DARE TO UN-LEAD

The Art of Relational Leadership in a Fragmented World

The Podcast

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Episode 3 – Jeff Boudro

Power and systems in the workplace: Barry Oshry fellow Jeff Boudro

Can we be free at work? For human systems thinker Barry Oshry, emancipation comes from seeing patterns of power dynamics arising in human collectives. His long-time working partner Jeff Boudro explains some of the main ideas Oshry brought to the world. Listen in and learn how we can empower ourselves and others for a better collaboration through system sight

Podcast Transcript

Celine: It is tempting to think that more leadership or some kind of improved leadership will help us and our organizations work better. But what if leadership was part of the problem instead of the solution? What if our understanding of it only maintained principles of the past, which no longer serve as well?

That's what I explore in my book, *Dare to Un-Lead*, and today in this podcast. Join me and my guest, a person quoted in the book or in tune with its values, to learn from them what it takes to un-lead and succeed together.

Welcome to the Dare to Un-lead podcast, episode 3.

Leadership Matters, and yet the way we understand leadership today is no longer adapted to the citizens, consumers, and workers we have become. Obsolete views have consequences on our lives. That's what my book opens with and what we've discussed with Myron Roger and Stowe Boyd in episodes 1 and 2 of this podcast.
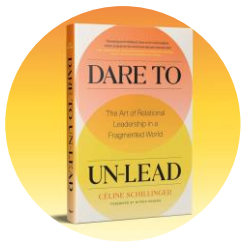
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In each episode, we explore with a guest some of the themes addressed in the book, and I hope you'll join us for the whole series and tell us what you think. While writing the book, I came across the ideas and writings of Barry Oshry. Better late than never!

Oshry is a pioneer in the field of human system thinking; the author of books which I now find essential to the practice of change in organizations; and he is the founder, now retired, of the company Power + Systems.

Today in episode 3 as we start talking about liberty, I am very pleased to welcome Jeff Boudro, Executive Director of Power + Systems.

Jeff is obviously very familiar with Oshry's thinking, having worked with him for several years and prior to that, Jeff has had a long career in business, human resources, organizational development, and so on with several companies, including Staples, CVS, and others. My favorite line in his resume starts with "World travel sabbatical: Traveled around the world for a year with my family visiting 38 states and 32 countries". Whoa! Jeff and I got together a few months ago in Franklin, Massachusetts, and I'm so happy to connect again with him here today. Welcome, Jeff.

Jeff: Thank you, Celine. It's great to be here in support of your work. I've loved your book and can't wait to discuss.

Celine: Oh, that's awesome. Since we last met, you've obviously read my book, I saw that on LinkedIn and I'm dying to know if you liked it?

Jeff: Very much so. I found it very provocative and full of ideas about not only the challenges we face in the world of work, but where we go from here. There is a lot to sink our teeth into.

Celine: Oh, that's awesome. I have plenty of questions to ask you, Jeff, and the first one is for us to know you better a little bit. What is your art? What is the thing you are uniquely doing and that you enjoy doing? What do you do?
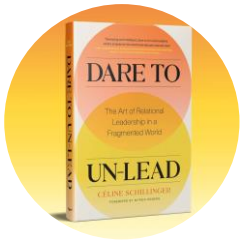
Jeff: Well in terms of work or in terms of personal?

Celine: Whatever you want. Whatever you want to tell us.

Jeff: Well, in terms of work, why I am drawn to Barry's work, and I've been doing it for over two decades, just because it has so much potential for unlocking the positive potential of the organization at all levels.

One of the things that Barry's work is so uniquely powerful at, is helping people see the system within which they're operating. And that is not only helpful in the workplace, it's so relevant and so powerful in all of the social circles that we move in, whether it's family, school, place of worship, you name it. Oftentimes we think of ourselves as having interactions with other individuals, and we fail to see the systemic nature of these organizations that we spend so much time and devote so much energy to. So from a work perspective, that's what I love to do and I've been doing it for some time.

