

Dave:

Let's say that you're one of the many, many listeners who doesn't have a job this week that you had last week and you want to be a parent who leads. What does that conversation look like?

Stew:

I think it starts with an expression of commitment to love and attention and your full devotion as a parent to doing everything within your power to provide love, safety, and security. I'm going to do everything I possibly can.

Announcer:

Bulletproof Radio, a state of high performance.

Dave:

You're listening to Bulletproof Radio with Dave Asprey. Today's cool fact of the day is that water balloon physics is helping us to understand human biological functions, and the reason this matters so much is that that thin elastic membrane around a water balloon is very similar in how it behaves, at least in fluid dynamics, to the way your cell membranes behave. We're now figuring out what happens in that thin layer of tiny droplets of fat that hold your cells together. In order to do the math on that scientists filled custom elastic capsules with water and threw them at 100 miles an hour and recorded the impact in super slow motion and then took tiny measurements of the footage. They figured out surprising relationships between the behavior of the capsules and tiny water droplets. Where capsules are held together by the tension of a membrane, water droplets are held together by surface tension. The researchers were able to use that connection to adapt and change the math that describes water droplets, so now it's a capsule engineering problem.

Dave:

This ties directly in with the work that Bulletproof helped to fund at the University of Washington where we looked at what happens to those tiny droplets of fat and water interacting? It turns out water is doing crazy stuff, and since your body is mostly water and we don't understand basic things about water and biology, anytime we can do something like create math that explains how fluid filled capsules deform or change with pressure, that's you my friend.

Dave:

Today's show is going to be awesome because it's a show with someone I've known... Stew I'm dating us. I think for about 19 years I would say.

Stew:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dave:

This is one of my Wharton professors. I took his class about 19 years ago, and he's been on the show once before when he wrote a book called Total Leadership and I wanted to interview him now because his book that just came out called Parents Who Lead that talks about how to be a parent with purpose while having a career and an actual rich life. It's hard to do and it's maybe doubly hard now that so many of us are at home with kids and I can't tell you how many podcasts have been interrupted or business

meetings by kids coming in. My last one my daughter's in, "My Zoom has crashed. I don't even know what a crash is." All right, we can edit that out, let's hack this.

Dave:

I wanted to get a chance, a perfect timing actually, to talk about okay how do I do what was already hard but I at least got a break at work. How do I do this when I'm at home and I get these constant interruptions from kids? How do you maintain that richer life you talk about in Parents Who Lead when it's some days degraded to a series of constant interruptions, whether it's I'm just going to focus on this PowerPoint presentations... I'm sorry I'm going to focus on your socks. Really, how do we do that Stew? You're the wizard, tell us.

Stew:

Oh my gosh Dave it's so good to be here and to be with you again. What I remember from you in my class these many years ago is that you always asked difficult questions and that's one of the reasons why I love knowing you.

Dave:

Aww, thanks.

Stew:

That's a tough one because we're in uncharted waters now, and so many of us are being forced to figure out new ways of living and working that we've never had to confront before. To answer your question I think the most important thing is to be flexible, to give yourself a break, and to communicate, maybe over-communicate with people, including your kids if they're capable of human communication beyond grunts and give me milk or whatever, to where you can actually talk about what your needs and interests are, what her needs and interests are, as well as with your colleagues or your community members, whoever it is that you're interacting with so that you can become more skilled at mastering the art of interruptibility. Which is what I wrote about many years ago in Total Leadership in which now seems evermore difficult as the physical boundaries between work and family have virtually disappeared for so many of us.

Dave:

You've studied work life integration for 30 years, you actually started a program about 30 years ago. It seems like the culmination of 30 years of research is when everyone, unprepared, is suddenly practicing full on work life integration. You're saying, "Be flexible and talk to your kids." Come on, really what does even being flexible look like?

Stew:

It's a little bit more than that. The thing that many people underestimate in terms of its power in being able to deal with constant interruption is setting up expectations with the people that you're with to say, "Look, here's what's happening in the larger context of my life right now. I've got two kids at home and it's highly likely that I'm going to have to deal with one or two of them over this next hour. Here's some ideas for how we can adjust when that happens, what do you think? What are dealing with in your world that I should know about?" Take a couple minutes at the start to set expectations so that when you are indeed having to deal with your daughter's crash on Zoom... I'm surprised she doesn't know

what crash means but I guess she'll be learning. That it's not a shock to your colleagues or whoever it is that you're interacting with, and that you can both adjust.

