

Announcer:

Welcome to The Carey Nieuwhof Leadership podcast, a podcast all about leadership, change and personal growth. The goal? To help you lead like never before in your church or in your business. And now, your host Carey Nieuwhof.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, hey, everybody, and welcome to episode 354 of the podcast. My name is Carey Nieuwhof, and I hope our time together today helps you lead like never before. My guest today is Jo Saxton. I met her at last year's Global Leadership Summit in Chicago, and man, she dropped a couple of bombs that just really, really hit me and I said, "Hey, can you come on my podcast?" So anyway, she's a leader worth following, so glad that you're tuning in for this.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And today's episode is brought to you by Gloop. You can learn more about your church's online audience, so you can better engage them at gloopinsights.com/carey. And I'm so excited about a brand new resource, Tony Morgan's Unstuck Group has. They've got one-day masterclass about the key shifts churches need to make because of Coronavirus. You can actually get a free copy of lesson one at theunstuckgroup.com/carey.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So anyway, I hope your summer is going okay. We are going to get into something. Today's episode a little bit of a cautionary tale because I want to pick Jo's brain in this conversation about burnout and she had a more severe case than I did, and that is something that's really on my heart. I've just talked to so many leaders who are so tired. I mean as you've heard a million times here on this podcast, 2020 is a year nobody expected, nobody signed up for and yet here we are. And the line that I wrote down, it just hit me. I remember the moment she said it from the stage at the GLS last year is, "You have one body, and your leadership lives in it." I'm like, "Oh yeah," and I almost killed that body. So, we're going to talk about that and also a bunch of other things. It's a wide-ranging conversation.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Jo Saxton is an author, speaker, podcast host and leadership coach. She's dedicated her career to growing leadership teams around the world and empowering women to find their purpose in their personal lives and leadership. In her book, *More Than Enchanting: Breaking Through the Barriers to Influence Your World*, she talks about, well, many things, including the role of women in church and society. Her latest book, *The Dream of You*, helps readers tackle their past, their identity and so much more. She's also spearheaded an initiative aimed to help women grow their leadership skills. So, I'm thrilled to have Jo on the podcast today.

Carey Nieuwhof:

If you're a new listener, make sure you subscribe and at the end of the podcast, I'm going to do a What I'm Thinking About segment, and I'm going to talk to you about the importance of sleep, why I prioritize it, and then I'm going to give you a couple of pro tips, some hacks on how to sleep better. This is something that I have become a little bit obsessed with over the years and I promise you, the better you sleep, the higher your productivity. That is the carrot in front of the horse for me. So anyway, we'll talk about that during What I'm Thinking About.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, as you all know, 2020 is a crazy year, and this year has disrupted and accelerated the church's need to engage with people online, but that complicates things like how do you know who's actually listening? So, I am super excited about Insights+. It's a brand new resource. I've had a backstage tour of it from my friends, your friends at Gloop and it removes the confusion behind who is watching you online to bridge the digital gap and restore the connection or actually build a connection between you and your online audience. If you're interested in learning more, you can get so many metrics on this from like age demographics to whether they attend your church or not. Yeah, it's all possible. Head on over to gloopinsights.com/carey to learn more. I think this is probably one of the biggest gifts I've seen to the church in a long, long time. Technology that could actually help you figure out who's out there.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Also, The Unstuck Group is getting alongside you to help you navigate this crazy time, so my team at Connexus just wrapped up another strategic planning session with Tony Morgan at The Unstuck Group to clarify what's next for us, and I can't recommend Tony's coaching enough. I hired Tony, I think probably for the first time maybe eight years ago, when I was still the lead pastor at our church and had him in a number of different times and I don't know about you, but I just find the best leaders always have coaches.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So here's one way to do it. Okay? Their master class is only \$99, and if you register for it, it's a one-day masterclass on July 30. It's all about the key shifts churches need to make because of Coronavirus, so you will walk away, if you register for that, with action steps and clarity around what needs to change to thrive in the post-pandemic world. Now, my listeners get free access to lesson one from the masterclass guide book. To action that deal, head on over to theunstuckgroup.com/carey, and you can download your copy immediately, and then join them on July 30. Tony is one of the greatest thinkers out there in my view, and he sees a lot of stuff that I think a lot of leaders miss, so you'll want to check that out theunstuckgroup.com/carey.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So well, with all that said, without further ado, let's jump into what I hope will be a life giving and helpful conversation with Jo Saxton.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Jo, welcome to the podcast.

Jo Saxton:

Thank you. It's great to be with you. I've been listening to you for ages, so I'm excited to be able to talk face-to-face with you.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, I'm so glad that you can build into our leaders today and it was really nice to get to spend some time with you personally last August in Chicago at The Global Leadership Summit. That's kind of a surreal experience being able to talk to hundreds of thousands of leaders at once, isn't it?

Jo Saxton:

It's amazing, and the fact that the event keeps on happening through the year, and so you hear from people for the next year. So, I'm currently hearing from Brazil, and it's wonderful. Absolutely wonderful.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Really?

Jo Saxton:

Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's amazing.

Jo Saxton:

Right. It's absolutely great. I love it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

There is no other event like it in the world, Jo. And you said a few things there that I'd like to make sort of the springboard for our conversation. You got a brand new book that released a little while ago called Ready to Rise, which we'll get into as well.

Jo Saxton:

Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

But you asked this really fascinating question, which is, "Who were you before anyone told you who you were supposed to be?" That's a great question. Can you unpack that for us a little bit, Jo?

Jo Saxton:

Yeah, I think it's a question that has helped me come into my own as a leader and for the leaders that I coach help them come into their own, because we pick up things through our lives. There are our gifts and our dreams and ideas, and then there's life that happens to you. There's the way that people happen to you that may steer you a little from your dreams. I think of many of the church leaders I've worked with over the years, who no one planned to go into lots of meetings. No one planned. That was not the game plan to be in meetings from 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Very true.

Jo Saxton:

They were drawn by something. The business leader, they were drawn by something, and I found it really helpful for us as leaders to just check whether the oughts and the shoulds have begun to shape us and distort us in some way. And I think it's a great way to get a signpost to those original dreams as well

Carey Nieuwhof:

How did that happen for you? Like, what were you told to be?

Jo Saxton:

Oh, well, there were a lot of messages. I grew up in London, I was born in the '70s and the time I was growing up in London, there was a lot of racial tension. I'm a Nigerian immigrant and there was a lot of pressure in terms of whether immigrants were stealing jobs, the kind of people you were. And so there was very much... it was quite a negative and a pejorative thing. I mean, it depended on if you write all the tabloids all day in terms of how valuable you were, but then it kind of labeled you before you had a chance to be. It labeled your potential.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So, you're seen as a Nigerian. You were judged by the color of your skin, by your gender.

Jo Saxton:

Very much so, by gender, ethnicity. But in the time of when the first things about allegedly Nigerian scams came out, in terms of online...

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, you're right.

Jo Saxton:

... there was a particular slur and I remember saying to someone occur to someone, "Guys, did it ever occur to you they may not have been Nigerian? Did it ever occur to you that honesty was not going to be the key thing here?" Do you know what I mean? That they may have been from somewhere else and covering their tracks? In some way-

Carey Nieuwhof:

I'm still waiting for that transfer into my bank account, Jo.

Jo Saxton:

Yeah. It's a long time coming.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's crazy. That's such a good point. That's such a good point, but you don't... it's like what's happened with Coronavirus, too. If you're Asian, the amount of pushback Asian people are getting right now is huge and you're like, "Well, that could be anybody."

Jo Saxton:

Absolutely.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Like you think about all the stuff I've done in my life that has hurt other people and you didn't even do anything. I mean, my goodness, it was just the color of your skin. It was like, where your parents were from.

Jo Saxton:

Absolutely, and it's dehumanizing, and when you're dehumanized, you get detached from your potential. You get detached from your gifts and abilities and your qualities even if not in your eyes, in someone else's. And so for me, I felt from even from my childhood, from my earliest days, that I had a lot to prove and a lot to defend. I had to defend my worth and value, the possibilities of what I could contribute to the world. And I remember my aunt sitting me down when I was about seven years old, and she and my mom and many others had moved to England in the '60s, and had encountered all kinds of racial distress and challenges as they were kind of trying to adjust to this world as well. And she said, "Jo, it's going to be really hard for you to make it in this country. And so you're going to have to be at least twice as good as everybody else."

