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A Conversation With Kathy Kolbe: Conative Intelligence & The Importance Of Caring First

Shannon Waller: Would you like to hear from Kathy Kolbe herself about Cognitive Intelligence? Stay tuned for a fabulous, wide-ranging, fascinating conversation about how she became so fierce and independent, where her independence of thought came from, which I deeply appreciate. Also, Cognitive Intelligence, the importance of affect, and how to be a great leader. Stay tuned for this great, great conversation. Hi, Shannon Waller here, and welcome to Team Success. Today is really a highlight for me because I am talking to my dear friend, one of the very, very, very few people I consider to be a mentor, and someone whose life work has dramatically and positively impacted my life, and that is Kathy Kolbe. So Kathy, I am so delighted that I finally have you on my podcast, but it took me so long. I was at KolbeCon and you were talking about something that I just lit up and I'm like, hmm, this would be perfect for what my podcast is about. And that is cognitive intelligence and leadership. So that's going to be our theme today. But before I do that, I first got certified in Kolbe in 1995. And it actually gave me the confidence to start my very first coaching program, which was the strategic assistant program, many, many, many, well, that year, it gave me the confidence to do that, because I started in November 95, and I think I got certified in the spring, came down with Babs Smith, because I was coaching people who cognitively were the complete and total opposite of me, which was really fun. And Kolbe had been around, Kolbe, you call it theory, it really is Kolbe wisdom, had been around for a while then. And I know I know you. founder, incredible family, incredible business, brilliant take on one of the parts of the mind that no one had any insight or a way to measure before you. But that's a very skimpy introduction. So how do you introduce yourself? I'm super curious because I'm going to skip a million things.

Kathy Kolbe: Well, I used to as a young person and even when I moved to Phoenix and I was involved in community stuff and people would say, who are you? And I would say I'm an obstructionist. I'm a catalyst for both trouble and hopefully some good things. But I'm an unusuality. I don't fit into any of your categories. And then they would want to find out more. But that's the truth. I don't fit into categories very well.

Shannon Waller: So how do you, I mean, obstructionist, I love it. How do you create your own category? How do you define yourself? What's important to you?

Kathy Kolbe: That's an interesting question. The thing that's most important to me is my family. The second most important thing is the truth as it relates to all people. My family is an affect, and I love them. I want to be with them. I put them first in the affective category, and the affect is most important for me. So many people think I'm some sort of brainiac and that I sit around and think all the time. That's just really not who I am. I'm always coming up with ideas, and I'm always kind of digging deeper for what am I missing here about people, but my focus is people. I was an unwanted child. I'm the youngest of four. My parents did not want a fourth child. It was the end of the Depression, and they thought, I think because they wanted to think it, I was a tumor. They thought I was cancer, and I was a tumor, and they had to get rid of me.



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So my mother was in surgery having the tumor, who I call Kathy, taken out. And when they started the surgery and started removing the tumor, I kicked the knife out of the doctor's hand. Well, lady, that's who I am. I am feisty. I had to kick my way into the world. My parents pretty much ignored me and my older sister raised me. I didn't get the help my siblings got. I didn't get much of anything. I was the, just get out of our way and let's pretend you don't exist person. So what I did was decided, okay, I can get away with pretty much anything. My siblings would get in trouble if they did this, that, or the other thing. It didn't seem like my parents wanted them to be hurt, but they didn't seem to worry if I got hurt. So I figured out very young, I have the freedom to be me. And instead of feeling sorry for myself because they didn't give me as much attention, I thought, whoo-hoo, all right. They have to pay attention to what they're told to do. I don't have to. I'm free to be me. And I remember trying to define for me what does that look like? What do I have to do to stay safe? because I'm not being watched carefully. What do I have to do to achieve my goals? And then I had to figure out goals. What are my goals? What do I care about? And I very quickly learned I did not care about learning about numbers or language. I cared about learning about my fellow students and the teachers. And I was always studying them. I was studying the nature of the teachers and what they did and why they did things differently. And by the way, I would go have conversations with them about it. And they would be amazed that I recognized this, that, and the other. And they would become interested in the dialogue where I was talking about, why do you do this? And why do you always repeat that? And how come you never do such and so? And what makes you teach so differently from the other way people are teaching the same thing? I was also analyzing my fellow students. So by the time I'd gone through a series of trial and error, my older sister had a beautiful singing voice. When I tried to get a singing lesson from her teacher, her vocal coach said, Kathy, and I was in high school, I'm sure there are things you're good at, but singing is not one of them. Oh, dear. Somebody in my neighborhood, one had tap dancing lessons, and I thought that would be just exquisitely wonderful and fun and I would do it. I went for tap dancing lessons and every time they would say to the right, three, four, to the left. Well, turned out I discovered in tap dancing lessons that I'm dyslexic. I didn't know the difference from right and left. And when they would say what to do, I had no clue what that meant. I would go in the wrong direction. And I the teacher, I remember hearing say to my mother, please don't let her Come back. I couldn't sing. I was not welcome back to dancing. I would try to go to yoga and they just said, oh, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. She can't just behave herself and be calm. She doesn't know how to be calm. And she goes in the wrong direction. So I learned I can't be calm. I don't go in the right direction. I can't sing. I can't dance. OK, so I decided when I was in middle school that when I got to high school, I would be the co-director of the high school musical. because I could boss people around. I was really good at knowing people and being bossy. And I thought I could be the co-director of the high school musical, even though I couldn't sing, dance, or read music. And it turned out, I discovered I was really good at leading. And making decisions and enabling people to be who they were and getting people to enjoy working together and building teams. I was good at all that. So that became my career,



