



This Is Your Life Podcast
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Michael Hyatt

Michele Cushatt: Welcome to *This Is Your Life* with Michael Hyatt, where our goal is to give you the clarity, courage, and commitment you need to do what matters. My name is Michele Cushatt. I'm your cohost, and I'm sitting in the studio with Michael Hyatt. Hey there, Michael.

Michael Hyatt: Hey, Michele.

Michele: Well, for most people, the word *confrontation* is a bad word.

Michael: It is. It creates all of this emotion in us because most of us... Well, I'll speak for myself. I avoid it. I don't like confrontation, and I know you don't either, because we talked about this.

Michele: Yeah, I don't like it either. In fact, I would even say I really hate it. I mean, it creates such negative emotions in me. I tend to avoid it, and generally speaking, I really don't do it well. In fact, just last week my brother (who is kind of a leadership expert himself, or at least someone who studies it, wants to learn more about it, and is in that kind of world a lot) and I were having a conversation about our leadership styles.

I asked him, "What do you think your greatest leadership weakness is?" He shared his with me, and then he asked the same question of me, of course. I told him it's confrontation. I'm just not good at it, and it's a necessary part of what we have to do in relationship and leadership, but I'm not good at it, so I'm hoping you can help me with that today.

Michael: Well, I'm somebody who's not naturally good at it either, but I've had to learn. Unfortunately, most of us don't get training in this. Nobody says, "Hey, we're going to have a confrontation course," or, "I'm going to educate you on this."

Michele: And who would sign up for that, right?

Michael: Exactly.

Michele: It wouldn't even really... We don't like it, so why would we sign up for a confrontation course?

Michael: Yeah. But it is possible to do better at it.

Michele: Absolutely.

Michael: To be honest, I don't ever want to get comfortable with it, because I think feeling the gravity of it is part of doing it well, but I definitely think it's possible to do it better and to at least see the path so you can get through it and know you're going to be effective in the process.

Michele: I wonder too if part of the reason we don't like the word *confrontation* is that too often, it becomes a conflict.

Michael: Yes.

Michele: Not all confrontation has to be a conflict, but in our experience, so many confrontations are just full of kind of heavily emotional conflict. That's what makes us not like it.

Michael: And so many of them end badly.

Michele: Mm-hmm.

Michael: We've all gone through the experience where we've severed a relationship or at least damaged a relationship, and it's not the same after that. I can think back to a number of years ago (this was actually a very painful experience) when I confronted a friend of mine who I thought was in the middle of an affair, and I knew his family and his kids and all of them very well. It was very painful for me to watch them go through that. I felt like I had to speak into it, not from a position of being judgmental, but it didn't go well.

Michele: Aww.

Michael: He didn't receive it. He denied it, and the relationship really has never been the same to this day.

Michele: Which is not what we want to have happened.

Michael: That's right.

Michele: Again, it's why we often avoid conflict. We don't want to lose the relationship.

Michael: Yeah.

Michele: Now on the flipside, one thing I've learned as I've gotten older is that when confrontation is handled in the right way, it actually can (it can, but it doesn't always) make the relationship stronger. From that standpoint, confrontation is actually a powerful tool for us to have in our tool belts.

Michael: Well, I've certainly seen this in my marriage. Confrontation is the doorway to deeper intimacy if you're willing to walk through it and willing to learn from it and do it in the right way. As long as there's no confrontation... You can do that if you want to keep your relationship superficial.

Michele: Mm-hmm.

Michael: But when people start colliding in their interests, wants, desires, and backgrounds, and all of those things comes into contact with one another, you're going to have conflict. It's inevitable.

Michele: It's impossible for us to be in relationship with other people without some amount of friction.

Michael: Yep.

Michele: I mean, it's just going to happen, and we as leaders can effectively use confrontation and those moments of friction in order to strengthen those relationships as long as we know the right steps. So today you're going to walk us through the appropriate steps of handling a confrontation. It's going to come up for all of us at one time or another, but you're going to give us the tools to increase the likelihood that it ends up with a positive outcome. It won't guarantee it, but the chances of it ending positively will be greatly enhanced if we follow these steps.

Michael: The reason it won't guarantee it (we should say this too) is that you have another person on the other end of the transaction, so to speak. They're going to make their own choices about how they receive what you say. I mean, I've been in situations where I really have been considerate and respectful, I've had a considered response, and I've thought it has been delivered in all of the right ways, and still the other person has chosen to respond in a way where they just haven't received it.

