



## EPISODE 009:

# Brains brought into business with Gerrit Pelzer

[00:00:00] **Gerrit:** The modern day fear response is expressed in a high rate of absence, high turnover rate, disengagement, or a blame culture. There are two key aspects for leaders, why it's important for them to understand the emotions. First of all, being aware of our own emotions. Yeah. How does fear show up? How does anger show up?

[00:00:24] And then how can I deal with this in a productive manner? You are not a fan of saying manage your emotions, because I don't think we can really manage them, but we can regulate them. Yes. But in order to regulate them, we need to be able to experience.

[00:00:42] **Carolyn:** Garrett Peltzer is a German executive coach. He's also an adjunct professor of leadership based in Bangkok.

[00:00:51] He's passionate about helping leaders create the conditions in which people can be their best. He's got 12 years of coaching executives with his own leadership experience in Europe and Asia. Garrett has a background in natural sciences. You'll hear a little bit about that, and he also takes a scientific approach to coaching, especially in using the latest insights from applied neuroscience to achieve behavioral changes that last.

[00:01:23] I hope you enjoy your conversation. So you are going to hear this conversation with Garrett and I where we talk about the brain and really have a lot of fun with neuroscience. But I wanna share with you, when I first met Garrett a few weeks ago, I met he and his podcast partner and they have a podcast called Second Crack.



[00:01:47] And I thought, what the heck does that have to do with leadership? But it's really clever and quite ingenious. The metaphor that they're setting up, and I wanna share it with you because I think it really emphasizes how aligned Garrett and I are, even though we are in different continents and we come from very different backgrounds.

[00:02:12] This philosophy of a second crack comes from Martin and Garrett's love of coffee. Now, I'm not a big coffee drinker, but apparently when you heat up a coffee bean, it releases oils and it's through that oil that the coffee bean reaches its full potential to give you a nice rich tasting coffee. And as leaders.

[00:02:36] We need to be willing to step into the heat so that we can release our full potential. And I think the world that we are trying to lead within these days is full of heat. There's no shortage of ambiguity or complexity or issues to navigate through. So I hope you enjoy this conversation with Garrett, and perhaps you'll find some.

[00:03:05] Inspiration in there. To form your second crack, welcome to

[00:03:10] **Intro:** Evolve a new era of leadership, a podcast for real leaders to join real conversations with business experts, practitioners thought leaders, and change makers who integrate head, heart, and body in all they do, who commit to compassion and curiosity, who commit to radical self-leadership in their quest to understand others better too.

[00:03:33] Because the only way to deliver real results is to. And what it takes to lead real human beings. This is a new era of

[00:03:42] **Gerrit:** leadership.

[00:03:48] **Carolyn:** I'm Carolyn Sora, and this is Evolve a New Era of Leadership. Welcome. To all of you listeners tuning in to evolve a new era of leadership. I am really excited to have a guest from the other side of the world right now. Welcome, Garrett Peltzer. So glad to have you on the show today. Thank you



[00:04:13] **Gerrit:** Carolyn.

[00:04:14] Lovely to be recording with you today.

[00:04:16] Yeah,

[00:04:16] **Carolyn:** and we're in a bit of a different time zone. I'm having dinner, you're having breakfast, so you know, one of us might sound a little more perky than the other, but at the end of the day, I know you and I, when we met for the first time, not too long ago, we immediately found this connection around right.

[00:04:34] Our brains. Yeah. So Garrett, today we're gonna talk about this book that you contributed, a chapter Two Brains Brought Into Business. And maybe you could just start off by telling us what brought you to be writing about Brains into the business.

[00:04:52] **Gerrit:** That's quite a long story. I try to keep it short. So by education, I'm actually a chemist and I worked for about 12 years in the corporate world, and now I've been working for, well, a bit more than 12 years also as an executive coach like you.

[00:05:09] Mm-hmm. . And there are a lot of funny things around coaching and I realized that sometimes just listening to people and asking them powerful questions would not necessarily help them change their behavior. And so I asked myself, what else is there? And I thought, well, you know, everything we do, all our behaviors are somehow related to the brain.

[00:05:35] And being a chemist, having this education in the natural sciences, I basically returned to neuroscience and I asked myself, how can we apply what we know about the brain in coaching? And leadership, and I've been studying this a lot over the last 10 years. So with one of my teachers, Paul Brown, who is one of the editors of this book, asked me to contribute a chapter and that's my small contribution to it.

[00:06:06] Yeah.