From a personal perspective, I love nature and my family and I are quite adventurous, as our travels that you alluded to might reveal. And so, any chance to get out in nature, especially if it's in the mountains, the ocean, the lakes regions of all the beautiful places in the world.

Celine: That's awesome. You are Executive Director of Power and Systems. What does Power + System do?

Jeff: Well, we really have three main functions in terms of our organization and how we support the organizations we work with.

One is that we certify people such as yourself perhaps, to go out there and bring this work that Barry and Karen Oshry both created and bring that to the organizations that they serve.

So really trying to get the work out there and make it accessible, and far spread. I've done this work on six out of seven continents. I'm just waiting for an invitation from some research scientists out in Antarctica so I can check that off the list :) but it's amazing, the commonality of the human experience, despite very notable differences in different countries, different cultures different ways of working, there's something so common about the human experience to the systems in which we work.

We also do a lot of client engagements ourselves, so we work with a lot of clients, everything from Fortune 100 or even Fortune 10 companies, to more regional players, to nonprofits, to community groups, to school systems, to government agencies. So, I get the blessing of such a wide spectrum of organizations to work with and within, and that has been a particular joy for us.
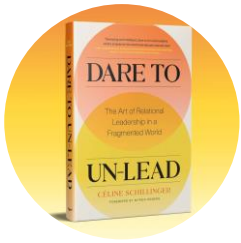
And then I would say the third thing is to continue to do the research that our work is based on, that this is not something that Barry just made up in his head. It is literally hundreds of thousands of people who have gone through these programs and really experienced and benefited from all the insights they gained from a very experiential exploration of the topics that Barry has such expertise in.

Celine: Hmm. Can you tell us a little bit about Barry? For those who haven't heard of him yet.

Jeff: Sure. Barry's a really interesting story all by himself, even if it wasn't for this great work that he did.

He grew up in the Massachusetts area. And, something I didn't even know about until he retired and became our emeritus in 2018, is that when he was 13 years old, he learned during World War II (he's 90 now) about all the horrors that World War II created for people and, at his early age, he just could not fathom. How could people get to the point where they could do these things to each other? War in general, you know, the genocidal things that happened in various countries around the world during this. And that was actually the beginning of his journey and his exploration.

And interestingly enough, halfway around the world in Germany, there was a colleague, a later colleague of his that also experienced this. People came to his school when he was 13 years old, interviewed him. He was very bright and very athletically accomplished, and they brought him to this exclusive school up in the Austrian Alps. And it was only a year and a half, almost two years later that he realized he was in a Hitler youth camp. And he was also horrified that he had been unknowingly brought into this world. And so, the both of them actually partnered over 50 years to really deeply examine what are the systemic ways in which people can so vilify each other, that they can justify doing such horrible things to them.

And this is not just in World War II, there've been countless genocidal campaigns, if you want to call them that throughout world history. And so, Barry's work has been really, steadfastly focused on understanding what are the patterns that we fall into as human beings and what can lead us to great dysfunction and even great harm to each other.

And he did that first in more of a societal context, but eventually people kept telling them: "I see these same patterns happening at work".

Maybe there isn't murder involved, but there is great dysfunction and great disempowerment that comes out of it, and it just has tremendous application. And so, a lot of the work that I have done with Barry's work has been in the organizational context of companies, whether they be for profit or for profit or nonprofit.

Celine: Amazing. I quote Barry several times in the book, but I think it's particularly relevant to talk about his ideas today in relation to chapter 3, which is entitled 'Can There Be Liberty at Work?' In fact, I find his thinking to be deeply emancipatory. What do you think of that?

Jeff: Well, first of all, I love the question.

It's such a provocative question because you know, when you go to work, does that mean that you've signed up for voluntary servitude to some degree? Are you willing to, in exchange for money, give up your time, your energy, and even the output of your work? Cause then the company that you work for owns that.

