

The Peaceful Productivity Podcast

Ep #84: Soft Skills



Full Episode Transcript

[The Peaceful Productivity Podcast®](#), with your host *Kim Christiansen*

Ep #84: Soft Skills

Welcome everyone. I'm Kim Christensen, and this is the Peaceful Productivity Podcast, where I share strategies to help you get the most outta your time and feel better in the process.

Hi everyone. Welcome to the podcast. Before we get started today, I wanted to make a quick announcement and that is that we are starting a new Toastmasters club. For those of you who have been following me for a while, first of all, thank you and second of all, you'll know that I'm a huge advocate of Toastmasters.

I believe that success in business, whether you're an employee or an entrepreneur, is based on a foundation of communication skills, so the ability to communicate effectively, to build relationships and connect with other people that is critical to business success. So for that reason, we've started a new Toastmasters club for business owners.

If you are a business owner, an entrepreneur, and you would like to practice and develop your skills in marketing, networking, in sales, in relationship building, if any of those things are an area of development for you or you just wanna meet some like-minded people, I'll invite you to come check it out.

The open house info session is on April 18th at 12:00 PM Pacific. This club will be entirely virtual so, doesn't matter where you're joining us from around the world, you are invited to come and I'll put the registration link in the show notes.

Okay, so onto the main topic for this podcast, which is soft skills, and of course that's related to communication skills because soft skills, somewhat hard to define. I'm not sure I'm a huge fan of soft skills versus hard skills. I almost think of them as hard skills are technical skills, job specific skills and soft skills are everything else.

Those transferable skills that you can use no matter what job career position that you're in, they are the ability to communicate your ideas effectively, to make connections, and to take on other perspectives. Among so many other things, I like to think of soft skills as emotional management skills.

So I'll give you an example. I was talking to a very dear friend about her daughter's school experience. Recently, her daughter's teachers kept coming back to mom and suggesting that daughter just needed to learn how to raise her hand more, to ask more questions and to participate more in the discussion.

The teacher said it was really hurting daughter's academic performance, that she wasn't participating more. The teacher also suggested that perhaps mom could talk to daughter about this. When I came into the conversation, mom was seriously frustrated. The reason that she was so frustrated was because she had already talked to her daughter about this several times. It wasn't a situation of daughter not knowing.

Daughter already knew. She knew it quite well. In fact, she had had many conversations with her mom about this. The issue went deeper than just knowing something. It was at an emotional level, and that's something that I don't believe the school system is equipped to deal with or teach. In my opinion, emotional management should be taught in school as well as at home, but there just isn't the support or the understanding in the current educational system.

Ep #84: Soft Skills

There isn't even really emotional literacy. Well, I shouldn't say that. I should take that back. My own daughter's experience is that they did some work around emotional literacy at school, but not near enough around emotional literacy and emotional management.

For far too long, there's been this stigma around emotional management, and I believe that the devastating effects of this are becoming more and more clear. That's my soapbox but I really do believe that this is important for those of us who are interested in productivity and particularly in peaceful productivity, because emotional management is really at the core of most productivity issues. It's never a matter of not knowing. We like to tell ourselves that it is.

We like to tell ourselves that perhaps if I could just find that one time management tool or that method or process that I just haven't learned yet, then I will be productive or if not productive, then I'll feel better about what I'm doing about my productivity. I think the reason that that story is so tempting to so many of us is because if it were true, then all we would need to do was find that one tool or that one method, and then all of our productivity issues and our ability to follow through. All of that would be solved.

However, it's not an issue of lack of knowledge. Unfortunately, if it was a lack of knowledge, the entire billion dollar diet industry would fail. It would collapse because we already know what we need to do. As an example, in order to take care of our physical health, we need to eat nutritious foods, move our bodies, drink water, get sleep. It's not a matter of not knowing that. It's a matter of following through executing on it. It's a matter of emotional management. I always say that the gap between knowing and doing is filled by an emotion.

Emotion is the fuel for our action, for our behavior. It's the spark or the trigger that starts a habit, and it's also the fuel that reinforces that habit, over time. We like to tell ourselves that our decisions are based on logic, but we know that they are largely based on emotion.

Do I wanna work out right now? Do I want to eat that piece of cake? Do I wanna watch tv? Do I wanna clean the house, hug my daughter, go to the store, call my mom? All of these decisions are made at the emotional level, not at the cognitive level. It's what we feel like in the moment and what we feel like is based on our feelings. That's why I'm constantly learning and teaching emotional management skills.

