

Belonging Uncertainty and Bridging Divides with Geoffrey Cohen

Debbie Sorensen: [00:00:00] That was Geoffrey Cohen on psychologists off the clock.

Yael Schonbrun: we are three clinical psychologists here to bring you cutting edge and science based ideas from psychology to help you flourish in your relationships work and.

Debbie Sorensen: I'm Dr. Debbie Sorensen, practicing in Mile High Denver, Colorado. Co-author of ACT Daily Journal, and an upcoming book on act for burnout.

Yael Schonbrun: I'm Dr. Yael Schonbrun, a Boston based clinical psychologist, assistant professor at Brown University, and author of the book Work Parent Thrive.

Jill Stoddard: And from coastal New England, I'm Dr. Jill Stoddard, author of Be Mighty, the big book of Act metaphors and the Upcoming Imposter. No more.

Debbie Sorensen: We hope you take what you learn here to build a rich and meaningful life.

Jill Stoddard: Thank you for listening to psychologists Off the clock.

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Hi, this is Debbie. I'm here with Yael today to introduce an episode that I have with Geoffrey Cohen, who is talking to us about his book, which is called *Belonging, the Science of Creating Connection and Bridging Divides*. And Yael and I were both so excited to talk to you about this episode, to introduce it that we even just started chatting about it before we hit record.

we had to contain ourselves so that we could have some things left over to say in this intro to the episode.[00:02:00]

Yael, what are, what are some of your thoughts about the conversation?

Yael Schonbrun: Well, Debbie, as you're saying, like we just started chatting because this is such a. A common experience for humans, right? This fear of not belonging or, or of being uncertain about where we belong. And I was sharing with you that, you know, I have shared on the podcast before that I experience a lot of social anxiety and I think it's often about this.

Feeling of not being sure how other people are evaluating me, whether I've done the right thing, whether I've said the right thing, whether I look the right way. And it's, it's not even that I'm sure that I did badly in any of those spheres. It's, it's really just this sense of uncertainty and what we know about uncertainties.

That that is a very hard emotional experience for people to handle. We prefer certain pain to uncertain, uh, lack of pain, and, and that is what research. Compellingly shows, and it's just so interesting how it is so omnipresent, this fear, this belonging uncertainty, and how uncomfortable it.[00:03:00]

Debbie Sorensen: Yeah, it's really interesting because since I talked to Geoff Cohen about this, I've been really on the lookout for this idea of belonging uncertainty, and it's when you pay attention to it, first of all, you see it everywhere. in your own life. I'm noticing it with my kids when they talk about certain things, but then it gives you this framework to think about it.

Like, oh, that's what I'm experiencing right now. And then you can kind of shift a little bit in terms of how you're thinking about it. You can think about like, oh, you know, if someone else might be feeling belonging, uncertainty, can I find a way to bridge that? And that's what a lot of his work about is like, This fundamental human experience.

And then how do we bridge some of these divides that we have people, how do we create a world in which there's less of that feeling of, you know, I don't belong here. And that's part of what I love about his work too, is that he's someone who's so clearly on a mission to try to do something about this,

Yael Schonbrun: yeah, and I love that this was such an optimistic conversation, [00:04:00] right? He's not suggesting that he has the solution for everything, but he does have a lot of ideas and talks about it in such a optimistic way, which I, which I really love, cuz I think it can feel like a very dark thing to be thinking about how belongingness is such a dominant issue in our, in our culture.

The other thing that I sort of, on the other side, I, there isn't a panacea and he says that very clearly and one of the things that I think it can be tempting to do is to take ideas and research, like the research that he puts forth and shares with you in this, in this episode and say, okay, well all we need to do is.

Change the mission statement or make these small tweaks, and then it'll sort of infuse throughout our organization and people will feel a better sense of belonging. And it reminds me of something my husband was telling me, that his company is trying to infuse more creativity, but they often do these sort of piecemeal things that don't really take root.

And I think that is an important thing to recognize that increasing a sense of [00:05:00] belongingness within an organization or inside of a relationship takes a lot of small tweaks over time. And that it really needs to be a very deliberate process. It, there isn't sort of like a change that you can make and then all of a sudden belongingness is now available to everyone and I actually think it's helpful to set that expectation cuz then you can be more effective in trying to increase belongingness in realistic ways.

Debbie Sorensen: Yeah, it's just, it's so interesting cuz it really is like a cultural vibe. Even I think that example you're talking about, about creativity, it really takes this shift, this cultural shift, which is sometimes feels really big and slow to change, but it is possible. Because if you sit, if you sit there and say, Hey, be more creative, or, Hey, start feeling like you belong here.

