



WiseLife™ Speaker Series Featuring Richard Leider

Why Uncertain Times Need Certainty of Purpose

June 9, 2020

Becky Krieger:

Tonight our session is going to be kicked off by Richard Leider. He's going to spend the first part of our program talking about the work that he's done around purpose. And then Ross has a list of prepared questions that will guide tonight's conversation and we're going to plan on ending right around 7 p.m. So I would like to kick this off and introduce you to the man you may already know. Thrilled to have Ross Levin moderate tonight's conversation as he has found meaning and purpose in improving the lives of others. Ross is a regular columnist for the Minneapolis Star Tribune and Financial Advisor Magazine as well as a highly sought after speaker. But he is an industry pioneer with a dedication to giving back and improving the financial planning profession. He was the very first recipient of the Financial Planning Association's Heart of Financial Planning Award and the inaugural recipient of Financial Planning Magazine's Lifetime Achievement Award. Youngest ever.

Ross recently served as the chair of the University of Minnesota Foundation and is an ambassador for the Certified Financial Planners Board of Standards in Washington DC. Ross's guest this evening, Richard Leider is the founder of Inventure - The Purpose Company where the mission is to help people unlock the power of purpose and answer that question. Along the way, Richard has written 10 books, including three best sellers, which have sold over one million copies. The Power of Purpose and Repacking Your Bags are considered classics in the personal growth field. Widely viewed as a pioneer of the global purpose movement, his work has been featured in many media sources and his PBS special, The Power of Purpose, was viewed by millions of people. He has taken his purpose message to all 50 states and four continents and has advised everyone from the ARP, to the NFL, and our own US state department. He is ranked by Forbes as one of the top five most respected coaches. Today we are pleased to have him here with us so please join me in welcoming Ross Levin and Richard Leider. Thank you.

Ross Levin:

Thank you Becky. Richard, I'm really excited to have you. I have to admit I've only read probably seven of the 10 books.

Richard Leider:



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Ross Levin:

They've been really great and I'm really excited about your next book that's coming out which hopefully we'll get a chance to talk about. That'll be coming out next year. So thank you for doing this. To kick off I thought it would make some sense for you to kind of talk a little bit about purpose and some of the work you've done and the research that you've done and take a few minutes to kind of go through some of those things and then I'll start to ask you some questions if that works out for you.

Richard Leider:

Works great for me. Thank you and it's a real privilege and I've been looking forward to it. Anytime I can hang out with you and talk about big ideas, plain living and high thinking, it's a good thing.

Ross Levin:

Thank you.

Richard Leider:

We can't really do this without doing the ... And Becky already did the context of the pandemic and everything that's going on. And I think there's kind of a crisis of spirit going on right now which is going to lead to what I would call a social recession, not just a financial recession. So I think you deal with both and The WiseLife Speaker Series deals with both. What I hear day in and day out today in the work I'm doing and have done for over four decades is this. I just want my life back again. And what people mean by that is different because everybody's an experiment of one. So when they say they want their life back again. And then the world comes up, the new normal. I don't think there will be a new normal. I think there will be a new you or a new possibility, but it's not going to go back to normal. Some things will be normal again. But I think for all of us ... And I know for me personally it's been a mixed bag. I go back in the olden days, January, I gave speech in Costa Rica and I was here and there and doing this and that and all of the sudden on a Friday afternoon in March, everything was wiped out for the future relative to that kind of work.

Richard Leider:



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The silver lining for me in that mixed bag was writing a new book, which I had a contract for but I'm now way, way, way ahead of where I would be otherwise. So for tonight the question is this, can we grow from a crisis or is it going to be the new normal and go back to the way it was? Can we grow from a crisis? The answer in positive psychology and the purpose movement is unequivocally, absolutely yes. Purpose and uncertainty go hand and hand. Purpose gives us a compelling reason to get up in the morning and to do what we need to do to transform our lives and help others. As Nietzsche said, and has been quoted often by many people, "He who has" ... Or she. "He who has a why to live, can bear almost any how." So I think we've got the how. Lot's of hows right now that need attention, but the question is why? What's the point of the exercise and how do we when you get up in the morning ... Which is what purpose is really all about. Purpose is the answer to the why question. And that is, why get up in the morning? And when I do get up in the morning, what am I going to do? What's my life going to be about?

Richard Leider:

So purpose is not a trend nor is it a luxury for the good times nor the wealthy nor the well educated. It's universal, worldwide. And what I've discovered over decades of study and meeting with many, many who I would consider world renowned thought leaders around this, is that purpose is fundamental. It's fundamental to health, it's fundamental to healing, it's fundamental to happiness. And ultimately it's fundamental to longevity. People who have a reason to get up in the morning beyond their own self, serving others in some way, tend to be more resilient and live seven to 10 years longer. So when I did a PBS special, PBS paid for me to go to neuroscience labs around the country. Many of whom where I had already been. And what you find today is that there is science clearly, neuroscience, that shows that purpose affects actually the structure of the brain. And so we can go into detail about that if people want to. But I talked in January when I was kidding about the good old days in Costa Rica with a woman who wrote The Telomere Effect. She won the Nobel Prize for telomeres. If you google it.