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was to be good at helping people be who they were and helping people be people. And I would go after classes up to teachers and say, And that started in grade school, actually. You know, the way you're treating Tommy, he's not gonna learn anything. He's shut down. You're so mean and cruel to him, he's not even trying to learn. And if you want, I'll tutor him. But you gotta stop trying to teach Tommy the way you're doing, because you're just ruining him. And the whole class doesn't like you because of it, because we like Tommy better than you. I found people, teachers and others, would listen to me. And I felt at first I was going to get in trouble for saying those kinds of things, but what I found was they thanked me. So I've kind of gone through life analyzing people and interactions and then telling them the truth and finding out people do want to hear the truth. It's just they don't find very many people who tell them the truth.

Shannon Waller: And tell them with a way where they can be more successful and more free to be themselves.

Kathy Kolbe: Always, I mean, I was the kid who decided, I guess, that I wanted to live and kick the knife away. If you wanna live, you gotta kick the knife away. You gotta assert yourself, you gotta be you. And if you're ignored in your family or in your job, well, then you gotta do something to stand out. And my parents never cared if I stood out. I mean, the dean of school at Northwestern had to drive to my parents' home to tell them they should come to the award ceremony, because I was getting the highest award in the university, and they didn't even know I was a leader there. They truly paid no attention to me, very little, especially my mother. And the dean of students knew that, and she felt they should be there. And later, I asked her why she bothered to do that, and she said, it wasn't for your sake, because you don't need it. self-esteem and you have friends and teachers who bolster that. But it would just be nice for your parents to understand you really are special because they haven't really ever seen that. And I remember just thinking, oh, all this time, I thought nobody noticed that my parents didn't see, but it was noticed. I learned from those kinds of things how everybody needs to be noticed. Everybody needs the freedom to be themselves and to be noticed for what they naturally are good at, not for what they were taught to do. I was taught to do some things that I became pretty good at doing, but those weren't the things that I ever felt good about. Where I felt good was doing the things I initiated. I did that. I started that. I'm really, really proud of Kolbe Corp. I'm not so proud of, this probably doesn't sound great, I was in Time, Man of the Year. I was one of three people for their Man of the Year issue. It never made me particularly proud, because Time needed a certain stereotype kind of person, and what they liked was, at that era, I was one of the few female business owners, and it was all about that I was a female business owner. I gotta tell you, If I were to make a list of things that really matter to me about me, that would be very low. The fact that I came up with understanding conation and helping people understand who they are, that matters. That I made money as a businesswoman, a lot of people make money, including women. And yeah, I was one of the first, there were only



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three female business owners when I was one, but that to me was not, I don't, that was a circumstance. Discovering conation and the MOs and all the work I've done with conation, the month I discovered the word conation and started researching it and understanding it was a part of the mind and writing about it is the month it was taken out of the dictionary, the word. Seriously? Seriously. The same month they took it out of Random House Dictionary. Thank God you caught it before it was gone. Well, it was gone. I had to get them to put it back in. I even flew to New York just a few years into it and met with the Random House people and said, do you know what you did? And do you know how stupid it was? What I also did was went to the Library of Congress, and I had a wonderful, wonderful guy who was a Kolbe-certified person who was living in D.C., and he said, Kathy, what we really need to do is go to the Library of Congress and check on the word conation and where they have it, and could you believe there was no topic card? With all the zillion of topic cards, there was no card for the word conation. Think of all the times you see intellect and you see affect. Conation, no card, no card. Well, I had to get to the point where, yeah, there'd be a card. It took me a long time to do that. Is there a card now? Yeah, there is. It's kind of like over my dead body. It took a lot of time and a lot of people helping me before we got that card in the Library of Congress, but it was kind of fun. I'll show them. They think they know all about words, and I think they know all about the mind, and I think they know, I mean, what do they know? But if you were to go to a conference, the psych department, if you were to go to a anything dealing with the brain, they aren't going to talk about conation, because the people who wrote their books would have to rewrite their books and insert conation. So I went to Harvard, and one of my high school buddies, who had been in the high school musical, was the dean of the psych department at Harvard. And I went there, and I took the Kolbe Index, and he took it, and he had his faculty members take it, and he had his family members. He said, Kathy, you're really, this is so accurate, this is so right, this is so amazing. And he said, so I want you to do something. I want you to turn around and run as fast as you can away from Harvard. Really? I said, what are you talking about? I'm here because I want the world to know. I want them teaching it. He said, there is not a professor in my department who wouldn't have to rewrite his textbook because they're wrong. They keep talking about two parts of the mind. They don't recognize conation. You have proven it. and they can't have you lecture here or be around here or have your books in here. They can't do it because it would totally deny their expertise. It would just show that they would have been wrong. Well, how am I supposed to deal with that? Yeah.