Carey Nieuwhof:

Oh, wow.

Jo Saxton:

She said, "It's not going to be enough to be good." And she said, "You won't get away with what your friends get away with." And Carey, the thing that struck me most about it when we were having this conversation was that she didn't sound angry or emotional, it was a matter of fact, "Hey, let me just tell you a couple of things."

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow.

Jo Saxton:

That was the tone. This is how it is. This is how we get by it. Just make sure you're really good at what you do. And then we moved on to another conversation. We were talking about what we were eating for dinner that day. It was that on a level.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So Jo, what was that like to hear that when you were seven years old? Like what impact did that have on you?

Jo Saxton:

To be honest, it felt medicinal, really. It felt like this is the advice and I had been seeing... I mean, sadly, even though I was seven, I wasn't new to experiencing racism or sexism in some way and not just from kids on the playground, from authority figures around. So on one level, it was, "Okay, here's the plan."

Carey Nieuwhof:

Right.

Jo Saxton:

It felt like a plan to progress forward. Obviously, as a kid, you don't think of the cost of a plan that you make and the challenges of that plan, you just think of the plan and I heard the urgency of the situation, but I didn't think beyond that. So in my mind, the person I should be was I'd have to be twice as good to be seen as equal.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow. Isn't that interesting? And I'm sure skin color does play a role. My parents were immigrants, which is interesting. My grandparents in particular came over when my mom was like 10, and piecing family history together, at that time, they weren't British. They weren't analysts and I love the Brits, so it's fine. But they weren't British, they weren't Scottish, they weren't Irish. They were Dutch, and the Dutch were seen as kind of those people, right?

Jo Saxton:

Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And so they lived in some pretty squalid housing, and this was the '50s and the whole deal and they worked their way up, but it's interesting that they never had to have that conversation with me. I don't remember one conversation where they said, "Hey, Carey, because you have an impossible to pronounce last name, this is going to be a really difficult life for you." I just heard that this was the land of opportunity. And I think it's really important for people to hear what you have to say, and to know that it's not the same for everybody and to be sensitive to that. What are some other moments along the way like even think about your journey into adulthood and then into leadership as someone who's gone on to write books and speak and coach and help others, what are some others shoulds that you heard along the way?

Jo Saxton:

I think some of them revolved around whether I should be quieter, whether as a woman leader, whether I should be quieter, whether I should want to be involved in church plans and congregations, whether I should want to be a communicator and a speaker, whether that was a door available to somebody like me and it wasn't just along... I mean, obviously, there's a broad theological continuum in the church, and I wasn't even necessarily referring to that because there is a whole framework of conviction and people stay true to those things. But even in the context, where, technically, technically they welcomed women in varied spaces of leadership, not just with women, but men also, practically it was sometimes a different deal.

Jo Saxton:

So some of the oughts and shoulds were, "Was I okay to come as me, or did I need to assimilate into a particular way that was deemed the right way, and was that the right way? Was it cultural difference that was actually happening here? Were there different things just by virtue of different life experience?" Like you say, you draw on the story of your parents and their experiences and how it's informed your journey, I was often the only black woman in the room. I was almost pretty sure I was the only woman in the room most of the time, and so some of the shoulds were "Should I speak up? And if I say something assertively, how will that be interpreted? Will I be deemed as arrogant or worse?" There are no nice words when it gets worse. "Will I be deemed as threatening? If I seem passionate, will I be

deemed as angry? And what do I do as I seek to communicate healthily and to be a healthy leader as well?"

Jo Saxton:

I want to be a healthy leader like all of us were there to serve, aren't we? But how do we navigate the cultural nuances in that. And so there were some should where I remember someone saying to me, "When I heard a Jo was speaking, I thought it was a guy." And I was about to speak.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, welcome to the world of Carey. No one expects a guy.

Jo Saxton:

You see our names, Carey, our names.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I know, I know, Jo.

Jo Saxton:

Because we've been fixed with them and at times when people are like, "If you want to, you could be really good if you would just tone it down a little." Or, "You should be married if you're going to lead." I got married at 29, and so whilst nationally and internationally that's not especially late, in the church community, that was late from my views. And so, for some, it was like, "Well, if you really want to do these things, what you need is to get a good guy, and do it that way." And so, those were some of the shoulds. My marital status was an all should. How I showed up in the room, needing to be nonthreatening, needing not to ask too many questions, was something an always an issue. I think sometimes for some, it was a surprise and then as we got to know each other, we just gone on with it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So can I ask you, do you know your Enneagram number?

Jo Saxton:

Oh, yes. I am like you, an eight.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I figured. I figured just five minutes into this and knowing you a little bit, I thought you're probably an eight, so that creates challenges in and of itself. I mean, take all the other factors away, being an eight, I always say it makes me feel like the report card where I failed and I had to bring it home and explain it to my parents, being an eight. But I would love, Jo, for you just to answer like okay, because we all need self-regulation, right? Like, none of us walks into a room perfectly, whatever your Enneagram number is, you're either too shy, too timid, too bold, too brash. How do you sort that out or how have you sorted that out versus what part of that is, "Because I'm a woman, or because I'm Nigerian, or because I don't fit your idea of what a leader looks like or sounds like," versus "Oh, I actually do have to turn it down?" Do you know what I mean? How do you navigate that?

Jo Saxton:

Yeah. And it's been a journey and the journey has involved a greater self-awareness of saying, "Okay. Hey, I want to be a healthy leader." It's made me pay attention to the broken parts of my story that have damaged me. It's made me pay attention to how I've responded to the pressures of the day. Something like how has racism and sexism impacted me and damaged me? How has that dehumanized me, and how have I responded to that? Where am I needed to get help and support with people? That's been one of the things that it has done. It's helped me really build a village of safe people around me to do life with, but I think often where the Enneagram eight male and feel free and correct me if I'm wrong on this is sometimes seen as a dynamic leader threatening to some, but dynamic and strong and assertive. Sometimes in a woman that is typified as a threatening person as a whole.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yes. Ian Cron has talked about that at length and he says that's where you get into the not nice words very quickly.

Jo Saxton:

Yeah, very quickly.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Like, "Oh, she's just, fill in the blank." And I think that's a very fair observation. I just want to amplify something you just said, which I think is really helpful. A lot of stuff went off in my mind when you said it, healthy, right? If you look at the Enneagram, healthy is a wonderful filter to what is natural and acceptable and helpful as opposed to "Okay, where do I need to course correct here?" Because we all need to course correct, right?

Jo Saxton:

We do. We do and the pressures of leadership and the pressures of the day, they come to bear on us and we lead from the inside out, so we need to know what's happening on the inside, and rather than just give ourselves a pass and say, "Well, because I've had a bad day, this is how I'm going to react." I want to be a whole leader, and I want to lead fully with integrity as an integrated person, but that means doing the work when required to become whole as well.

Jo Saxton:

And I think in the end, Carey, I think one of the biggest challenges for me was when it came to owning who I was, was almost agreeing with God about the way I'm wired is not an accident. He was not shocked with my design. He knew I was an extrovert. He knew I was assertive. He designed it that way and it was a delight. Not a problem or not a concession. God isn't like, "Oh, my gosh, I gave her an intellect. Oh, what do I do?" He is not having a crisis and feeling overwhelmed, because there are strong men and women on earth. And as I began to recognize, "This is how He made you, say yes to how He made you."

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow.

Jo Saxton:

Just agree with him. Agree with him on your giftings and rather than the cultural expectations of those things. I think that actually helped me pursue health much more, because it wasn't from a place of shame and it wasn't from a feeling of threat to somebody, it was from a place of agreeing with the Creator and wanting to serve well.

Carey Nieuwhof:

No, and I think it's such a great question, "Who were you before anyone told you who you're supposed to be?" Because they're business leaders who are trying to fit into the suit or the corporate culture and go, "This isn't really me." There are preachers who have adopted a vocabulary and they're like, "Yeah, that's not really me." I mean, it permeates into so many aspects of our life where in trying to fit in, whether that is because of the color of your skin, your gender or just the culture of the place, you end up feeling inauthentic and a denial of who God created.