Richard Leider:

In telomeres everyone of your chromosomes like the end of a shoelace ... You know that little plastic tip on the end of a shoelace? Every chromosome in your body has a little tip like that called a telomere. And if those telomeres shrink you age quicker and you get sick faster. If those telomeres grow or continue to be steady, you are healthier and live longer. And what they've been able to measure in the brain and in the body is that purpose actually ... It's not the only thing. Diet, exercise, other things. But you can have all those other things but if you don't have a reason to get up in the morning, the telomeres shrink. Dr. Elizabeth Blackburn won the



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Nobel Prize for that. So anybody who's a skeptic online right now, I just want to say that there is science there. But here's the point that I would like to make before we turn it into some questions, et cetera is that, often we get purpose and we get transformation or change in our lives when there's a crucible, when there's a problem. Like the pandemic is a crucible. George Floyd's death was a crucible for many.

Richard Leider:

But crucibles are those situations that really change the game in terms of how we have to show up and how we can show up in certain ways. So purpose is fundamental to surviving and thriving and particularly, during these crucibles, during these changes ... And think about any change in your life. It could be a financial change, could be a health change, could be an age change, could be a divorce. You can name many, many things. What you're all about Ross is helping people to secure those and to make sure that they and their families are okay with these. But what happens during one of these is we go higher and we go deeper. And when we go higher we step back to make sense of things, to see what's going on out there. And then we go deeper after that to say, well what's my reaction going to be? Consider your reaction to 9/11 for example. It was, what's really going on? And then oh my gosh, I better call home. I better get home or whatever. Same is true with all of these. Breakdowns often, not always, but often precede breakthroughs. And so what happens during one of these is something called limbo. A trigger comes and we go into limbo.

Richard Leider:

And limbo is that period of uncertainty between something ending and something else beginning. It's the chaos. It's kind of like being between two trapezes. On the one hand we're holding on to the past, the old normal. And in the other hand we're looking for the new normal. But before letting go of the old, we want to make sure of the new and we're not sure of the new right now. So we're holding on to both and being in that trapeze is a lot of stress for people. It's chaos and they look for guidance. They look for, well what do I do in times like ... So I want to share with you in a few minutes three equations or three things that I think we need to do when we're in limbo, which many, many people ... I think the most recent study I just saw ... It was in the New York Times or someplace. That 80% of the country is feeling anxiety. And I know I'm not and many of you listeners and viewers are not necessarily on the wealth side or the health side at risk at the very moment. Some are. But what happens is we have anxiety regardless. Because we don't know and we don't like uncertainty. And so when we have those, there's three reactions in the research. You asked about the studies. There's three reactions that people typically take when they're in limbo.

Richard Leider:



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Think of you, think of your family, think of the people, your partner, spouse, et cetera. Anyone you want. Which of these are you or which are they? First is ... It's kind of like a natural bell shaped curve. Not the first, but one group of people. Maybe 15, 20%, maybe higher. They spiral into hopelessness. They don't recover and they go into despair in certain ways and they really need a certain kind of help. The middle of the bell curve are people who do bounce back but that's after despair. They're not pollyannish. They're not saying oh, this too will pass and just hang on. They go through despair. They go through anxiety. They go through different hoops. After which they end up ultimately often a year later bouncing back. The right side is what they call now, post traumatic growth syndrome. There are people who are post traumatic growers. And that's who I often have studied. That's who people like Abraham Maslow have studied when he studied self actualized people. These are people who tend to grow through a crisis. That's the wise ones. That's the wise people that we seek. Not that they're smarter, braver, richer, stronger, but somehow they have the resilience to come back and grow through.

Richard Leider:

In the '60s after getting out of graduate school, I was trying to figure out what to do with the rest of my life. And you'd think you'd figure that out with a advanced degree in counseling psychology and certificate as a counselor and all of that. And I saw that one of the people I'd studied was Victor Frankl, was doing a seminar in San Diego. And I was in Colorado at the time and I hightailed it down there with no money, camped out and spent a week with Victor Frankl who wrote the book *Man's Search For Meaning*, which is true classic in the field that we're talking about here. And that's the field of transitions and dealing with crisis and all of that. And he said this. I'll never forget. He said, "The last of the human freedoms is choice. It's to choose what you want your life to be about regardless of the circumstances." So the people on the right hand side of the bell curve tend to be make choices. What choice do you have in a concentration camp? Which he was in four concentration camps. His pregnant wife, Tilly, and his parents and his siblings all got killed. He's the only one who survived.