[00:06:07] **Carolyn:** And the book comes out in April, I believe we're recording in February. Hopefully. Hopefully, yes. Well, fingers crossed. Yes. You never know. So we share. Curiosity about the brain, and we also share a publication month because my book is coming out in April as well. Oh, wonderful.

[00:06:25] **Gerrit:** I'll make sure I get

[00:06:26] **Carolyn:** a copy.

[00:06:27] Yes. Well, we'll make sure that you do get a copy. And so why I thought you would be such a great guest for the listeners, Garrett, has to do with this practical and insightful look into the neuroscience and how we can, as leaders use biology to help us be better leaders. And so, In the book you write about the fact that there are three essential aspects about the brain that leaders need to know.

[00:06:57] And so I thought maybe we could talk about those three aspects and dig into what you write about in the book and any other like additional sort of fun stuff that you wanna add in there. Cuz you know, like we said, we both like to geek out about this stuff. How does that.

[00:07:12] **Gerrit:** That sounds wonderful. I

[00:07:14] **Carolyn:** love it.

[00:07:14] All right. All right, so the first thing that you write about in this chapter is that every brain is unique. Now, besides the obvious, you know, we're all in different bodies, what do you mean by this, and why is it the first? Why is it number one on your list of three?

[00:07:33] **Gerrit:** Okay, so. When we look at the brain, we all have the basic components.

[00:07:39] They're, they're all the same, right? We all have a brainstem. Then we have parts that some people will call the limbic system. We have a neocortex. But how these 86 billion or so neurons are connected, that's highly



individual. That's unique for every person, like the fingerprint, and I think it starts with the question.

[00:08:03] What is the brain actually for? And obviously the brain is in charge of a lot of tasks, right? All kinds of bodily functions. I mentioned behaviors, and perhaps first and foremost, The brain's job is to keep us alive. Right. And that's maybe why I put it as number one. All the other aspects are equally important, I would say.

[00:08:27] So in this context, we can say that the brain is the organ of adaptation. Mm-hmm. , what does that mean? Well, if you look at our history as human beings, We are incredibly adaptable, so we have evolved to adapt to very different cl, different food supplies, but this adaptation goes much further than in which region that we evolve as hunter gatherers.

[00:08:55] Also today, we all adapt to the unique circumstances we are born into, right. So if you think about it, the moment we are born, we need to make sure we survive. Somebody needs to feed us, somebody needs to keep us warm, right? Yeah. So all we can do is maybe cry and then somebody provides food immediately or maybe not right away.

[00:09:21] So we already learn to, let's say we express a need and we learn how our environment responds to it, and then we adjust again. How we express our needs. Mm-hmm. and then as we grow up, but let's say we are still children, we are still depending, our life depends on other people. So we always learn how do I express my needs?

[00:09:45] How does the environment, the other people around me, Respond to it. And again, I adapt. And you know, in some families or some circumstances, we grow up. It's continues being about survival. Right. You know, how do I need to adjust so that I don't get beaten up? Yeah. So the brain constantly interprets what's happening around us, make sense of the world, and adapt.

[00:10:15] And so in this way, Each unique brain forms certain habit. And patterns in life that that often persists through a whole lifetime. So that is what I mean with every brain is unique. And then of course, we need to ask the



question, why is that important when it comes to leadership and executive coaching?

[00:10:35] You took the question

[00:10:36] **Carolyn:** right outta my mouth. You must have your own podcast, Garrett, like ,

[00:10:40] **Gerrit:** but yeah. Do I do .

[00:10:43] **Carolyn:** So why is that important? I mean, it seems obvious and yet I know there is a very specific reason why you are, are putting it into this chapter. So why is it important for leaders to remember this? So the

[00:10:58] **Gerrit:** question I get often asked in my executive coaching could be around, How do I motivate my team?

[00:11:05] Mm-hmm. And then we all would like to have a simple, ideally a one size fits all answer. But the reality is that different people are motivated by different things. And a mistake that I see many bosses make is to simply assume that everybody else is motivated by what motivates them. Yeah. For instance, if you talk about senior leaders, they may be motivated.

[00:11:32] Career professional or material success. And then they're surprised when other people don't get excited about the outlook of the next promotion. Right? And the other very important implication at work is, for instance, stress. So different people respond very differently to different circumstances. It's not the environment or certain conditions that are inherently stressful.

[00:12:02] It is how individuals evaluate the same situation differently based on their past experiences and their adaptations. So, For instance, a very, let's say, fast paced work environment that may be exactly the conditions that make one person thrive, whereas another person is already totally overwhelmed. Yes.