Shannon Waller: Brilliant. You've been a rebel since before you were born.

Kathy Kolbe: Well, I was certainly a rebel when I was born. You know what? I'm not a pushover. No. Even at 84, damn it, I'm gonna do what I need to do, I'm gonna do it my way, I am not gonna put up with silence. By the way, I'm going to be doing a seminar on cognitive aging. I am so sick of people who don't know me, assuming, and by the way, only five, two and a half, maybe five, three still. That little lady with the gray hair, ignore her. Seat her in the



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back of the room because she's an old woman and she has nothing to offer. That's the way old people are taught in our society. It's very American to think of the old people as, you know, just kind of put them in a wheelchair and try to be kind. Well, it's just not kind to me, to not let me, argue with you or let me present you with a new idea or don't shove me in the back of the room and ignore me, you will be sorry.

Shannon Waller: Like don't put baby in the corner.

Kathy Kolbe: Yeah, right. Well, I have a feeling as a baby, I probably cried for attention, but it was always my sister who helped me, not my parents. I learned somehow over the years, ignore the people who ignore you. It's not worth it. Nice. and work with the people who support you and care about you. And I've tried to use that, needless to say, I have an interest in kids who are orphaned, because I felt orphaned. And I don't mean this for pity, because I never needed pity. I was cussedly independent. The independence was because they didn't have time for me or even really wanna deal with me, they being my parents. What a gift that was. What a gift that I had to take care of myself. Of course, my sister helped me, but I learned to be independent, I learned to fight for what I needed and wanted, and I learned I really liked being being under the radar. My parents were so busy helping my brother and the middle sister that I could get away with doing things they didn't know I was doing. I got interested in other people's religion for a whole number of reasons. My family didn't go to any religious services anywhere, and I wanted to know, well, what is church like? What is the synagogue like? I wanna know. So I started having my friends take me with them to their places of worship, and I became so knowledgeable about, oh, these different religions. And boy, did that help me understand them, understand why people get caught up in rituals, and why some rituals really matter. And I learned that rituals are a really important part of life that didn't happen in my family. But if you don't ever have any family rituals, there's an emptiness. And I filled it by knowing other people's rituals. But then when I got in college and I took a class on something about all kinds of religions, I'm a resistant fact finder. So if I had to read books about religion, I would have failed that class. But I was the A student, because I had been in all these different kinds of religious, Baha'i synagogues. I mean, just any kind of religion you can think about. Found my way there. I think that helped me understand humankind better. I think that's one of the things that has always helped me know we are individuals, but we're made up of all these factors and what we've seen, what we've learned, what we've been told. And religions tell us a lot about ourselves. Some of it true and some of it not so true about all of us. I think cognitive intelligence is seeing all those variety of ways in which people become who they are. We're naturally our MO, but how we use our MO is so determined by what matters to us as individuals, and that comes from our family and the traditions and the environment around us. The greatest impact on me was the amazing school system I was raised in, the Oneidka schools in Illinois, were fairly experimental at the time. Do you want me to keep talking?



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Shannon Waller: Yeah, what I wanna dive into is cognitive intelligence, and even before we hit record, you were talking about observing people since middle school. Yeah. And their behaviors, and Dan Sullivan was just talking about yesterday in our Free Zone workshop, what can you not not do? Kathy, in all of the things you've been talking about, you cannot not observe people and look at what they're doing and why they're doing it and observe them and saying, hey, this is working and this isn't working. And so I love the retrospective on where this started from. And you taking such advantage of that freedom, you could have resented the heck out of them, but instead you were like, awesome.

Kathy Kolbe: Well, yeah, the more you don't pay attention to me, the more I can learn on my own, and the more I learn on my own, I'm discovering about me and others. I mean, my dad was creating a test, the Wonderlic Personnel Test was the first test used in hiring, and I thought he was dead wrong. And I was 10 years old when I decided that. But instead of telling my dad I thought he was dead wrong, I would ask other people, you're using the Wonderlic, why? I was trying to find out without saying bad things about my own father. I really adored my father, but he was wrong. And I knew it, and I knew it from the time I was very young when I was scoring Wonderlic tests. He got the federal government to use the Wonderlic. Instead of us going into war as a soldier, he donated all of his tests. They took his tests and gave it to everybody in the military, practically. So we had generals, and we had privates, and we had all these. In our basement, we had an office, and I would go down there and score Wonderlic, and I could tell which questions they missed, and I was looking at patterns. All I knew was gender and age. And then I had the questions, and I started seeing patterns of how men scored differently than women, and how age made a big difference. And I remember asking my dad, why do the younger people score better on the Wonderlic? And I had some specific questions, one being a very complex math question. It was all cognitive questions. And he said, well, it's not that you get dumber as you age. remember why Kathy cares about age and has been thinking about age, because it was that conversation that started me on what's different and the way the mind works by age. He said, it's not that you get dumber by age, it's that you forget what you learned. So the older you get, the further away you are from your years in the classroom, so you forget the formulas. And now I would know the word should be algorithms in many cases. And I'm bemused. By the fact that the older I get, I think the wiser I get, but the dumber I am. So when people say, well, when we age, do we lose our intelligence? And I say, no, we lose our memory of what doesn't matter because we don't try to keep it current. So I can no longer remember algorithms, but I sure as hell can make them up. I have the ability to create them. but I don't have the same ability to remember the formula as was made by someone else. Does that make me smarter, dumber? And when I say no, it makes me wiser because I'm wise enough to know I don't need to remember everything. Remember the things that matter and remember how to create. Don't forget, Kathy, that you're a creative human



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being and you can make it up as you go. So if you don't know the answer, make it up. They'll think you're right.