It's like, that doesn't work. You need the whole vibe to change. And then people start to feel the impact of that. So it's, it's an interesting thing to think about, and I think it's a, it's a level that's really [00:06:00] easy to ignore sometimes within psychology. Um, but that, that we really need to take a look at that, like what's happening in this particular cultural context that, that people aren't feeling that

way, and are there small things we can do over the course of time and big things that that might shift.

Yael Schonbrun: Right. So for example, if an organization has a mission statement that really very explicitly states that inclusivity and belongingness for all is really a priority, and there's still a sense that that's not taking root, then the question becomes sort of how is that trickling down and what do we need to do?

What kind of changes on the ground? How does management need to engage? You know, what are organizations like? You know, uh, I'm trying to think of the word. Um, You know, uh, committee, are there committees that could be made that could help to impart change in the organization? Are there, you know, events that could help the conversation start to take root?

I just think, you know, it's, it's easy to sort of default to like one time [00:07:00] things to improve the way that people feel daily. And that rarely works, right? It's, it needs to, as you're saying, be. and over time.

Debbie Sorensen: Totally. We see that all the time, right? Where if you ask someone, oh yes, I really care about. Inclusivity of course, or diversity like most people do, you know? But then, but then there are still things that get in the way. It's like just saying that is not enough, or having one meeting about this, or something like that.

And so even though this is big and, and there's a lot to think about here, there's no, you know, quick fix solution to any of this. Um, Geoff Cohen really does offer some helpful ideas about this throughout the episode and, and kind of ends on that note of some, some. Important things to consider. And so I hope you'll listen all the way through to the end of the episode to get some ideas for, in this very hopeful and, inspiring conversation.

[00:08:00] Geoffrey L. Cohen is a professor of psychology and the James March, professor of Organizational Studies in education and business at Stanford University. He received his PhD at Stanford and at Cornell. He is a social psychologist who has published widely, his research examines processes that shape people's sense of belonging and self-concept and the role that these processes play in various social problems

using a social psychology approach. He and others have developed concrete science backed strategies to create more welcoming spaces for people from all walks of life. And he has a new book out called *Belonging, the Science of Creating Connection and Bridging Divides*.

Welcome to Psychologists Off the clock, Geoff, I'm so happy that you're here today. I feel like we're gonna solve some of the world's problems together in this hour,

Geoffrey Cohen: Thanks, Debbie. It's great to be here. I'm sure we'll at least make a small dent.

Debbie Sorensen: a small dent, and, and share what you've been doing in your work over the years with, with our listeners. Um, reading your book. I mean, I almost [00:09:00] didn't know where to begin because there's so much really important and interesting content in there. I literally sat down to write my questions and I was like, where do I begin?

Because there's so much, so I actually thought I'd begin with a quote, and this is kind of paraphrased from your, your intro. , you say that the purpose of the book is to foster your own sense of belonging and foster it in loved ones, students, coworkers, and people you argue with to help others feel included and to turn everyday encounters into understanding, connection and growth.

so, Geoff, I love this and it also feels like a bit of a tall order you're , you're tackling here. And I'm just wondering, you know, you're a social psychology researcher. What do you think social psychology has to offer to this really, know, important mission that

Geoffrey Cohen: Yeah. Thanks for asking. That's really beautifully put. I think that, um, social psychology's big lesson is that every [00:10:00] situation can be made at least a little bit better, at least a little bit better. So my field is really in the business of showing how if you change an aspect of the situation, often a subtle social one, you can get sometimes very large effects on, on behavior.

For example, if you give people a little baggie of candy to put them in a positive mood, that increases their likelihood of helping a stranger later by, as I recall, roughly 30 percentage points. So small tweaks to the situation that we can all make can have pretty dramatic effects on behavior. Not always, but sometimes, and I kind of make this claim that, well, generally speaking, almost every social situation can be made a little bit better and we have some power over the situation by the fact that, that we're in it and through the words we choose and, and the behaviors we [00:11:00] engage in and, and the way we engage across lines of difference, we. Make the situation go a bit better, at least a little bit better, sometimes a lot. So that's the premise of the book. That's the premise of the book is the power of the situation. But as part of the situation, we as

individuals share some of that power. So we have some ability to mold situations in ways that bring out our individual and collect the best,

Debbie Sorensen: You know? Yeah. Well, we've made the point on the podcast a number of times that, so I'm a clinical psychologist and so are my cohosts, and we've made the point a lot of times. In psychology, sometimes we look too much at the individual, but we don't look at the, the context or the culture or the circumstance.

And I think what I love reading your book, it's not just so, it really highlights that some of the, the situational and contextual factors, but it also, we'll get into this later in the interview, but it gives some idea of like, well, what can we do to change some of this? Because sometimes [00:12:00] it feels onerous to try to difference.