[00:12:29] So when leaders deal with people, we always need to be mindful that everybody is a unique individual. Yeah,



[00:12:39] **Carolyn:** why I was so drawn to that first question is really the underlying foundation of why I wrote my book, which is about the path to trauma informed leadership. And you know, the first rule about that is to be a trauma informed leader.

[00:12:56] You don't need to know the trauma. In fact, it's none of your business. But what you do need to know is that we all have had experiences. And some more trauma than others that impact how we take in the environment. So I think that first question again might seem obvious, but it's really important as we evolve.

[00:13:19] Evolve. I didn't even say that on purpose cuz that's the name of the book. But as we evolve our workplaces and we have to navigate through so much uncertainty and ambiguity, we really need to understand this mechanism that goes. In our brain with what's safe, what isn't safe, what's my experience telling me?

[00:13:39] **Gerrit:** Absolutely. And and some people may look at drama as something wrong with that person, but again, it is an adaptation that the brain has made. Yes, it's your brains best possible response to whatever it is that cause this, what we call trauma.

[00:13:58] **Carolyn:** Yep. It is a healthy response to protect us. Right. This brain is pretty amazing, right?

[00:14:03] Trying to protect us . It is. So we've got a good understanding now of that first essential aspect of the brain. And is there something, an anecdote or something from your own coaching practice, Garrett, around this first aspect that maybe could bring it to life? Or should we just go on to the second aspect?

[00:14:26] **Gerrit:** Well, one of the things that come to mind is a lot of my coaching is also around who are you actually as a leader? Because who you are is how you lead. Mm-hmm. . And when people come to me with this question, you know, how do I motivate people? I often ask them, What motivates yourself. And then they realize when many people do this and really for the first



time as a formal exercise, and then they realize that they have a certain set of motivators.

[00:14:56] Yeah. And once they do this, it becomes more transparent for them or more clear to them that. Okay, I see that I have this unique set of motivators. Yours is different, and then everybody else I work with, their motivators are also different, and this realization helps them to deal more effectively with different people.

[00:15:19] Yeah.

[00:15:20] **Carolyn:** Garrett, I'm curious, do you happen to use the Enneagram system of personality to help uncover those motivat?

[00:15:27] **Gerrit:** I

[00:15:28] **Carolyn:** don't, oh, this is why there's so many wonderful different coaches out there. Um, . That is a system that I personally use for myself and I use it with my clients and I love it because it talks about the motivator behind our behavior, not just the behavior.

[00:15:46] And I love how you articulate it and its importance in your coaching. Yeah. Wonderful. So why don't we go on to the second question, because the next two areas, there's lots, lots for us to unpack here. I'm, I'm really excited about them. So the second aspect about the brain, That you talk about in this chapter that you've written is that emotional processes play a more important role than people think.

[00:16:16] So let's just talk a little bit about that, and then we'll talk about the eight basic emotions. So why did you feel it was necessary to address that and call that out for leaders?

[00:16:27] **Gerrit:** There was also a deep insight for myself. So having been a corporate guy in the past, I experienced that little room for emotions at work, right?





[00:16:36] Mm-hmm. , we, we say things like, you are too emotional or Emotions have clouded your judgment. And yeah, that is because we believe we are rational beings, sometimes disturbed by feelings, but neuroscience teaches us. We are essentially emotional beings who can also think rationally. Yeah. And what we call emotions is nothing fuzzy or soft.

[00:17:08] Emotions are the results of what I call the heart biology. So very complex neurochemical. Processes. Processes. And these processes. The emotion. They drive all our decision making and behavior and these emotional processes, they take place in the brain much faster than than cognitive processes. So the emotion takes place first.

[00:17:35] And then we make sense of it later. Right.

[00:17:38] **Carolyn:** Right. Hello, marketing . All based on emotion. Um, right. Yeah. Yeah. By the way, I am one of those people that has been called too emotional and having emotion cloud my judgment and for a lot of my leadership life, I tried to tame my emotions. I tried to hide them and bury them and Terrible.

[00:18:01] Yeah. I thought they got in the.

[00:18:03] **Gerrit:** Yeah, and for me it was the opposite. You know, I studied chemistry for a very long time, , so you, you focus on everything rational, logical, and I had a hard time to reconnect with my emotions.

[00:18:16] **Carolyn:** Hmm. Yeah. Side note, I just finished reading a book a few weeks ago called Lessons in Chemistry.

[00:18:23] It's a fiction book. Have you heard? No, I haven't. It's a really fun read. It was really, really, really well done. And uh, it just reminded me of what you were saying, being a former chemist in

[00:18:37] **Gerrit:** I looked that up. .