Richard Leider:

And so he was liberated from Auschwitz. He went back to Vienna where he's a neurologist and a psychiatrist training other doctors. And after he healed ... He weighed 87 pounds when he got out. He healed after periods of time and he sat down in nine days and wrote *Man's Search For Meaning*, which has become a classic. That fortuitous encounter changed my life and changed my trajectory to be where I am sitting here with you today. But what he talked about which I want to leave you with is something he called, tragic optimism. Tragic optimism. That's that mindset of growth. In the concentration camp he could get up and give somebody else a kind word, a hug, a crust of bread, a slurp of soup. Hope for the future. Something beyond



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himself. And that's what purpose is Ross, and you and I have talked about this before. Purpose is always outside of yourself. It's something larger than you. You get up in the morning ... E.B. White kind of nailed it when he said, "I rise in the morning torn between a desire to save the world and a desire to savor the world. This makes it hard to plan the day."

Richard Leider:

Regardless of what stage you're in, retired, not retired, working, health issues, whatever, saving and savoring is what the balance is in certain ways. And saving doesn't mean literally being Mother Theresa or Gandhi, saving the world. It means, making a contribution in your own way. So let me stop there for a moment before I share these three tips or three equations about dealing. What do the tragic optimists do? What do they do that we can learn from and what have I learned over four decades? I think you're going to share, if people want, my manifesto. I consider myself a pioneer in the purpose movement. Well every movement needs a manifesto, so I wrote what I call my Incomplete Manifesto for Purpose. Incomplete because I'm still learning. I learn about this all the time in spite of the fact that I know some about it, I'm learning almost every day about it. Particularly in writing. Writing for me is really about study and learning. So I think you're going to share that manifesto and my top 10 questions with people, send it to them online, so I won't go through that right now.

Richard Leider:

But every new idea goes through three phases and purpose back then in the '60s, '70s, et cetera, wasn't like it is today. And so the German philosopher, Schopenhauer said, "Every new idea goes through three stages." First is, ridicule. Purpose, you can't eat purpose. I mean, get a life. I need to pay the mortgage and all of that. We can talk about that. Second, violent opposition, actually pushback. People saying ... And healthcare or in financial services et cetera. And Accredited has been way ahead of the game on blending life planning and financial planning and I applaud you and I love reading your columns about it and hearing what you have to say about it. And the third thing is, self evidence. So ridicule, opposition and then self evidence. Well now both the science and the psychology say that purpose is really self evident to a long life and to a healthy life and to a happy life. So let me push the pause button here and see if you will want to weigh in before I share these three tips.

Ross Levin:

Richard I really appreciate what you're saying. I think it's really important and especially during this period of pandemic because we have to figure out how to come out of this thing. And I agree with what you're saying that there isn't a new normal. I call it a now normal, what things are going to be like today. That's all we really know. But before you share the three things, one



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of the things you said that I thought was really important and I think people need a better understanding of, is when you talk about higher and deeper, that deeper piece is hard for a lot of people. And when I'm working with a variety of people and they look over their lives and they experience regret, it tends to be around maybe not having the purpose that they thought or not going deep enough on some of the things that they really needed to explore. So when you talk about maybe your three things, could you also talk a little bit about how you go deeper, what it looks like in this fast paced world what we do.

Richard Leider:

Yeah, these are actually three ways to go deeper so it fits right into that. But we are a society of doers, not reflectors. And that's why oftentimes a crucible or a crisis is what forces us to go deeper. To say, what do I need to do here? What can I do here? Well let me share these. First of all, number one is have a reason to get up in the morning. Have a why. And it's all about contribution. As I said, purpose is about your aim. I had a conversation with the chief of primary care for the astronauts and their families at the Johnson Space Center. He was trying to figure out how to help astronauts as they leave the space program in the next phase of their life after they've had this focus. It's like people who've made wealth and had a focus. Now what? The game has changed and the old rules don't apply to the new game necessarily. And I said, "Well why is this such a big thing?" And he said to me, "Richard, have you ever heard of the overview effect?" And I said, "No." He said, "Well, look it up." Well I've sense studied the overview effect. In almost every astronaut ... And there has been almost 600 astronauts that have gone into space now. 12 have walked on the moon, 40 women, et cetera.

Richard Leider:

And he said this. And he quoted this. This is from Bill Anders from Apollo 8. And he said this. "We came all this way to explore the moon and the most important thing is that we discovered the earth." And what happened with the overview effect is they went up there with this achievement orientation and they came back with a contribution orientation because they looked and all of that black space out there. It looks black from what I'm told and the pictures. And there's beautiful blue orb with no boundaries and there may be the sun or the moon depending on where. And the overview effect is, almost every astronaut has changed their perspective on life. That's what the overview effect is. They come back wanting to somehow contribute to save this planet. Not just because of the climate. And I don't mean save, I'm just going with the save and savor. But I mean literally make a contribution somehow. This is so fragile and so precious and one of a kind. We don't need to go to the moon and we're not astronauts. But we do need to have an overview effect.