Geoffrey Cohen: Sometimes it feels onerous to try to make a difference. And sometimes we feel like we're not making a difference no matter how hard we try. What I wanted to do is to, and what I've done in my career is to try to offer solutions. So I went into social psychology because I, I really cared about social problems.

That was my sort of big, big impetus. I worked at volunteer organizations, I tutored kids. Um, so my focus in my career has been not just documenting problems, which is what a lot of social scientists do, and useful, you know, to understand the causal basis of problems, but to figure ways to, in which, uh, we can kind of intervene on them for the better.

And I don't really like that word intervene, but I, I like the, maybe the. Be the better word might be support. You know, figuring out ways to better support and empathize with people beyond the ones, you know, the business as usual techniques that we've inherited from our culture or from [00:13:00] our family or from each other.

And um, you know, one of the subtexts of a lot of the research is that, you know, there are a lot of things, a lot of bad things, good people do a lot of bad things. Good people do that in the end, do more harm than good, you know, to ourselves than others, you know? And just take one example. The tendency to judge what Lee Ross calls a fundamental attribution error, to kind of think that what drives troublesome behavior is a troublesome character.

To kind of go from behavior to infer like there's some underlying attitude or trait there that must explain it. Well, that's sometimes true. We really overestimate

the degree to which that's true. And what we end up doing is casting blame and aspersions on people who behave objectionably to us, which actually makes a problem worse because underlying a lot of the objectionable behavior that we see in the world, I think is a sort of uncertain and sometimes defeated sense of belonging, a sense of isolation.

And [00:14:00] when we engage in righteous indignation or insult or, or denigrate each other, especially those who disagree, we end up worsening the very problems that we wanna solve. So that's a kind of another subtext of, of, of a lot of the research in social psychology that, you know, we're always doing these things that might not just be, you know, counterproductive, but actually, uh, it might not be only ineffective, but actually counterproductive.

Debbie Sorensen: Yeah. Yeah. I wanna get back to this idea of belonging in a second. I think that's really central. But first, would you mind, so when I was reading through your book and then also looking on your, I was pulling your bio off your website and I was just amazed by some of the types of problems that you were drawn to looking at in your So could you just give our listeners a sense of some of the types of problems you and your colleagues have have looked at? Cause it's quite. impressive and like inspiring to

Geoffrey Cohen: oh. Well, thank you. We, [00:15:00] my lab, my colleagues, this is a really a team effort. Uh, you know, and I, I really owe a huge debt to my mentor, Claude Steele, um, who's worked with me on a lot of these projects. And Greg Walton, a close colleague, uh, who helped develop some of the research on below Uncertainty was a real pioneer, is a, still a pioneer in this area.

Um, but the, the topic span. The achieve achievement gaps or opportunity gaps in education, gender gaps in in stem, political polarization, closed mind inness, resistance to change, mental and physical illness, obesity, health disparities, empathy, uh, and like kind of little practices to help people maintain their equanimity and stressful situations and their resilience.

So motivation as well. So I, I, I think that, you know, one of the things that's cool about being a social psychologist is [00:16:00] that what you end up doing is showing that very heterogeneous phenomena in the visible world end up having this kind of hidden common source. And, and the hidden common source for, for a lot of these problems is a sense. Social disconnection in a lot of cases, and also a sense of psych, what we call psychological threat. A sense that myself is not safe here, which often comes from feeling like you don't belong.

Of course, we're not saying that all these problems. Have and as their, that belonging is a determinative factor, but it's a contributing factor.

So much so that we, uh, co-opted this term by Pete Buttigieg, the who said that our time is a crisis of belonging and a crisis of belongings. Really, apropos is, it suggests that, yeah, many of the things that we're seeing in our world, political polarization, achievement gaps, extremist behavior, even violence, I think to some degree have a, they're kind of symptoms of an [00:17:00] underlying cause.

They're symptoms of an underlying cause. And, and that underlying cause is in part a kind of psych is psychological in nature. Uh, a kind of thwarted sense of connection that I think too many Americans have, too many people throughout the world have now. And uh, you know, on the other hand, once we understand that there's lots we can do about it, I think.

Debbie Sorensen: Yeah. So what do you, so, so that concept that you've mentioned a couple times, it's so central. I wanna just unpack it a little bit more belonging, uncertainty,

Geoffrey Cohen: Yeah.

Debbie Sorensen: I believe that's a, a term that you and some of your colleagues coined that term. Is that correct?

Geoffrey Cohen: Yeah, that's right. We went back and forth on the, this term, uh, this is Greg Walton and I, uh, years ago, came up with this term to describe this state of mind in which you're uncertain of your belonging. And it captures this reality that I think we all experience when we're just kind of walking on shaky eggs.