Shannon Waller: I love that. So you've been talking a little bit, Kathy, about the three parts of the mind. So the affect you talked about earlier, the cognitive, and then, of course, conative. I want to know more about conative intelligence. Is it the awareness of one's own Kolbe MO? How do you describe or define conative intelligence? I'm very curious.

Kathy Kolbe: You've got part of it. It certainly is awareness of your own MO. It's also, cognitive intelligence is know how to use what you've got. Okay. And I think that's one of the really big missing attributes. It's something we don't teach that every child should be taught. I'm gonna tell you, Shannon, You should not spend time worrying about the details because they don't matter to you. Shannon, what you should spend your time doing is coming up with new ideas and then powering your way through using them and discovering what works and doesn't. But forget putting it into a book and having a whole explanation and plan. If you have a plan, you'll blow it anyway. You won't stick with it. So that's me using my cognitive intelligence to tell you, do this, don't do that. Most people are not very intelligent about their own cognitive abilities. They know how smart they are cognitively because you keep getting told that. Stupid SAT tests. I hated them. I'm glad that we're almost rid of them. But the SAT tests are one of the blights on America, in my opinion, and harmed us in not being leading edge country in innovation. because the really innovative people didn't do well on the SATs and didn't get the opportunities, didn't get the scholarships. What stupid decisions were made for a very long time because of the cognitive being the primo issue and really the only issue. It didn't matter how nice you were, it didn't matter how accommodating you were to other people or your social skills, you could be a jerk. But if you were cognitively smart, you would get into places like Harvard and Stanford. Why does Stanford have such a high suicide rate? That's worthy of a lot of thought because that school has a serious problem that they have not solved. I don't see much research or writing about youth suicide. And now it's one of the things I focus on. If we don't let our youth know what they're naturally good at and support them at being who you are and doing it your way, then our young people get stressed. They get the feeling of being lost. they lose their confidence in themselves. I always had confidence in myself because nobody else told me what to do or helped me, and therefore, I never had to worry about losing that. When I talk to people who have lost it, it just breaks my heart. I mean, I was treated what some people would consider poorly, and I think one of the greatest gifts I was ever given was not being helped. And it's on you, you're on your own. Hey, little kid, go off and do your thing because we don't have time, yay! That was wonderful. When we hover over kids, we don't give them a chance to experience failure and then figure out how to fix it. And it's the fixing of failure that makes kids feel empowered.



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Shannon Waller: Oh, that's fascinating. So it's fixing the failure that people,

Kathy Kolbe: Oh, that didn't work. Oh, it all went wrong. Okay, so what are you gonna do to fix it? When you help a kid figure out how to fix their failures, that is helping them always feel, I have a go-to way to create a solution. I am good at helping myself survive. Those kids have greater self-efficacy, and self-efficacy is the essential. to prevent suicide. You must feel there's something about you that's worthwhile, that you have a power, you have an ability that matters. The worst thing is for a kid to feel, I can't do it unless my parents help them, I can't do it unless I cheat, I can't do it unless they simplify it for me. You need to help kids understand what they're good at and how to use those abilities and how to achieve their goals, not some parent goal or school goal. So I dropped out of was be eighth grade, we had to learn from little books. Each week we had to learn math and we had to learn something in, I think it was social studies or whatever it was. And we would read the lesson and do the little activity and then on Friday you'd take the test. I decided I wanted to take as many of those tests as I could and be done with it. So by Thanksgiving I was done with a year of all the little books. And they didn't know what to do with me. And I said, well, I know what to do with me. Just give me freedom. Let me just wander the school and go into whatever class was interesting to me or whatever activity and just let me, you know, I finished the work you asked of me. Now, let me do my own thing. And they did. And I don't know if they ever lay anybody else to it, but it was an absolutely wonderful year because I created my own path for learning. And then I learned that's what I have to do the rest of my life, is that's what works for me. It doesn't work for me to sit and do it the normal way. My way wasn't the normal way, but it was my way. What we need to do for every kid is help them learn what is your way? What is your MO? How do you use that to accomplish your goals? Because only you can accomplish your goals.

Shannon Waller: Well, and that's why conation is so vital because, as we like to joke at Coach, it's factory installed. that comes with you and it's unalterable, it's just there. But if it's squished, not acknowledged or you don't have or take that freedom that you did, I can see the Stanford students feeling distraught because they might be highly intelligent but completely going against their grain.

