

EEP 125- John Buford & Sean Georges: On Mission Leadership

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SPEAKERS

Maria Ross, John Buford, Sean Georges

Sean Georges 00:02

Real authentic leadership is kind of an upside-down world, it's you at the bottom of conceptually influencing from that place looking up at your teammates, in alignment with mission. So, your mission, your shared purpose is at the top. It's always in your line of sight. So, you're not just walking around patting people on top of the head. Right? You are, you are finding ways from that place and you're asking a simple question. What is my best and highest role to serve this person or this team in alignment with our shared mission?

Maria Ross 01:27

We all know that when it comes to leadership and accomplishing a mission, the US military is hard to beat. But we think we understand what that means. It's actually not about cold commands or ranks and titles. If you want to become a more effective leader than tune in my guests, both former military leaders themselves unpack the fundamentals of good leadership so you can be more effective. John Buford and Sean Georges are co founders of on mission leadership, providing coaching and speaking that equip and support leaders to succeed. They're the co-authors of the new book on mission, your journey to authentic leadership. John Buford served as a Marine Corps officer for more than 20 years, conducting operations overseas, and teaching at Officer Training schools. After retiring from the Marines. John earned a doctoral degree in Education with a training and performance improvement specialization and became a certified wilderness medicine instructor, college professor and outdoor educator Sean Georges is a retired general counsel and SVP of human resources for a publicly traded retailer with 5000 employees and 400 stores. He's also a Naval Academy graduate, and Marine Corps officer and Judge Advocate, John and Sean view leadership as a real human centric responsibility, not a romanticized mythical calling. Today we talk about what authentic leadership really means. Why leadership doesn't derive from power, and how to put people and a shared mission at the heart of your leadership model. They share how military leadership principles can lead to business success, and why some civilian leaders misunderstand what that means. And the important difference between leading and managing. We discuss the mistakes well intentioned leaders make, and how to balance supporting

your team and being human with strength, confidence and excellence. Enjoy these practical and timeless leadership lessons.

Maria Ross 03:36

Welcome to the empathy edge. John Buford, Sean Georges. I am so excited to have you on here to talk about leadership and what we can learn from the military. It's almost counter intuitively about what makes effective leadership. So welcome to the show. You have both authored a wonderful book called on mission. And you also have co-founded an organization on mission leadership. So, tell us a little bit about your story.

John Buford 04:05

Sure, I'll start with that. Sean. It's long, but I won't make it started in third grade in small town and

Sean Georges 04:17

As a tourist

Maria Ross 04:18

I love it.

John Buford 04:18

Don't don't worry. I have a fast forward coming up here. Yeah, we were best friends in third grade in high school athletes together. And then both went in the Marine Corps in different ways shone through the Naval Academy through a public school, boot camp in public School, stayed in contact for years and years. And then oh, I don't know a decade or two ago. They start blurring after a while. But we had this 20-year kind of email conversation about leadership and it grew and it grew and we tested each other when we questioned each other. And we started putting our thoughts down. And then one day, we kind of had an epiphany and said, "hey! let's, let's write a book". We really think we have a message that could be useful to people. And it was more of a bucket list type of thing than marketing or business proposition. And it's been a wonderful, wonderful journey. And we're very happy with the, with the product that came out. That was fast.

Maria Ross 05:28

No, I love it. It's the cliffnotes version. And then did you start on mission leadership before the book or after the book?

John Buford 05:35

Concurrently, roughly, you know, if that was more of a business thing, you know, we we needed to an umbrella bucket to catch all the goings on of publishing and writing and website and marketing. And so yeah, we started kind of current concurrently with writing a book that I love.

Sean Georges 05:56

No, I think this is Sean. I, I think that one of the, one of the real core reasons why we decided to write the book was really like John mentioned, to both gather, refine, and test our beliefs and concepts. And

so you know, you even if hopefully, people will buy it, read it, apply it more importantly. But it was a you know, kind of a refining fire anytime you've got to. Okay, well, when I say leadership, what I mean by leadership, exactly, when I use the word authentic, what am I talking about? What's the journey?