Stew:

What I'm seeing with my students, with my clients over the last couple weeks, is that there's so much more of a... I don't know if accommodation is the right word as interest in people's lives. You're looking into my home office right now, I'm looking into your kitchen slash workspace, and we get to know each other in ways that we didn't before. There's a lot of benefit to that. I think the simple acknowledgement of I'm a human being beyond the work exchange that we're doing right now, and so are you, so let's deal with that. We're being forced to do that now and I think that that's helping everybody. It does require, as I say, some adjustment and flexibility, but I think if you negotiate it just a bit up front it makes everything a lot easier. What do you think?

Dave:

I think negotiating and saying what you want is important. In fact I remember you're one of the very first people who said, "Can we take an ROI approach, a return on investment, what do you get for what you do on your entire life?" The class that I took from you those two decades ago was a real brutal and frank assessment of how much energy are you putting into different parts of your life, your community, your home life, your relationships with your friends, your health, all that. Most people in an executive MBA program are saying, "I'm probably not very balanced because I'm working and I'm going to school full-time." You're telling people, "Hey, hold up the mirror. Measure and then take action."

Stew:

Yeah.

Dave:

Parents Who Lead okay now we're at home. How do you measure and then figure out this ROI on what to do? Certainly communicating needs based on hey, if you do this one thing that has the highest return for me I'd be really grateful. Okay, that's cool but how do you even know what has a high return when you're at home?

Stew:

Well it starts with doing the diagnostic. There's this thing called the four-way view, which you did back in the day. I don't know if I called it that then, I think I did, where you do just what you suggested. Let me take a minute so that listeners can understand what it is. They can do it right now in fact, it's not that complicated. If you think of these four buckets or these four spheres of your life or domains as work or career or school, it's one piece. Another is your home or family, that's the second piece. However you define that and of course that comes in many, many different forms. Then there's the community of relationships beyond work and family, friends, neighbors, social groups, political groups, religious groups, whatever, and then there's you as an individual, your private self that is your body, your mind, your heart.

Stew:

The boundaries among those of course can be quite permeable and they can overlap, in some cases they're separate and distinct. Let's put that aside for now and think about these four different domains for the sake of doing this rough cut diagnostic on what matters and where is your attention and what's

the impact or the ROI that you're getting from the attention that you're spending on each domain. If you think of those four domains and the first thing that I'll ask you to do is to take 100 points and allocate them according to how important, right now, snapshot of your current subjective reality, how important is each of those parts of your life to you.

Dave:

You could put all 100 in one bucket if you wanted to?

Stew:

Exactly.

Dave:

Okay.

Stew:

Yes, yes so if your boss is sitting next to you, you could put 100 into work and zero, zero, zero on the rest and... I'm kidding, that's the old model of the ideal employee.

Dave:

It really is. I mean that's the IBM model. Look at *Madmen* and that was how it was.

Stew:

It was, it was, and that still lingers in many parts of the world unfortunately.

Dave:

You were a top 100 exec at Ford, which is an old, old line company.

Stew:

I was. Top 300 but yes I was an executive bander brought in from Wharton for a few years. Just before I met you I spent a few years there as the head of leadership development for the company worldwide and that's where we came up with this Total Leadership model based on the research that we'd been doing at Wharton in the 90s. Yeah, the ideal employee at Ford then was one of 100% commitment, but I was brought there to try to change that.

Dave:

It wasn't functional?

Stew:

It was no longer working, right and the CEO brought in 30 of us at the top 300 level to infuse new blood and different models for how to work and how to live and how to think about the company from an outside in perspective as opposed to from an inside out perspective. Our work, the work that I did there, was a part of that initiative. Yes, that's the old model and for some people it still is 100% work and nothing else. Most people don't have that profile, but my point here is that it can be anything. I think that was your point as well. Whatever that allocation is take an honest, no bullshit look at all right, what

do you really care about? Not what your mother wants you to think, not what your friends say you should be doing, but what really is in your heart and mind right now.

Dave:

This is what you care about, not what you're doing?

Stew:

Yes, and the second column, second column of this chart that you can envision and you can scratch this out on a piece of paper or anywhere, is where is your attention, which I assert is perhaps your most important asset as a leader in your life and in your business life. Where's your attention during your waking hours in a typical week or month, any period? On a percentage basis, same four domains.

Dave:

Where does Facebook fit in those four?

Stew:

I don't know you tell me.

Dave:

It's 80% of attention for some people.

Stew:

If you're Mark Zuckerberg it's work I suppose. I don't know. Yeah, well that's a really good question. How do you think about your social relationships online? Is that your community life, is it your work life? Again, there's some overlap, but the point here is to make some distinctions among the different parts to get you to think a little bit more creatively about how these different parts of your life interact and how they affect each other because they do.