Kathy Kolbe: I would say if we were to study, well, The kids who have committed suicide in universities are almost always highly intelligent, highly successful. The problem is they probably never felt the freedom to be themselves. They were successful at what was considered the right thing to do, the right way to do it, and they did things that others applauded and they did things they were supposed to do. My hunch is they never had any feeling, strong cognitive intelligence about this is who I am, this is what I need to do to be me and I will fight for being me rather than fight for being what everybody else says I should be, getting the A's, being a soccer leader. The kids who figure out what their goals are and achieve their goals are the ones you don't need to worry about.



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Shannon Waller: I love the self-efficacy and how you figure out failure, how to fix it is powerful. So you've been talking about parenting a little bit. Let's talk about leadership more in general. So what does it mean? So in a business, in a company, what does it mean to be cognitively intelligent as a leader? I mean, obviously one of my rules of life, I don't have very many, is know thyself, which is Kolbe is a huge part of that, obviously. So I'm presuming that's part of it, but to also be super aware and is it coaching, managing, leading the people that you're working with in that same, what does that mean to you? What does cognitive intelligence and leadership mean to you?

Kathy Kolbe: Well, cognitive intelligence starts with yourself. Are you intelligent enough to understand who you are and to know your MO and to have really looked at it and said, okay, I see I'm good at this naturally. Why have I spent so much time trying to be better at things I'm not naturally good at? What's been the cause and effect? So the very essence of cognitive intelligence is to truly know thyself in terms of studying your cognitive result and comparing it to what you thought you would be and what you have tried to be and what you would hope to be. And what really disturbs me are the people who say, now that I see this, I know what I need to work on. No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. When you see your Kolbe result, this is what you celebrate. This is who you are. This is what you're proud of. This is how you know you can be free to be you, is be this, be you. When people get their result and say, well, now I get it, I'm not organized enough. I have a short little blue line, as you do, and I'm not a planner, and I don't plan ahead, I don't organize, and there's chaos around me, it's a mess. You know, chaos never caused anybody to lose their creativity. Cleaning up so there's no chaos can destroy it.

Shannon Waller: Oh, please say more. This is music to my ears.

Kathy Kolbe: The more someone tells you with your natural resistance and follow through that you need to have a plan before you start. You need to have the materials. You need to have the budget. You need to do the things to prepare. People who are naturally, instinctively resistant to follow through should never prepare for anything. They should never plan. They should never try to have a schedule and follow it. To follow a schedule would be the death of them in terms of their creativity. Everything I'm talking about deals with your freedom to be yourself and to be creative in your own way. I have known fabulous teachers, people who really understood how to teach, how to help kids learn. Good teaching is all about how to help kids learn. It's not about how neat and tidy your classroom is. And yet, the way a lot of schools evaluate teachers is by walking into the classroom and see if it's orderly, and are the kids quiet, and is it neat, and is everything turned in on time? Does she have her grades done on schedule? The worst results you get on the charts that they have in school for teachers, the better teacher you probably are.



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Shannon Waller: I love that.

Kathy Kolbe: It's just a reverse because our schools are scheduled and you have 40 minutes or whatever it is for a classroom, and at the moment when you're about to give a conclusion or a kid is about to say something really exciting, the bell rings and you have to stop. That is not good education. It's terrible education. It's not good when you take all the gifted kids and put them together because they're the smart kids and then these other kids are left, don't get as many trips to go see things because they're not as smart, they don't need that. Don't get as many books, don't get as many this, don't get as, well, as a matter of fact, any gifted classroom will be more boring than any other classroom. because they're all trying to be smart cognitively, and they're not using their punitive creativity. In a classroom where they're not so bent on you have to learn and get good grades so you'll get good SATs or whatever now, hopefully that will loosen. The whole education system built around cognitive scores has harmed generations of kids, which means in the workplace, We have people who think they're smart and think that's good and that's good enough. Being smart is never good enough. Interesting, being smart. And in fact, it's often your biggest problem. What you need to be is freedom to try things, trial and error. You need things that might be dumb but could save the company. And I know some of the individuals who created some of the greatest technology in the world, because I happened to be working with the companies they were working with. I was working with Apple and Intel in the very early stages of technology. It was not the smartest people who did the best, most breakthrough work. It was the people who felt free to just, let's try it and see what'll happen. Their egos weren't caught up in, I have to be right. They more wanted to see, could I make a difference? Could I change this up and something exciting will come from it? And that's not just because they were maybe QuickStart risk takers. Too many people think QuickStart risk takers are going to be the best entrepreneurs. That's absolutely not true. I have to undo that. There are a lot of things I have to do and undo. Help me, help me undo people thinking if you're a quick start, you should start a business. No. If you're a quick start, you're very good at imagining things that aren't yet there. You can see things before they happen. You can forecast. You can take a risk and be very comfortable with it. You're good at trial and error. You will naturally sneak out and do it differently because quick starts do that. That doesn't mean you're going to make a lot of money as an entrepreneur. There is not the direct correlation that a lot of people think there is there. That's been a misnomer. By the same token, there are a lot of people who think follow-throughs should be only doing the books, only keeping things in a standard format. There's something so creative in the mind of a follow-through. because they see the discrepant event. They see that moment, that thing, that way that's never been tried before, and they know how to pull it out, separate it, condition it, and make it trial and error, make it work. It's so interesting to work with highly creative follow-throughs because they don't know how creative they are. They've never been praised for that.