Maria Ross 06:39

Well, that's a great segue, because that's actually my first question for you is, what does it mean? What does it really mean to lead authentically, we hear that buzzword thrown around a lot. What does it mean to lead authentically and develop a shared purpose? What does that actually look like in practice?

Sean Georges 06:56

Yeah, you know, one of the things that we really focused on in and we do, we try to walk the talk as well, but but as we were writing the book, and coming up with with core concepts, we were looking, we wanted to stay focused on the real thing. On the the end, so authentic, isn't some kind of, we don't have a trademark after it or anything fancy. It's not, it is simply what we have observed in the course of our military careers, our civilian careers, which were very diverse kinds of experiences, and, you know, for profit, nonprofit, in the classroom outdoors, John, with his experience was that there that running across all of these experiences, and is something very real and true about, about both people who who lead, who lead in an authentic way, and, and what it means to lead authentically. And, you know, John, and I like to say, and we didn't make this up, either. There's nothing new under the sun when it comes to leadership. But there are these simple core, very real concepts, perspectives and principles. So authenticity is both who you are while as you are leading in your life, and also what it means to lead. The concept is simple. And it is about it is about influencing another human being with whom you share a mission. So, you've got some shared mission, some shared purpose to be working together, operating together. There's something there. And so, it is a responsibility. You have to another person to influence them. And at the core of all of our experience, and all of our observation, all of our experience following which is an important School of leadership, and leading it has to do with relationship. You can you can influence another person's actions, their commitment to that shared mission, through your relationship with them. And it's not a warm and fuzzy thing. It is simple. It is about servant leadership, leading as a servant. So that's the authentic that's the heart and soul of what we found to be leadership in all the different environments.

Maria Ross 09:43

Well, and I would say to you know, because as a brand strategist, I talked about this a lot in terms of what is an authentic brand and it's not this one thing, it's not this one definition of authentic is whatever it is, whatever is true for you and your business. It just means you're not putting on a facade? Yes. About authentic leadership, it's really about leading with your strengths. Right? Well, you are with your style with your sense of humor with your, you know, vulnerability and not trying to pretend you're something you're not.

Sean Georges 10:16

Yes, absolutely. And I think people have a hard time with that maybe because they've seen a lot of, you know, sort of posturing and puffing, and there's gotta, you've got to look a certain way talk,

Maria Ross 10:29

To have all the answers, etc.

John Buford 10:32

Yeah, smartest.

Maria Ross 10:34

Right, exactly. And I think you know, that's, that's also vulnerabilities also misunderstood, because it doesn't mean you walk around not making any decisions and crying all the time. It just means when you know, you're confident and those decisions, when you need to rely on others, you rely on others. And when you don't know the answer, you say, I don't know, but I'm going to find out.

Sean Georges 10:54

That's right. Exactly, we will find out right. And, you know, that's, that's the thing that I think people have a hard time with is, you know, it's sort of an upside down real authentic leadership is kind of an upside-down world, it's you at the bottom of conceptually influencing from that place, looking up at your teammates, in the in alignment with mission. So, your mission, your shared purpose is at the top, it's always in a lot your line of sight. So, you're not just walking around patting people on top of the head. Right? You are, you are finding ways from that place. And you're asking a simple question. What is my best and highest role to serve this person? Or this team? In alignment with our shared mission? You are? That's the mirror check question. Every authentic leader is asking them themselves. What's my best and highest role to serve? In alignment with mission? When you get that now the answers right can depend on so many things. Yeah, depends on the nature of the mission, the readiness and capabilities of your teammates, your you know, knowledge, ability, competence, all that but if you always act from that place, that is kind of the heart and and soul of what it means to lead you're you're finding ways to influence your teammates in accomplishing something together.

Maria Ross 12:30

Well, and I think too, you know, people have a hard time making that jump from doing to leading, you know, it is it is a mental job, it's, it's your job is no longer to do the thing you used to do your job is to enable and empower others to do the things they need to do. So, your team succeeds, as you said, toward the mission. And where I see a lot of companies go wrong businesses go wrong, is either their mission is just some fluffy statement, they put about a poster on the wall that nobody actually takes to heart or understands what that looks like every day. Or they don't they didn't even articulate a mission. So, so I'm just in my own head thinking, this is why I'm here. My boss might be thinking something else; my colleague might be thinking something else. And nobody's nobody's running in the same direction.