We don't [00:18:00] really know if we belong or not. We have a hypothesis that we might not. For example, you might be at work and you've heard or have reason to suspect that your boss doesn't like you. And now in interactions, you're not sure. Now in interactions, you're in belonging, uncertainty. You're kind of looking at his behavior very carefully or her behavior very carefully to sort of look for signs, tell tales, cues as to whether or not they think negatively or not of you.

Likewise, I think we experience this all the time, walking into a social gathering or a party step through the door and tumble in. Maybe you forgot to, to bring a, uh, a dish for what you discover later as a potluck. And you're kind of feeling all

eyes upon you. You have this sense that, that nobody looking at you, but everybody is talking about you.

And it's a kind of psychology in which, um, you know, I [00:19:00] think it's twofold. There's two consequences. One is that it's exhausting. These, you're kind of perusing the environment constantly. You're preoccupied and Do I belong? Do I now? So it's hard to kind of focus on the conversation and focus on learning.

And second, you're, uh, in the state of mind where little things loom large. A person might kind of smirk or look distracted, and all of a sudden, ooh, that's, that's a cue that maybe I don't fit in here. And Greg and I linked this belonging uncertainty to the experience that a lot of, uh, underserved students experience in school or, or workers at work, ethnic minorities, where they're kind of entering an environment where their group has been historically underrepresented and they're understandably uncertain about whether this is a place where I belong, whether I can belong, even whether I want to belong.

When I was an assistant professor, I experienced this really intensely, and I think this contributed somewhat to our research where, uh, you know, I was an assistant professor and I felt intense [00:20:00] belonging, uncertainty, being at this place with these academic superstars. And I really felt a lot of belonging, uncertainty.

And I noticed. At the end of the day, I come home, I'd be exhausted and I think back, what did I do all day? And I'd realize not much except worry. So my mind was in this kind of churn of thinking, do I belong or not? It was just depleting. Uh, people who face negative stereotypes are facing that a lot more, a lot more regularly, that, that kind of ruminative cycle that can really be sapping.

And then the second thing I noticed is that like these little things would loom large. Like the chair would make a comment on a class of mine. I'd be like, oh, what did he mean by that? And uh, so it's a preoccupying state of mind and, and I think it's one that we experience a lot. All of us have this. It's kind of ironically something that unites us.

Debbie Sorensen: It is, it's part of the human condition. I was actually thinking about it in my own life and everything from, I went to an event a couple weeks ago, like a social event and [00:21:00] felt and walked in and was like, didn't see anyone I knew, but everybody else seemed to know each other. Of course, there were a few people and you know, it was, but my first response was, I gotta get outta here. I felt so uncomfortable, you know?

Geoffrey Cohen: Exactly.

Debbie Sorensen: A small example like that. But then also, you know, when I went to graduate school, I've shared this story on the podcast before, when I talked with Jill about imposter, we talked about imposter syndrome. I got to graduate school at Harvard, I felt like I didn't belong there.

I felt like, who am I? I'm surrounded by all these really smart people that probably went to these, you know, great schools and have all these amazing achievements, and why am I here? You know? And, and by the time I left I felt like, okay, I can, I can do this. But I think it was a, took a long time for me to feel like I fit in there.

So it's, I get what you're saying, both the micro examples and then also the bigger, you know, these big life things that you're doing where you feel so uncomfortable.

Geoffrey Cohen: And you can feel so uncomfortable in that moment. You feel like [00:22:00] you're under a spot. Like sometimes like everybody might be watching you. You know, the kind of high school cafeteria effect is kind of similar to what you're talking about,

Debbie Sorensen: Oh yeah.

Geoffrey Cohen: no one to sit with. I feel like everyone's watching me to see what I'm gonna do, and, uh, we've all been there.

It doesn't stop it from being highly aversive. And one of the things that I think the research helps with, it's almost like literature in this way, is to kind of universalize that experience. So, you know, it's good to know that we all, most of us experience this, it breaks down what social psychologists call pluralistic ignorance, where we can kind of all be in the dark about what other people think, especially for these states of mine that.

In heart that we keep secret, like embarrassment, feelings of humiliation, feelings of shame. We don't share those. So it's easy to feel like, God, I'm the only one, which you can kind of aggravate the condition. So, um, I think like, you know, your, your, your, your story there and the [00:23:00] research is, is very helpful to people to kind of, you know, put us all on the same, same psychological page.

So we're, you know, this is a common human condition. And what that means though is that we can all help each other get through these moments, uh, some of which are more important than others, some of which are more important than others. As we know, you know, if those first few days of work or school don't go well, if you don't feel like you belong, you can really slip and take a negative turn, especially in those kind of formative teenage years.