So the question itself is so provocative. And the answer, as you would expect, is so complex. My answer is a resounding "it can exist". Liberty can exist at work, but it's not as simple as a yes or no question, at least from my perspective.
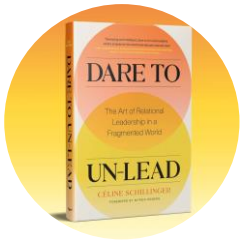
Celine: Barry explains that there are, as you previously said, dynamics that take place in systems, like organizations, to which we contribute unknowingly. So, in a way, we are servants to those dynamics and we are even helping those dynamics maintain themselves, right? We keep them in place, but instead we could change that if we saw those dynamics and that's what Barry's helping us too. Is that correct?

Jeff: Absolutely. I mean, Barry talks about a concept called *system sight* that if you can see the system you're in while you're in it, it just opens up all kinds of possibilities for empowerment.

There's one of Barry's really well known books called *Seeing Systems: Unlocking the Mysteries of Organizational Life*. And so Barry explores this quite deeply and did so for over five decades and is still writing about it today. You know, as we speak, he's probably typing away at his computer.

Celine: He says system sight is the source of empowerment. What does it mean?

Jeff: Well, let's talk about the opposite. You know, sometimes we are blind to the systems that we're in. We don't see the fact that we're falling into patterns with others. Not necessarily as a function of our interrelationship, but actually the system dynamics that we're swimming in. It's kind of like the goldfish in the bowl, not seeing the water that they're swimming in, system dynamics. Maybe it would help to give some examples of what we're talking about to make it more tangible.

So, Barry really designed a lot of work and strategic frameworks, as well as experiential workshops to explore this for people and help people have system sight, and the simple and yet very powerful, very visceral way that we do this, is that we drop people into an exercise where they're running a company, and we set up a very simple structure. And that simple structure is far simpler than the organization's people actually work in, but it serves everybody well.

So Barry sets up an organization where there are Tops, there are Bottoms, there are Middles, and there are Customers, and I'll define that a bit. So Tops, whoever ends up in that role, and it's somewhat random in terms of what role people end up in, for the exercise, are the people that have overall responsibility for the organization.

They can make any and all decisions, and they're responsible not only for the vision and the accomplishments of the company, but of the culture of the company as well. Bottoms are the people that actually deliver the products or services of the organization. They're the ones that actually have the most output in terms of a tangible product or result.

Middles, as the term implies, exist in between the Tops and the Bottoms. They're responsible for executing the vision of the Tops, but they're also responsible for managing, giving feedback and resources to the Bottoms. And these terms mean different things in different contexts, but in this context it's really important to not just think of this in terms of hierarchy.

These are actually, as Barry describes them as "worlds" or "conditions" that we all move in and out of with quite a bit of regularity. So for example, if you are, even if you're an individual contributor, you can be very Top in a particular context, if you are managing or leading a particular initiative or project. It's not just a function of how high you are in the organization level-wise, it's really a function of what kind of responsibility do you have?

And what's interesting about this is that as we move in and out of these worlds of Top, Middle, Bottom, and Customer space, there could be an internal, or an external customer by the way. We encounter very predictable conditions in each one of those places. For Tops, as an example, their world is one in which they're struggling to survive in a world of complexity and accountability, and it's coming at them from all directions.

It becomes very clear to them that they have to figure this out if they're gonna be successful in their role. Again, whether that's leading an organization, leading a department, or leading a project or initiative, doesn't matter what the scale is. if you're at the Bottom of the organization, well, when you're in that kind of position, you're dependent on them to give you the resources, the direction, the empowerment, to do what needs to be done.

And oftentimes, we are struggling to survive in a world of vulnerability. Why? Because we might see things that are broken or not working. and we're wondering when are they, whoever they are gonna see it, and more importantly, when are they gonna address it? So that predictable condition is vulnerability.