Jo Saxton:

Yeah, absolutely. And I think the world misses out for that. I think we don't lead to our full potential. I think that our business leaders are held back, our creatives are held back, our church leaders are held back and we second guess our dreams or ideas or we overcompensate, which is equally problematic and rather than bring the richness of our difference and the richness of our wiring to our leadership.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Because you said a few things that really, really spoke to me, so I want to move on, but this has been very rich. How have you become more comfortable with who you were created to be? How have you become more comfortable with being authentically, healthily you?

Jo Saxton:

Yeah, I think I'm from a collective culture and Nigeria is a more collective culture and so, the people around you really are highly important. And so, I think my siblings have had a huge role in it because they know the whole journey, they know who you are all day long. And I think it has been those moments when I have been faithful to the best of my knowledge to my skill set when it's been building a team and the sense of it feeling like I'm coming alive. There was a healing even in leading in the way you're wired.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yes, there is.

Jo Saxton:

And so I think that has made me pursue it even more, because the other way burns you out, and you and I both know that burnout is no fun.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Absolutely.

Jo Saxton:

Round peg, square hole, no fun. And so I think it helped me become comfortable in that way. And there have been moments where I would like take a scripture, in this case, I'd take Psalm 1:39 and say, "I

praise you because I'm fearfully and wonderfully made." And I'd apply that to me as the leader. It doesn't mean I'm right all the time at all. It's not saying I'm perfect. I think those things have helped. Community has helped. Dealing with the broken pieces of my story has helped and being in environments where there's a healthy fit has helped. Being in team settings where people have become kind of curious on our difference and so, we've learned and grown together where I've been able to show up as I am.

Jo Saxton:

And that has sometimes meant saying, "Hey, this is the racism I experienced today, and I'm really angry about it," or "This is the sexism I encountered today, and I know it's far from your story, but because we're a team, you need to hear this part of the story, and you need to weep with me. I'm not going to want you to fix it. I've been living with this since I was a three-year-old. I know how to fix it, but I need you to hear my lived experience that's part of our journey as a team together."

Jo Saxton:

And that's actually helped a lot, being with teams, where people have listened and sometimes wept for, guys who have wept on my behalf for the misogyny that I've encountered or got angry on my behalf and for the racism. They've watched me encounter and they've watched how I've been treated and they'll call people out on my behalf in that space. That has been a really healing thing, because then you've got a safe place to show up as a leader because I just want to get on with the leading. That at the end of the day, I just want to get on and take the call.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Now that's really helpful. The other place my mind went is, when you're comfortable with who you are, it's a very good decision filter, because you can quickly say, "Oh, that's not me. No, I'm not going to do that. That would not be authentic." And I had a harder time when I was younger.

Jo Saxton:

That's so true. It makes you know so much swifter.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. All right. Shifting gears, you said something that was one of my top takeaways at the GLS last year. And I'll get to it to... Oh, yeah, here it is. "You have one body, and your leadership lives in it." I'm like, "Whoa, okay." So you have one body, your leadership lives in it. If your body could talk to you, what would it want to say? So, that observation rocked me as somebody who's almost 15 years on the other side of burnout now. Your leadership does live in your body. So can you unpack that for us, Jo? That was just worth the flight and the price of admission to me.

Jo Saxton:

That's so gracious of you. I think, simply put, your body doesn't lie. Your body doesn't lie, and I what I learned the hard way, like many of us do, insist on doing, I'd come out of a very painful church situation where a number of us, including the senior pastor, we all left at the same time and because it was the cleanest way to do it, and even then it was agony. And I was just trying to keep everything going. That's how it is in times of crisis. We are parents, we are friends, we are leaders, we're taking care of everybody the best that we can and so that taking care of everybody else somehow justifies the hours

and we don't notice the hours go by, and we don't eat as well and we don't sleep as well, and we're not hydrated. And all of these things are happening to us, and my body got fed up with it.

Jo Saxton:

My body got fed up of me pretending everything was okay and so at night, I would be having anxiety attacks and my mind would be racing. I'd be clearing my throat because I couldn't breathe, and it would happen three or four times a night, every night. And in the morning, I was making breakfast for my children, and it was agonizing. And I was seeing a therapist at that time, but my body was catching up to everything. And I basically ended up in Urgent Care with heart palpitations. And I remember the doctor saying to me, "When did you last sleep?" And I said to him, "Oh, I slept in February." And Carey, it's like slow motion. It's like slow motion even now. He put his pen down, he put his notepad down, he turned and he looked at me and says, "Mrs. Saxton, it's October."

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow.

Jo Saxton:

And he said, "Insomnia is what is happening." And it was important for him to name it for me to finally acknowledge what my body had been saying all along, "Something is fundamentally wrong, you are not okay, and you cannot keep over functioning in a bid to make it better someday." And I mean, it was really painful. It was so, so painful and I know, I'm sure it's part of your story as well. We don't burn out because we want to.

Carey Nieuwhof:

No.

Jo Saxton:

We burn out because of the other things that are driving us and often trying to help everybody else or the old stories, the oughts and shoulds of who we're supposed to be are so loud and in times of crisis, it's intensified. And so, I think it's made me have this take stock and say, "Okay, it's time to listen up here when your body starts talking." When it talks by your sleeplessness, when it's the aches and pains that don't go away when you're having stress-related symptoms in some way and remind yourself that you may have great ideas and be a wonderful businessman or a woman, a wonderful innovator, a great creative, but if your body's out, you're out. You're out and it's not worth it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So, my experience, Jo, would say that a lot of leaders who are burning out or are burned out don't realize that they're burned out. They just thought it was normal, right? Nobody sleeps at night. Everyone's tired all the time. "Yeah, my passion is gone, but isn't that life?" What were some of the signs, like can you give us an idea of the chronology like was this an overnight thing, did it build up over a course of years? And then what were some of the conditions that led you to that hospital bed in Urgent Care where the doctor said, "It's October?"

Jo Saxton:

Some of the signs were friends who I dismissed too quickly asking if I was okay.

Carey Nieuwhof:

What were they seeing in you?

Jo Saxton:

They would just see me keep going, and they had seen the circumstances and I'm like you, a pretty straight shooter. So I'd say, "Yeah, it's been really tough and it's really hard." And they're like, "We hear you kind of being vulnerable, but we see you going a hundred miles an hour. So, it's great that you're telling us how you feel, but it doesn't seem to be impacting you slowing down and reflecting in some way. You've got the right checklist and yet it's not impacting things." And so people would be like, "How are you really, Jo, really?" And I'd say it, but I still hadn't computed that I needed to stop, so that was one of.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Was it was that a stressor for you? It's interesting. I had a conversation with a previous podcast guest named Steve Cuss, who said that one of the ways we work out our anxiety sometimes is by working more. Is that a stressor to you, like when you get stressed your idea is "I'm going to step on the gas pedal?"

Jo Saxton:

Yeah, and I think particularly in this moment, because there were so many young adults who I was working with who were hurting, I was particularly concerned that they would be okay. And I was like, "I've had hard times before. This is their first big church disappointment. I want to come alongside them, so that they're not bitter in 10 years' time." So, it was all very reasoned. I'd had it all planned in my head.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So, okay, so that was one sign, you had friends who you should listen to that you didn't listen to. What were some of the other signs?

Jo Saxton:

I mean, I think the sleeplessness itself was the sign that I was tossing and turning and my mind was racing, I just couldn't sleep and so I'd stay up later and later to avoid sleeping. And it's like, "How many times are you going to watch the same episode?" Like for me, Carey, when I can say the lines of Modern Family, I've probably watched that episode enough.

Carey Nieuwhof:

You know the whole dialogue. Yeah.