Stew:

You take another 100 points and allocate them as to where is your attention in a typical week. Not so much where your physical presence is because there's an important distinction between physical presence and psychological presence. You can be physically present and psychologically absent. Another 100 points allocate them according to, again an honest appraisal as to where is your attention. Then look at the ROI. First in terms of your subjective sense of well-being on a simple scale of one, things are terrible, 10 to I'm fully satisfied and feel great at work, at home, in the community, and for myself personally. How would you rate that? That takes some reflection and some sober looking at well how do I feel about how things are going in each of these different parts of my life.

Stew:

Finally, finally ask yourself how well am I doing in performing in each of these different domains in terms of the needs and expectations of the people who matter most to me in each of the different parts. Again, on a scale of one to 10, Dave if I were to ask you to identify, and I did ask you this 20 years ago, who are the key stakeholders in your work life and you'd think about who those people are and you'd think about how well you're meeting their expectations and you'd rate that, again on a simple scale of one terrible, to 10 outstandingly. How would you rate how well you're doing? Then do the same for your

home relationships, your family, as well as for your key relationships among friends and community. Then finally in terms of how well you're doing in meeting your own goals and expectations.

Stew:

That is the four-way view snapshot. Anyone can do that and what we find is that when you take that snapshot you start to think about where there's opportunity for you to perhaps shift some of your attention so that you can better meet the needs and expectations of the people around you and take real action to make things better for you and for them once you start to look for it. What we do in Parents Who Lead is have partners in parents, that's what we refer to them. Sometimes they're married, sometimes they're not, sometimes they're separated, sometimes they're single and they've got partners who are not lovers but they are other partners in the parenting enterprise, whoever they might be. Fill that out for yourself and then have them fill it out, and also fill out your estimate of what you think they would say.

Stew:

Fill it out for yourself and then you fill it out for your partner and then they do the same for you and come together to see, all right, what does this actually look like in terms of what we care about and where we're putting our time.

Dave:

When I did this along with 100 friends in school, pretty much after the first two columns when we go what do I care about and where am I putting my time, wait a minute, I'm putting a huge amount of my time in stuff I don't care about. The you say, "Oh," and that in and of itself is a slap in the face, and then you get to the next one and you say, "Okay, how good of a job am I doing? Oh wait, okay I might be doing a good job on stuff I don't care about but I'm doing a bad job on stuff that I care about even more. Oh wait, I'm not doing so well here," and then you get to the next one and then you ask the people who are influencers important for you and you get answers probably like you'd expect. Sometimes though, especially on the home relationship stuff the answers are usually not what you'd expect at all.

Dave:

I remember one friend from class, even 20 years later, when she sat down and she said, "Okay I did all this work," and she asked her partner, "Hey, what do you think about all this stuff?" What came out of it was that every time she'd come home from a business trip she'd run and grab the dog and play with the dog. He's like, "What am I? Below the dog?" It was a major thing.

Stew:

I don't remember that.

Dave:

Yeah, it was really funny because she was laughing about it. She's like, "I had no idea. I loved the dog, I missed the dog." They actually changed what she did when she came home. It was a dumb little thing except it really matters.

Stew:

[crosstalk 00:17:33]. Of course it does.

Dave:

We're all full of that.

Stew:

Yes and everybody's got something like that. What we do in this new book, which is done specifically for parents raising kids together is to focus on how we could design these exercises in a way that would work for them as a collective, so that's why we have... With examples from our labs. We ran a lab for a year or so to get real people going through these exercises from which we learned and their stories fill the book as illustrations of how to do this and how to talk to each other so that you can get on the same page. Even though you're going to have differences and there's going to be conflict, the key at the beginning is to establish all right, what's the common ground that we want to walk together? What do we have in common as our shared view of the future?

Stew:

You may remember Dave I also asked you to write a leadership vision identifying what an ideal day would look like 15 years down the road, what would you be doing in the morning, in the afternoon, in the evening? Why would you be doing what you're doing and with whom and what's the impact that you're having?

Dave:

I remember mine. It was one word, it said coffee.

Stew:

There it is, and so it became real. We have people do that now on their own and then we have their partner do it and then they... Again, they look at it together and say, "Wow, these are amazingly different, what are we going to do about that?" Or, "Wow, we want the same exact thing." It's usually somewhere in between. Let's see even now what we can do about creating a shared, collective vision of the future that helps to inspire us, to guide us, and to help us make decisions not just in the long run, but now in terms of what we really care about. What we found is that that's probably the most important aspect of this whole process is getting on the same page as to what really matters because everything flows from that.