There's nothing you can do. You sort of have the satisfaction of knowing you did everything you could, but having said that, I think those occasions are few and far between. I have very few of those stories and a lot of positive stories about successful confrontations.

Michele: It reminds me of a verse in the Bible that actually (I'll paraphrase because I don't have it memorized completely) says, "Do everything in your power to live at peace with one another."

Michael: Yes.

Michele: So today we're going to do everything in our power to have a peaceful outcome to a confrontation, knowing some things are going to be outside of our power, but the chances will be much higher that we will have a peaceful resolution.

Michael: Okay.

Michele: Let's get started. These are *steps for an effective confrontation*. What is the first one?

Michael: Well, I think the first step is to *give the other person the benefit of the doubt*. You know, most people don't wake up in the morning with the intent to make you miserable or to ruin your day or anything else like that. I mean, it just happens. They probably unintentionally offend you, or maybe you misread it. There could be a lot of different reasons for this. Start by giving them the benefit of the doubt and realize there are probably 1,000 different reasons for people's doing what they do and that we don't always have to take it so personally.

Michele: Mm-hmm.

Michael: My own perspective is that I'm not going to confront it unless I'm seeing a pattern. If it's severe enough, maybe I would, but I'm looking for a pattern. If it's a pattern of behavior, then it probably needs to be confronted, because if that person were aware of it (this is kind of my assumption), they would correct it. But they're probably not aware of it or they need to be at least called out on it. I want it to be a pattern. So the first time or maybe the first couple of times it happens, I'm going to let it slide before I confront it.

Michele: What I have also found with this first step is that if I take the time to give the person the benefit of the doubt, like even just stepping back and saying, "Okay, what other factors might be contributing to or influencing this person's behavior or action at this moment in time...?" If I stop...

There are so many times when I don't even need to go through the other steps here, because I end up finding out as I give them the benefit of the doubt that there is a good explanation for why I'm seeing what I'm seeing. So let's say somebody is just snippy one day, and they just don't have a very kind or compassionate response.

Michael: Yeah.

Michele: If I stop long enough to give the benefit of the doubt, I might find out they just went through a huge loss the week before or their child is struggling or whatever, and then all of a sudden I'll go, "You know what? I don't need to confront here, because I just need to have grace."

Michael: Well, there's that story that Dr. Covey tells in *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, and I can't remember if he's telling it about himself or somebody else, but there's a man who's on a train, like a subway. This man comes on with his children, and his children are really unruly. They're running around the train. They're making all of this noise.

The man is thinking, "Why don't you get control of your kids? What in the world is wrong?" The man is just completely oblivious to his children's behavior, so finally the man who is kind of the innocent bystander confronts the man. The man says, "I am so sorry. My children just lost their mother today, and everybody is just a little bit out of whack." Then all of a sudden he has compassion.

Michele: Mm-hmm.

Michael: He realized, and that shifted everything.

Michele: True. It comes back to what you said a moment ago. It's to look for the patterns. The fact that somebody has a behavior or action or does something you think needs to be addressed doesn't necessarily mean it needs to be confronted.

Michael: Yeah, we need to extend grace, I think. I will say this, though. I have known people who are unwilling to confront and who let that be an excuse.

Michele: Mm-hmm.

Michael: They beat themselves up. They say, "Well, my behavior is worse than that," or, "I don't have any place to be confronting that person," or, "They're in a position of power above me, and I can't confront it." By the way, I want to also talk about that in this episode because sometimes the confrontation is not just with our peers or with our subordinates. Sometimes we have to confront people who we work for, and I've had to do that on several occasions. That can get a little dicey.

Michele: That's tricky, yes.

Michael: But I want to make sure we talk about that, so let's not forget.

Michele: Okay, we'll come back to that later. So first, give the person the benefit of the doubt. That's the first step. At that point, if you feel (even after having given the benefit of the doubt) this is something that, for the other person's best interest and the best interest of your relationship, still needs to be confronted, what's the next step?

Michael: The next step is just to *purpose that you're going to speak directly to the person responsible*.

Michele: As opposed to speaking to everybody around that important person, but not that person.

Michael: Well, this is how it typically goes.

Michele: Mm-hmm.

Michael: Rather than confronting the person, we oftentimes talk about the person to people who have no ability to change the situation, and gossip is exactly what it is.