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Shannon Waller: I don't know if this would land with you or not, Kathy, but one of the key people, my support partner, Katrina, dear, dear, dear friend, she handles all my scheduling, rearranged today because my flight was canceled. So thank you for being accommodating. So I'm still in Chicago. And I am very clear, scheduling for me is a very creative act. No, it is not.

Kathy Kolbe: Oh, okay. It's quite the opposite. Tell me, well, maybe I'm wrong, and I'm always open to being wrong. Why do you think it's a creative act for you?

Shannon Waller: She calls it Tetris, like it's playing Tetris. And how do you make the pattern work and how do you make things fit and how do you rearrange it when there's been a change? And she will craft and design this incredible thing that meets a whole bunch of different success criteria.

Kathy Kolbe: Why is it creative for you?

Shannon Waller: I understand it for me. I have nothing to do with it. My security is not OK.

Kathy Kolbe: I thought you're talking about you found it creative. Oh,

Shannon Waller: No, I find that she does creative. Let me put it that way. It's masterful what she does and how she looks at it and gives her. And if for me, if you want to drain the life out of me, you'll have to go two or three times on a scheduling thing and I'm dead. Right. But for her, it's food. It's Tetris. It's fun. And for me, it's a dread factor. But for her, it's not.

Kathy Kolbe: This is interesting because, yes, it can be a game and it can be fun for a follow-through because it's not stressful. She knows she can handle it. She knows she can do it right. As soon as you add complexity to it, That follow through is not going to think this is as much fun. Now it's overwhelming. There are too many things. But now a fact finder, this is again cognitive intelligence. It is intelligent to have a follow through play with a system that is future-oriented and they can make it fit and that's it, they don't have to redo it. But when you start having constant, complex issues introduced to it because it gets more and more involved, more layers, then you have to, cognitive intelligence, bring in a cognitive-initiating fact finder.

Shannon Waller: Yes, she's a six, so not a seven, but a six. And she'll tell me when it's getting too complex, which I agree, because it's too complex for me, too. But yes, it's 6733, sir.



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Kathy Kolbe: So I'm a quick start follow through. So my quick start is an eight and my follow through is a six. That makes me a natural theorist because I innovate systems. I see things and then I put them into, ooh, what could be new and different and helpful with this? And that's why I like algorithms. I believe interesting algorithms are quick start follow through. Hmm. But I don't want it to get overly complex because I'm a two and fact finder. So the moment I get it complex, I just turn it over to David Kolbe, who is an initiating factor and say, David, whatever you want to do with this, here's the as much as I'm going to take as far as I'm going to take it. So teamwork. Cognitive intelligence is not about kumbaya, that we have such fun working together. I mean, that should be there, but that's an affective overlay. Cognitive intelligence is really cognitive affective. If we're cognitively intelligent, it sounds like, well, that means we're adding in knowledge. Yeah, knowledge is good, but what we have to do is pay attention to Affectively, who cares? Does it really matter and why? Because if we don't have an affective desire, and I think this is so important and people, I'm not doing a good job teaching this. The Kolbe creative process starts not with conation and not with cognition, it starts with affect. If we don't give a damn, it won't happen. If we don't care, we're not gonna spend our energy. So the first thing we have to do in an interview, instead of big deal how wonderful the job is, we have to have that person feel comfortable with us, comfortable in the environment. We have to find out what they care about. And in a classroom, and I'm gonna go back to the suicides at Stanford, how much did anybody care about the affect of the students who committed suicide? They were brilliant, they were hardworking, they were winners. But were they doing what they wanted to do? Did they care about it? Did they have a feeling of comfort and joy in what they were doing? If you have no joy in winning, why win? There are a whole lot of things that I think You know, I have a joy in being around my family. So I am not gonna work hard at doing things to take me away from my family. I don't fly. Now, that's because I've had a brain injury, but it's also because I don't wanna leave my family. I wanna be where they are. If they're gonna fly and they do a lot, I'm gonna have to start flying again. But I would do it to be with them. It's the joy, that makes us commit our energy. It is the desire. It is because we want to do it. If we have a classroom of kids who don't want to learn, they won't learn because you cannot engage the brain cognitively if it doesn't want to do the work. So every teacher should learn how to affectively engage Manage the classroom and it comes with praise often for kids who maybe aren't that good But there should be praise for being who they are If every teacher could and I think of it as write a little love letter to each kid. This is what I love about you That's more important than giving them grades and I think truly caring and loving kids makes you a good teacher and a good parent and And I say to people who are having babies and they're scared that they'll do something wrong, and I said, as long as you give total love to this baby, you will never do anything wrong. That's the first rule of good parenting, is love that child. Now, I wasn't a loved child. I think part of that, again, goes back to autobiography. I was loved by my sibling. That's where I learned to be loved, was someone who didn't have the responsibility to do it. But the mother with the most responsibility never loved me. It didn't mean I didn't love her, but I knew she didn't love me. So it was conative intelligence with affective overlay. The



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affective is always what drives it. I wanted to understand why my mom didn't care about me. I came to realize it wasn't that she didn't care, it's that she just couldn't. She was a homeless orphan. You have to know that part of her. She never had a home. She never had a mother. She didn't know how to parent. She didn't know how to show that kind of love. I had to learn what my mother didn't know that made her be who she was in order for me to love her. So there's conative intelligence, there's affective intelligence, there's awareness of why people feel the way they do and do things the way they do it. When we put all that together, we have healthy relationships.