Dave:

Is there a difference between parents who lead and... What's the opposite of that is a better way of... What's the opposite? Parents who follow? What do you mean when you say parents who lead? What are they leading? Who are they leading and who's following?

Stew:

What we've done here is to try to take the science of leadership that we have contributed to and that we've curated from the literature on leadership and psychology and used that to inform the art of parenting. Lead is to inspire people to come with you to a better tomorrow based on a clear picture of today. To do that requires that you have some sense of what a better tomorrow is looking like and to articulate that in a way that other people can understand. Well first as a partnership but then whoever matters to you, especially your kids yeah.

Stew:

That requires some effort, it doesn't happen by magic and nobody anoints you a leader. You have to create that. Parents who don't lead are people who feel like many people do these days, and that is overwhelmed, scared, reactive to life's circumstance, and not really asserting an idea about their sense of purpose in the world and what it is that they're trying to do during their brief time dancing on this beautiful earth. They are feeling will of the wisp, torn and tattered, moving around in a lot of different directions, and not really feeling clear about what it is that they're here to do, and of course that affects their kids.

Stew:

Parents who lead are those who have a sense of what matters to them and they're figuring out, just as we all are, each day a new way to take a step in a direction that's closer and closer to that world that they see as a better tomorrow for them and the people that they care about.

Dave:

I think it does. You're saying having a shared vision makes leadership. I've seen almost no companies where there's co-CEOs succeed. There's usually you're the boss, as in the head leader, and everyone has to practice leadership but ultimately there is a leader, and when there isn't a leader usually chaos and political games ensue and it's a nasty situation.

Stew:

That's a good point.

Dave:

In a family when you have two people usually who are raising a child, how do you decide who's the leader? How do you avoid that co-leadership trap?

Stew:

Yeah, well there's more research now on shared leadership models and teams and the importance of having joint ownership of responsibility for taking people into a better future. We know more about this now. That said, there's always going to be tension because once you have two people you've got two different world views and that requires continual adjustment and negotiation and that's the work. Each couple's different, each partnership is different, but the ones that work, just like the companies that are successful in distributing leadership, are those that are spending some time on all right, who's good at what? Who wants to do what? What's fair? Let's figure that out and let's look at what's working and what's not and let's adjust as we learn, what's working and what's not. It doesn't come easily.

Dave:

Let's take this down into quarantine land.

Stew:

Okay.

Dave:

I asked around in my group of stakeholders, my wife and my kids, who loves to do dirty dishes? It's going to amaze you but no one raised their hand, not even once.

Stew:

Get out. Your daughter, how old are your kids now?

Dave:

12 and 10, my daughter's 12, son's 10.

Stew:

All right so your 10 year old son is not into doing the dishes, I'm shocked Dave, shocked.

Dave:

I know, maybe there's something wrong with them.

Stew:

I don't know what you're doing there. I think we need to talk more, but please continue with your question. I think I know where you're going.

Dave:

All right, so this is one of those things where we all have a shared goal of we'd like to be able to eat our next meal because if we don't have dishes or a place to cook we can't do that, but no one wants to do the work. Everyone listening to this is dealing with this probably two and usually three times a day more than they did before.

Stew:

Yes.

Dave:

How would you go about applying this Parents Who Lead model towards the shitty tasks of daily living that we're all seeing more of?

Stew:

The shitty tasks, yes and man I wish I had an easy answer for you, but I'll give you a hard answer, which is the only one I know. That is however you can... You started to answer it yourself. However you can ground the choices about who has to do what in a sense of fairness and a larger perspective on why you're doing what you're doing, why this has to get done. That's what you started to address. If we don't have clean dishes we're going to get hungry fast or we're going to get germs. Who wants that kids? Do either of you want to have disease coming into our family because our dishes aren't clean? Which one of you wants that? Why is it important for us to be doing this?

Stew:

I mean a good leader does this. He or she explains look, this is why we're doing what we're doing. It's not just by executive fiat that I'm micromanaging your ass because I like to boss you around, it's there's a purpose here.

Dave:

You're ruining my next book. I was going to call it Pepper Spray Parenting and that was going to be my answer for everything and Stew.

Stew:

You can try that Dave. In the short run it's probably easier, but we have to be as leaders is role models for the kind of values we're trying to teach our kids and that's really what the heart of this whole project is about, to be values conscious or values driven as a leader in your family and the other parts of your life that you care about and it's hard, but it's possible, and anybody can do it. It actually makes it easier to say, "Now do you understand?" "No I don't." "Well okay. I tried to explain it to you, you still have to do it."