Michele: Well, what you do is create a situation where you now need to be confronted because you're participating in something that's not healthy or helpful for anyone.

Michael: Truly. Well, I think one of the most powerful things leaders need to take away from this is that you're constantly modeling what appropriate behavior is to the people who you're leading.

Michele: Mm-hmm.

Michael: So if you're talking about that person (it might be you talking about your boss in a negative light rather than confronting him or talking about a peer in another division or another department within your organization), you're modeling to the people who report to you, to the people you're trying to lead, what's acceptable behavior.

Michele: Mm-hmm.

Michael: You always have to be conscious of that. I would always like somebody to come directly to me, so I want to model that behavior so my people will do the same thing. If they have an issue with me, I want them to come to me, not talk about me.

Michele: It's so interesting because when we... You may be talking about a boss negatively with your peers, which creates kind of a sense of...

Michael: Connectedness?

Michele: Connection and connectedness.

Michael: Yep.

Michele: But someday you might end up being the boss.

Michael: Yeah.

Michele: Then people will already know your character based on what you did not as the boss but as the employee. What does that say about you?

Michael: Well, have you ever had this experience where you're talking with some peers, they're talking about somebody who's not present, and it occurs to you, "What do they say about me when I'm not present"?

Michele: Oh, absolutely! I always go there because I know that if they're willing to talk about somebody else in my presence, they're willing to talk about me.

Michael: That's right. It really creates a culture of distrust.

Michele: Mm-hmm.

Michael: It creates a culture of cynicism and nothing good.

Michele: When I've had that happen, at the same time that I'm more cautious in those conversations, I also have been very convicted because the truth is I know for a fact that if I talk about somebody else, they're also thinking the same thing.

Michael: Mm-hmm.

Michele: "I'm sure she talks about me too when I'm not around."

Michael: Yeah, so we have to be careful with that, I think.

Michele: So careful.

Michael: Yep.

Michele: Okay, so to speak directly to the person responsible would be the second step and such a critical part of this process. Again, our goal is for a healthy confrontation to happen.

Michael: Yes.

Michele: So that's why it's so critical. If you don't talk directly to the person, you're just behind before you even get started.

Michael: That's right.

Michele: Okay, what is the third step?

Michael: Well, it's really to *affirm your commitment to the relationship*. You have to contextualize the whole discussion.

Michele: Is that what you open with, basically?

Michael: Yeah. That's what I would open with.

Michele: It's just to open with this kind of affirmation?

Michael: I would say something like, "Michele, I'm really committed to this relationship, and I value this relationship so much, but there's something that's missing or something that's in the way that I feel like I need to talk to you about."

Michele: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Michael: So I'm putting a high value on the relationship when I initiate that discussion, and it's in that relational context that we're having this discussion. So it's not because I'm ticked off, because I want to get even, because I'm feeling vengeful, because I'm feeling hurt. Sometimes all of that is part of it, but I like to kind of wait until I've processed through that so I'm not speaking out of that hurt place, because hurt people hurt people.

Michele: Mm-hmm.

Michael: We've all heard that, and I've heard those situations where I've been too reactive, spoken too quickly, haven't contextualized it, and done further damage to the relationship and moved myself farther apart from the very person I was trying to reconcile with or trying to develop a deeper level of intimacy with.

Michele: You know, there's something about affirming the relationship out loud.

Michael: Yes.

Michele: Because it doesn't just benefit the person who's hearing it but also you. You're hearing yourself say this, which reminds you of the value you're putting on the relationship. It kind of keeps you on task.

Michael: It does, and I think people can receive it if they know the relationship with you is secure.

Michele: Mm-hmm.

Michael: If that feels tenuous, like you've written them off, or they can't repair it, they feel hopeless... Nothing good is going to come out of that. So to reaffirm the relationship just puts it in the proper context and lays the foundation for the discussion that follows.

Michele: I've probably seen this play out most powerfully in marriage, where when you have some kind of difficult conversation you need to have, if you don't affirm... I just want to say before we even talk, "I love you. I believe you have my best interest in mind. I believe your heart is in the right place. We're on the same team," and all of that kind of stuff. Then I go into, "But when you do this, it hurts me." Before I launch into that, I really need to set that foundation.