John Buford 13:18

One of the most powerful experiences I had was, I was facilitating executive leadership development program. It's out in the wilderness is out in the woods. It was a extended wilderness expedition, we we were building a pretty complex rope bridge across her ravine. It was an initiative that these exists. They're all type A personalities, all GMs. And they each had a task to do and every it was going nowhere. Quickly. Everybody was doing things on their own. Everybody was being an individual superstar, tying knots slinging slings, around trees, clipping carabiners, and nothing was getting done. Nobody was talking especially with each other and one of the one of the participants, a woman just

stopped what she was doing, started looking around and watch her teammates, flailing for a while. And she finally got his attention and said, hey, hey, everybody stopped looking at her. She said, "what are we trying to accomplish here?" Amazing, not amazing, but but confirmatory the power of that question, but one person spoke up and said it was his honor to do it and another person, another person, and quickly a vision was seated and everybody agreed on collectively what they're trying to accomplish. That's all it took. And so, yeah, I agree, Marie. I mean, that is so critical for a leader to keep that mission is Shawn calls that mission alignment or Mission clarity, Mission awareness inside because we're so busy producing widgets and balancing budgets and doing all this stuff we do in organizations, sometimes just what are we trying to accomplish here by Game Maker for?

Maria Ross 15:16

Well, and you know, from a brand perspective, when I work with with an AI, when I work with companies, we want to articulate a mission and a vision that's meaningful, that actually will inform daily decisions. So you know, one of my favorite things to say is, can you ask yourselves if this meeting, or whatever decision you're making in every meeting you have every day, is furthering the mission or detracting from the mission? And if you don't do that, then you're not living your mission.

John Buford 15:44

We're just as guilty of not doing things. We're just as guilty of doing things that have nothing to do with a mission. That's probably that's probably worse. Yeah. Because Because doing stuff to, to what's necessary for admission is usually is usually \$1. You know, you, you're gaining by getting there. But what happens is people get sidetracked by, okay, these processes creep in over time, this culture builds around this what we do, and sometimes that question is, why are we doing this? Right? Right? Nobody can answer. That's probably the worst of the two evils is doing stuff that has nothing to do.

Maria Ross 16:29

It's distracting, right? It's just, it's just a waste of time and effort and resources. So, you know, you want everything you want, you know, everybody marching in the same direction, which actually kind of brings me to an interesting question for both of you with your military experience, because I know a lot of your leadership philosophies are grounded in what you learned in the military as well. There's a, I think there's a I would call it a fallacy in corporate leadership, where people think they're adopting a military model, right? They think they're adopting, I'm going to be a drill sergeant, even hear that phrase, I'm going to be a drill sergeant, right? Or people describe their boss as a drill sergeant. Right? And it's a very, it's very command and control. But is that the reality of military leadership? Because military leadership is so effective? And I have to imagine there's more to the story.

John Buford 17:18

So so let me kick let me kick that off, Sean, and I'll let her go. So, command and control is absolutely important. But I think the where people get derailed is they confuse command and control with leadership. There are two different things command is absolutely imperative. It's imperative. You know, authority is imperative in any organization, any team, right? Like you have to have a person [...]

Maria Ross 17:42

You need to understand that roles, yeah.

John Buford 17:43

You're right, and understand the roles and those type of things in organization. And you know, the way organizational relationships work in a way interpersonal relationships work are two different things. I think in the military, it's the the rank structure is so ingrained is so important. It's just taken for granted. And there's where you get that kind of phrase, it's popular right now, there's been a book written about it, we mentioned ours leaders eat last is that's where the power comes from in relationships is building that one on one, you know, relationship with people because the, the authority, the rank, the following awards, that's, that's very much a part of the efficiency. And just because of the nature of the work, it's required, but the best leaders that we've known show I love you to, to build off this, the best leaders we've known, didn't have to remind you, that they outright, right. They they serve, you.