Richard Leider:



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And at some point in midlife we need to reflect and look at the big picture. Why am I doing this? What's my legacy going to be? What do I want? What's my mark in certain ways? So the equation I use for number one, having a reason to get up in the morning is, $G + P + V = C$. Gifts, plus passions, plus values, equals calling or purpose. Another word for purpose. If you get up in the morning and you use your gifts, the things you love to do, on things you care about and feel passionate about just a little bit each day, in an environment that values you and that you value, you're living purposefully. That's what we call living purposefully. And so that's the first one. So let me give everybody here a purpose. So you can't say oh, it's too big. Here's what I learned from doctors. One doctor when I was in the neuroscience labs held up a pill. And he said, "Richard, do you see this pill?" And he said, "This pill will reduce the effects off Alzheimer's, will reduce the incidents of macroscopic stroke by 41%, will help with sleep apnea and other disorders and add seven to 10 years of your life. You want to buy it?" And I said, "Of course, but who can afford it?" And he said, "It's free. And you know it because that's why you're here. It's purpose."

Richard Leider:

And he was simple making the point that there is time coming when your doctor in addition to giving you a vaccine for the pandemic, is going to give you a purpose. Say, "Ross, you need a reason to get up in the morning in addition. I've done what I can do for you but you need to have this part and your heart all aligned in ways that'll give you the resilience that you're seeking." So here's the default purpose. Only two words. And if you're listening to this, please write these down. Even write it on a post it. Grow and give. That's it. Four decades of work. If you get you every day with the intention to grow and give today. And you write that on a post it and you put it on your mirror and you say in the morning, how am I going to grow and give today? And at the end of the day before you go to bed at night you look at it and say, how did I grow and give today? Holding yourself accountable. You're living purposefully. And at the end of five days ... Five days. You will absolutely know exactly what I'm talking about. Because you will feel purpose. It's not just a mental construct, it's a felt sense. Purpose is a verb. It's something we do and it's a felt sense. We can feel it when we do it. So that's number one.

Ross Levin:

When you say grow, what does grow look like? Is it about being curious?

Richard Leider:



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Yes, it's about being curious. That's exactly it. But it's what you asked about going deeper. It's about opening doors that you haven't opened before. It's about curiosity. And as the founder of TED, the TED Talks, the founder of TED, Richard Saul Wurman taught me when I was backstage with him at an event. And he said, "You know, TED was founded on curiosity because billions of people, billions every year, are curious enough to watch a TED Talk." I said, "Well how do you define curiosity? How do you define growing?" And he said, "Curiosity is about seeing the extraordinary in the ordinary." It's not about going to school, going to a class, even reading a book. It's about noticing and observing what's right there in front of you in nature and the other person that's across from you. Asking questions. If you're not curious about yourself ... And you know you've been to dinner parties where you go home and say, "We sure know a lot about them but they didn't ask one thing about us." Well that's one you probably don't want to go back to again. And that's not curious. And curiosity keeps people alive.

Richard Leider:

So number two ... And by the way, the paradox, the overview effect, the paradox is we go on the outside often, like to the moon, but we find purpose on the inside. And so the same is true. Whether it's a crucible or other things in our lives and we end up making choices from the inside. Number two is have purpose moments. Have purpose moments. And there are 1,441 moments in a day to grow and give. That's how many minutes there are in a day. So if you take sleep away from that, that's less. But purpose moments are when you stop and say hello to somebody. It used to be give someone a hug or a doorway ... It's the listening to somebody. It's the simplest little things that take a minute or two that make for a legacy life and it all adds up in the end. So having purpose moments. The number one stress buster is purpose moments. When we get outside of ourselves and contribute something to others. Where are we? We're in the present moment. Not thinking about ourselves and it busts our stress in certain ways. So with people who are depressed, there's medications and it depends on what kind of depression. But getting them out to do something for somebody else often may not cure the depression but it will make the day.

Richard Leider:

So even on your worst day, today, there's times when you can have emotional contact with others instead of emotional contagion, which if you watch the news too much. It's emotional contagion. You get into a downward spiral. So purpose moments. And the formula here is this. It's not letters, it's anxiety equals uncertainty times powerlessness. People are anxious today. We talked about that. The anxiety of what's going on with all the things that Becky talked about in the world and you talked about. And different levels of anxiety and it's uncertainty



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times powerlessness. Well what can we do about certainty? The one thing we can be certain about is purpose. Having a reason to get up in the morning. Powerlessness. One thing we can do is make a difference in one person's life every day. My purpose is to help others unlock their purpose. That's not just a brand thing, that's a passion. Anybody's who's known me for any length of time knows that's what I care about, that's what I read about, study about. I'm not a saint. I've got plenty of challenges like everybody else does in different ways. But every day is a good day for me if I can make a difference in one person's life that day. Unsolicited. I'm not talking about getting paid to coach someone. I'm talking about where it wasn't expected, where it was an uncertain situation. So that's the number two one. Have purpose moments and have at least one purpose moment a day.