And for the Middle well. We've probably all spent time in the middle, whether it's at work or in our family, and that's a world of tearing. Why? Because the middles have to manage up well, and they have to execute the vision of the Tops, as I mentioned, but they also have to manage down well and make sure they're supporting and leading the teams that report to them.
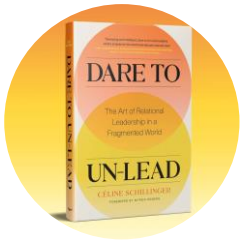
And what inevitably happens is that they're struggling to survive in this tearing world where everybody wants something from them. And ironically, they often don't control those things that people want from them, they have to go to someone else in order to give the people what they're requesting.

And then the Customer world is often one of neglect. Somewhat ironically, in organizational spaces, customers feel like they gave their money and they should get their product or service at the speed, cost and quality they want. But oftentimes organizations are so internally focused, especially if there's a lot of change or competitive pressure, or, I don't know, a pandemic thrown into the mix that customers often feel neglected. They feel like they're on the outside looking in, wondering: "when are we gonna get what we paid for?" And feeling neglected as a result of that.

You mentioned something that's really key. Not only are these challenging conditions at Top, Middle, Bottom and Customer space or worlds very difficult and very predictable. We as human beings, especially when we're not at our best or when we're overloaded, react in ways that are actually somewhat ironically pretty poor strategies for dealing with these challenging conditions.

And as you kind of alluded to, we actually unknowingly, if we don't see the dynamics for what they are, actually *reinforce and amplify* those challenging conditions and not only sustain them, but make them worse or more challenging.

I don't know how much detail you want to get into that, but that's really for me, where the magic happens in terms of people seeing that "when I'm in the top space and I'm feeling like things are coming at me from all directions, my reflex reaction doesn't make that go away - it actually makes it worse" as an example.

Celine: Now that's really powerful. I participated in one of your workshops and I was part of the Bottom and it's striking to see how fast the us versus them dynamics sets in. Almost instantly, whether we want it or not, that's what happens.

Jeff: Yes. It happens almost instantly and without us necessarily seeing it. And sometimes it's not even us *versus* them. Sometimes, it's just enough to say it's us *and* them that can be enough divisiveness to really have an impact on the organization and people's experience.

Celine: Exactly. And when you are appointed at the top of any organization, whether a big or small, your temptation, your natural tendency is to suck up responsibility to yourself because you feel responsible. You've been appointed there, so there must be a reason. And so everybody's like happily giving you "yes, you take the responsibility, you're in charge"; and when things go right, there's no problem. Everybody's happy, but things rarely go right forever or as predicted.

Jeff: Yes, there's always some unexpected glitches or sudden turns along the way. Certainly.

Celine: Exactly. And then, the system becomes unworkable.

And so instead of perpetuating those dynamics, as we say, you need to adopt counterintuitive behaviors. Which is super interesting, but which is not easy, right?

Jeff: No, they're not. Even if you see it more clearly, that doesn't mean that the challenging conditions are any less powerful and hard to overcome, number one.
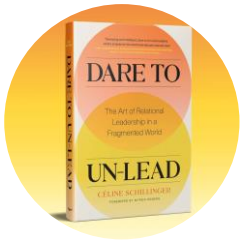
And number two, it takes constant discipline and focus and skill to show up in these alternate ways. But it is possible, just to elaborate a little bit on what we're talking about.

You mentioned the Top space. So, whenever we're in the top space, there is this tendency when we are beset by that complexity and responsibility coming at us from all different directions, to suck up responsibility to ourselves. And that's bad enough.

Because when we do that, we end up working one or two levels below where we should. We get into the weeds, as the expression says. And we end up inadvertently becoming a bottleneck to the organization. And that would be bad enough. But what's even worse, and has really big implications for the organization, is that when we suck up responsibility to ourselves, not only do we have to slow down and become the bottleneck in the organization because all decisions have to go through us, but we also have to remember we're sucking away responsibility from other people.