Dave:

Exactly. Exactly, and we do a lot of talking about brain development and the power of having experience. There's this interesting conversation lately around if you have practiced something enough, you have enough experience that you've developed competence, then you're competent at it and then when you express that you're competent in it then it's actually normal. But when you have no experience and you express competence it's arrogance. Right, and so as any child will do they say, "I already know how to do that." "Okay, can you explain how you have any experience doing this and any practice becoming competent?" Then the conversation... Okay, well in our house in order to get competent at something you have to have done it before, so you will be quiet and listen and then it will continue.

Stew:

I think that any example that you can give from your own life where you demonstrated that same arrogance and what the consequences were for you or other people, that can help.

Dave:

It's a tough situation. We talked about dishwashers, what about these other aspects of leadership where these are things that maybe your kids normally wouldn't be exposed to, for instance a lot of times when there's parents if you have a fifth category in the study we just did, which would be marital relations. There's an interesting graph around the age of the children and happiness with your love life and they're inversely correlated, right?

Stew:

Right.

Dave:

Now that people are in a quarantine situation where you never get a break from your partner or from your kids, how does that shift your perspective on being a parents who leads? A parent who leads and never gets to be alone.

Stew:

Well just because you're living together and never having your own bounded space doesn't mean that you can't have some time during the day to do something that enables you to be on your own. I think it's critical to, as I'm sure many of your guests have talked about compassion starts with yourself. In order for you to have the generosity and tolerance that's needed in these terribly trying times, under the constraints that we're all having to operate under, you got to have some time for yourself. You got to do whatever it takes to have even a sliver of time where you are consciously and deliberately caring for yourself. But the really interesting literature on survivors of prison camps and prisoners of war from the generation prior to mine, shows powerfully how the key to survival in those circumstances, the people who made it through, were those who found some way to care for other people.

Stew:

They had enough internal reserves but they had a reason to live, they had a purpose that was invariably driven by helping other people. Even if it was a thin slice of a corner of a piece of gruel that kept somebody else breathing for another day, that helped them to sustain their own sense of life and purpose. You got to have both I think. Some centered idea of what you need and some time, even if it's in a corner under a table, and it's a lot of people going into closets. In small apartments in New York City who are finding a few minutes of I'm shutting the freaking door, I'm going to be alone here, and I'm going to meditate or whatever. Daddy needs his time. In order for me to be able to do what I need to do for everybody else today I need this 10 minutes. Whatever it takes.

Dave:

We had a conversation the other day in my house and I'm going to relate this back to the overarching parts of Parents Who Lead, but my kids, as all kids do, they want to creep their bedtime later, later, and later, and later. Finally I sat down I said, "Look, if you take only an extra 20 minutes here it seems like oh it's just 20 minutes." I said, "But let me explain this to you. If you go to bed at 8:30 and I go to bed at 10:30 that means I've got two hours, and during that two hours I need to get ready for bed, I have chores and tasks, and I'd like to have some time to talk with mom, some one on one adult time when the children are not here because that's important for adults." I said, "So if you use 20 or 30 minutes of that what percentage is it?" You see the little math things going, "That's 25%." "Yes, and that's why you're going to get your ass to bed on time tonight."

Stew:

Well I would have paused-

Dave:

How'd I do?

Stew:

Not bad Dave because you helped them to understand your reasoning. What you didn't do in that scenario as you described it was to ask them... You're not asking permission here, you're saying... When you laid out your reasoning, which was very clear, you might have then said, "What do you think about what I just told you? Does this make sense to you? Does what I suggested... What questions do you have about that?" "No dad, I get it. You need to be with mom and you need to take care of all this other crap. I get it, that makes sense and I can see how that helps me ultimately."

Stew:

By doing that quick check in on it's not just a top down command, this is what I need so get to bed now. This is one of the leadership principles that pervades this work is explain your reasoning. Doesn't mean that you're asking for their... You're not delegating authority to them, you're not relinquishing your responsibility, you're helping them to understand the choices that you're making, and again, the values that underlie them. My relationship with mom is really important to me, it's important to her, and we believe it's important to you too.

Dave:

Getting buy in, okay.

Stew:

It's getting buy in on the underlying value that drives the choices of your time and attention that you're trying to get them to see is something that they should support.

Dave:

Got it because of enlightened self-interest or well when you're young-

Stew:

Exactly.

Dave:

No so enlightened self-interest but at least self-interest.

Stew:

Emerging.

Dave:

Yeah emerging, there we go.