Richard Leider:

And number three is redefine success. This is a time right now when we say go deeper to kind of reset your life. And when I did the ... Well, I've written a book called Repacking Your Bags which is about the good life. And the formula is this, so here's the third equation. $P + P + W + P =$ the good life. So place plus people, plus right work, good creative work that fits who you are regardless of whether it's volunteer work or grandparenting work or paid work, plus purpose equals the good life. We've done a lot of research on the good life. My philosophy professor coauthor and I. And that's the definition of the good life. So I ask the people online here with us tonight, are you living in the place you love, with the people you love, doing work you love that matters to you with intention, with a purpose, a daily reason to get up in the morning? If so, you're living the good life from Aristotle forward. So redefining success means pushing the reset button and looking at that as one way to grow when you talked about going deeper. To grow. To say am I doing that?

Richard Leider:

And when I did the PBS special I did something that to this day I still get emails. It's called the drawer test. Like a drawer in your house. Could be a closet but a drawer is simpler. So you turn around right now ... Don't do it. And go through a drawer and you've just defined the good life and you look at everything in that drawer and there's three boxes in front of you. Keep, toss, can't decide. And you say, to live my vision of the good life, to simplify things, to lighten my load, to live the good life, what in this drawer do I want to keep, what do I want to toss or sell or give, and what I can't decide so I'll put in a box and put it away for now? I have people who start with a drawer, move to a closet, then I get an email saying, "Thank you. I just sold my house." Because they realized when they started with something real tangible that, first of all, defining the good life, I don't really need this anymore. I don't want this anymore. In fact, I spend too much money insuring this, why am I keeping this? And you know the storage locker business is one of the biggest billion dollar businesses in the country.



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Richard Leider:

So with this reflection and this formula, consume less, contribute more. As we get older, consume less, contribute more. So at life's end everybody comes to a point where they want to know, how do I measure my life? And as David Brooks talks about in his Eulogy, Virtues Versus Resume Virtues, I've had the privilege of doing some memorial services for people where I was the officiant. And it always starts very quickly with the resume virtues. Who he was, who she was, what they did. And then eventually it gets to eulogy virtues which are, who was this person really for me personally? And that's the contribution that people really want to make with their lives. And wealth helps with that. Wealth's a good thing. But the balance of money, medicine, and meaning is what I would like to end with. And we need all three. We need money, we need medicine, meaning health and of course vaccine now. And we need meaning. We all know people who are for example healthy and have money but aren't happy. And we know people who don't have money and don't have health and are happy. And so what is that all about? Well it's about this tragic optimism. This mindset. This purpose mindset that my life matters.

Richard Leider:

And so if you look at ... Final comment here on this round, is that when you look at all the books I write and the books on your shelf back there, if they're about happiness, ultimately they get down to two things. And those two things are to belong and to matter. That's it at the end of life. Did I belong and did I matter? And so you can make it more complicated than that, so that's what I like to share with people.

Ross Levin:

As you were talking ... This is really great stuff. And I was thinking about a couple different things. One of the things that I was thinking about with this pandemic, I'm 61 now and we used to say 60 is the new 50. But you know what the pandemic taught me is that 60 is the new 70, right? Because I'm in that group that can show early at Byerly's. One of the things that I realized that one of our struggles in having purpose is how do we really accept who we are and not become attached to things that we aren't or things that we have that might not be lasting? Once we accept who we are how to then we get to the point where you describe and you talk about maybe three Cs in some of your books about choice and curiosity and courage to commitment. You talk about getting started and how sometimes people need things perfect before they get started as opposed to just getting started. So I'm just curious about how you feel about both acceptance and attachment and then where we go from there.



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Richard Leider:

Well, it's a very good question. It's very complex. A lot of layers to it. But there's an old adage that says if you are what you do, when you don't, you aren't. So when you retire and you're no longer this or your kids go off and you're empty nest, you see so many people who think they are what they do or they are their stuff, et cetera. What's the way out of that? Well, I believe that one of the things that really creates resilience is having a sounding board. And a sounding board is like a kitchen cabinet or somebody who really knows who you are in the depth, in the soulful part of you, not what you own and who you've been. A part of you. I always kid my wife Sally and she doesn't care for it that much but I think it's true for me to be honest with you. I said, "Nothing's worse to me than sitting in an airplane or at a dinner party next to a former anything." We're still acting like they are a former even though they've been retired for five years. I used to be and they're still living in that.