So, if you can make those moments go a little bit better, you could change some, at least a few people's destiny. And I think we could all play a.

Debbie Sorensen: Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. Well, one of the problems that you've looked at in your work is on hate crimes, and it just so happens that we're recording this episode at kind of a somber moment. I'm in Denver and just a few days ago when we're recording this, that the episode will come out a few weeks from now.

But we're recording this in the aftermath of a hate crime that happened in Colorado [00:24:00] Springs at club Q, which is an L B G T Q plus Club. Um, and I, I don't know, no one seems to know much at this point about the motivations of this particular incident, but generally you have some. Thoughts on, uh, and some, some thoughts and theories about what motivates people to do behaviors like that.

Geoffrey Cohen: yeah. I mean, I am not an expert on this area. Uh, you may be more than I, because. And a lot of these cases, it involves mental illness, like a kind of, almost like a psycho, it's like a psychological fire in some of these cases that leads people to this. So I, I, I don't know, in any particular case, in a lot of cases for sure, mental illness contributes.

Um, so I wouldn't wanna con, I wouldn't wanna talk about any particular case like this one, especially when we don't know that much about it, except to say it, it is, it is devastating and, and heartbreaking to see these things happen [00:25:00] so often and it really does make you want as a citizen and as an academic to kind of figure out how can we, how can we, how can we stop these things from happening?

And of course, laws and policies are gonna be important in that endeavor. Uh, one of the things though that really comes across in the research on extremists and terrorists and, and, and here I'm talking about kind of the ordinary people who are kind of lured into extremist groups like neo-Nazi groups.

The kkk. Uh, so not necessarily people with, with mental health issues. Um, it often begins with a need to belong. It often begins with a need to belong. And here I'm drawing on the work of Aru Lansky and Bruce Hoffman who have studied terrorism and extremism for decades. And what emerges is this story, which is that, you know, a lot of the people who join these groups and who later even do these [00:26:00] horrific, engage in these horrific hate crimes.

Uh, but they're part of these groups. They're kind of organized groups. Uh, is that the interesting thing? They don't necessarily as subscribe to the ideology initially. They don't really believe in the toxic racism. I mean, they might a little bit, but they, it's not, it's not what impels them to join.

Instead, it's that feeling of being part of something bigger than oneself. I tell the story of, um, c p Ellis a uh, man from the deep South in Durham, uh, North Carolina, who joined the KKK in the seventies, and he later left it. But he describes how it was just cool to be someone who mattered. He remembers kneeling before the cross at the KKK ceremony.

He says, for the first time in my life, this little person felt like somebody. [00:27:00] And so these groups are highly organized to exploit a need to belong, and they prey off of it, and they get these people who, whose need to belong has been defeated either because of economic deprivation. Or because of family isolation from their families, the, the, the, or they might simply feel like their group, not they themselves personally, are being left behind in, in society.

And it's that sense of being left behind that is exactly the opposite of belonging. I mean, literally means to go with. So being left behind means you don't feel that sense of belonging. That that's what often is, seems at least observationally to be the kind of key driver for a lot of people to join these groups.

And then once they're in there, they're impelled to do like these terrible things starting with like small, terrible things building up to big, terrible things. It's almost like a foot in the door effect. And they, they start to kind of self justify and then kind of [00:28:00] begin to believe in this poisonous ideology as a kind of way to justify their own actions because of sort of cognitive dissonance, phenomena, uh, or process.

So I, I think that what I would say is that it's so easy and understand them on our society go from bad behavior to think it means bad character. And yes, of course sometimes it does, but a lot of times there's a kind of, uh, more subtle mechanism at work in which people aren't beginning with bad characters so

much as with desperation, and they're finding some port on the shore, uh, probably perhaps the only port on the shore that that will take them in.

And, um, it's a little bit of a fos and ba bargain because then they have to endorse this poisonous ideology and do these terrible things in order to stay a good member of. So that's, I think what a lot of the work suggests and, and looking even at the research, a [00:29:00] sense of ostracism, even a sense of loneliness is, is pretty predictive of aggression and conspiratorial thinking.

And there's even lab studies that manipulate a sense of ostracism and find that people become more extremist and conspiratorial in their thinking. So, um, you know, there's a kind of, um, uh, a bunch of evidence in this area, non definitive of course, but all suggestive of the power of a defeated need to belong in propelling people to horrific actions.