Michael: Well, I had a discussion like that with Gail a number of years ago. It was probably 12 years ago or so, and I was really involved in my job. I had a very responsible position in my corporation. It was before I was the CEO of Thomas Nelson, but I was the president at the time. She sat me down and said, "I really need to have a talk with you." Of course, when she says that I gulp. I know I'm in trouble.

Michele: I know. It's like, "Oh no!"

Michael: But then she just said, "Look, I know your heart is right. I know you're working hard for the family. You love your family, and I'm so grateful for all that you do, but I just have to have this conversation because I think what's at risk right now is not just our relationship (yours and mine) but your relationship with the kids. We just need to talk about the amount of time you're spending at work."

Michele: Hmm.

Michael: But she put it in the context like that where it was easy for me to hear. I knew she had my best interest at heart. She wasn't ticked off. She wasn't angry. She wasn't coming from a needy place.

Michele: Mm-hmm.

Michael: She was coming from the position of being a steward of this larger relationship that she was trying to manage and trying to protect, and she spoke into my life, so I totally heard it.

Michele: Well, it's such a beautiful thing because she said from the beginning, "I believe your heart is right," which is just so powerful.

Michael: Yes.

Michele: It's so powerful to believe the intent of the other person is good. That goes back to the benefit of the doubt as well.

Michael: It does, and it's as important as the first thing about giving the benefit of the doubt to believe that their intention, even though it may be poorly executed, is good. That's a belief, you know, and it may be unwarranted, but love believes the best. I believe that.

Michele: It does. I find believing that the intentions of someone else are good is a far better approach even if maybe it's not true. Maybe the other person is being malicious, but if I constantly approach relationships believing the other person is an enemy or trying to be malicious, it is just bad news every single time.

Michael: Yeah.

Michele: It's much better to come at it from a standpoint of belief and confidence.

Michael: And sometimes you will be abused and people will be taking advantage of you, and maybe they will have a malicious intent, but I don't care.

Michele: Mm-hmm.

Michael: From my perspective, I would rather assume the positive and operate out of that, because I think it's healthier for me and it's going to be more effective in dealing with that person, than put them in a defensive posture where they're just trying to defend their motives (which I can't know anyway; I can't see into their heart).

Michele: Oh, no. Absolutely not. I also think of it when I think of times when other people have made judgments about me. I just wish they would have trusted my heart and my intentions.

Michael: So true.

Michele: It feels so good when there's someone who's willing to do that. That motivates me a little bit more to do the same in return.

Michael: Well, I've said to people before when I've offended them, "Look, I promise this I not coming from a place of malice; it's coming from a place of incompetence."

Michele: Mm-hmm. That's good. Can I steal that?

Michael: "I haven't been malicious. I'm just incompetent."

Michele: That's good stuff. So good. Okay, so give the person the benefit of the doubt, speak directly to the person responsible, and affirm your commitment to the relationship. What's the fourth step?

Michael: It's to *outline the issue as objectively as possible*.

Michele: Oh, now this is easier said than done.

Michael: It is.

Michele: Because our emotions get involved.

Michael: They do get involved, and (I think you can probably relate to this as a writer) I have to write it out. It's just how I process stuff.

Michele: Oh, uh-huh. Well, that's probably a smarter way to do it, because otherwise I just go on bunny trails and the emotions take over. Yeah. So writing it out is smart.

Michael: I literally come up with the talking points (like we teach in SCORRE).

Michele: Do you have a spreadsheet?

Michael: No, but I do typically put it in some kind of document, usually in Evernote, where I just do kind of a brain dump. For me, it usually begins as part of my journaling practice.

Michele: Okay.

Michael: I journal daily. I'll just write it out because I don't really know what I'm feeling until I express it in written form, and that just helps me.

Michele: Mm-hmm.

Michael: But then I try to reduce it to the two or three issues that make up the thing so I can kind of give it some structure and talk about it in a coherent way so the other person actually has something to work with. So I'm not just backing up my dump truck and unloading a bunch of garbage on them, but I'm giving them something. "Here are the specific issues we need to deal with and we need to talk through."

Michele: I would imagine that practice of kind of writing it down helps you to really clarify what is really the pain point for you.

Michael: Yes.

Michele: Sometimes that's really cloudier than we think.

Michael: Yep.

Michele: We think it's so clear until we start to really sit down and go, "Okay, what's really at root here? What is really bothering me about this?" It ends up being something behind the obvious. It's something a little bit deeper.