Shannon Waller: And then we can be good leaders, right? Good parents, good teachers, I think is really key.

Kathy Kolbe: You used the word leader and then you dropped it out as an example. I think we have very few good leaders in business today, in major businesses, because it's about money. It's about power. It's about continuity. And I mean, we're running out of so many things. I don't think there's enough care about the people. You cannot be a good leader if you don't lead with the affect. If you don't care about your people and you don't show that caring and then understand it cognitively, then you won't do it cognitively.

Shannon Waller: I have to say, Kathy, that is why my sole focus has always been on entrepreneurial companies. because there's so much more connected, real, caring. Most businesses are started with a lot of passion. When I coach Kolbe and describe it and have people kind of get their brains out, I mean, like these are striving instincts. You don't strive unless you care, right? The fact that it all starts with the affect is such a critical step that people forget. And I like the point that you brought up, to be a leader, you have to start with caring. If you don't care about the people, then you can't.

Kathy Kolbe: One of the most interesting consulting gigs I ever had was with IBM. This is way back. in the 80s, and they were trying to come up with new this and new that, and innovative, the other thing, and they asked me how I could help, and I said, let me go work with one of your teams and observe how they work together. How they work together was a phrase that was not known to them. The team I worked with was a team that was trying to do IBM learning systems, and they were trying to take teams within IBM and then they wanted to take it outside. So as IBM Learning, which was at OxyMoron, once I started working with them, they wanted to figure out how can we get people to learn faster so that the time it would take to introduce a lesson and teach it and then test and see if people could do it, if you could shorten that learning time by using the IBM learning system. Well, they started with, what do they have to learn? What are all the details to what they have to learn? What do they already know? And how can we shorten it? Because we can use what they've already learned, what they already know. So if we find people who are in the right majors or the right background, that's going to



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reduce the learning. And I said, You are so wrong. You are so wrong. And they said, well, it's not working, so maybe you're right, but why is it wrong? And I said, because you're paying no attention to what the people want to learn and what they want to do and what their goals are. You're just trying to pull out of their brains things they've already had crammed into their brain. It's all cognitive. There's no affect. I said, have you ever considered trying to figure out who cares about this project? and basically pick people because they're interested in this project and the outcome of it. And so you try to find people who really want to work on this project and have a desire for the outcome you need, and to see if they will learn faster because of that. Do you know what we found when they started doing that? They reduced the time to learn by almost 22%. It was between 22 and 23% reduced time to learn. So the affect, we proved it at IBM, and then they, of course, management changed and different people, and IBM never really embraced it organization-wide, but these individuals did. Many of them became Kolbe certified and some couple still are after all these years. The key I learned from that lesson for me was I have to keep saying to people, until you have the emotional buy-in, the desire to learn, the desire to reach the goal, until you have people who care about your project, you won't reach your goals. the deadlines will just not be reached. I believe that people like Steven Jobs, I've come to know some of the people who work very closely one-on-one with him, they cared about their common goal so intensely that they very rarely missed a deadline. I think the IBM experience, I wish it had been written up more, and you know some of the people who were on that. They would talk about it. But IBM never sold that as part of the IBM intelligence, because the people at the top didn't learn that. It was this learning group that knew it. Interesting.

Shannon Waller: So just before we wrap up, Kathy, what else would you have to say about teamwork? When cognitive intelligence, me knowing what I'm great at, what I, I don't use the word should very often, but what's gonna be most fulfilling and what's not, how to facilitate my creativity and how to shut it down. And then you talked earlier briefly about connecting with other people. And that to me is kind of the essence. I do exactly the same thing. If I'm scheduling, it's like Katrina. You know, not me. So, is that part of how you think of leadership as well in an entrepreneurial organization in my context? Does that make sense when I talk about it that way?

Kathy Kolbe: I rarely am fond of the leadership programs I hear about or have attended because they start with the wrong premise. that you need the people who are the smartest or have the most experience or work the hardest. It's all about who cares the most. Leaders shouldn't be your thought leaders, they should be your emotional leaders. Who are the people who have the biggest stake, who care the most? who won't let it die, who are determined to make this happen, who buy in, and if you have to convince someone to be on the team, you don't want them on the team. If you interview someone, they say, well, I don't know if it'll really work, but I need a job. Don't ever give someone a job because they say they need a job. It's do