Her Hana a rent in origins of totalitarianism thought that one of the reasons that the German populace was susceptible to the Nazi ideology was that they were so isolated and anize, they were looking for something to attach themselves to. So it, it does seem to be a theme in the human

Debbie Sorensen: Yeah. It really helps me make sense of some of what's we're seeing with political extremism and divisiveness where it's kind of just hard sometimes to make sense of it and, and that does make sense. You think of people who are feeling. [00:30:00] disconnected. And why would they be drawn to something like that?

Geoffrey Cohen: Yeah, disenfranchised.

Debbie Sorensen: right? Yeah,

Geoffrey Cohen: They feel like they don't have a voice and they're pissed and they're looking for a scapegoat

Debbie Sorensen: yeah.

Geoffrey Cohen: and they wanna belong. So it's like that's, that's kind of the recipe. Make people feel like, join me, join us, and you'll have a place.

Debbie Sorensen: And people will go along sometimes, I think I got this from your book, right? , people will go to long sometimes with a social climate in a way they wouldn't just on their own. And, and you gave an example I was really struck by, I kept thinking about this example after I read it in your book of the

Jewish high school student who faced some antisemitism at school and her peers kind of.

It just went along with it to the point where it got pretty extreme and it was really to think about that. Could you just say something about that, about like how social climate could contribute to something like [00:31:00] bullying or racism?

Geoffrey Cohen: Yeah. I think a lot of times people are just play acting at these things, or it's the, the line between truly believing and a play acting is, is, is thin in, in that anecdote, the girl, the girls, Uh, victimizer said, yeah, we were just playing, you know, when I wrote, when I was reading Mind Comp in the cafeteria, we were just play acting.

We're just, it was like a big joke. And well, from her perspective is not a joke at all. Like that's highly offensive. But what had happened at that school is that doing, engaging in antisemitism had kind of become a kind of way to be, to kinda win approval, to fit in with your peers and to kind of make these in jokes and, and badger together.

And so when finally the whole thing blew up, a lot of the, the perpetrators are like, what? I don't, I, I really didn't mean it. I wasn't, I didn't feel hate, but I think in a lot of ti a lot of times, [00:32:00] you know, it's, the things we do aren't really coming from things inside of us. It's, it's a kind of. Bit of a performance, social life is a bit performative, and we often want to win the approval of the people in our groups, and that can lead us to do things that we don't really believe in.

Uh, that can have some pretty terrible effects. And I think that's what happened in, in, in her case, uh, Rebecca's case, that she, um, was kind of victimized by this sort of social contagion of a, of a norm. It had just become cool at this school for these kids to be antisemitic. So I think that happens a lot of times.

There's a, there's a, you know, I, I've always thought of this, oh, this issue. There's a famous study by Phil Zimbardo. It's come under a lot of scrutiny, a lot of criticism, some justified, uh, I, I do try to kind of save the baby from the [00:33:00] bathwater in describing it, but there's this one, encount. Long story short, he, he created this, this prison in the psychology department got, you know, more or less ordinary young adults to play prisoners and guards.

And the simple story is that the guards became mean and sadistic and prisoners became really passive and apathetic. Of course, that's not the full story, but there

were some pretty horrific instances of behavior on the part of the guards of sort of, you know, brutalizing or the brutalizing, the prisoners.

Anyway, after there's a famous interview between a guard and a prisoner or, or an interview between the guard prisoner and the guard says to the prisoner, look, I was just play acting. This is pretend. And the guard says, well, yeah, but that harmed me and you were really good at it. [00:34:00] And so I think that really captures the.

The anecdote too about Rebecca is like, well, even if we don't mean it, even if it's coming from a desire to fit in, these kinds of behaviors can really be noxious to other people. And a lot of times when we're doing these things, it's like, because of group norms, group pressures, these kind of biases that we can all fall prey to, but it doesn't mean that they're not harmful.

Debbie Sorensen: Yeah, I think that's one of the things that social psychology tells us. It's really important. It's like we all have to be aware of this and on the lookout for it because it, we're not immune from it. It's easy to look at what happened Germany. In the Hitler era and be like, oh, we would never do that.

We're not like that. And in the circumstances that they had people who probably, know, if you had asked them, would say the same thing, went along with it. And so I think it's like, it's just helpful to be aware of these, how group norms can affect us in ways that are not good, so that we're not so susceptible to it.

Do you think that helps?

Geoffrey Cohen: I think that [00:35:00] totally helps. That's, that's well put. A little humility. A little humility would go a long way. I saw this Bumper sticker that just kind of said it all, and it read, don't believe everything you think. Don't believe everything you think. And I think that captures a lot of the wisdom of social psychology, that our minds play tricks on us and we can kind of deceive ourselves into thinking we have a firm grasp on reality when in fact we don't.