To me, emotional management is the difference between living a life on default and living a life of intention and purpose. For many years, I misunderstood the meaning of emotional management. I prided myself on my ability to quote, unquote manage my emotions because I never allowed myself to become emotional. I confused those two things.

Being too emotional was really frowned upon when I was growing up. Being emotional was considered a feminine characteristic and a sign of weakness. It was also considered a sign of irrationality of not being in control of yourself. Oh, she's so emotional.

When I started my career, being emotional was also called being unprofessional and also criticized at that time was being a whiner, being a complainer and showing any type of pain. Stoics were very celebrated when I was going through my early stages of my career, as were the cold unemotional business types that surrounded me at that time.

Ep #84: Soft Skills

Needless to say, I took all of these cultural messages and socialization, and I made them mean that the secret to success in business was being professional, which meant being smart, rational, and emotional and logical. So what I did as a result is I just stuffed down all of the emotions, and I was very handsomely rewarded for that. So then the pattern got reinforced. It became so common for me to just stuff down all of the emotions that I didn't even realize that it was a habit that I had created.

Over time, I started attributing it to my personality rather than a way of projecting myself that I had adopted and that I had cultivated over time. So a very clear boundary between work and personal was drawn for me. In fact, like many people, I developed a work persona and a home persona. I don't think I was alone in that. I think there are still people out there that have created different masks for different areas of their lives.

In many ways, it really does serve us to cultivate an image of how we would like to be perceived by the world. I also work with a lot of clients who want to try something different. They want to show up more authentically. They feel like they've lost sight of who they really are. They realize that business is really based on relationships, and relationships are based on our ability to connect and our ability to connect requires us to be authentic.

So our ability to be authentic is really at the heart of business success. This has definitely been my experience. Back in the day, by all outside measures, I already would've been considered to be quite successful. I had a prosperous career as a C P A at a company that I loved. I was working with people that I cared about and I had amazing friends and family, but I still felt like something was missing, that I wasn't really living my true purpose.

The problem was I didn't really know what that purpose was. I didn't know what was missing. I had been working so hard doing what I thought I was supposed to be doing to create success, that I was sitting on a pile of achievements and not really able to take any satisfaction in them. Why is that? Well, I believe it's because I had cut myself off from my own emotional experience, and that's the root problem with stuffing down emotions. It leads to a void. It can be very debilitating, over time.

The gap between knowing and doing becomes hollowed out. So if you're anything like me, you end up doing things that you don't wanna be doing, like maybe working in a job that no longer resonates with you, or like feeling out of control of a habit, such as watching Netflix or scrolling or eating or drinking or smoking, or not doing any of those things that you want to be doing, like self-care.

When you're not living an intentional life, not doing the things that you intend to do, then you end up feeling badly about yourself, which is just more ammunition to distract yourself from yourself, more reason to stuff down the emotions. For someone like me, I just took that feeling, that feeling of feeling badly about myself, and I stuffed it down on top of the thousands of others that I had stuffed down over time.

The problem with stuffing down emotions is that you aren't just cutting yourself off from the negative emotions. You're also cutting yourself off from the feelings of fulfillment, happiness, and joy. This is what ultimately caused me to seek out some help. It was when I realized that my life had become quite stale. I felt like I wasn't living a life on purpose. I hadn't really felt joy in what I was doing in a long time.

Ep #84: Soft Skills

So how does one start the process of unpacking decades of stuffed down emotions? Experts often refer to a coping mechanism called compartmentalization. This is when you park an emotional reaction for a later time, and this is a very excellent, great skill to have, particularly when you're in a work setting and you don't want to be triggered and say or do something that you'll later regret.

Compartmentalization allows you to recognize the emotion and then choose a different action instead of reaction. The key part about compartmentalization, the part that I was missing for so many years was the ability to come back to the emotion later on to process it.

So in the past few years, I've been really focused on developing my skill of processing emotions, and this has been life-changing. It means that I am now making decisions in full consciousness of my emotions, not in denial of them.

As a result, what I want, what I truly want factors into the decision making process. It's like my authentic self has been given a voice. That's the key to living a life on purpose. It is to understand your authentic self and let that authentic voice have a vote in the decision making process, which then leads to fulfillment, self-confidence, intentionality, and that feeling of feeling in control.

If you are finding that you aren't able to follow through on your plans, or if you've given up on making plans altogether, the issue could be the skill of processing emotions. If you'd like any help with that, that is the cornerstone of my coaching program. I teach you how to bridge the gap from knowing to actually doing. Have a great day, everyone.

Are you looking for a coach who will help you increase your business profit, while protecting your time and your wellbeing? If so, I'll invite you to check out my website, financialwellnesscoach.ca.