Jo Saxton:

That was happening. I was like, "Cam's going to say this. Now they're going to say that." I'm like, "Jo, this is not a good sign," because I was clearly, it wasn't even for the entertainment value. There was an avoidance going on. And so I think that's one of the things, the things I was avoiding were but it was a bit of an indicator. The fact that I was even avoiding sleep and it was my way of rationalizing the fact that I can't sleep. It's like, "It's not that I can't sleep, I'm just watching some late night TV to decompress," was one of the things. I think, I mean, I had some good, good people who loved me who were committed to me, but we were all going through it. I think that was the hard part in that moment. The key team who

didn't like to get... we all had various manifestations of stress. All had various manifestations at that time, so that was probably another indicator.

Jo Saxton:

And I think that I wasn't obsessed with much, but I was just so committed to my children not being damaged and being sheltered from all that was going on, that I was especially hard on myself internally as a mother, but I just wanted to do right by them. I just wanted them to be okay and if I had noted the over responsibility that was growing, that would have been the other indicator, just the sheer, "So, you've got to be the great friend, you've got to be the great mother, oh, your husband's in this, too, so you've got to be the great wife." And normally I would regulate how many things I was taking on and adjust my rhythms accordingly. In that moment, I wasn't doing that.

Carey Nieuwhof:

How did you end up in the Urgent Care? What tipped you over?

Jo Saxton:

Well, I was ignoring the heart palpitations. The first day I was like, "That's weird." Then the second day, I ignored it more. It's not good, Carey. It's not good at all. And then the third-

Carey Nieuwhof:

It never is for any us, but like you say, none of us thinks we'll ever get there and particularly for an eight, you're bigger than that, come on, right? Like, you've got this.

Jo Saxton:

You've been through stuff before, bleed and carry on. And when it was three days' heart palpitations, I thought, "I'm just going to call a doctor to see if I need to see him sometime." And when I called, they ordered me there straightaway. They said, "Look, I'm not even going to carry on this conversation with you much longer. This is what you need to do. This is what you need to tell them when you get there." And the guy was like, "Repeat after me. What are you going to tell them when you get there? Use the words I'm using for you." Because I think he could tell that I wasn't taking it as seriously as I needed to. And he said, "If you tell them what I tell you, they will see you straight away." And so I walked in, told them and immediately, they rushed me into a room, immediately.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow. Wow. Okay, so you get there and you're reading some leader's mail right now, it's just stress, anxiety, burnout. They're just almost stapled conditions for a lot of leaders, particularly with everything we've been through with COVID...

Jo Saxton:

Absolutely.

Carey Nieuwhof:

... and by the time this airs, it'll be a new world again. Talk about the recovery. And how many years ago was that, Jo? That that happened to you?

Jo Saxton:

It was six years ago.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. All right. So, you've got you've got a little bit of distance between you in that moment. Can you talk about how you move through it and what are some of the changes that you've made since then?

Jo Saxton:

Yeah, yeah. After I went to the doctor, the initial thing was I had a prescription for anti-anxiety medication, that was the first thing he did. He said, "Look, we need to give you something as you go on this process." And I wasn't too worried about that, that for me wasn't the big one. I was okay with saying, "I needed some medical support at that time." But sitting down with my people was the kind of moment of truth, really. And I mean, when I say my people, my friends locally, my best friend in England, who I've known since I was 18. She was like, "Okay. Let's have the talk. This is why I'm worried about you. This is what you ignored. This is what you need to hear." And sometimes you need a friend to be that blunt with you.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's a good friend.

Jo Saxton:

Even my siblings introduce her as a sister. She's that close in our family. And she was like, "This is what's got to stop." And so I started going to bed earlier. I admit it when I knew the words of a Modern Family episode that I didn't need to see it again. I started running again, which is a good thing for me. I love to run and I decided where my intensity would go, and rather than my intensity going into endless activity, it would go towards my well-being.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's a really good way of framing that, because you're right. You are, and you can tell, an intense person, so am I, but you can put your intensity into very unhealthy places.

Jo Saxton:

Absolutely. And so I had to decide what I would do. I'm from a culture where alcohol is I mean, in England, it's like part of the staple, but I thought I need to avoid certain things. I need to work out what foods aren't good for me right now. I'm not majorly into healthy things. I mean, I love healthy food, but I was just needing to be aware of if I'm rushing, if I'm hurting on the inside, I won't be eating well, either. I won't be attending to my body well, that was another thing. And then I had to do less and I had to give myself some space for grief.

Jo Saxton:

And so the nature of my conversations with the therapist changed, and he said, "Okay, now it seems like you're right. Let's talk about it. Let's grieve. Let's grieve." The other thing that I recognized that when all the church meltdown happened, it was around my 40th birthday. And he said, "So you have this milestone year where things are going well and then suddenly it doesn't, we need to process that together. We need to talk that through because there were these high hopes that were dashed. There

were these longings that from the depths of your story, remember when you had to be twice as good, remember? And being twice as good couldn't work here? It didn't matter how good you were, everything fell apart. It didn't matter how hard you tried how hard you worked."

Jo Saxton:

And so there was a real reckoning, Carey, of what was going on in my inner world and how it was manifesting itself. And so that in practice meant less, less doing. And it was hard because obviously, we walked away from jobs, which meant we had to earn money somehow. But then it was, "Can you rely on the faithfulness of God at this moment? Can you begin to connect with your networks and rather than from a place of proving, offer." I'm committing to people again. I just had to frame it differently, but sometimes that mindset shift is the biggest leadership shift that we need to make, isn't it? And It took me some time and honestly, I'd love to say, "And then, I lived happily ever after." And I didn't, because there are layers to these things.

Jo Saxton:

And so over the next couple of years, I kind of worked out, "Okay, this is working for me. Now, I need to do less again." And I just stayed more accountable and I think I'm just aware that in times of crisis, this is what I'm prone to do. In times of crisis, I am prone to over responsibility. I'm prone to running faster than I should. I am prone to I may be sleeping at night, but it may come out another way. And so if I know that about myself, how can I guard it before it's a problem?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Were there fears on the side of recovery to doing less?

Jo Saxton:

Oh, gosh, yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. Can you talk about those because I think most driven leaders would say, "Less? That sounds like a recipe for failure."

Jo Saxton:

Disaster. Oh, absolutely because I had built my entire life on being twice as good to be equal. I wasn't competing to be the best, Carey. I was competing to not be left behind. I was competing to have a chance, to have a shot. And so the idea of doing less, every fiber of my being caused me to panic because I thought I have known there have been places. Because this was what my aunt said when I was seven, she said, "Jo, even if they don't like you, even if they don't respect you as a woman or don't like you because you're black, if you're that good, they'll employ you anyway, because it just makes sense financially." That's how good we needed to be.

Jo Saxton:

And I have been in environments where it was useful that I was a woman. It was, they didn't get called out at events on their lack of diversity if I was present and something. And when I say that, I know that there are people who aren't really working hard for an equitable platform. I'm not saying that's true of every environment I've been in, by a long, long stretch of the imagination, because everybody's got to

start somewhere. Everybody's got to start somewhere, but I knew I had been in those environments. So I thought, "If I'm not twice as good, is good enough, enough? Will I get employed? And if I'm not employed, what will that mean for our family?"

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow. Wow.

Jo Saxton:

Every time, Carey, I go to an event, in the space that I meet a woman who looks like me or a woman who doesn't look like me, but hasn't seen women on the stage and she's weeping. She's weeping because she hasn't seen herself. There hasn't been that mirroring that says, "That dream you have, that idea." And somehow, I took on the responsibility of that in some way because you don't want to be... like you, I'm excited about seeing people of different ethnicities in different generations, and bringing their skillsets to bear because we both know it makes everybody richer.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, it does.

Jo Saxton:

Everybody richer, so when I'm the first black woman speaker, I want to make sure I'm not the last. Do you know what I mean? I want to make sure I'm not the last. And so, doing less made me fearful, not that other people would have my opportunity, it wasn't like that. I'm happy with that. It just made me wonder, "Will the less mean that I don't get to do things?" Like God, "I do trust you to be equitable, I just don't trust society, so how are things going to work?" I think we're human and I think we're fallen, and I think we're broken and I think even with our best efforts, we've been falling short on things we know we could do better on.