[00:18:38] **Carolyn:** Yeah. Have a, have a look. It's a fun read. So in this chapter you talk about eight basic emotions, and I found this fascinating.

[00:18:47] I hadn't seen this laid out in this way before, and. I'd love to hear you share with the audience here, those eight basic emotions and why it's important for us as leaders to know how they might show up at work.

[00:19:03] **Gerrit:** Right. So I think I need to take a short step back here. Okay. One of the big problems when it comes to the emotions is that neither neuroscientists, nor psychologists, or any other people have been able to agree on a universal definition as to what the emotions are.

[00:19:23] Mm. And in fact, there's also no agreement on how emotions are different. Feelings, states and moods, and often time, you know, even rather famous authors and researchers may even use these terms interchangeably. So it's not consistent. And so I am using one model. It is a proposal, it is a model. It's not that we can say we have hundred percent scientific evidence for it.

[00:19:52] Yeah. But it's probably one of the best models we have right now. And that has been developed by Paul. And he talks about these eight basic emotions. We have on one side, the so-called survival emotions, and maybe we can put a link to the diagram we can in into your session notes. Yep. There is fear, anger, disgust.

[00:20:16] Shame and sadness. And while these, this may sound negative, there's nothing negative about any emotions. Again, they have helped us to evolve over millions of years and take for instance, fear. Nobody likes fear, but the underlying biological process here is that as soon as the brain detects a potential, It prepares the body within milliseconds for this ancient fight, flight, or freeze response.

[00:20:49] Right. Long before we feel consciously afraid. Yeah. And these. Milliseconds made all the difference for our survival when I'm always using this hunter Garre example when we had to escape from a predator, right? Yeah. We need to notice it as quickly as possible and then run as fast as we can literally run for our lives.



[00:21:14] And evolution wise, we still have the same reins. Mm-hmm. . And then on the other hand of the spectrum, we have the so-called attachment, emotions, joy, excitement, and love and trust. And we can ask again the question, what does it have to do with leadership? What are the practical implications? So some neuroscientists will write emotions.

[00:21:42] E hyphen motion. Yeah. Highlighting that emotions give us the energy for action. For motion. Preparing us for fight or flight, right? Yes. And so the brain does not distinguish between a perceived threat, let's say, the real threat of a tiger in the bush. Or the perceived threat of a bullying boss at work.

[00:22:09] Right. And the threat can be just my facial expression. Mm. A threatening tone of voice, you know, just raising the tone of voice because I'm annoyed in, in a meeting. Yep. And of course at work, we rarely see people running out of the meeting room or slap the boss in the face. Even though, yeah,

[00:22:30] **Carolyn:** I had situations like this.

[00:22:32] I'm sure some people might wanted to do that.

[00:22:33] **Gerrit:** Yeah, yeah. But let's say the modern day fear response is expressed in a high rate of absence, high turnover rate, disengagement, or a blame culture. Yeah. So there are two key aspects for leaders, why it's important for them to understand the emotions. First of all, being aware of our own emotions.

[00:23:00] Yeah. How does fear show up? How does anger show up? And then how can I deal with this in a productive manner? You are not a fan of saying manage your emotions, because I don't think we can really manage them, but we can regulate them. Yes. But in order to regulate them. We need to be able to experience them.

[00:23:20] Yeah. And then in terms of leadership, I often say leadership is about creating the conditions for people to be their best. And so as a leader, I need to understand how might I trigger the fear response in other people. And then how



do I avoid this instead, how can I nurture feelings of joy and excitement and trust?

[00:23:49] And it's not about, you know, we just have a happy workplace and we are all happy at work and that's it. No, no, I can be challenged at work if I feel safe. And so, When I nurture these attachment emotions, that is where energy can flow, where people can be creative, innovative, perform, and be their best, whereas when there's fear, anger, and sadness, the energy goes inside to survival and we are not getting the best out of people

[00:24:22] **Carolyn:** at work.

[00:24:23] Yeah. One of the things that I say to build on what you're saying there, Garrett, is. We've got a range of emotions, and like you were saying, emotions are good, they're data points, and unfortunately we don't get to choose which emotions we'd like. So I'll have a little bit of love, belonging and joy today please.

[00:24:40] But let's put a hold on. The shame, anxiety and fear, we don't get to choose that. So as somebody who. Feels intense emotions, but learned how to push them down. You don't get to choose which one you'd like to show up, and I think that that's a really important aspect of this work for leaders is that emotions are okay.

[00:25:03] We don't wanna suppress them.