So we're then denying them the opportunity to take risks to learn, to grow, to contribute to the organization. And over time, if we continue to suck it up as Tops, we gradually disempower the organization. We train people not to think for themselves, not to take the initiative, to wait for direction, to be told what to do. And that is just tremendously damaging to both the organization and the people within it.

Celine: And then it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Right? It's a vicious circle that sets in.

Jeff: Yes. Not only self-fulfilling, but self-reinforcing. You can develop more and more scar tissue around that.

I don't know how many managers I've [known], I've had almost all of them say "I have an open door policy", or, "I really want your ideas", but it doesn't take you long when you're in a relationship with your boss to know if he or she really is open to ideas and wants your input or not. I've had plenty of managers that said they had an open door policy that nobody ever took them up on that offer. And I've had other great leaders that, you know, I really went to and trusted them as a partner to help me think through the obstacles I was trying to overcome in the organization. So they both exist.

Celine: When we met, I had read Barry's book *Seeing Systems*, which I found absolutely awesome. You suggested that I read *Context, Context, Context*, which I did of course. And thank you very much because it's very insightful and I now better understand the notions of individuation and integration.

Can you explain what they are?

Jeff: Sure. These are two of the four strategies that Barry talks about in order to really build robust systems, as he calls them: systems that are more than just the sum of their parts. When you think about things systemically it's the opposite of breaking it down to bite-sized chunks.

It's really understanding the holistic nature of organizations and the people in them. So, Individuation and integration are two behaviors or activities that both individuals and groups engage in in organizations, and if it's a healthy organization, if it's a robust system, Barry would suggest that there is some tension or balance between those. You can almost think of them as opposite poles on a continuum.
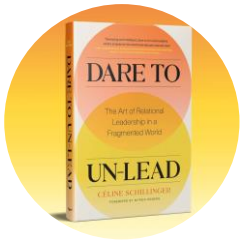
Individuation is when either people, singularly or in groups go off and explore and figure out what are their unique talents and what are their unique ideas that they can bring value to the organization through – an organization that goes off and does training design, or is involved in sales or engineering... – what are they doing to individuate and bring their talents and their experience and their passion to life. And that is true both for individuals and groups.

Integration on the other hand, is really an important balance because integration means instead of pursuing things individually, as individually would suggest, integration really involves people coming together and sharing information, diagnosing problems or opportunities together, creating best practices, breaking down silos that naturally form in organizations. I think if you get more than 10 people in an organization, you can have silos even at that small scale.

So, the thing that I find really interesting about what you brought up is that organizations, whether it be departments or the entire organization, have to achieve a very deliberate, very intentional balance between when are we individuating, and how periodically do we come together to integrate, to share information, to solve problems, to diagnose issues; and to make sure that everybody in that system has a shared understanding of the more holistic view of what's going on. Not just their particular piece of the puzzle, but to see the whole puzzle.

Celine: Speaking about that, we often hear about power conflicts at the top of organizations – you know, executive teams not working well together, for example. Competing with each other and so on. Are senior executives doomed to fight one another?

Jeff: I don't think they're doomed, but it happens with great regularity. Not to every senior team, not every time, but with great regularity as Barry is prone to say. And there's a very good reason that top teams can devolve into what we call turfiness, that if under sustained pressure, the top team copes with that overwhelming sense of complexity and accountability that I mentioned before.

If there's too many things going on, this competitive pressure, this product launch, there's a pandemic, as I mentioned before… any number of things that add turbulence to the organization. Well, as a coping mechanism, what we as humans often do, especially in the top space, is that we divide and conquer. All right?

I'm the C F O. I'm responsible for all the financial decisions. I'm the C O O. I'm about operations. I'm the C H R O. I'm responsible for HR and people stuff, and that's not bad, unless it becomes your only way of operating.