Michael: Yeah!

Michele: So writing it down helps clarify that, but the I think it probably also keeps you (well, you said this) from doing the dump on the other person where you just start picking up every stone you can possibly think of that irritates you about the other person and throwing it at them. You've really narrowed it down, like, "We're only going to address one or two or three things here; nothing else. Everything else is off of the table."

Michael: Right. Writing it down also has a way of putting it into perspective, because the problem can really feel big and gnarly, and then you write it down and you go, "Okay, this is manageable." It gets you hopeful. You think, "Okay, we can deal with this."

Michele: Yes.

Michael: I had an assistant years ago who just had a hard time getting to the office on time, and her performance was actually great, but she was just tardy a lot.

Michele: Uh-huh.

Michael: She had a family and all of that, so the first couple of times I excused it, but then it started impacting me.

Michele: Oh, okay.

Michael: So as I started writing that down, I said, "Okay, what I want to talk to you about is your punctuality, being to work on time." I kind of moved from that to, "It communicates to me (I'm sorry I feel this way) and makes me feel like you're disrespecting me and you're disrespecting your colleagues."

Michele: Mm-hmm.

Michael: "There have been a couple of times when people have come by and needed some information and you haven't been here. Then it interrupts my day." So I'm writing this all out to where I have a series of talking points so I know where the conversation is going to go. It also left her with a clearer understanding of what the issue was so she could remediate it, fix it.

Michele: Mm-hmm, which sets her up for success.

Michael: That's right.

Michele: Confrontation should always be a means to a positive outcome, not just a venting session.

Michael: Well, we didn't say that before. I don't think we even have it on our notes here, but that's actually probably another step. It's to get really clear with what the outcome you want is.

Michele: Uh-huh. That's great.

Michael: What's the behavior or whatever you want to fix? Get clear on the outcome.

Michele: I think that if we don't take time to do that, because our emotions are so powerful, it ends up just being that unloading or that venting, and we don't really have it clearly in our minds that we do have this positive outcome we're shooting for.

Michael: Yep.

Michele: I'm sure your assistant turned around and could be on time, and you set her up for that kind of success.

Michael: Well, she was mortified. Obviously, that was a habit she had to overcome, so there were times when she slipped, but she certainly turned it around.

Michele: That's great. Okay, so let's move on to the fifth step.

Michael: Here it is.

Michele: Yeah.

Michael: This is the very one we were talking about. It was the next one. *Be clear about what you expect and what you want.* In other words, what's it going to take to fix the situation? In my case, I said to her, "I expect you to be here no later than 8:30 in the morning. I have to have you here." I was very clear.

Michele: Mm-hmm.

Michael: "I need you to do this, and I want to do whatever I can to help you. Is there anything in the way, anything I can do to help?" But I would be very clear with what wanted.

Michele: As we go through these steps, by the way, these really are done in order, so you do start with affirming the commitment in the actual conversation itself.

Michael: That's right.

Michele: You start with that affirmation of the commitment to the relationship. You outline the issue as objectively as possible, and then you move to expectations.

Michael: Yep.

Michele: But that comes after you've established kind of this trust of, "I value you. You value me. This relationship is important. This is what I'm struggling with. This is the issue, and this is what I want to see the result be."

Michael: That's exactly right. Like in that conversation with Gail that I referred to, she wasn't just ambiguous about what she wanted me to do. She just said, "I really need you to be here for dinner every night."

Michele: Mm-hmm.

Michael: "I know there might be some exceptions. You may be traveling, but I really need you to make an effort to be here for dinner every night."

Michele: That's a very clear and specific goal.

Michael: It was. So I just said, "Okay. I can do that. Maybe I can go earlier. Maybe I can just manage my workload differently." I mean, you figure it out.

Michele: Mm-hmm.

Michael: You've heard that old adage. It's somebody's rule (I can't remember whose): "The work expands to the time allotted for it." That's true. I just knew that no matter what, I was going to leave the office by 6:00 every night.

Michele: Okay.

Michael: So I got home for dinner.

Michele: That's great, and I'm sure that because it was a positive confrontation outcome, it reaffirmed her.

Michael: Yes.

Michele: And it brought you closer together, strengthened the relationship, which is the goal.

Michael: It did, and obviously it wasn't the last time we had that conversation.

Michele: No, I'm sure.