[00:25:05] **Gerrit:** Yes, and a good friend of mine said it's very dangerous to suppress emotion. Of course they will come back with

[00:25:12] **Carolyn:** greater force. Absolutely. Absolutely. Garrett, do you have any examples from your coaching practice where your client was really able to find a new level of leadership by understanding this concept or these

[00:25:31] **Gerrit:** concept?



[00:25:33] Yeah. I think first of all, it's a gradual process. Mm-hmm. , it's maybe you are understanding, you can have an insight once you see this model and you have this insight and you understand it. But the practical application usually takes some time until you can really say, wow, you know, I've really embraced this.

[00:25:51] And I think for most people it will. Work in progress forever. But I remember one particular situation when I was working with an engineer and you know, very rational, very performance driven, and we actually worked more on how can she relate better with people. And I explained to her this model of eight basic emotions.

[00:26:15] And then in the next session she came back happily smiling and said, look, I had this discussion with one of my staff last week and I. He was coming from a place of sadness and I thought, how can I bring into a state of more joy and excitement? I said, Hmm, wow. She embraced this model much faster than I did that.

[00:26:36] That was a wonderful experience, .

[00:26:38] **Carolyn:** Yeah. The piece that I really liked about this model is how it really helped identify, you know, five of those emotions keep us. And let us know, you know, about danger, which you, you talked about to help us get closely involved, right. Which was the excitement or joy and then the, the trust or love.

[00:26:59] And then one of those emotions can push us in either direction. And I thought that was a really good way to see these emotions. And as leaders, how can we nurture or create more opportunities, as you've said, for the trust and the joy.

[00:27:17] **Gerrit:** Yes. To unfold. Yes, exactly. Yeah.

[00:27:20] **Carolyn:** Yeah. And I know we haven't mentioned this explicitly, but what is that one emotion that can push us in either direction to avoid or to become attached?



[00:27:31] What is that one emotion

[00:27:32] **Gerrit:** we should? Yes. I haven't mentioned that it's startle or surprise, right? This, this moment. Uh, one example could be a great comedian on stage who holds your attention and you, you get really curious and you don't know. In which direction is this going? Right? Is it going to be something really funny or rather disgusting?

[00:27:52] Mm-hmm. . So you know, you hold in this maybe state of, what should I say? Attention. Wondering what's coming next. Yeah. Or you hear a sound and you're not sure what does it mean and it's, it kind of alerts you and it can drive you then in either direct.

[00:28:08] **Carolyn:** Yeah. Is there anything else around the emotions, the eight basic emotions in this second element that we haven't touched on that we've missed?

[00:28:18] **Gerrit:** I think as you said, uh, before we started the recording, we can probably talk for hours , and I remember we have, we have other items on the agenda, so yes, there are many, many interesting things around it. I would perhaps recommend one book, it's called the Fear Free Organization, where Paul Brown is one of the authors, and that goes really deep into that subject.

[00:28:40] All

[00:28:40] **Carolyn:** right. Well thank you. I'll definitely, uh, be looking that book up. So let's go to the third aspect then. And so this is the last essential aspect of the brain that you've highlighted here, and it's the fact that human relationships are fundamental to health, wellbeing, and performance. So there's an obvious aspect to that, like of course I need to work with others.

[00:29:08] Why is it so important on this list for leaders?

[00:29:13] **Gerrit:** I would say, because like the emotions, the importance is completely underestimated in the workplace. You know, we come here to get the job done, not to be friends, right? And especially, again, these leaders who



focus on the rational parts of their thinking, it usually helps to explain the rationale.

[00:29:34] Behind relationships, make them understand that once again, it has nothing to do with being soft. Relationships are an integral part of our biology, and once again, relationships, at least in the past, were critical for our survival. Mm. So think again. You know, my favorite example, the hunter gatherers.

[00:29:54] Hunting and groups was just so much more efficient. And at the time we have indications that children were not only raised by their biological parents, they were raised by a group of people. So you know, you need to have. Good relationships with these people. You need to have trust with them that they take care of your child, right?

[00:30:16] And if you were sick, you couldn't go to a hospital. So you need to have good relationships so that people take care of you when you are sick. And if you were, let's say, expelled from the group, it was basically a death sentence, right? But even in our modern lives, there's a very famous study, it's almost a hundred years ago in the 1940s, I think it was a Austrian researcher who compared the lives of orphans in an orphanage with the lives of children who grew up in prison with their imprisonment.

[00:30:54] Mothers and I would have to look up the exact numbers, but I think within a couple of years, more than 30% of the children in the orphanage died, even though they were well cared for in terms of shelter and food, hmmm, in the same period, none of the children who lived in the prison died. They lived with their biological mothers.