Because what inevitably happens if you basically get to a situation where that's the only gear you can operate in, then what happens is the top team will devolve into turf battles. And what happens is that this is mindset becomes the overriding mental process the team operates by. And what you see top teams devolve into is arguments over relative importance, or "I did my part, when are you gonna do your part?"

And really, they get away from the *integration* that we were talking about a minute ago, which [makes] top teams that are really healthy and robust. [With integration], they make sure that they're sharing resources, that they're coaching each other and supporting each other and holding each other accountable. They're sharing good information. And for example, if one area of the business, like, supply chain in so many companies, were under fire during the pandemic for a variety of
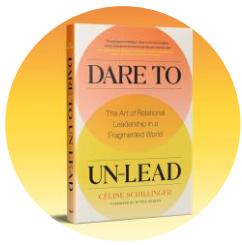
reasons, then what do we do to support them, to shift resources to them, to make sure that collectively we're successful? It's not okay to say "I'm okay. You're not okay".

You can actually see, if you sit in on a C-Suite meeting, very quickly, evidence [of whether] the group devolved into the kind of turfiness that I mentioned, or [if they] are really still sharing the same vision, working with each other, holding each other accountable. It's really clear to see when you see how the team operates with each other.

Celine: That's amazing. I read Barry write several times that in organizations, things are not personal. They are not personal. They are systemic. What do you say to all those who think their manager is a jerk, for example?

Jeff: Well, I would first say it's possible that they're a jerk, but it's also possible that they're struggling to deal or grapple with the very challenging conditions that exist in their space, and you might not have enough access or enough visibility to see exactly what it is they're grappling with. A little empathy goes a long way in terms of how we show up in other's worlds.

A really simple example is… I'll talk about myself. I had what I thought was a great idea that would really help the organization, and I spent extra time, nights and weekends writing up a proposal and I sent it through my boss to our boss's boss. I got the agreement to do that, and I waited and I waited and I waited and I never heard back.

And my initial reaction was, well, I'll never do that again. They wouldn't know a good idea if it hit them in the rear end. You know? It was a very immature way for me to react, but understandable, I think. And what I failed to realize is that they were already dealing with 25 pretty serious complications, and I added a 26 complication to their pile.

So, although I thought I was helping, I was actually inadvertently adding to what they were already struggling with. And so, I had an obligation to find a way to show up in their world as a solution, not as another complication, if that makes sense.

Celine. So, what would you do differently if you were to do that today?

Jeff: Well, I've had to do that many times since that relatively long ago experience. And so just a handful of examples of what can be done.

Knowing that they are living in a world of complexity and accountability, instead of giving them a seven page proposal, I need to give them an executive summary. Instead of me just sending them an email, plopping it into their email box, maybe I booked time with them to discuss it. Instead of thinking just solely about the idea from my perspective and what I think it solves, how can I make sure that my solution actually solves a problem that they already are grappling with and would actually be relieved to help implement?

How can I find other people in my network, other allies that could help me strengthen my pitch? How could I find out what's the right time and place to actually get an audience? So, this message, this proposal could be heard.

I could go on and on, but you get the sense that if I get outside of myself and put myself in their world, I have to not only be more strategic about how I show up in their world, but I actually have to
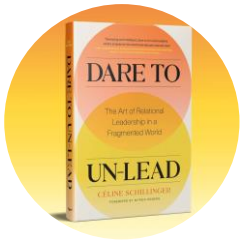
somewhat counterintuitively try to ease their condition to make it easy for them to do what I think, and more importantly, what the organization needs.

Celine: And this works both ways, right?

Jeff: Absolutely. Absolutely. When I'm in a position of leadership, I also have to realize that when I walk into my frontline employees' world, they already have a lot to do and I might think I have a great idea, but to them it might be, oh, this sounds like more of do more with less, or this is another management trick. Or maybe if we wait, this is just the, you know, flavor of the month and it'll go away.