Sean Georges 18:47

know, that's one of the phrases John and I come up with that are kind of looking back over combined 80 years of, of leadership and following experience is that leadership does not work the way an org chart looks. Org charts are designed really for management purposes. You manage your your designating authority, you're, you're you're, you know, certain spans of control, things like that. Management is about people leadership, or is about things, things processes, you know, systems. Leading leadership is about people. And one of the one of the biggest eye openers for for me about the military and, and leadership really can't and this is after four years at the Naval Academy where, you know, you think you're getting a it is a kind of a graduate degree and what it means to follow and to lead and what works, what doesn't, but was at the basic school in Quantico was this phrase that was bouncing around and it was this kind of strange sort of little quip leaders eat last. Leaders eat last. What? What is that all about? Okay, well, I know where to stand. And when we go to the chow hall, I'm going to be last in line and you know, the the team, your Marines are going to be in front of you. So I've got that part. But it means everything, it means you are subordinating your needs, wants, your, you know, your ambitions, if you will, you can still be ambitious, but it is about your energy, your focus, your attention is on your team in the direction of mission. So, leaders eat last means everything, it means you are taking care of your people. First, I love the theme, you know, sort of the name of this podcast, empathy edge, that that requires humility, when you lead from that place. Empathy means you are keeping in mind and then focus what's going on with your team. You know, the Marine Corps, just one of the most important things you need to do to lead in the Marines is to is to share the burden with your we don't sit back and, and in the office when when, you know, we've got people out there doing hard work, you're out there with them. Not micromanaging, but sharing the burden, and caring about their experience, not just theoretically, or it's not a box you check. It is your their heart and soul, your heads there, you're also thinking about mission, you're thinking about your management responsibilities, right? But you're thinking about the human beings. And that's, that's just part of the magic. So the reality in the military, is that it is about servant leadership, the effective leaders authentic leaders that we saw, regardless of rank, number of metals, on their chests, you know, whatever, right? They served their people first.

Maria Ross 22:12

Well, and that's why they engender such loyalty and such productivity and such performance. And that's, you know, when I researched the book, the empathy edge, that was what all the research shows is that empathetic cultures breed more innovation, people are more loyal people are more productive,

by whatever measure, you define that and they more often than not achieve their goals. So, it's not about just being compassionate and empathetic, and everyone's standing around singing Kumbaya, this is actually in pursuit of achieving the mission. So, for too long, we've we've held this paradigm that if you are more human at work, if you are more compassionate at work, if you care about your employees, and you even bring a motion to work, that it means you're going to be you're going to lack ambition, you're going to lack a competitive edge, you're going to lack performance, and the inverse is true. So I love what you're saying. And, and I love what you said about, you know, servant leadership, because I think this is this is a place where well intentioned new leaders might get it wrong if servant leadership means I kowtow to the needs and desires of everybody on my team. No, that's not what it means. And so when you were talking about that, it's it's about doing what's best to empower the team and you are making decisions, you are very clearly making decisions, and setting goals and holding people to high standards, but in service of the team. And I think that's a nuance that new leaders don't always when they're trying to embrace servant leadership, they think it just means Oh, I just need to be really nice to everybody.

Sean Georges 23:48

Now let's take a vote see what they want.

Maria Ross 23:51

Exactly, exactly.

John Buford 23:52

And I think the the most the most powerful analogy I use talking about servant leadership and it's one that's that's simple, and that everybody understands, because if you haven't been a parent, you've had a parent. And I think the parent child relationship is just the perfect you know, metaphor or model to explain servant leadership, we've foul either been a pair or had a pair and understand that it is a the wide range of responses, right? Every parent, nearly every parent, every good parent, number one in their life wants to serve their child wants to see their child's thrive, survive, do well do better than they did. higher standard liver, etc. But they don't just coddle their children. They do what's necessary to move them their children forward, whether that's a coaching role. disciplinarian, sometimes a shoulder to cry on or a hug. Sometimes, I've swapped the Fanny, right? It's It's, it's a wide range, but all of it is based on the desire and the commitment to serve their child. Right. And so, you put that you turn that into a leader follower relationship, it's the same thing. You know, Shawn often does a really good job talking about the difference between sympathy and empathy, right? Like sympathy is is pat him on the back and feel sorry for someone. Empathy is much more, is much stronger. Because you're putting yourself in their shoes,