Richard Leider:

And I say, "Well what gives you energy today? What are you creating?" So I look with this sounding board, who do you hang out with? Because in many ways, you're a composite of, they say, the research says the five people you hang out with. If they're all overweight, you're probably overweight. If they're all living a certain good life, you're probably living that good life. So I would diversify my sounding board. But number one, you need a committed listener. And that isn't always your spouse or partner or even best friend. Because those people may know you and want to keep you just the way you are. So a committed listener though is somebody, maybe the first conversation you ever had with somebody sometimes. But sometimes we go to a retreat and we have that conversation and people say, "I never told this to anybody before." So who's your committed listener? Secondly, who's your wise elder? Who's that person that's 10 years older than you that you look forward and you say, that's a great example of the way I would like to age. Who are they? What do they have? What do they do? And who are they being? It gets down to having, doing, and being. So who are the wise elders that you look to and what would they be asking you if you were talking to them about your good life?

Richard Leider:

Third is, who are your wise youngers? Who are the people in your life who are 10 years younger or more, who ask different kinds of questions and have different ... And I love the idea that I got from Chip Conley. Chip Conley ... He wrote a book called *Wisdom at Work* but he created a hotel chain called *Joie De Vivre* in California. And we always stayed at his hotel *Vitale* before he sold it to the *Embarcadero* in San Francisco there. But then after he sold his hotels he became the coach to the founder of *Airbnb*. And he would go into a meeting and they ... Why



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him? He was in his late 50s. Because Airbnb folks were all in their 20s and 30s and they didn't know hospitality. They knew real estate and technology but not hospitality. So he was in to teach hospitality. He'd walk out of a meeting Ross and Brian Chesky, the founder of Airbnb said, "We don't have a clue what you're talking about." And Chip Conley would say, "I don't have a clue what you're talking about either." So he coined the term, mentern. Which is a combination of mentor and intern.

Richard Leider:

And so I think having a wise elder and a wise younger ... Ultimately what I want to be is a mentern. I want to be a learner where I'm learning from people like elders and younger and mentoring, giving back what I can to those as well. Who do you know that would be a good mentern? And then, are you a good mentern? Are you a learner? The world has changed. Mentors can't just say well here's the way to do it because how do they know in this new reality? And then the fourth area is who's your purpose partner? Who's the one you can really talk turkey with? Someone you can sit down with and say, "You know, I got cancer and I'm scared." Or, "I'm 75," which I am. "I'm 75 years old and I'm looking at this in the next stages and I don't want to pretend that I'm 60." 60 is not the new ... 75 and 60. I like being 75. But I want to be full out engaged 75 and learn and be with other in an intergenerational world. So I think that's one way to look at who you hang out with. Who's your tribe? To belong, to matter, and do you really matter to those people or are you a checkbook?

Ross Levin:

That's great. Richard, I know you've got the 11th book coming out and it's Who Do You Want To Be When You Get Old, is that right?

Richard Leider:

When you grow old.

Ross Levin:

Who Do You Want To Be When You Grow Old. And talk a little bit about what you've learned. You just mentioned you're 75 and when you kind of look back, what are the things that you did particularly well and what are the things that you wish you would have known 20 years earlier?



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Richard Leider:

Well I've been interviewing people like me. My age that is. For decades and writing about it. And so I'll use that as the framework to answer the question. When I ask people, what would you do differently or what have you learned, it's usually people who have retired. I started doing this research because I was part of the Harvard study of adult development. Which by the way is the second most watched TED Talk of all time. It's by Robert Waldinger who still heads it up, who I know. But they studied progressive life after being ... I got a Bush fellowship and studied in that. And after that I started to do my own studies and my own interviews of these three things.

Richard Leider:

Number one, if you could live your life over people would say, I wish I would have been more reflective. I wish I would have stepped back and looked at my choices rather than what I call, live a default life. And for a while I had lived a default life. I did kind of check the box, did the things. Until I realized, this is not me. And there's different incidents along the way that realized that I needed to make a change. Both vocationally, relationally, and other ways. We're not reflective as I said earlier without a crisis often. But I learned to be reflective. And I teach people to be reflective. And I think it's important that particularly at different stages of life ... In midlife there's something called now, it used to be called a midlife crisis. People always used to say, "And now we have Dr. Midlife Crisis talking to us." And that would be me. And now it's not a midlife crisis. They call it the U curve. In the middle of life there is a dip in the research worldwide. Life goes like this and then there's this dip. And then there's this ascension into aging. Now how can that be? Because the old model of life went like that. Like grow up, grow old. The three stage model is dead in the water now.