Michael: But yeah, she was willing to risk that to go to the conversation. It really helped me. It helped us. It helped our family.

Michele: All right, so what's the final step then to effectively using confrontation?

Michael: Well, this is one you have to be very careful with, but it's to *explain the consequences, both positively and negatively*. In other words, "If you're willing to adjust your behavior, this would be so awesome because here are what the results are going to be."

Michele: Mm-hmm.

Michael: So in my assistant's case, what I'm trying to explain to her is how by being on time she communicates respect to me, she communicates respect to her colleagues, she's able to serve the team better, and she's able to bring the whole thing up a notch.

Michele: Mm-hmm.

Michael: What are the consequences of not doing that? Sometimes this is implied, and it can't feel like manipulation, but in her case I said, "If you can't do that, I need to know now, because I have to have an assistant here at 8:30, and if that's not you, then I'm going to have to find somebody else who can do it."

Michele: Mm-hmm.

Michael: "So is this something you can do or not?"

Michele: And? She said, "Yes, absolutely"?

Michael: She said, "Yes, absolutely." But I think you have to give people that choice. They have to have that buy-in. They have to understand the consequences. The consequences can't be ambiguous. It can't be a veiled threat.

Michele: Yes.

Michael: I was totally willing to do that. I'd come to the place where I said, "If she can't show up on time, I have to find somebody else."

Michele: Mm-hmm. "It's too important."

Michael: "It's too important."

Michele: But at that point you've already affirmed that she's valuable, that you like her on your team.

Michael: I want her to win.

Michele: You want her to be on your team, so you have no desire for her to go elsewhere.

Michael: That's right.

Michele: But this is such a critical requirement or a critical need where she either needs to step up or you can then move on because it's not a good fit.

Michael: That's right. Now in the situation where it was the reverse, with Gail talking to me, what she didn't say is, "Look. I need to know if you can be on time, because if you can't..."

Michele: "I'm going to have to find somebody else."

Michael: "I'm going to find somebody else." You know, with some behaviors I may get to that point, but she just made it very clear. "Look, if you can't do this, my fear is that our family is going to suffer."

Michele: Uh-huh, and that would be the consequence.

Michael: That's the consequence.

Michele: It's not that she would replace you but that...

Michael: She might!

Michele: Let me know, Gail.

Michael: I didn't let it get that far.

Michele: If he doesn't shape up, I can whip him into shape. Yeah, but we have to let people know kind of what... Again, it's spelling out for both of us what the outcomes are.

Michael: Yeah.

Michele: "We're going to go one direction or the other, and you have the power to change that if we can work on this together."

Michael: Totally. I had another guy who worked for me, and then he actually worked one level below me, but he had this really old-school behavior of intimidating his subordinates and had several of them

complain to HR and come to me. So I sat down with him, and then the person who he ended up reporting to sat down with him. This guy needed to be clear with what the consequences were. If he didn't change this behavior, we were going to have to get rid of him. I mean, we just couldn't let him affect the culture and poison the culture.

Michele: Mm-hmm.

Michael: We really worked on him over the course of about six months. He never would change, but he always knew what the consequences were, so we finally said to him, "We told you from the beginning that if you couldn't fix this (or you wouldn't fix this)... This is really a case where you wouldn't...not that you couldn't, but you wouldn't fix this. Because you wouldn't fix this, we're going to have to let you go." And we did.

Michele: Well, at that point, I'm sure it's still not a pretty situation, but it's such an easy transition. You've set all of the steps in place, so it's very clear what's next.

Michael: Yes.

Michele: It's still not pretty, but...

Michael: Well, you have a better chance of preserving the relationship if people know what's coming.

Michele: Yes.

Michael: The thing he couldn't say to me or to his supervisor was, "Oh my gosh! You changed the rules! I never knew that was on the table or that was a consequence!" He knew from the beginning that this was serious.

Michele: He knew. Okay, so let's talk about when the confrontation doesn't work, kind of like what you were just describing. These six steps are fabulous. I mean, they're just excellent. For me, being someone who struggles with confrontation... I've been literally (for those who are listening and not watching) taking notes as we go through this podcast because it's truly a great process to go through. But the fact that you do the right steps doesn't mean you're going to get the right outcome.

Michael: That's right.

Michele: So what happens if you go through all of these steps, you handle it beautifully... Let's say you just handle this confrontation like a pro. It's just amazing, and yet still the other person flips out and gets angry. There's this whole big meltdown or whatever. The confrontation just really goes south. What do you do then?