Stew:

Yeah, and that's what you're teaching them. That's what we're hoping more and more parents will start to do is to be conscious of their role as educating the next generation as to values that are ones that you'd want them to hold and to live by and to be willing to fight for. As I look to the future I see the need for children, the next generation having a strong sense of what they stand for and why it's important that they take a stand. That that's going to be more important than ever, don't you think?

Dave:

I really do think it's going to be critically important. In fact you read my mind there. We all know that kids will copy what their parents did. In fact most people listening, unless you've done huge amounts of work as a therapist or something or you spent years meditating in a temple somewhere by yourself, you probably do a bunch of things your parents did, whether it's the way you set the table. Little things throughout life that you never consciously decided to do, they're how it's always been. You'll very likely at the end of your life die doing some of those same things and never having known it, it's just a human

condition. We know that our kids learn by watching how we lead, but aside from being good role models as good leaders, so I'm taking that off the table for you, what can listeners and me, what can we do to teach our kids to be better leaders, especially in the face of a bunch of fear like they're dealing with today?

Stew:

Mm-hmm (affirmative), well I think it starts with acknowledging the fear and anxiety and not denying it. If you're feeling scared as I am, I welcomed my first granddaughter into the world six days ago.

Dave:

Congratulations.

Stew:

Born in New York City. Thank you.

Dave:

I'm guessing you weren't there for the delivery.

Stew:

Well her father, who is my son, was not there for the delivery.

Dave:

Yeah, they didn't let him in?

Stew:

Yeah, the next day they rescinded that regulation. Yeah, but it was okay. He was home with their 13 year old adopted son and that in some ways made it easier. It's a longer story Dave then your listeners probably want to hear about but everybody's good. Of course I worry about them and they worry. There's a lot of fear, especially in New York right now. To deny that there is real scary things happening in the world doesn't help, but you have to frame it in terms that kids can understand. Courage of course is persisting despite fear, it's not ignoring fear pretending that danger doesn't exist, it's acknowledging it. Then finding a way somehow to persist because you have some sense of hope that there's a better tomorrow, which is why having that picture of a better tomorrow is so critically important.

Stew:

I would start with that. These are scary times, here's what we're hoping for, here's what we believe in. Whether that's the importance of education or social justice or adventure. Whatever it is that you value that you want your kids to know about, to stand for, find a way to talk to them about it in ways that they can get and bring that down to the level of okay, now this is why you're going to sleep at 8:30 or why you got to do the dishes. So that they feel a part of something bigger and they're not being, like so many parents who don't lead, torn and blown about by the winds of fate.

Dave:

Now let's say that you're one of the many, many listeners who doesn't have a job this week that you had last week and you want to be a parent who leads. What does that conversation look like?

Stew:

I think it starts with an expression of commitment to love and attention and your full devotion as a parent to doing everything within your power to provide love, safety, and security to your kids. I'm going to do everything I possibly can. It's not going to be easy. We're going to have to make some changes in the way that we live and we're going to do this together. I'm never going to stop trying to do everything I can to be the father that you need me to be, to be the mother that you need me to be because you are the most important thing to me. I think the honest appraisal of this sucks but we'll get through this together is what we need from all leaders right now.

Dave:

Okay, there's transparency here. Some couples it's your money, you make it. Other couples everything is shared, sometimes you have your own credit card, sometimes you don't, but during a time like this I mean how transparent do you recommend parents be with kids? It is time for more transparency, less transparency. It seems like such a messy thing but it's such a part of leadership. As a CEO how many employees should see all the numbers? I don't want them to go to the competitors, but I want everyone to know how we're doing. It's the same thing. Do you want your kids at school talking, "My parents don't have a job. My parents are doing well." It seems messy. What do you do there?

Stew:

I think it in part depends on their age and what they're capable of taking in.

Dave:

Of course.

Stew:

One of the things we did at Ford was to share with every employee worldwide what drove our share price, we taught them how to understand shareholder value. What we aimed to do was to have each and every employee... This was the aspiration. Understand how what they did, no matter what their job, how it contributed to that value. That meant opening up some of the financial picture that had previously been closed. There were problems with implementation of that as you can imagine with 330,000 people in 80 different countries, but the idea was so well received and where it worked it created so much more commitment and sense of confidence. Okay, I'm a part of this. That's my general bias to be sharing information that's relevant for people. You got to figure out is this relevant? Do they need to know? Typically the people who are higher up in an organizational chain, whether that's a family or a company, think that yeah, they don't need to know. When it turns out actually they do need to know.

Dave:

Yep.