Richard Leider:

Millennials don't even know what that means. The three stage model is, learn, earn, retire. The three stages. Over for the predominant majority of people. But the happiest times in life are often back when we're getting going in certain ways and after this U curve if we do our homework on ourselves, if we reflect and make some choices and lighten our loads, let go of certain things – that's often the happiest time of our life. Not a period of decline. And irrespective of health, age, all of those things, it's still ... And the U curve of happiness is hugely big in the research right now. So reflecting is important to make those choices. Secondly, the biggest regrets are in career and in relationships. People look back and they say, I wish I would ... In relationships a better spouse, partner, colleague, boss. You can name it. Parent. That goes with us along the way. But the number one regret in the research is work, career. And why? Because we spend 60% of our life working. The biggest block of our time is spent there. And if



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we do it just ... If it's just a job and not a calling, not something that fits us and gives us some sense of aliveness and joy, we're just doing it to earn enough money so that we can either decline or ascend, we've wasted a lot of time. It's not a good investment of our time.

Richard Leider:

May have been a good financial investment but not a good time investment and all of the sudden, people wake up and they're 60 and realize they haven't lived the life, they've lived a default life. They've lived somebody else's vision of the good life, not their own. I would say for myself the best choice I ever made was to make a career change. And I did it because I had what they now call a side hustle. I was a HR professional at what is now US Bank, used to be First Bank. And I had a side hustle called lunch hour limited. I was trained and certified as a counselor. And so you buy me lunch, I coach you over the noon hour. Well my boss who was the CEO of the bank didn't think it was such a great idea because I had an 80% success ratio. 80% of the people I coached quit.

Ross Levin:

We're going to keep you away from my colleagues.

Richard Leider:

Well the fact is though ... I laugh too when I even say it. But the preponderant majority didn't quit and leave. They quit and went back. They didn't literally quit. That was just drama. But they went back and talked to their boss and said, "These are my gifts. This is what I really care about. I want to reinvent my job or move somewhere else in this organization where I can really make an impact and want to get up and go to work every day." About 15% did leave. And they should have probably left anyway. So with that and with my Bush fellowship I made the big move, re-mortgaged my house to hang out my own shingle. And the Inventure group and now Inventure The Purpose Company has had a great ride. It's had its rollercoasters with the economy like everything else. So that's what I would say a great decision. So reflect and then the courage of making big choices in career and relationship. And then the third thing that people said if they could live their life over again, they wish they would have understood earlier in life that purpose really matters, mattering matters, that contribution matters. And even Einstein said don't spend your life achieving, spend your life contributing.

Richard Leider:

I think a lot of people who are struggling with the pandemic are people who are really achievement oriented but not contribution oriented. And there needs to be a balance. It's not



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either or. But if it's all about you and yourself, that self absorption really drives people away. And so the whole ... As I said earlier, that purpose is a verb. Purpose is compassion in action. It's giving. And it doesn't mean you have to not make wealth, not do a lot of other things. But there needs to be a balance in there of how you contribute and how you help others.

Ross Levin:

You know, what's interesting though when you're talking about this because in some ways you use the US Bank story as your catalyst for what happened for you, but what you were doing at US Bank was growing and giving over the lunch hour and choosing. You made a choice to make your work a place where you could grow and give. So sometimes it doesn't necessarily need to be an environmental change. It might just be a perspective change.

Richard Leider:

Exactly. And some of those people as I said ... The 80% went right back in and figured out new ways or, they figured out that the way that they gave was coaching soccer at night. That this was going to be a job and it was going to pay the bills and it may be the best they could do for the moment. But oftentimes ... I wrote a book called *Work Reimagined* and every single chapter begins with a story of a taxi cab driver. I interviewed taxi cab drivers, or I used to. I will in the future. Taxi cab drivers and other people who are service oriented people. And sometimes it's not about driving a cab that's his purpose. Purpose is not what you do, it's who you bring to what you do. So he could bring and I could bring more of who to my job at the bank.

Richard Leider:

But I decided that I wanted more clear alignment with my gifts, passions, and values. And this taxi driver, this immigrant taxi driver in the opening story of *Work Reimagined* said, he said he loves giving help to older women and he was talking about this and I said, "You got a calling." He said, "No, my calling is coaching soccer at night." And he said, "They have to kick me off the field and turn the lights off because I love it so much and I love kids. I wish I could do it for a living but I pay the bills this way, but I'll tell you, my soul yearns for those nighttime soccer coaching things." That guy came totally alive when he started talking about what he really cared about. That guy's going to live longer if that's the case because he's got a reason to do what he's doing, to pay the bills to be able to balance it out.

Ross Levin:

One of the things that you talk about is making change, which I think is really important. One of the mistakes that we see clients make a lot of times is that they think that the change is



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going to change their life, so the new house, the new spouse, the new job. Will you talk about the difference between that versus the change that you're actually describing?