Maria Ross 25:36

you're in it with them. Yeah, you're and you're and you're actively listening to what they're going through. So, as you said, sympathy is a little bit more distant. It's sort of like, Oh, I'm really sorry, this thing is happening to you. And empathy is more about I'm going to I'm going to sit with you in this right sympathy

John Buford 25:51

is something you do to someone or something you share with someone exactly. You have to work at it, you have to work at getting in their shoes, right? Then you have to decide you want to do that it's the same as good listening skills, right? You have to work at listening, you have to stop what's going on in your mind, and turn that off, and be intentional about okay, I want to understand what she who she is.

Maria Ross 26:19

And without defensiveness, this is the thing I always say is empathy. Actually, empathetic leadership actually requires a lot of strength. And you actually have to have your own house in order before you can't really be empathetic. Because you can't take on space in your brain for someone else's point of view or perspective or feelings. If you're too caught up in your own usual you will you will perceive everything as an attack your opinion to your values to who you are versus how you disagree with me. Tell me more about that. Why do you why do you disagree with this strategy? Why do you not think this is the way to go? Instead of Well, here's automatically why I'm right, and you're wrong.

Sean Georges 26:59

This, this sort of rolls back around to one of the things about the military experience that I think is really smart. We before you are given put in a place where you're even expected to, to to lead to influence others in the direction of a shared mission. You're following. You are learning how to follow and with without question, you know, they don't make you a general, right away or whatever they don't. In fact, you've got to take care of your own stuff first. But that is brilliant. because it enables you to understand right to and to empathize without question, you know, that when, you know, when when something is required or not. You've been there you you've experienced that. And so, if you paid attention on that journey, right, everyone, you become aware of how you can influence other people and what that what that means, you know, I love General McChrystal, I think I'm quoting him correctly, once said, or wrote something along these lines that leadership is about, or requires the discipline of empathy. And I've thought, oh, that is really an interesting couple of. You know, it's whether whether you were sort of born into this world, an empathetic human being or not,

Maria Ross 28:28

Which we all are sciences. But that muscle just atrophies for some time. So, we can strengthen it again.

Sean Georges 28:36

And it exactly, and that's why it's a discipline, you have to bring it to the dance every time you've got to continue to exercise it. And I love that I think that's a, that's a part of what makes us makes us human and effective. In our leading, so yeah.

Maria Ross 28:56

Oh my gosh, so much good stuff. So where do you see, well intentioned leaders go wrong? Can you give us one or two red flags that maybe someone listening might go, ooh, I think I just did that behavior or did that thing unknowingly thinking that I'm being supportive of my people?

John Buford 29:15

Let me start with a short one. And Sean, you can build on this. I think one of the biggest mistakes isn't answering the question directly where they go wrong, but where they don't get off on the right foot.

Sean and I spend a lot of time in our book. Talking about leading from where you are leading from your place. I think a lot of people get caught off, they get caught off handed or get surprised when they get promoted, or they get put in a situation where they're no longer just an individual contributor, but now they're expected to weed Yes. And so we go to great pains to to try to catch people Start your leadership. Now there's no title, there's no rank, there's no you don't need a title to lead, there's nothing in our definition, or very few definitions I've ever read, that refers to, you know, those in a particular position in the organization or with the title. So if, if you're not prepared, if you haven't built those or built those relationships, if you haven't built that muscle memory, and I'm also talking about the heart muscle, not just others, but if you haven't done that work, then when you do get in a position where you're in charge of or charged with leading other people, it can be a bit, a bit of a surprise, and you can show up a little bit flat footed. So that would be the first thing that says, just start exhibiting leadership behaviors. And as Sean said, serving others and aligned with the mission, asking yourself for your best and highest rollers. So you're prepared when you get there.