So I have to understand that I'm walking into that world of vulnerability, and it's possible that they'll greet my idea with a great deal of enthusiasm; but given that they live in that world where they're used to "them doing things to us", I have to realize that my good intentions are possibly going to be translated in ways that I didn't want or intend.

Celine: That's fascinating.

Jeff: So in all directions, whether it's top to bottom or middle to bottom, or customer to top in all directions, how can we really have more understanding and be more strategic about how we show up in their world and how can we make it easy to do what it is the organization needs?

And that means setting our ego aside.

That means having a lot more empathy, being a lot more strategic. There's a whole bunch of different skills that that requires to your earlier point about it's possible, but it's not easy. It takes a lot of work and a lot of discipline to do this well.

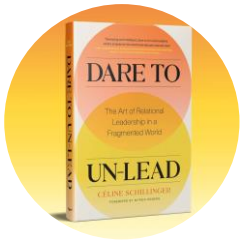**Celine:** My last question maybe will be around system thinking in general.

It was very new when it emerged as such with, with this name, this label, you know. Today I feel maybe we're more used to this term, to this concept? The fact that everything is connected… Yes [we get that]. The fact that everything is complex... Yes. Do you feel, in your experience and across all the companies and executives you meet, that system thinking has become mainstream?

Do you feel that we all now are familiar with systems, or not? Or is it still very new in some areas or some businesses?

Jeff: That's a great question. First of all, I think some people, when you mention system thinking, their eyes glaze over. And so, there are some people that just aren't attracted to that way of thinking about things.

But on the other hand, there's also lots of different systems thinker experts out there. Some systems are really about IT systems, the information technology that helps us get information in, in data dispersed or processed or analyzed throughout the organization. Barry has really focused on human systems or organic systems, which is quite different.

Peter Senge did a lot of work around learning organizations as an example and understanding that our ability as humans to adapt and learn is critical to our competitive advantage and the wellbeing of

the organization and the people in it. So there's a lot of different schools of systems thinking number one, but I have noticed to directly address your question that 25 years ago when I was doing this work in organizations, it was mostly people at the top of the organization or maybe in an organization development function that would gravitate to these discussions and really be looking at the organization through that systemic lens.

Over the last, I would say, 10, maybe even longer years, I've seen more line managers really thinking more holistically about the organization and having more awareness and sensitivity and focus on the organization holistically, and that that might be evidenced by people doing culture work or engagement surveys or other things to really look at the organization more systematically.

And yet I have to also say that oftentimes even in our attempts to work in organizations more systematically, we still fail to solve those problems systemically. I'll give you engagement surveys as a brief example. Oftentimes what happens when companies do engagement surveys is they spend a lot of energy figuring out what are the questions we want to ask? Or hiring a consultant to help them with that. They spend a lot of time deploying the survey and making sure they get great compliance and, and getting a lot of people to fill out the engagement survey.

They spend a lot of time slicing and dicing the data to make sure they can get down to the nth degree about who's feeling what way in the organization. And then if there's any energy left over, they usually march out there and say, all right, here are (and the Tops usually do this), "here are the three things that we're gonna tackle. There are many issues we could tackle, but here are three that we have identified that we think could make a real difference". And they oftentimes even empower committees or action teams to address that.
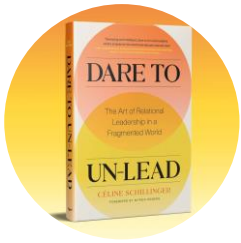
But what inevitably happens, I find, is that the organization gets busy and new business comes in, or new business dynamics happen. And those efforts, those engagement teams, action teams lose steam. And before you know it, it's ready for the next engagement survey. And a lot of people in the organization feel like you're asking me the same questions that I answered last time, and I don't see that much of a discernible difference from the feedback I gave you before.

So, I'm gonna give you even lower marks this time, or I'm not gonna certainly raise my marks. And that's, I know, a pretty grim view of engagement surveys. They're not all like that, but all too often.