And there's a lot of examples of this. Um, and it's only later, maybe in retrospect that we realize, oh, that was not my best moment. I really kind of was led straight by something. And I think being aware, I, like you say, I think just being aware of what we're capable of is one of the best antidotes. You know, we gotta, you, you know what you're capable of.

And a lot of these studies that we've done, uh, my colleagues and I, we find for instance, that one of the big predictors of bias is. The degree to which people are

confident in [00:36:00] their own personal objectivity. So the people who really believe, ah, I am totally invulnerable, cognitively, I am totally objective free of any bias, actually, they're the ones who are most biased.

They, we found engage in the most, uh, gender bias, gender discrimination. And in some research by my colleague Michael Schwabe, we find that they're the most susceptible to fake news. They're the most likely kind of think, oh, this must be true. Which makes sense because if you think that what you think is true, then anything confirms that confirms your point of view is by definition true.

And so you're really, um, vulnerable to believing nonsense.

Debbie Sorensen: Yeah, that is a really good point. That's really interesting. You mentioned earlier your mentor, Claude Steele, who I associate with his work on stereotype threat, and I think it's a really interesting concept and, and I was wondering if you could just talk a little bit about what that is and how it applies to some of the, the [00:37:00] problems you were talking about earlier, like the, the academic achievement.

Geoffrey Cohen: Yeah, I, I think the, the, the big lesson of stereotype threat is that the same situation can be experienced very differently for the different people in it. It's really hard to realize, and Claude and his colleagues, Josh Aronson and Steve Spencer demonstrated that beautifully with, in the case of the standardized intellectual test.

So for, I'm gonna simplify, but for white people, for instance, you know, an IQ test or you know, the kind of academic ritual of the standardized test, you know, that's kind of, kind of pretty neutral, pretty normal. I'm just kind of taking it, it's, it assesses my performance and aptitude, but, you know, is, is not a huge deal.

I might get a little nervous, but for black students there is an extra apprehension, which is that if I do poorly on this test, it could. Validate this negative stereotype about [00:38:00] the intellectual limitations of my group. So for me, as an African American taking this test, the situation is psychologically a lot more dire.

Now. In addition, just worrying about whether I do well for my own personal sake, I had to worry about the reputation of my group and how my performance gonna reflect on them. And, and, and I also have to be thinking about the history of these tests as used as a kind of justification for the subordination of my group.

And so there's like a lot of baggage for me, uh, or in this test for me. And what Claude and his colleagues demonstrated was that under certain circumstances, that stereotype threat, that kind of fear of confirming the negative stereotype about one's group can really dramatically undermine performance. Uh, and those conditions are when the test is really, really difficult. So I'm kind of at the frontiers of my ability. I'm wondering, What does it mean that I'm struggling and when I care about [00:39:00] doing well, I really care about doing well. I wanna do well in this test. I'm invested in it. Under those two circumstances, this preoccupation can understandably derail you.

And so they demonstrated that really, really, um, elegantly and in some classic research. And I think those studies make the point that is key to, uh, understanding how to cultivate belonging, which is, you know, a situation might seem totally comfortable and neutral to you, but to someone else it might be seen as all together differently.

And there's so many examples of that. I think we've all experienced this in our lives where, wow, that encounter seemed fine and then later on you feel like you discovered, no, that was not fine for the other person. Uh, or you had a teacher and you really enjoyed the teacher, but the, someone else in that classrooms like had a completely different experience.

So I think that's one of the big lessons is just because the situation, uh, as you experience it, has this sort of quality that doesn't mean it's. As generalized as you think. And, and that's really key to [00:40:00] cultivating belonging and, and creating these campuses and these workplaces where all people feel at home.

Now you gotta think about, well, how do I create a home where these cues in the environment aren't sending bad signals to one group at the expense are at the benefit of another group. And that requires a lot of empathy and craftsmanship. You know, just to take one other example, you know, you might think that a colorblind mission statement for your company saying, you know, we just judge people by who they are in their individual merits.

We pay no, we give no credence to their race or their gender or their religion. You might think that's a good thing, but actually that seems inauthentic and is offsetting to many minorities, uh, because it is. It is so dissonant with their lived reality. And so research finds that that message, while, you know, it seems pretty good to whites, is actually, uh, dis [00:41:00] discouraging and deterring to minorities, uh, and their interest in, in the profession.

But creating alternative, this is where the, the hope comes in. Once you're aware of that, then you can kind of create alternative situations that bring everyone into the fold. So mission statements that emphasize and value diversity and celebrate our diversity as a source of strength and say how, you know together the, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts because we're all different and bringing our contributions to the larger group, those messages work well for everyone.

They work well for everyone in general. Um, so I think that's, that's how this area of stereotype threat relates to topical belonging. It really underscores this point that I think is so difficult for us to understand is that the way I'm seeing a situation may be very, a workplace classroom. Home life may be very different from, uh, the way other people see it to the detriment of their belonging.

