we would totally love to hear about that.

Kathy Caprino: We'd love to hear it. Thank you, thank you for joining. So enlivening and thanks everybody for being here and *Finding Brave* in your own life and we'll see you next time.

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