Jo Saxton:

So, it really was a faith journey. It really was a faith journey to say, "I'm not going to overdo it and I'm going to see if my good enough is enough. And I'm going to use the word no again. I'm going to get good at the word no again," and allow that to be the lead and I learned two things. One, God is bigger and better than I thought, and two, that there were partners in business and in the workplace who were looking for people who were enough, who would bring their stories of enough, who would tell their stories of burnout and be like, "Oh, gosh, me too." Do you know what I mean?

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's why I'm always interested, Jo.

Jo Saxton:

And it was a different journey, but it's been a good journey.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Well, and since to your question, and I don't know how to frame it otherwise, so please don't hear it as trite, but how has doing less worked out for you? My theory is it probably hasn't led to less has it? Like, I

mean, maybe you're working less, but when you look at the results, the results aren't a fraction of what they were before, are they?

Jo Saxton:

No. I mean, ironically, greater creativity. A couple of books. Great relational connections, just engaging in relationships with the people I've worked with in different ways. My kids are glorious. They're teenagers and they're wonderful. Time in my marriage. I mean, it's been good, it's been good. And an ongoing check in with friends who know that that is the way I can go, that I can live without doing way too easily. So, I would say it's something that I do have to keep a check on, particularly in crisis. I have to know when the clouds are gathering. And what my natural propensities are.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Is there anything you miss about your old self?

Jo Saxton:

Sometimes.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. No. There's a little piece of me I miss, pre-burnout Carey. There's a little sliver that I'm like, "I used to enjoy that."

Jo Saxton:

I think there was. I kind of missed the belief that it worked, because sometimes it did. Sometimes it worked. I think it was I had to break up with overachievement. It was a breakup. It was a toxic relationship. And there are that sense of maybe it's simply pride of that kind of work twice as hard, got there and you've finally got it. Yeah, I've missed that from time to time for sure. I think I have, yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I think I prayed better before I burned out, but-

Jo Saxton:

Oh, I certainly prayed longer.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, me, too. I prayed longer and I think I prayed better. And I'm like, "Am I a pagan now? I don't understand." But my wife would say she sees way more fruit of the Holy Spirit in me now than she did 15 years ago, but yeah, it's funny. I haven't asked that question before, but I'm like, yeah, when I'm listening to you talk, I just wanted to ask it because I do miss one or two little things, but I will take the current me all day long over the old me.

Jo Saxton:

Totally. I think I have a different kind of courage now. I think back then, a lot of my kind of "let's do this" was actually fear. It was actually fear because I think that kind of drive can be fear-driven of what you don't get, of what you'll miss. Again, I was fighting to be equal. Now, I know I'm equal and I don't have

to. Do you what I mean? I know I'm equal, I know God has gifted me, and I know that as leaders, we're healthy in places where what we bring to the table is celebrated, not just tolerated.

Jo Saxton:

And there's a peace that comes with that. And so the courage now is different. I still get afraid. For sure, I get afraid, but there is a "Hey, Lord, I just want to serve you," but I want to be part of teams and environments and organizations that are going on this journey together, where I don't feel like I'm hiding the things that I can contribute just in case it's too much. And that is very freeing, very freeing.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I just want to underscore what you said. You're not trying to prove that you're equal, you know you're equal. We could almost stop right there. I want to keep going, but I didn't want that to get lost in the moment. That's so healing and I hope that hit some leaders listening right now who maybe can relate to that part of your story that, yeah, you don't have anything. And that happens. I mean, I've seen white guys, they got some chip on their shoulder and they're trying to prove something they never got from their dad or they're trying to prove something that happened on the playground when they were eight. And it's like, "I don't know what that is, but you need to lose it because it's not helping you anymore."

Jo Saxton:

Yeah, totally. And it may you may have had a way of handling it that worked for a while, but actually leaders, it's time to know you're enough. You're enough. You're already good enough. And if you know that knowing that truth would change you in some way, then it's time for to let it change you.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I got to ask for the insomniacs I know and care about, how did you start sleeping again? Because that is a real issue and I've never struggled with that. I can sleep almost anywhere, anytime. So, how did you because that is a massive issue for a lot of people who are just struggling and it's a compounding issue because you just get more and more tired, more and more frazzled.

Jo Saxton:

Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah. So, how did that reverse for you?

Jo Saxton:

It took a little while and the medication actually helped. The medication helped me and the processing of the pain helped me and so, it felt like it was holistically. It wasn't just, "I went to bed earlier." It was, "I was in therapy and really doing some work." So, therefore I wasn't thinking at night the things I've been pushing down all day. And then there were some things like I put my phone in a different part of the bedroom. I didn't watch anything too interesting. I'd have a cup of herbal tea, and I don't know whether the herbal tea helped, I think it was just the ritual of calming down like and giving myself a minute made a big difference. Yeah, I think those things helped, and it did take a while. It took a few months.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow. No. I really appreciate that. And I love that you raised a bedtime ritual, because leaders talk about morning rituals all the time, but bedroom rituals, research would say are just as important. And I always say if you have your sleep, you have everything. So, it really helps. It gives you a baseline. You talk about your people a lot and you encourage leaders to ask and I love the fact that you come from a more communal, I mean, we're living in the hyper individualistic West, which doesn't always serve us well. Who are your people? Why is that an important question?

Jo Saxton:

Yeah. I think I learned it from my mom and my aunts because a lot of my aunts aren't actually biologically related to me, but that's how much they've been in our family and been part of our family. And what I've realized is that you know what, even when we look back on history, Carey, I think it was, who was it? Thomas Carlyle was a historian who had this kind of great man theory and had this idea that history was focused on these individuals. But actually, when we look at the stories of the great figures of history, there was a movement there. Nelson Mandela, there was a movement, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, there's a movement of people. There's always been villages of people really around leaders doing different things that have made that world possible.

Jo Saxton:

And that's not to take anything away from the wonderful gifting they have, but they there's always been people there, so that's been something that's helped informed me in thinking I'm not as convinced of the great man theory as it comes out because when you look at the broader story, there's more than one story to tell, but what I've realized is that we need people who help us get roots and people who give us wings. They say that about, "It takes a village to raise a child," I think it's true for leaders. They say, "A kid needs roots and wings," I think it's true for leaders. And by roots, I mean those people that keep us grounded, your significant others and they could be your spouse, it could be a good friend, it could be a family member.

Jo Saxton:

Those are the people who know you anyway, who can call you on your junk, who will celebrate you, who you don't have to perform for. Those kinds of relationships bring us to life, but I think you need those relationships that give you wings, that connect you with other people, that let you know about, that your brain trust. I can think of some great ideas, but I'm when I've got a team, oh, my goodness, those ideas have nuance and texture. When that team is representative contextually of the world I'm in, oh my goodness, I miss faux pas, I gain insight and wisdom, it's more fun, and it's more creative. There's a great dynamic about it and so on.

Jo Saxton:

I think some of that driven-ness, we could get rid of if we realized, actually, we did this stuff in community and we did this stuff with a village of people. And I would ask every leader to consider, "Who's your village?" And sometimes, "Well, right now, I'm doing it." Well, somebody's probably cooking for you, they're part of your village. Because they're doing things that you don't have to worry about the mental load of them. You know what I mean? You don't have to think of other things because...

Carey Nieuwhof:

Oh, it really relieves anxiety. It totally does. If you have a great team, people sometimes say, "It's the hardest part about leadership," which in some respects is true, but yeah, it just takes the pressure off you as the leader. I think I'm going to get this stat right, if it's wrong, just correct me but I believe you said that depression and anxiety cost a trillion dollars a year in lost productivity, that was a McKinsey study from a couple of years ago. Is that accurate?

Jo Saxton:

Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And could you talk about what we're going to do about that challenge? And here we are, I don't know by the time this airs, where we'll be in the COVID crisis and the reconstruction of the world and our health and economy and borders. But you talk about anxiety and depression spiking, that was a 2018 study, it's probably even higher now.