Sean Georges 31:00

And I would, just to build on that, I would say, you know, the, the the times when I've seen if there are people not exhibiting leadership behavior, not stepping into that gap are they don't see it, they don't see the moment, they don't see the opportunity. So, they miss it, or they try to fall back on management principles. Let's set up KPIs, let's set up a cue ours, you know, and let's measure performance and do just, you know, all of this stuff that does not necessarily move a human being in the moment with respect to their commitment or their actions. They blur the line between managing and leading, and we do such a poor job overall. And our society, I think, on the planet in, in having a in developing and helping people to, to, to develop and grow and kind of shoulder their responsibilities as leaders, we and quite frankly. That is what John and I are trying to, to chip away at or just take a sledgehammer or re rebuild. I should put it more break.

Maria Ross 32:27

Right

Sean Georges 32:28

Is we have got to find a way to help people come to grips with and to shoulder their leadership responsibilities in their life. And we don't do a good job of that. The concepts are simple. It's not easy. Absolutely, you know, to stay on top of, of what it means to be a member of a team who can lead. And those are the best teams, right? And leadership shifts around. And it's not about rank, and sometimes you're following and sometimes you're you're being a good teammate, and sometimes you're taking a lead on this issue or that issue or on this matter and, or on that matter. And then you're gonna step back, it's a very fluid, kind of, that's how real leadership works and real. So, you need as many people as possible who are ready and able to step into that gap.

Maria Ross 33:22

Right. And, you know, I know I've been a part of an organization, I'm sure you have to where the most influential leaders weren't necessarily the head of the team. And not because they were usurping power now. But just the relationships they had built with people, the trustworthiness, the authenticity, made people want to follow them. And so, I love what you said earlier about, it's not about your rank or your

title. Because I think people who are not great leaders fall back on that sometimes. Well, I'm the VP and I said so right. And so, it's really those people who should never have to pull rank, that are able to influence other people's behavior because people want to follow them. I had a guest on the show previously, who talked about being the leader, every being the leader everyone wants to work for, and I'll put a link to her episode in the show notes. But it's that concept, it's that you don't really want to force it. You want it to just happen organically, that people are following you and, on your team, and accomplishing the mission because of who you are and what you stand for.

John Buford 34:30

Yes. And the circle circle back around your original question you just made me think of something really I think your original question "where do where do people go wrong?"

Maria Ross 34:40

Yeah.

John Buford 34:40

I think another additional what Sean said I think another place they go wrong as they tried to do too much themselves too much of the burden on their own shoulders and we we have a piece. And you know, our final chapter book we talked about kind of what next are okay, where do I go from here? And we say there's no greater purpose and you know, this, we know this. There's no a higher calling of a leader, they create more leaders. This really became evident to me I taught at undergraduate college for 11 years, taught undergraduate students and in my mission, my personal mission may not my, my job description. My personal mission was to help these young people find their voices a leader. And that was always in the forefront of my mind was not how to lead these people, these these humans, these these undergraduate students, but how I can move the dial or give them the opportunity to move their dial on finding their voices later. What does she need right now to help her move forward? What does he need for me to move forward? Because ultimately, you want to seem team of leaders, right? You want to be able to look at an organization and the team. And the greatest teams I've ever seen is I didn't I couldn't tell who was in charge.

Maria Ross 36:01

In a good way.

John Buford 36:04

It didn't see the bad side of that. When nobody's even worse, but

Maria Ross 36:12

I love it. I love it.

John Buford 36:14

It's a give and take, you know, it's a dance. That's something that I think leaders should always be doing. What can I What can I do to empower to teach the coach to help this person lead from where they are.