Michael: You know, there's not much you can do at that point. I mean, it depends on the context because in some situations, like if it's an employee and it's the right kind of damage (or I should say the wrong kind of damage) in a corporation, you may have to get somebody else involved.

Michele: Okay.

Michael: It may be HR. It may be their supervisor. There are a number of paths you can take. You may not be able to just let it go. You may have to escalate it to the next level, but in most situations that doesn't happen. Like in a personal relationship, there's not any way to escalate it reasonably,

Michele: Mm-hmm.

Michael: So you might just have to separate over that.

Michele: Okay.

Michael: You may not be able to continue to walk with that person in the same way you have been previously.

Michele: Mm-hmm. Now in a situation like in a marriage or something where you are in that relationship, committed to that relationship, and that confrontation just doesn't seem to happen well, the temptation sometimes is to say, "Well, the process doesn't work," and just throw it out and go back to your old way.

Michael: Right.

Michele: But sometimes you just need to continue using the same process even if you're not getting the right results, and maybe over time even that example will help create an environment of safety so that confrontation can have a better result.

Michael: Yeah. I think it's tougher in a marital situation because your only alternative may be to just continue to love that person and continue to pray for them and hope they come around.

Michele: Or even in a close friendship or something like that.

Michael: Yep. I have one of those right now. We need to talk about the boss situation.

Michele: Oh yes, please!

Michael: That's a tough one.

Michele: Just a recap: This is if you have a boss and there's a situation where you feel a need to confront the boss on something that's significant.

Michael: Yep.

Michele: It's something that really needs to be addressed. How do you enter into a confrontation situation when you're actually doing it with someone who's a level up?

Michael: Because it feels very precarious, and that's because it is.

Michele: Oh, well, there's so much at stake.

Michael: There is. I had this boss. He was one of the new owners of our company when we sold it. He was the chairman of my board, and we missed our sales numbers one month, so I sent an email not only to him but to the other board members and my executive team, reporting on the previous month. I was very matter-of-fact. This is something I did every month.

"Here are the results, and here's what I think drove the results." Well, he did one of those "Reply All" instead of "Reply" just to me things. He lived in another state, so he wasn't there face-to-face. He did a "Reply All" and basically said, "What the [blankety blank] happened? Do you guys have any idea what you're doing?" He basically just chewed me out in an email, but he did it in front of my peers.

Michele: But he copied everybody.

Michael: He copied everybody, my subordinates...

Michele: So it was more of a shaming kind of situation than anything else.

Michael: So initially I was fried.

Michele: Oh, of course. Yes.

Michael: I was ticked off, ready to quit, and all of that stuff. I cooled down and said, "You know, this is not good for the organization. It's not good for him. Maybe he didn't even realize he copied everybody." So I gave him the benefit of the doubt.

Michele: Okay.

Michael: But I said, "I have to confront it." So this felt very consequential.

Michele: Well, you feel like your job is on the line as well.

Michael: Totally.

Michele: Because if you dare to confront some employers, they just don't want to have anything to do with you anymore.

Michael: Yeah, and I haven't been in this situation many times (it has probably been half a dozen times) where I feel like I'm risking my reputation and putting everything on the line but I must do it to go forward. The alternative is just that I kind of stuff it and somehow diminish myself in the process, and it's like everybody in the organization is also waiting to see how I'm going to react, right?

Michele: Mm-hmm.

Michael: So I slept on it overnight, had a conversation with Gail about it, and said, "Look. I have to confront this person about this, and you need to know this may not go well. This may result in my getting terminated. I hope that's not the case, but I can't not confront it." Of course, she said (we've had this situation a few times), "Absolutely do what you need to do."

Michele: Okay.

Michael: So I didn't reply to the email. I picked up the phone and called him, because you can't do this kind of stuff via email.

Michele: No, it can't be email. In fact, it's typically best face-to-face if you can do it that way. That doesn't always happen.

Michael: Absolutely. If I could have done it face-to-face, I would have, but it wasn't possible. So I picked up the phone and called him. We made small talk. By the way, it was one of those things where he was even unaware. It was like he was on to the next thing.

Michele: Uh-huh.

Michael: So we talked, and I said, "Look. I want you to know I'm really committed to your success. I want nothing more than for you to succeed as the chairman of my board and the person who bought our company and all of that, but I have to talk to you about that email you sent yesterday."