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they want to help with the goal? I find most companies don't understand teams in the way I think is most important. Of course it matters if you have the right synergy, the conative differences, but you don't want the inertia. In fact, inertia, conative inertia is the single biggest problem in any team. You have too many people who do things the same way, you will not succeed, because you don't have the energy of differences. So inertia and conation is the first reason for a team not succeeding. A leader who has the same M.O. as most of the people on the team will not be able to lead well because they're not leaders. Everybody's just following the same path. The most effective teams I've seen over the years that I've coached teams are the ones who aren't quite sure if they're the right players. They believe in the purpose. They aren't settled on one path of reaching that purpose. They aren't just following guidelines. I don't even want to mention the name of some of the people have given me awards that I don't want to be rewarded because I have a system that is always uniform. I want you to make it work for you because you care. I hesitate to say some of what, because I don't want to single anybody out, but doing things in an orderly way and meeting the goal to be on the right calendar and the right budget, That's nice if you can do it, but the goal should be, did you create a solution, a product, a program that matters and that you care about? You achieved your purpose, and if your purpose was just to stay on budget, that is not ever going to lead to creativity. That is cognitive intelligence. The wisdom is, if it's all about money, There's no conation in it. It's not purposeful. The conative part of you is giving of yourself. It's giving everything you can make happen to make it work. That only happens when you're committed because you care. So a good leader works to help, first of all, build teams of people who care about the team goal. And secondly, knows when to ditch people, not because they made a mistake. I've never fired anybody for making a mistake. But somebody comes in and tells me it just didn't matter. Yeah, I didn't care about that. Okay. I may really like you as a person, but you can't work on my team if you don't care about what we're doing. I worked with NASA on the teams that were setting up the astronauts. And one of the things that they did so well was every single person on those teams cared about reaching the moon or whatever the goal was and cared about the life of the astronauts. Their precision as team members was incredible. They cared. Now, we can't all talk in terms of, oh, you're an astronaut, but we can set goals based on priorities that matter. and get the emotional buy-in. Until you have the emotional buy-in, you will not get the cognitive energy. You will get cognitive excuses. So to me, leadership starts with the creative process, the Kolbe creative process of caring.

Shannon Waller: Wise, wise, wise words, Kathy. Thank you. I feel like you've given just enormous direction for people who are leaders to become much better. So thank you.

Kathy Kolbe: Let me say one thing before we go. Sometimes we care too much. True story. And so I wanna be sure to note that. You might care as if it's your life's work, maybe it is your life's work, but remember, your life's work isn't every team member's. top priority. Oftentimes their top priority is their family, not yours. So what you need to do is also understand and be



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engaged in what are the top priorities emotionally, affectively, for the people on your team. It's not just about the goal of the team, it's about their personal situations.

Shannon Waller: Yeah, and if you can help connect what they want for their lives with what you're doing, that's what the very, very best leaders do. I completely agree.

Kathy Kolbe: That's what strategic coach does for people. You're very, very, very good at that.

Shannon Waller: Thank you. Oh my gosh, Kathy, I could hang out with you for days and I occasionally get the chance to do that, but never one-on-one almost. So thank you, thank you. And I really appreciate you hearing more about your history and your childhood and how you've used that. Oh my gosh, so resourceful. And the importance of fixing failure and taking advantage of a system and being yourself and knowing how to connect that with other people and connecting it to purpose and affect. I don't think I've ever had this kind of conversation before. So I've learned a ton. I know my listeners will as well. So just thank you for your intelligence, your thoughtfulness, your conation, your KolbeMO. Yeah, it just makes a profound difference. And I feel like I knew of affect, I knew of cognitive, but when I discovered KolbeMO just, clouds parted, light shone down, angels sang, because now things made more sense. I could want to do something, I could know how to do it, but I wouldn't. And my cool BMO just showed me why that was true and then how I could be creative and how I could be effective. And then also how I can be a good leader too. So I just am so appreciative.

Kathy Kolbe: Let me add one thing I've observed. What a fabulous mother you are. And I believe you are mothering according to your truth and your kids' truth, if they're most. So, you go girl, you be you. It's fun to watch.

Shannon Waller: Thank you. And I have to say, knowing about Kolbe and connecting that with unique ability, of which Kolbe is a huge part, oh my gosh, completely gave me so much more confidence in my parenting. By far, far from perfect, but it gave me confidence and it gave my kids confidence. Just to tell a quick story on this, so I love Charlotte. Charlotte, in grade three, having done the Kolbe Y, probably a little early, one year, printed them off, multiple copies, clear plastic folders, colored duct tape, Charlie's Kolbe, and handed it out to her teachers. I love it. This is who I am. That is precious. I think she's lost some of that confidence at 20. At that age, I'm like, and one time I called her going to a, she called me and she's like, mom, can I have your credit card number? I'm like, why do you want my credit card number? And I was going to a Kolbe event in Toronto, Amy Hickerman. And she goes, oh, I want to have my friend Mina do her Kolbe. I'm like, okay, here you go. So you have been a huge part of my family. And for that, I am incredibly grateful. So.



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Kathy Kolbe: My goal in life is to have every fifth grader in the country know their M.O. So help me, help me, help me.

Shannon Waller: I love that goal. OK, fifth graders. All of them. OK, let's add Canada to that list.

Kathy Kolbe: In the world. U.S., Canada, the rest of the world. I love it. Yeah. OK. Great as it is. I love you. It's so much fun to be with you. Let's do this more often.

Shannon Waller: OK. I like that. My love to your gang, whom I adore. You have great, great, great children. Just saying, because I'm friends with them. So just thanks for being you, Kathy. Much appreciated. Back at you. OK. Bye, love. Bye.