[00:31:18] And you know, one would expect that life in prison. Much harsher. Right, and there is another indication, at least one other indication I know of that relationships today are still as important as in our hunter gatherer times. There is a Harvard study that was conducted over a period of. 80 years. Wow. And that study 80.

[00:31:45] 80, yes. . So you obviously, not everybody survived the study. Yeah. But they could say that those who had good relationships, they lived longer,



they were healthier, and they were happier in their lives. There's a clear correlation. And also other, let's say social studies indicate that. , good relationships at work are, we spoke about motivators are an important motivator at work.

[00:32:12] So even if your job in general or temporarily is not very pleasant, people can still enjoy coming to work because they enjoy working with their buddies, right? Yeah. Right. And I think we have all experienced, most of it, at least during Covid when there was a lot of isolation. I think many people for the first time, How they miss being connected with other people.

[00:32:40] And maybe one last example, I, I had this prison example. I've been told that the hardest punishment is solitary confinement, right? So even the toughest criminals, they still crave connection.

[00:32:55] **Carolyn:** Yeah. Yeah. And that piece of our brain, I mean, we are wired to be social. Yes. And I know you're in a different hemisphere, so maybe you could comment a little bit on that, but I know in the Western hemisphere here in North America, there really is a cultural norm almost that.

[00:33:15] You have to go it alone and with strength and perseverance on your own, you will have great power. It goes against biology. It absolutely doesn't align with the way our brains are wired. Do you experience the same sort of thing on the other side of the world there?

[00:33:31] **Gerrit:** 100%. And two things come to mind maybe quickly on what you just said.

[00:33:36] Being wired, it reminds me of, uh, Dan Siegel, who has coined the term. Interpersonal neurobiology. Yes. So, you know, when I speak about the brain, it's not just in our brains. Also, when we are talking now, you know, our brains make new connections and we are always interconnected, whether we believe it or not.

[00:33:58] And the other aspect, I find it interesting that you're mentioning culture. I've been living in Thailand for almost two decades and I sense that here





people pay much more attention. To relationships, they value connections much more than how it's done in my home country, Germany.

[00:34:17] **Carolyn:** Hmm. And, and Garrett. What does that look like in the workplace?

[00:34:22] So, I've heard from leaders, I don't have time to be friends with everybody. We've got work to do. How would you describe to your clients, or what do you share with them when that's the mindset or the belief that they're coming?

[00:34:39] **Gerrit:** Yeah, of course. The lack of time is a real one. I would say all people in the corporate world are extremely busy, and often the higher up they are and the hierarchy, the more busy they are.

[00:34:51] That's real. Yeah. And also, I don't think you need to be friends with everybody. I mean, we can discuss how do you define friendship, but you need to make genuine connections with people. And it can start with very simple things. , you spoke about western culture where we often greet people with a handshake.

[00:35:12] Mm-hmm. , am I making a connection with my handshake or is it just, you know, something I do with my body and then there's nothing behind it? Yeah. So I can have a firm, not too hard handshake. I can look the other person in the eye, maybe smile and make a real connection. Yeah, looking at people through my facial expressions, with my body connection, I either give signals for connection or rejection.

[00:35:43] No matter how busy I am, when I meet a person, I can at least quickly ask with genuine interest. How are you? Yeah. Something like that. Yeah,

[00:35:52] **Carolyn:** I think it's a really important point because as more and more neuroscience comes out, we're learning, you know, you don't really leave a person's presence neutral.



[00:36:02] They are either feeling safe, right to feel connected or right. There's a little sense of, oh, like, you know, threat. And again, our brain doesn't know the difference between a physical threat, oh some a predator's going to eat me, and a psychological threat as well. So I think for leaders it's really important to, again, let biology help us do our job and help us create these great workplaces that everybody.

[00:36:30] Yes.

[00:36:30] **Gerrit:** And you're mentioning a very important aspect here because when I talked about fear earlier, it's not only about predators, we are also permanently scanning the whole environment for threats, and that includes other people. Yeah. People can also be a danger for us, right? So the brain is permanently asking.

[00:36:49] Am I safe or not? Am I safe or not? And we are looking for these, all these nonverbal signals. How is this person looking at me? What's their body posture? End and end, huh? Yeah. And then as soon as we trigger fear, Hmm. We limit performance. Simple as that. Exactly.

[00:37:05] **Carolyn:** Yep. We pull away. Garrett, is there anything that we haven't touched upon?

[00:37:09] I mean, this is a really rich chapter that you've contributed to the book. Is there anything else you'd like to share or maybe other components of the.