Michele: Was there heavy silence on the phone?

Michael: Dead silence.

Michele: I can feel the tension just from talking about it.

Michael: I said, "I'm not sure you're aware that you copied everybody on that, but it was very embarrassing to me. I think it undermined my leadership with the team. It was probably the right message... In private, you can say whatever you want to me."

Michele: Mm-hmm.

Michael: "But," I said, "You cannot do that in public." Then I tried to explain to him how it was hurting him. I said, "It made you look small. It didn't serve the process. It undermined my authority. It didn't help us accomplish the objectives we're all committed to." Then I did the consequences thing. I said, "I'm asking you to commit to me. Again, you can say anything you want, but if you have something harsh like that to say, you come to me directly. If you can't do that, we need to part company. I cannot work in this kind of environment." I literally used these words: "This is unacceptable behavior."

Michele: Was that hard for you to say? Did you have to take a couple of deep breaths, or were you strong enough about it at that point that it just needed to be said?

Michael: I was really weak-kneed and scared up until the moment when I started, and then I was on a trajectory I had already laid out and knew exactly where the conversation was going.

Michele: Yes.

Michael: Then it was just a matter of execution. So I delivered all of that, and I said, "This is unacceptable behavior," and he took a deep breath and said, "You're absolutely right. I am so sorry. It'll never happen again," and it never did.

Michele: Okay, that says something about him.

Michael: It does.

Michele: I mean, there aren't many people I know of who have such a... That's a strong leader with a sense of humility.

Michael: Yes.

Michele: He was able to receive that, admit it, and own it so quickly too.

Michael: But you know, sadly (this is what so often happens in a corporate context), guys get away with that. Nobody ever calls them on the carpet, so they don't grow in their leadership.

Michele: Yes.

Michael: They would give anything to have people be honest. I was sitting in a team meeting with a consultant I had at one time, and she pulled me aside after the meeting and said, "Who are you mad at?"

"Well, I'm not mad at anybody."

"Yeah you are."

"No, I'm really not."

"Well, you need to tell your face, because it looks like you're mad, and you're intimidating your own team."

Well, for her to call me out on that was so valuable.

Michele: Oh, I'm sure you're so thankful.

Michael: Because I had no idea.

Michele: Uh-huh.

Michael: So it was very helpful.

Michele: Such good advice. We're going to wrap up, but before we do, do you have any resources you would recommend on this topic, anything that would be helpful to people or any other ideas?

Michael: Well, first of all, if you're listening to this and you have an idea of a resource, leave it in the comments.

Michele: Oh, that would be great.

Michael: Because I don't really have one.

Michele: Okay.

Michael: I think it's frustrating. There are probably a lot of books out there that have been written on the subject, and people will tell us about them in the comments, but I don't have one.

Michele: You know, one that came to mind was Dr. Henry Cloud's book *Necessary Endings*. It just has some really good advice about having difficult conversations.

Michael: Oh, chapter 7 of that book.

Michele: Look at him. He knows the chapter.

Michael: I know the chapter because... It's a long story, but yes. I used that chapter 7 to have a confrontational discussion with somebody I needed to have a discussion with, and that chapter was hugely helpful. Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend's book *Boundaries* is also excellent.

Michele: Yes. True. *Necessary Endings* actually helped me to be less afraid of confrontation, just because he normalized it, especially in the opening chapters of the book.

Michael: Pruning and all of that?

Michele: That's just kind of part of life.

Michael: Yeah.

Michele: I mean, having those kinds of endings in relationships or at least having those difficult conversations is part of life.

Michael: Yeah.

Michele: So it was very helpful to me. Well, if you've enjoyed today's conversation, you can get the show notes and an entire transcript of the whole episode at michaelhyatt.com. If you'd prefer to watch the video rather than just listen to the audio, you can find a complete video of this episode (again) at Michael's website, which is michaelhyatt.com. Do you have any final thoughts?

Michael: Yeah. I would just say that when you think about confrontation, as much as all of us like to avoid it, lean into it and realize it creates all kinds of possibility. You really can take the most important relationships to a deeper level if you're willing to speak the truth but do it in love.

Michele: So confrontation is no longer a bad word.

Michael: That's right.

Michele: All right. Thank you for being with us today.

Until next time, remember: Your life is a gift. Do what matters.