Maria Ross 36:26

And I think because of a if the leaders in the room have adopted a servant leadership model, then nobody's stepping on each other's toes, even if everybody's stepping up as a leader, because again, we're all here for this mission. And I like I love that you call it a dance, because it's, here's, I'm gonna step up, because these are my strengths. But John, I'm gonna let you step up for this. Because I know these are your strengths. There's no arrogance, there's no pridefulness, there's no ego. I've often quoted a friend of mine, Paris Albania, who I had on the show before as well, where she talks about ego kills empathy. And if you are coming at leadership, from an arrogant point of view, from an entitled point of view from a, everybody must listen to me and do what I say point of view. You might be successful in the short term, you know, but it's not sustainable. And again, you're not going to be the leader, people want to work for long term. So speaking of that, as we kind of wrap up here, just quick, not really round Robin. But John and Sean, who is an example of a good leader, in today's world, in any industry, any realm, any space?

John Buford 37:37

I'll speak to my history in one of the greatest leadership lessons I ever got, I ever received. He was a, he was my battalion commander. So he was in charge of, you know, 800 guys, and I was paid him in, you know, business parlance mid-level manager below him. In the military, there's very much a customer tradition of turning over command. So, when you leave a command, you have a big parade and a march and lots of pomp and circumstance, the old guy leaves the new guy or gal comes in. He was the best he was hard is harder than woodpecker lips, as we say, here in western North Carolina. He's a tough guy. But he was the best leader I ever knew. And when he turned over command, he visibly wept, watching his Marines, what we call pastor view, March, Pastor van, and it was a aha moment for me. I think I was a good leader, but to see a man of his status and rank, visibly emotionally touched, by watching the the men and women he served for several years marched by and knowing that, that he was moving on that stuff. And that that was like, oh, I get it.

Maria Ross 39:07

I get those are the models, right? People that can be strong, and have high standards, and be human. You know, we need to do that I have a son, especially for men in our culture and boys in our culture, we need to show them that they can be strong and emotional at the same time. So, I love that leadership example. That that he shared with you. And how about you, Sean?

Sean Georges 39:30

Yeah, in fact, I would add just to that, that, that that is required for leadership. Sometimes we get into this place. Oh, he was a great leader or she was a great leader. And then they were not quite No, no, no, that is leadership. I think there's, there's not there's that is leadership. We've got to build back into sort of the definition what it really means to lead authentically you know for. And I love what you said about your so. We have sons and daughters and, and we need we can and and should lead in the same way across the spectrum of our life. You know, when I think of just me personally and something that had an impact on me, it was. Well, many things did but there was an upperclassman at the Naval Academy who, who later became an admiral. And so, you know, by the system sort of said, Yeah, this this person is, is an excellent leader. And this was early in my development, and I was about to meet with him in the midst of my first year at the academy and get some feedback, and I was in sort of full-on

survival mode, I was coming at me fast and furious. I didn't know which way was up. And so, this was six months into the first year. And he he sat down, and I respected him greatly, just tremendous example, calm, he you could tell he was watching and cared. And he said, Shawn, what do you see yourself accomplishing here at the academy and in your four years? And that that question was like, I don't even you know, I'm trying to get through

Maria Ross 41:16

I won't hate that question of what do you see yourself in five years? I'm like, I don't know what opportunities themselves? Yeah.

Sean Georges 41:25

And I gave some silly kind of answer, you know. Hope to hope to graduate, sir. But then he said this, he said, no. He said, here's what I see you doing. And he laid out, you know, an academic goal and an athletic goal and a leadership goal. And he had been watching, he had been thinking he had actually put time and attention in and they weren't, you know, oh, you're gonna be great. You know, they weren't really.

Maria Ross 41:53

They weren't accustomed to you, because he got to know you.

Sean Georges 41:56

It was real. Yeah, he actually spent that was and I ended up doing some things that were along those lines, not because he said. This is what I see that you are going to do. But because he helped me to take another look at, at taking responsibility for my life and for my journey. And, and just a circle back around. Our book is about the journey. It's about taking responsibility for your journey of development, right here and now. Your life is your school. And that's what we're trying to get at.

Maria Ross 42:33

Well, I think that's a great place to leave this wonderful conversation. John, Sean, thank you so much for sharing your insights. The book again is called "On mission, your journey to authentic leadership". Pick up a copy if you can at all the places where you can get your books. And until next time. Please remember that cashflow and creativity and compassion are not mutually exclusive. Take care and be kind.