Jo Saxton:

Well, quite. And actually it was the World Health Organization that did a study on it as well, of mental health in the workplace and so, it's just fascinating globally that if depression and anxiety are costing the global economy at that point, a few years back an estimated 1 trillion U.S. dollars per year in lost productivity, what does that mean for our well-being, for human flourishing, yes, for our economies, but for a family life, for just our well-being. And like you say, as we navigate landscapes that we haven't before, with global pandemic, and again I've seen and again, as time goes on, we'll learn more about what this means that we're dealing with the kinds of situations that hadn't been seen before. And just that alone causes greater anxiety. That alone, because we are not just having an unknown moment, it's an unknown era now.

Carey Nieuwhof:

How do you help your team manage that? Because if you think about it, just, you know you're right. You talked about your body burnout, we talked about the pressure we put on ourselves and the striving that we have to try to even get to equal, let alone surpass it, et cetera, et cetera. So, how are you coaching your team to the point where there may be a lower collective anxiety, because you're their leader?

Jo Saxton:

Yeah. There are two things I encourage us to do. An internal one in terms of the questions we ask ourselves and one that looks at the landscape. So the internal question, I do go through the, "Who were you before anyone told you who you're supposed to be," because I want to hear your story. I want to hear the story that has shaped you, the highs and the lows, the cadence of your story. And I want them to be aware and some of it is just that conversations, like in the conversation you and I have had saying, "So, when you were thinking of that, how did that impact you, and how does that inform you now? What are the strengths of that information? And what perhaps, yes, that was your childhood understanding of that situation, how is that nuanced now? And how does it show up under pressure or in times of joy?" Those kinds of things.

Jo Saxton:

So, that's one thing I like to do because self-awareness is a great thing for us as leaders to know. I sometimes use those tools that recovery groups use in terms of hungry, angry, lonely and tired, "What

do you do when you're hungry?" So that we're attending to our appetite angry. With women, I often ask them, "Do you feel allowed to be angry?" And so sometimes, and "What's the cultural nuance of anger in your family system? How did anger show up in your family system?" And I actually asked that of men and women because I think that's true for all of us, isn't it? "What does loneliness do to us and what do we lean towards?" And then obviously, "What does tiredness do?"

Jo Saxton:

Those are some internal tools and I like to use those as neutral language because it's not just it's I'm asking, how are you doing? But I'm giving us some tools that we don't feel as vulnerable by some people's language for us all. And that's one of the things. Then when I'm getting us to look at the anxiety of the world, I remember hearing years ago, I used to work with a nonprofit that worked with churches on discipleship mission called 3D Movements. And the leader at that time used to talk about the cultural earthquake and how these moments in society and that language has been used a lot in popular culture, too, about when the maps change, when the landscape is so different by events in society that your ways of doing things, your maps don't work, your GPS isn't working.

Jo Saxton:

And I ask, maybe there have been some personal earthquakes, you didn't expect someone to ask you for a divorce, earthquake. A diagnosis that no one wanted, earthquake. Something happens in your community, earthquake. Or as we've encountered in 2020, but have looked at other years as well. World War II, earthquake. 2008. Do you know what I mean?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Earthquake, yeah.

Jo Saxton:

We don't even have to describe them anymore, just say the year and we know what it means. But I encourage us to say, "Okay, this is one of those moments, this anxiety, we don't know what's happening, but this disorientation is the result of all the things that were familiar not being there anymore." It's like driving into a neighborhood and you just don't recognize it. And even saying that makes people think, "Okay, it's not just me. We are all dealing with this thing." And I found in those moments that... sorry, I have to just give you a proviso, I'm addicted to alliteration.

Jo Saxton:

So, I found some things really helpful for us as leaders when we do that. What does it look like to be calm in that moment, and how do we find a place of calm? And so, that's more to your own internal rhythms. What does it look like to be compassionate in that moment, and what are the limits of your compassion in those spaces? Because everyone's disoriented and so people are going to act funny. And when I say funny, I just mean weird. So, what are the limits of our compassion, and what does it look like for us to have courage in those times?

Jo Saxton:

Now when I learned about this culture earthquake, when I was working with 3D and we were talking about churches, so we talked about compassion, and connection and things like that as well, but I'm talking in terms of just the internal leader and asking some questions of, "What are you thinking? Before you make a move in terms of what you do, what does it look like to become, what does it look like to be

compassionate, and what will it look like to be courageous for you before you do a thing?" Before you do a thing. That those things have been helpful, and we're in the middle of it with our teams. They've just been helpful in terms of our posture, right now before we do.

Carey Nieuwhof:

I think that's incredibly perceptive and helpful. What would you say to leaders listening who are like, "Jo, that's awesome, but that sounds like a counselor's office. I'm trying to run a company. I'm trying to run a church"

Jo Saxton:

Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

What would you say to them? Because I agree, I try to care for the whole person as a boss, but that is still not commonplace.

Jo Saxton:

No, totally. And they're right. The hard thing is if you want productivity out of your people and I think part of the tension is you want to get things done and move things forward, but your people have to be in a good place to be able to do that. So, I would still bring you back to that place of compassion and say, "I know the end goal is really important, particularly in these pressured times, particularly in these pressured times, but you're going to have to give people some space and yourselves space to breathe. And then and then say, "Okay." I would say, "What does it look like?"

Jo Saxton:

One of the big challenges in times when everything's shaken is, "What in our expectations can stay the same and what has to change?" Because we can say, "Okay, we need a plan and we need a strategy and we do," but if we are making a plan for a world that no longer exists, that plan will frustrate us.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So true.

Jo Saxton:

Our first exercise might be observing our clients, observing our church community, observing our teams to see what's actually happening, and then responding.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Jo, you've got a new book called Ready to Rise. It's been out for a little while. Do you want to tell us why you wrote it? I think we've danced around so many of the themes that you cover in the book already in a really powerful way, like saying yes to who you are and disempowerment, et cetera, et cetera, but who's the book for and what's it about?

Jo Saxton:

Yeah. Yeah, the book centers women. And I remember someone saying, "Does that mean it's only for women?" And I said, "Well, I've read lots of books where the stories were all male and I've got some

great things out of them. I have." I've got some wonderful, just some wonderful training and investment from people who don't look like me, who aren't my gender. And so I'm still going to say, "But this will give you some insight into women's lived experience in their leadership journey." So, you might feel sometimes you're on the outside looking in, but that doesn't mean it's not for you in some ways. It's not that it's not valuable, so it does center to women.

Jo Saxton:

And what has motivated me in this is that often for women, the leadership journey, whether it's corporate or community or nonprofit or church, isn't a linear path, it's just not that always that straightforward. And so, I wanted to just share the things I've learned over the years, the things I've observed over the years that have helped me grow in my leadership journey. I've often found women looking for mentors and sponsors, and wanting to be better connected. So, my hope and again, like I said it earlier on, I've often met a lot of women crying in bathrooms saying, "I feel called to lead. I've got an idea for a business. I don't know what my next step is going to be. I don't know where to go with this."

Jo Saxton:

And so, I wanted to put a resource in their hands for the journey and well, and also Carey, the other thing about it I'm struck by is we are living in a time where the people who we're valuing as leaders is changing. It might that grocery store worker who's been cleaning everything, so that you could buy your food. It's definitely the healthcare workers. It's the teachers who are working out-of-the-box to make sure our families remain educated and stuff. They're leaders. They're influencers. We're realizing who we really need and how much we've really needed them, and they're making decisions. They've had to make decisions which have determined people's well-being, their life or death scenarios. Have they had any investment to encourage them along the way, so yes.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Really interesting, 2020, we're seeing healthcare workers, frontline healthcare workers and first responders, sort of getting the elevation we gave firefighters after 9/11, right?

Jo Saxton:

Yes.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Which is, it's not that firefighters are any less, they do incredible work. But yeah, you're right, they're forgotten heroes. Okay, last question for you. Curious, you mentioned changing leadership styles and who we value as heroes shifting. Can you talk about that in the leadership space? I mean, for years, people have said the whole kind of command and control model of leadership is disappearing. How else do you see the model of leadership shifting in the future?

Jo Saxton:

I think as we embrace the diversity of our world, as we embrace different ethnicities and cultural stories, we receive some nuance. I think a leader without cultural competency is a leader with an interesting deadline, without some kind of cultural awareness to the stories of the people in your community. I honestly, I think it's our job. I think it's integral. Even if you don't live in a neighborhood, which is especially ethnically or socioeconomically diverse. A lot of us leaders want to change the world, we want

to change the city, we want our business to impact the communities. Have you walked in those communities recently? When you look at the list of friends and places you're learning from, does everybody look like you, vote like you, live like you? And that's not to say that they're not valuable.