[00:37:19] **Gerrit:** Um, I think in terms of the time that we have today, I think we got the three key messages across. Okay. And then, of course, if people get interested, there's a lot of resources out there.

[00:37:30] They can also reach out to me and then we can give them. Much more to

[00:37:35] **Carolyn:** digest. All right. Well, and on that note, we will make sure that we've got links in the show notes on how people can get in touch with you.



I know that you have a partner who will be coming onto the podcast as well, and you both have your firm called Second Crack.

[00:37:51] So I guess you're the first crack of the second crack that I get to speak to in two weeks. . Um, and Garrett, just really quickly, how could people get in touch with you or where could they find.

[00:38:02] **Gerrit:** Maybe the easiest way is to connect with me, uh, via email or reach out to me via email. That is my first name, Garrett.

[00:38:10] That is g e double r i t vivo coaching.com. Vivo coaching is v i v o and then the coaching. And you can also find me on LinkedIn. I think I'm the only person with the name Garrett Pelzer. Again, first name, I spelled it already. Last name is p e l. Z for zebra e r,

[00:38:34] **Carolyn:** and that's Zed for our Canadian friends.

[00:38:37] **Gerrit:** All right. Yeah, I thought that was uh, o only British.

[00:38:40] **Carolyn:** Thank you. No, that's funny. And I did learn to drop that silent tea in there to make sure I'm saying your name correctly. So don't put a T in that if you're looking for Garrett.

[00:38:48] **Gerrit:** And of course there is, as you said, second Craig, the leadership podcast, which you find on all the major podcast platform.

[00:38:56] Yeah.

[00:38:57] **Carolyn:** Well, Garrett, I'm so happy that I came across your work and that you were able to come on to the show, and I'd like to wrap things up by asking you the three questions that align to my evolved leadership model. Are you ready to go there? Are we all set?

[00:39:15] **Gerrit:** I'm a bit worried what might come up , but I'm ready as can be.



[00:39:20] **Carolyn:** Alright, so the first question is about self-awareness and I would invite you to share a moment that yielded a lot of insight about yourself, maybe about your reactivity, your motivators, but might have also been a little bit uncomfortable. Anything you can share with us there, Garrett.

[00:39:41] **Gerrit:** Yes. So I hear often from my clients that the best feedback they ever received was also the toughest feedback, and, and the same applies to me.

[00:39:51] And I remember one specific situation. I had a coffee with a good friend who is also a very experienced psychologist and coach. And it's been a while ago. I cannot remember exactly what it was, but he was talking about something. For the scientist in me felt very esoteric. Mm. And I had a rather harsh and potentially condescending response to it.

[00:40:20] Something like, that's nonsense. Mm. And I'm very glad that my friend had the guts and gave me candid feedback. It was in, let's say, two dimensions. One was how he felt about my behavior that it made. Feel bad, not appreciated. And that with my tone of voice and the comment, I kind of put an end to the discussion, you know?

[00:40:46] Mm-hmm. , I'm right, you're wrong. End of discussion. Right. And the second aspect was that he also mentioned that his interpretation of my response was that I was being defensive. And that's made me think a lot. I mean, it may sound now very easy, but I was really shocked cause I realized. This behavior of mine was probably a bad habit or pattern that I've probably used many years, and I've annoyed many people with this behavior.

[00:41:21] Hmm. And I also thought about this defensiveness a lot because initially it didn't make sense to me, but then I realized talking about making sense, the brain is also the organ. Making sense of the world, making meaning, creating meaning. And so having spent a lot of time in this scientific world that has shaped my model for the world.

[00:41:46] So I'm quick as discarding everything that can't be explained with science, anything that is oter, right? But. That is then also a pillar of my model



of the world. So everything that is, let's just call it esoteric or anything for which I can't find evidence. Yep. I also discarded because it's potentially a threat for my model of the world.

[00:42:13] Mm-hmm. , because if this other view, if it could be right then I've lived for the last decades. not the right life. Mm.

[00:42:26] **Carolyn:** Wow. That was quite a moment with your friend. Are you still friends with that person?

[00:42:31] **Gerrit:** He's, uh, visiting Thailand and I hope to see him next week, .

[00:42:34] **Carolyn:** Oh, well give him a good firm handshake. .

[00:42:39] **Gerrit:** I'll give him a

[00:42:39] **Carolyn:** warm hug.

[00:42:40] Or, I was gonna say. Or a hug. Or a hug. . All right. The second question, Garrett, is really around regulation in our nervous system and. I'm curious if there is a practice or a ritual that helps return you to a calm regulated state or keep you in a calm regulated state.