I want to go back a couple of steps in that process. Our response as Tops in organizations is to do the engagement survey and then suck up responsibility for solving the problems. That's where that goes wrong in my opinion. What if we brought a cross section, not the entire organization together, but people at all levels, in all functions, in business units together and said, What does this data mean to you? What makes you happy about it? What makes you sad about it? What do you think we should do about it? To involve the whole system, but instead, we survey everybody.

We suck up the responsibility at top, and then we say, here's what we need to do without necessarily ever saying, would that make a difference in your view? And, can we really follow through on that or are we too ambitious with what we're trying to tackle? So, I don't know if that story seems familiar to you at all, but I've seen this play out time and time again in many of the organizations I've either worked in or consulted with.

Celine: Totally, absolutely familiar. Thank you so much, Jeff. That was a fantastic conversation. Where can people find you and Power + Systems?

Jeff: We're super easy to find. Our website is called powerandsystems.com, and you can go to our website and find out all about our programs. We even have little sneak peek videos there.

If you're curious about what these very powerful, very visceral experiential workshops that we do, what do they look like and what are the participants' reactions to them? And you can always email me at jeff@powerandsystems.com.

Celine: Thank you Jeff. And all links and more references and connections to books and videos will be included in the description of this podcast.

Thank you so much everyone. Looking forward to staying in touch. Jeff, have fun.

Jeff: I'm having a great time. Thanks so much for having me on today.

Celine: Thank you, Jeff.

Great insights. Thank you all for listening. You'll find more info in *Dare to Un-Lead*, the book. And all links in the podcast episode description.
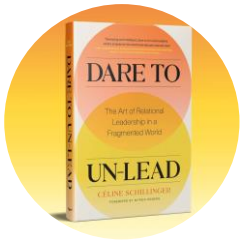
Podcast Resources

Healthy, robust and conflict-free organizations, communities and groups: this is at the heart of Barry Oshry's work as an educator, scholar, practitioner and a pioneer in the field of human systems thinking. We are lucky in this episode to speak with Jeff Boudro, Executive Director of Power + Systems – the company founded by Oshry.

Prior to leading Power + Systems, Jeff has accumulated decades of professional experience with several U.S. companies (including 16 years at Staples) in the areas of human resources, learning, organizational development, talent management and leadership development. At some point he went on a world travel sabbatical with his family, exploring 38 states and 32 countries in a year.

Efficient organizations of the 21st Century need empowered workers, not indentured labor. But how does empowerment start, and where?

It may well begin by seeing the systems in which we are immersed. By identifying among their relational patterns the ones that are useful versus the detrimental others, we become freer to make informed choices: what to perpetuate, what to change? Which partnerships to engage in, and how? We then augment our capacity to contribute effectively to organizations, to evolve them when needed, and to thrive at work.

DARE TO UN-LEAD

The Art of Relational Leadership in a Fragmented World

The Podcast

Curious to know more?

Read Dare To Un-Lead: The Art of Relational Leadership in a Fragmented World.

Barry Oshy's ideas can be found throughout *Dare To Un-Lead* and especially on
p. 148 ('Our Work is Relations')
p. 161 ('Integration')
p. 174 ('The Network as Organizational Design Principle')
p. 186 ('Equality in Diversity')
p. 190 ('Learning Together in Context')
p. 202 ("Being More Intensely Present for Each Other")
p. 242 ('Activism That Heals')

Check out Power + Systems, Inc. https://www.powerandsystems.com/

Watch "What Lies Beneath - A Human Systems Perspective: A Conversation with Barry Oshry"

Watch "Understanding and Transforming Human Systems - The Role of Power and Love: A Conversation with Barry Oshry"

Read Barry Oshry's books https://store.powerandsystems.com/

Connect with Jeff Boudro on LinkedIn

Curious to use these ideas in your work? Get in touch!

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