Stew:

And it would help them, and more importantly it would help you if they knew. Because that is the bias, lack of trust, and nah they don't need to know, I would urge you and others to think twice about that and to ask yourself, "What really is the risk in their knowing?" Place that against the upside of their

having a better sense of reality and a greater sense of they're being able to contribute to making it a better one.

Dave:

It could be that a lot of execs and maybe even a lot of parents we have a fear that oh kids will talk in school or employees will leave and take our competitive information with us. Yeah those are real risks, but maybe they aren't as big as the real upside but the upside's more vague. Okay, I buy that.

Stew:

It's harder to see it in the near term, yeah. Thinking through what the risks of withholding that information can help you to get over that hurdle.

Dave:

Okay. Ford versus Ferrari, accurate, not accurate?

Stew:

I haven't seen it.

Dave:

You haven't seen it?

Stew:

I haven't seen it. I know.

Dave:

That is actually an incredible movie. I think of all humans on earth you would have been the guy who'd see it.

Stew:

I know, no it's on the very, very top of the list of things that I'm trying to get to. Everybody says, "Oh I'm home watching Netflix." I'm like, "Really, when do you do that?"

Dave:

I watched it with the kids. It was one of those movies that was 99% age appropriate and so I was figuring they paint the Ford culture so beautifully, from the 60s.

Stew:

Yes, yes.

Dave:

At least I think they do, so I wanted to know if you saw the remainder of that. We'll put this as a plug for if you like the show that movie is mostly clean, a little bit of swearing. It was fantastic and it was about organizational behavior and resistance to change and disruption and all the good stuff anyway.

Stew:

Can't wait. I'm so sorry. I came ill prepared Dave.

Dave:

No. One of my favorite leadership techniques for children is you put them in front of a screen and then it's all automatic from there.

Stew:

This is the great debate.

Dave:

That's my second book after the pepper spray one.

Stew:

What's that book going to be called?

Dave:

I have no idea, I'm still thinking about it. Automated Parents, that's a good one.

Stew:

Plug In Parent.

Dave:

My kids are in a Waldorf school, so the reason my daughter didn't really know what a Zoom crash was is because she had never used Zoom until three days ago because they use paper and stuff, it's weird. It's like an iPad that operates off solar power and never runs out of battery.

Stew:

Amazing.

Dave:

Pencil and paper. To them this is all pretty new and exciting and fun, it's not like we don't watch Netflix. My question for you is okay, I want to be a parent who leads, I want to be present for my kids, and I also want to go hang out in the closet for an hour so I'm going to give the kids some of the screen time. I know you're not an expert on screen time but-

Stew:

I'm not.

Dave:

It feels like you're abdicating leadership when you threw your kids in front of something that gets their attention like that. Is it abdication?

Stew:

Again, give yourself a break. It's okay.

Dave:

X amount is okay based on your values.

Stew:

Professor Stew says relax your insane type A standards just a little bit, it's okay. However, my take, again I'm 67 so what do I know about the stuff, and I have studied it anecdotally with students with clients and reading some of the literature. There are good games and then there are bad games. There's good video and there's bad video. I think that's the key. It's not so much the quantity of time, it really is about the quality, which goes for parenting as well. That I have done research on. If you're present psychologically, if you're there paying attention, listening, curious, compassionate, engaged for a half hour, that's a lot better than sitting next to your kid while you're on your smartphone for two hours.

Dave:

That's totally true.

Stew:

Quality matters. Quality matters, and so choose your video poison wisely so that what your kid is doing there is in some way socially, or intellectually, or otherwise enriching. There's a lot of tools out there, there's a lot of opportunities to do that. The games that are addictive in the worst sense tend to be mind candy and that's a problem. Limited doses I think it's okay.

Dave:

Yeah, there's some evidence even for hand eye coordination and stuff like that. But lots of that man, it's especially hard for young brains to resist those. It's also especially hard for parents to never say, "You know you can have an hour because I wanted to chill." I think your underlying point there is even leaders practice some self-care because the ones who don't, if they go through the four-way analysis you just talked about, their inner happiness number is going to be exceptionally low because they're always, "Sure, I'll read a book to you," even though I needed to close my eyes for a little while and you could have listened to an audio book. Stuff like that.

Stew:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Don't forsake reading to your children.

Dave:

No, no I'm not saying I should read-

Stew:

No, no I know.

Dave:

I'm saying there are times when you say, "All right, I will read to you," and there are times when I'm done reading to you because I needed to give my brain a rest.