[00:43:01] **Gerrit:** So I would distinguish the two terms that you use.

[00:43:04] The ritual and the practice. Mm-hmm. , I could perhaps mention one morning ritual I have. Okay. I recite a poem from the Vietnamese Zen Master Han, and it goes like, Waking up this morning, I smile. 24 brand new hours are before me. I vow to live fully in each moment and to look at all beings with eyes of compassion.

[00:43:37] Wow. And then the regulation part is my. Meditation and general mindfulness practice. So we spoke about busyness, but I try, I'm not perfect, but I try to make. Maybe not on every day, but on most days time for 20 to 30 minutes mindfulness practice. And I also try to integrate mindfulness in every movement is a high goal, but as much as possible and to deepen my practice, I



will probably, when you publish the podcast, I will be in a retreat in France in Plum Village.

[00:44:13] That is the meditation center. Mm-hmm. founded by Han, and maybe after that I'll be enlightened.

[00:44:20] **Carolyn:** Wow. I'm really struck by that poem that you shared as well. I'm gonna try that out myself. I know that just. Having raised two young boys on my own for a while and you know, now I've remarried and just, you know, the first years of their life was so busy, so hectic.

[00:44:39] You just, I just got so used to just rolling outta bed and starting the day. Yes. And I realize now I could have started my day off with an in. At the very least, , and I say that now to the clients that I work with. If there's nothing else beyond just setting an intention or some gratitude for something that you might experience in the day, sort of setting that intention of gratitude, that is a good place to start.

[00:45:07] Wonderful. Yeah. Thank you for that, that poem. Now the last question is around this sense of something bigger than ourself, and I love music, so everything I do, it has to come back to music or basketball, one of the two. So we're gonna come back to music here. What is a song or a genre of music that makes you feel connected to others or just part of something bigger than?

[00:45:33] That's

[00:45:34] **Gerrit:** a difficult question, but one song comes to mind. Indeed. So we spoke earlier about connection and in this Plum Village tradition formed by Tik Han, he talks about inter being. And of course I have a, a scientific explanation for this esoteric sounding concept. Our bodies, for instance, consist. What is it?

[00:45:59] About 70% water? Yep. The calcium in our bones is the same calcium that we will find in the Rocky Mountains or the Alps. And when we die and our body decomposes, we often talk about the circular economy. It's, it's



circular already. Right? Everything becomes part of something else, and we are part of something else.

[00:46:24] We spoke about the interpersonal neurobiology, so we are permanently interconnected. That's tick hand calls, inter being mm-hmm. . And in this tradition, they have a song that emphasizes this. I'm not going to sing it, but it goes like this. We are all the leaves of one tree and the time has come for all to live as one, and then it continues with we are all the waves of one sea.

[00:46:53] We are all the stars of one sky. And you mentioned before, The high emphasis, especially in the western world on individualism, but I think it's really time for us to come together and live as one and solve the problems that we have created in the world. Solve them together.

[00:47:14] **Carolyn:** Yeah. That is a beautiful way to end off our time, Garrett.

[00:47:18] I know I could talk to you for hours. I'm really thankful that you came on and I guess you didn't have to get up too, too early. But thank you for joining us on the podcast today.

[00:47:29] **Gerrit:** Thank you for having me. It was a great pleasure. Oh, I

[00:47:33] **Carolyn:** just had so much fun having that conversation with Garrett. We could have talked for hours and geeked out over brain science.

[00:47:40] You know, now I'm realizing in university when I slightly entertained the idea of being a brain surgeon, I understand why. It's not because I wanted to cut people's heads open or dig in into the brain, but I was clearly fascinated by it at a young age. And you know, as I'm reflecting on. Conversation with Garrett.

[00:48:01] One thing that I'm realizing is, had I met him 20 years ago, the Carolyn of 20 years ago would've been so immersed and fixated and stuck in my own way of seeing the world. And now after becoming more self-aware, being really committed to understanding my reactivity, which is what I talk about in my book, evolve, understanding My Own.

# EVOLVE

A NEW ERA OF LEADERSHIP



## TRANSCRIPT

[00:48:29] Opens up my ability to hear others and to not see the world through my lens. And in this conversation with Garrett, I believe that we see the world from a bit of a different motivator, and yet we can connect and have such a rich conversation and really have this meeting place coming from a place of curiosity.

[00:48:56] I hope you enjoyed the convers. As much as I did, and if you would like to share your thoughts about this podcast, please feel free to hop onto social media at Carolyn Zuora and on LinkedIn at Carolyn Su as well. Thanks for joining us.