Jo Saxton:

I'm just saying we need to enrich that. Enrich your understanding. Let's maximize your gifts. This is not a chastisement of your guests. It's because we want your gifts to go further and we want human flourishing to touch every part of society, but that will require that your cultural competency and awareness is on the upswing rather than on the download. As I look to the future and actually not even the future, as I look to the now, as I look to the moment we're in, as we look to the schools, our neighbors, it's just really vital that as leaders, we are culturally cognizant, because not everybody experiences the world in the same way that we do, not everybody experiences our community, our city, our church in the way that we do, our business in the way that we do.

Jo Saxton:

And we could be missing out. You could be missing out in your business. You could be missing out economically, in your church, in the richness of your community. It's hard work for sure, but some of the best things are. And I've not known many leaders that are afraid of that really. You know what I mean? Often, we're pulling you back and tell you to sit down, not the other way around. So I think that for me is not an option. That's not a sideline minor course, that is a fundamental part of our leadership journey.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And that's really good advice. Getting into one more follow-up I've got for you. So look at me, I'm a white male in his 50s and I'm a leader, how would you counsel me to enter into this new reality? Because really, I'm sort of the target of what everyone is talking about, right? It's like white males, we've held leadership for a long, long time. So, how do I embrace the new reality? How do I empower other people? Like give me some pointers on how to do that and do it well.

Jo Saxton:

There are a couple of things I would do. Depending on where you're based and what you're looking at, I would say like who's in your city, who's in your neighborhood? Just for you to become aware of. I would ask who you're learning from in terms of who you're reading, who you're listening to? The great thing is in terms of podcasts means that there is a wealth, there is a wealth of opportunity for you to hear from different voices, different stories, and it will require some curiosity on our part. But I would say when you look at your phone and you have your podcast list, is everybody the same ethnicity as you? I'm not saying delete anybody. I'm just saying add a few. Add a few, and [crosstalk 01:06:33] the stories.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That's a good point.

Jo Saxton:

And just to hear. We go in as we're lifelong learners as leaders, so this is a learning opportunity, rather than feel, "Aren't you a terrible person because you're not." We don't have time for that. Do you know what I mean? Let me speak as an eight to us all. We do not have time for that. We just need to get on it. So I want to encourage us to think "Where do we want to learn?" And again, I'm unaware of the framework of theological conviction, but I will still say this, "How will you learn from women? Who are

you listening to? Who you learning from? How is that nuancing your leadership," because so much has been done by us not hearing other people's stories.

Jo Saxton:

And we meant well, we really did. We hope that this will be open to someone else, but it wasn't informed by their lived experience. And that impacts us, so that's a thing I would do. If you're a church leader, I would look at how your goals are this year for building relationship as peers with leaders of different ethnicities, the churches in your cities? How can you connect with them? I would go to the networking events that are in your business field, the networking events or the organizations that are talking about diversity and inclusion, and your talent. Just find out what you can. So, there will be a research element to this and it's a marathon, it's not to sprint.

Jo Saxton:

But that's okay because it's going to enrich your leadership and it's going to enrich your teams and it's going to enrich your output and it's going to be brilliant and it's a worthy thing. It's not just a nice thing to do. This is strategic, and it's right thing to do. And then I would encourage those of us who have power of various kinds, "Who are you mentoring and who you sponsoring?" Most of my opportunities, Carey, have been like when I think of my breakthrough moments as a leader. At one point, I remember, there were two particular, well, actually, there's been a few, particular leaders at given moments who have been a mentor to me and a sponsor. They worked out how to mentor even though different genders, different stories. They were great listeners.

Jo Saxton:

They're like, "I actually don't know how I'm mentoring you, so but I know the principle is, I've got to invest in you, so how are we going to do this?" But they also sponsored me in terms of, they put my name at the table and a number of us will say, "Well, I want to do that, but I don't know anybody." So, you've got to start with working out the relational piece, so that you can put their names at the table or maybe you go and visit their table once in a while. Do you know what I mean?

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, I do.

Jo Saxton:

Those are some practical things that we can do. So, start with the research and the learning, then think of the relationships that you're building and give yourself longer goals on that, and give yourself objectives. I mean, if we aim at nothing, that's what we'll get, pretty much. If you hope for everything and aim at nothing, we will just be like, "Oh, that's not my heart." Do you know what I mean? But what I've noticed in the leaders that I've worked with over the years, you guys have got strategies and talents and innovation, you can do this, you really can for human flourishing. The potential is phenomenal. It really is.

Carey Nieuwhof:

That is fantastic and hyper practical advice. Jo, anything else you want to share?

Jo Saxton:

I think one last thing. One of the stories I tell in the book and it's not one I've hidden. It's just I haven't told it very often is of a woman who in her 90s gets an award for being England's most inspiring learner.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow.

Jo Saxton:

In her 90s, she gets an English qualification, a Math 1 and a Computer Science. Her name is Emily Mae Butterfield and what happens is she left school at 12 because a teacher called her stupid, she ran out, and never went back. And it was the year 2000 she got the award, so when they're telling the story about her life, they talk about how in the World War II, she gets involved in the war effort. She joins the Fire Service, does all these incredible things and notices in England that kids are being evacuated for their safety. So, she starts to look after kids. She feels completely out of her depth because she can barely read. She hasn't got all the qualifications at start. But the landscape of the world is changing around her because World War II was a time of real and genuine fear and she just does what she can. Yeah.

Jo Saxton:

Years later, she's about 70, and she's asked to take hold of or to foster a preschooler and a baby and everybody could have said, "Really? You've been doing this 34 years now, you've done a great job, stop." And she does it a couple of more times. Years later, the preschooler, he is in international finance. He's a married father. He's wonderful, doing really well, and I'm the baby. And in times of crisis, I come back to her story and I come back to her story because we often feel out of our depth as leaders and we often feel like we don't know how we navigate this changing world. "I'm not skilled for this. I'm not ready for this. I'm not prepared for this."

Jo Saxton:

But we may have a couple of things that we can do. We do what we can and we don't know the legacy that we're building. And I just want to encourage us whether we are single or married, black, white, more degrees than a thermometer, never had a degree at all, you will all have times when you're out of your depth, but you also have gifts that you can unwrap that could help leave a legacy. And I just want to encourage us in times of good, but also in times of crisis, to be open to that.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Jo, that's incredible. I had no idea. So, one more time and you end up being that child?

Jo Saxton:

Yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Wow. And your foster mother was 70?

Jo Saxton:

Yeah, yeah. It was the '70s and you know things happen then, so but yeah.

Carey Nieuwhof:
So that's incredible.

Jo Saxton:
Yeah, she was, wonderful woman.

Carey Nieuwhof:
What a powerful story that is. Thank you for sharing that.

Jo Saxton:
Oh, it's an honor. I love to talk about her. She didn't let us talk about her much when she was alive. I told her I would. I told her I'd tell everybody because I think she's an incredible example to us all of unexpected, but incredibly influential leadership.

Carey Nieuwhof:
Well, the book is called Ready to Rise. Jo, thank you so much. This has been a fascinating conversation, really got me thinking about things I hadn't thought about in quite the same way, which is sort of the goal of conversations like this.

Jo Saxton:
Yeah. Thank you.

Carey Nieuwhof:
So, thank you.

Jo Saxton:
Thank you so much and thank you for what you do. Carey. I think it's just such a wonderful resource for people. I really appreciate it.

Carey Nieuwhof:
Well, it's a joy to have you on and thank you so much, Jo. Appreciate you.

Jo Saxton:
Thanks.

Carey Nieuwhof:
Yeah, you have one body, and your leadership lives in it. I'm going to remember that for the rest of my life and having paid the price for not paying attention to that, I never want to pay that again. And I don't want you to pay that price either, so I've got a What I'm Thinking About segment on I think one of the most important hacks you can have to avoid burnout, stay healthy, become more productive, which is sleep. I want to share some of the pro tips with you and that's coming up in a few minutes.