Richard Leider:

Well the language is change and transition. Change happens but transition is a choice. Transition is what happens in you. Change is what happens out there. So we don't have control all the time over the changes or even if we change household, the transition is you may not be happy in that new household. Who knows? And so when we look at the whole business of transition, it's about what I was talking about earlier about higher and deeper, going inside. So in order to move from let go of this trapeze and grab this trapeze over here, we have to have a reason to do it. A purpose. Something that really moves us to want to do that in certain ways. I know Victor Frankl, who I mentioned earlier that had transformative ... Everybody on this line tonight has fortuitous encounters with people. People who change their life one way or another and they weren't expecting it. And with Frankl that was the case. And he drew on the blackboard once. He drew the letter P, which stood for person. And then he drew the letter H, which stands for happiness.

Richard Leider:

So you have a P and an H. And then he drew an arrow from the P to an H and he said, "Ladies and gentlemen, there is no way you can pursue happiness." And he crossed out the line. And that's that new car, that new job, that new spouse, that new whatever. Then he drew right above the P, and M. and he said, "This is meaning." And then he redrew a line from the H, happiness, over to the M. and he said this, "If you want to be happy, happiness ensues from doing meaningful things with your life." As opposed to pursuing it directly. He said, "There is no way to happiness directly like that." Happiness ensues. It kind of comes in the back door if you will. Ensues from making choices that are meaningful to you and others. So I think that really stuck with me and again, I'm not arguing against having things. I like having things. But there's this model of having, doing, and being. And I think what you're talking about if you look at ... If I have enough, someday I'll be able to do what I really love to do. I'll have the freedom to do what I really ...

Richard Leider:

And if I'm doing what I love to do, I'll be happy. Well, how does that work? For a lot of people it does not work. So I start by flipping the model and I start with being and then going to doing, and then going to having. So if I'm being me, if I'm using me gifts on things I really care about, that'll lead me to make choices to do things that fit those values, that purpose, those things I care about. That's the wise part, I think, of what we're talking about. And if I'm doing



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me, I'll have a good life. And I often find people who do that, who work from the inside out as opposed to the outside in, they actually make more money. They actually are more healthy and happy because there's an alignment between who they are and what they're doing, not a misalignment.

Richard Leider:

Now, everybody here's an experiment of one. We all get to choose. But that's what I do when I coach and work with people. I start with the, so who are you? There's basically a colleague of mine, when you call him on the phone and the answering machine says, "At the sound of the beep, please leave your answer to life's two eternal questions. Who are you and what do you want?" So I start with who are you, what do you want? That's the being questions. And then I look at the doing and say are you doing you or are you doing a default life? If you're doing you, what kind of life are you having? And oftentimes people in midlife, in that U curve, that's when they flip the model and they go from having, doing, being, to being, doing, having. And these are not easy choices, but they are ... The research in positive psychology now is absolutely solid. The neuro science of what I'm talking about is absolutely solid. You can look it up in umpteen different ways. So this is not just narrative we're talking about here. This is actually on the ground science.

Ross Levin:

Well Richard, we're going to need to wrap. I wish we could keep going. I've got about 20 more questions to ask you. But just a couple different things I just want to mention. One is we know your book is coming out. Becky mentioned that for those-

Richard Leider:

Next year.

Ross Levin:

Next year. And for those who are interested, we're going to be sending out your manifesto and your 10 questions. And from my standpoint, I just want to tell you what a difference you've made in my life. I read your stuff a long time ago and it's really helped crystallize some of my thoughts and so I appreciate you sharing them with the group that's here. Because you've done special work and you've made a big difference for a lot of different people. So thank you.



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Richard Leider:

It was an honor to be on. I really appreciate being asked to be part of this and I hope that some people on this got at least one good idea that they can chew on. So thank you for inviting me.

Ross Levin:

I did. So thank you. And Becky?

Becky Krieger:

Yeah, thank you Richard. Thank you Ross. Richard, it was interesting to hear your mathematics adding letters together because we're usually adding numbers together. So just some really great takeaways and like you both mentioned, we are going to be sending the manifesto along with a worksheet, 10 questions to help you unlock the power of your purpose. So for everybody in attendance, there's a Survey Monkey that will be sent out. Watch for that. Give us your feedback. Let us know how we can improve. We are taping this session tonight and so you will receive a link with the recording. And that email will also have Richard's resources that we mentioned. And then, again, please mark your calendars. We are very excited to have commissioner Jan Malcolm join us on Wednesday, August 5th. That will be a very interesting conversation. And thank you everybody for joining us. Richard, an amazing job. We could have had you for two hours and that wouldn't have been enough time. So thank you for being so generous to our firm and our clients and our community and thanks Ross for hosting a great dialog.

Richard Leider:

Thank you.

Ross Levin:

Thank you very much. Bye bye. Thanks Richard.

Richard Leider:

Good bye. Thank you.



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