Stew:

Yeah, and that's going to be good for you junior and here's why. It's the same thing with your boss, with your clients. Here's why my being interrupted now and why you might see my cat jump on my lap while we're talking, why that's something that's ultimately going to make me more effective in helping you to deliver for you what's important to you. That's an important part of the leadership mindset that we're trying to help people to develop is it's not just about your needs, it's not just about your kid's needs, it's not just about what you're trying to do for yourself, it's how can I make this something that's going to work for us?

Dave:

I love it. All right, one final question.

Stew:

Yeah.

Dave:

If I use the Skype blurred background or the Zoom virtual backgrounds, is that good for working from home or bad from working from home?

Stew:

Wait, say it again. I'm not sure I'm getting the question.

Dave:

Look at my background right now. I'm going to do something in [crosstalk 00:47:24] Skype.

Stew:

Okay your exact background.

Dave:

Yeah exactly, so I'm going to go to my audio and video settings and I'm going to say appearance.

Stew:

Got the Dave background.

Dave:

I'm going to say... Where's the thing here?

Stew:

What I love about your background Dave I'm going to say immediately, the orange top for your refrigerator. I assume that's a refrigerator.

Dave:

Yeah, it's a refrigerator.

Stew:

That's super cool because that's so on brand.

Dave:

Oh thank you.

Stew:

Obviously, yeah. That's the thing that I've been thinking mostly about during our conversation.

Dave:

Was my orange fridge?

Stew:

Yes. Oh wow.

Dave:

I just turned on the blurred background.

Stew:

Okay.

Dave:

You were saying earlier that to work from home during the virus it's good because of people, you see more about their lives. You don't want to look like you live in a pigsty so I blurred my background. And on Zoom if we were doing that, I could actually have a background of outer space or wavy palms and you wouldn't even see my background.

Stew:

That's right.

Dave:

Is that actually a good thing from your perspective? You know 30 years of organizational development I just want your opinion. I know that you haven't studied this in a study but.

Stew:

All right, fair. My personal opinion I'd rather see the detail. But I'm nosy which makes me a good social scientist. I like to peek into people's lives and look at all the detail and say, "Wow, what is that jaw doing on top of the stove. What is Dave thinking about that dinosaur thingy or whatever that shark mouth or whatever that is." That's interesting. That tells me something about you.

Dave:

It's a crocodile skull, life size replica with gold teeth. Well they're painted gold but gold bling. I don't know what it is. I saw it and I liked it. It's interesting.

Stew:

That's another window into the soul of Dave Asprey, which I'm super curious about. I go for detail rather than the blur. I go for real rather than the fake because I think that helps us be human to human.

Dave:

Also encourages us to clean up our environment when we're in it all the time. I will admit I removed my used coffee cups from the counter behind me before the interview.

Stew:

You did? You see that too I would see as consistent with what I would expect is lots of used coffee cups.

Dave:

But the ones off camera they're here.

Stew:

All right, beautiful cup.

Dave:

Stew I appreciate your work in the world studying what makes people happy and makes them perform well at work and at home and understanding they're different environments but that leadership is there, and then applying it to parenting. Not in your 20s or 30s but waiting until you were almost 70, which is the age when real wisdom comes on. I'm going to give you a rounding error up there as one of our elders.

Stew:

I'll take it.

Dave:

Yeah, I do really... I think your work has merit, it's made a difference in my life for the last 20 years. Just that ROI lens, the self-assessment, getting buy in and an honest assessment from your partner in parenting. All that is table stakes and when people take the time to do it I think there's great value. That's why I wanted to have you on the show. Your book is twice as important now that we're in a pandemic because relationship pressures and parenting pressures are higher now than they were when you got at least eight hours a day out of the house, when you didn't have to deal with it as much. Thank you for providing the book. I know it's stressful to launch a book. It just came out right in the middle of all this and it's hard to get through the media noise, but your book is on point for where we are as a society right now. I'm going to recommend if you're a parent or you work with parents and things like that, Parents Who Lead is a meaningful, meaningful book that you should add to your shelf.

Stew:

Thank you so much Dave. I really appreciate it.

Dave:

Stew, I enjoyed the interview and I look forward to having you on when you write your next book in a few years. Another one in the works?

Stew:

Plug In Parenting, we're going to do that together Dave.

Dave:

Love it. If you liked today's episode you know what to do. Head on over to iTunes and leave a review or pick up Stew's book which is called Parents Who Lead and leave a review for that after you buy it and after you read it because you would tip your Uber driver if you ever saw them, your Uber Eats driver and hopefully you're still leaving a little tip out there for anyone who helps you. The way you tip an author is by leaving a review. We don't want money, we want to know we made a difference because that makes us live longer. Have an awesome day.