Carey Nieuwhof:

In the meantime, you may want transcripts or show notes for today's episode and well, we'll have probably 50,000 people who will hear or watch this episode, but only a fraction head on over to the show notes. We'll get 5,000 to 10,000 of you who do that, but if you do that, you will find a treasure trove of quotes, insights, kind of like the Cliff's Notes for all of this, and you can find that for free at CareyNieuwhof.com/Episode354. There's also transcripts of our conversation. We get those done for you. I think I mentioned this before, but sometimes if I listen to someone else's podcast and I really like it and they don't have transcripts, I will go and order one, so I can learn more. But you never have to do that with this show, because we do that for you. It is included free, and that's because of our partners, too.

Carey Nieuwhof:

We want to thank Gloop. I'm super excited about what they are doing to help you figure out who your online audience is. Make sure you check them out at gloopinsights.com/carey. The Unstuck Group has a masterclass coming out on how to thrive in the post pandemic world. Because you listen to this show, you get a free copy of unit one. It's a one-day masterclass. You can register for \$99, but if you want your freebie, head on over to theunstuckgroup.com/carey now and you can pick that up.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So next episode, I'm so excited to have John Eldredge. This was like other bucket list stuff for me. He has been influencing my life and ministry for years, and we sat down and had a meaningful conversation and I learned so much about John including lots of things that kind of surprised me and amaze me and warmed my heart. Here's an excerpt.

John Eldredge:

What you just said about Dunbar's numbers is a very kind thing to inform people of. This isn't criticism.

Carey Nieuwhof:

No.

John Eldredge:

This isn't, "Hey." It's kindness to say to those under 30, "Look. What you think is normal, it is actually very brutal on the human soul." Humanity was never living like this for thousands and thousands of years. For thousands of years, the pace of human life was three miles an hour.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Yeah, that's a great point.

John Eldredge:

It was the pace of walking.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So that's coming up next time on the podcast. Subscribers, you get that absolutely free. We've also got Dharius Daniels coming up, JP Pokluda about the future of the church, Sam Collier, Levi Lusko is back with a solo interview I did with him, One of the best previews into the future of the church. I've got a marathon with Gordon MacDonald, his life at 80 and what he seen coming up this fall. Angela

Santomero, creator of Blue's Clues and so much more. Lecrae is also on the show in the next few months. So, hey, what we're trying to do is create a leadership library of just case studies and excellence for you of some of the best leaders out there, what they've learned, what they've gone through. That's what this show is all about, and I really hope it helps you.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So what I've been thinking about, I've been thinking about you, and I've been thinking about how to make sure you don't burn out in this crazy season. So I want to talk to you about something that doesn't get a lot of attention and that is sleep. Now, when I was cutting my teeth in leadership in the '90s and early 2000s, it was routine practice to brag about how little sleep you got. It's like, "You know what? I can be a great leader on four hours of sleep at night." And I kind of bought that lie. And then in 2006, I burned out and I'm like, "Okay, this is really bad. This is not going to work."

Carey Nieuwhof:

And one of the things I've really adjusted over the last 14 years or so is my sleep and particularly in the last five years, I'm paying more and more attention to that, to the point that when travel was still a thing and it's not for me because the borders are still closed in Canada, but anyway, but we have almost no Coronavirus, so go figure that out. Anyway, I stopped doing, I never really did red-eye flights. I used to do early morning flights and I thought, "No, let's do midday flights," because I didn't like getting up at 2:00 in the morning or 3:00 in the morning to head to the airport, and I've really prioritized my sleep.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And then last summer, I did a few things that really made a big difference. Back on this show, oh, I don't know what the episode was, but Larry Osborne, who's been on a few times, said to me he doesn't wake up with an alarm anymore. And I'm like, "Really?" Because I always set an alarm and I really listened to that and I thought, "I'm going to experiment with that." So for maybe two years now, I have not set an alarm in the morning, which freaked me out at first, unless I have something I absolutely have to get done and that might happen once a month. Once a month maybe, I might set an alarm, maybe less than that. Certainly if I'm preaching on Sunday morning, there's an alarm, but I'm not preaching as much as I used to. So, I almost never wake with an alarm anymore. And it's really interesting because normally I'm up anyway, then between 4:30 and 5:30 in the morning, but you kind of wake up with your circadian rhythms.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And then trying to improve my sleep, I read a book by Nick Littlehales, simply called Sleep, and we'll link to it in the show notes, and he has all kinds of stuff. He coaches pro-athletes on how to sleep better and I mean, it's everything from like blacking out your room, like garbage bags on the windows and hotel rooms to the sleep kit. And I'm like, "I'm not going to do that." So no offense, Nick, but the one thing I picked up is a new sleep position.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So, it's kind of hard to explain and I wish I could show you, but what you do is you figure out your dominant hand, so I'm right handed, and you sleep on the opposite side, so you become a side sleeper. Okay? Some of you are like, "I'm a back sleeper or stomach sleeper," whatever. Try being a side sleeper and then move your body into almost the fetal position, so your legs are bent a little bit. Your torso is bent at the waist and your hands are in front of you. So, can you kind of picture that? If you think of

overhead, you're almost in the fetal position, so it's almost like a sideways crouch and your knees are bent and your left arm, I usually sleep, this is like really particular with my left arm kind of extended out from my shoulder and then my right arm folded over it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

He says that increases your deep sleep and you know what? He is right. It's pretty incredible. So your arms kind of form a V in front of your chest and your legs are bent, you're bent a little bit at the waist, so you're almost in the fetal position and you sleep like that. And I'll tell you, I was getting an hour to two hours of deep sleep at night, I will get now on good nights, three or four hours of deep sleep and the difference that makes when you wake up in the morning is unbelievable.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Now, how do I know I'm actually getting deep sleep? So, I've had Apple watches for years. If you have any kind of smartwatch, I actually use an app called Auto Sleep, A-U-T-O S-L-E-E-P and that just tracks my sleep. So, I have all the notifications off on my watch and I put it in theater mode, so it doesn't come on in the middle of the night or stay on, but it tracks my sleep while I sleep, and that will tell you how much sleep you got, how much was deep sleep. The deep sleep is the most restorative sleep you can get, so I'm normally getting between two and four hours, which is way up from max of an hour earlier, and so between not setting an alarm and tracking my sleep with a sleep app, and then using that new position, oh, I'll tell you last year or two, I've never felt better.

Carey Nieuwhof:

And here's what I believe, a rested you is a better kinder and more productive you. So while I'm recording this, I had a meeting that ran late two nights ago, didn't get to bed on time, kind of had a crappy day yesterday. It was just one of those days that never ended and then last night, I'm just like, "No, I'm going to bed early." I was asleep at 10:00. I got up at 5:30. I feel fantastic. And I just think your sleep is a superpower if you're a leader. So that's a little bit about sleep. I do not get eight hours a night as much as I wish I would. I usually sleep between seven, seven and a half at the most. I can't push myself past. However, I am a napper and most days, I will nap for anywhere from 10 minutes to 30 minutes in the middle of the day, and got my favorite spot in the couch to do that and that kind of gives me another boost. So, bottom line, take your sleep seriously.

Carey Nieuwhof:

Now you would think, "Well, I'm going to lose productivity." Actually, if you sleep well, you will be more productive, you will feel better, and guess what? If you're married, you'll be a better spouse. If you're a parent, you'll be a better parent. If you're a boss, you'll be a better boss because you won't be grumpy all the time. So anyway, hope that helps and you have one body and your leadership lives in it, so take care of it.

Carey Nieuwhof:

So those are some thoughts. I know I'm kind of on my soapbox for sleep, but I really think that's important. I see so many zombie leaders walking around and you don't need to be one of them. So anyway, that's one of the ways I get everything done that I get done. I hope that was helpful, hope it wasn't too technical, and we'll be back with fresh episode next time. In the meantime, I hope our time together today has helped you lead like never before.

Announcer:

You've been listening to The Carey Nieuwhof Leadership podcast. Join us next time for more insights on leadership, change and personal growth to help you lead like never before.