Debbie Sorensen: Yeah. You know, and you have chapters. It's really interesting. People should pick up your book because you [00:42:00] have chapters on belonging at school, work in the community, politics, health, um, it's just there's, there's a lot to think about. But this piece about the workplace and how we know that a more diverse workforce is great for people.

It's great for actually workplace culture, all these things. But I love this, you said it's not just add diversity and stir, you need to really change some of the features of the workplace to make. People feel that sense of belonging, right? That workplaces that have better sense of belonging, have better engagement and retention with their employees.

What can you say a little bit more about what kinds of things workplaces can do to foster that?

Geoffrey Cohen: Yeah. That's Frank Dubin. Uh, Uh, little injunction that, you know, too many workplaces have this ad diversity and stir approach, which really doesn't work. You gotta kind of do, you have to craft situations, [00:43:00] you know, do what I call situation crafting at the workplace to, you know, make it feel like a home for everyone there.

And there are many, many strategies for, for doing that. One being, you know, these mission statements. I think mission statements actually, you know, they're not just words. They, they set the tone for people's experience of the workplace and they potentially can increase the diversity of your, uh, of the candidates who apply to your position.

So, mission statements, as we talked about it, is one bit of situation crafting. Then when, when people are there, uh, there needs to be many things. In place to kind of create that sense of inclusion. And, and there's no recipe here, but one thing that comes to mind is just simply inclusive policies. So there's some nice work by Tony Schmid's lab showing that the mere presence of gender inclusive [00:44:00] policies, work policies, uh, such as, you know, uh, opportunities to report harassment programs, to support work life balance, and childcare, like those are not only objectively beneficial, but they're actually associated with a higher sense of belonging among female employees, at least in the sense that they don't feel stereotyped or looked down as much in light of the stereotypes their workplace.

Um, so that's, that's important. Um, I also think that there are so many ways in which we could sort of. Take things out of the workplace for, for the better, for the better. Uh, one being, uh, sort of this talk about how talent and genius are the kind of key drivers of success that's been shown to be pretty off, off putting to people who have been on the outside of the field.

Understandably so. So you're [00:45:00] telling me I don't have the innate talent to be here, or that my group doesn't have the innate talent to be here and in some really nice work by Mary Murphy and Andre Simp and, and, and many others. It's been found that, uh, companies that espouse this view that, you know, it's all about talent, actually produce less innovative workers. And, uh, and more unethical behavior among workers and and less belonging there. So there is kind of a whole, I mean, ideally there's no, like, no. So I don't think there's one quick fix, but what we're aiming at is changing the live situations of people in the workplace so that it adds up into a culture, a belonging where you're just kind of going 'em out your daily life and you feel like, yeah, this is a home for me.

And like, little things will get you there. Little things like what we're talking about will get you there, but ultimately I do think it is a matter of transformational leadership and the beliefs and the norms of the company that, that are in people's hearts. And, and these are kind of little ways to [00:46:00] get there.

And then the final thing that I would add to that is just perspective getting, perspective getting so important. I heard the, I think it was one of the deans at my daughter's college said this to the incoming students. He said, if you don't feel at home, I wanna know. And so you kind of invite yourself to feedback that, Hey, I wanna know you, you get, if people don't feel like they belong, you get that perspective and then you can kind of create ad hoc situational solutions to, to deal with it.

Uh, so I think that's another really key tactic. Too many places think that there's some recipe, uh, for inclusion, but oftentimes it's a kind of collaborative project that involves constant discussion and back and forth and conversation and, and you get there over time. Through that, that kind of mutual sharing and commitment, commitment to changing the organizational culture bit by bit.

Debbie Sorensen: there's so many things I wanna say about , [00:47:00] about what you just said. Um, I think so. Um. So this idea of situation crafting, I think is really important and it's, it's again, kind of woven throughout your book, but what you're talking about here really captures that.

It's like taking a look at this particular situation, this workplace environment, and thinking, how can we craft it to foster belonging, to reduce things like the, that vigilance of belonging, uncertainty, feeling like, I don't know if I fit in here, stereotype, threat, those kinds of things. Like how can you change this situation to make that better?

That's really kind of, if you were gonna describe what you're trying to do with a lot of your I think that's kind of,

Geoffrey Cohen: How do you make this situation a little bit better? Yeah. Yeah. How do you do that?

Debbie Sorensen: it's hopeful because it seems like there are things that you could do.

Geoffrey Cohen: There are things that you can do. It, it is a kind of a, a craft, I think, but also, you know, an attitude and a [00:48:00] mindset. I mean, I, I think about conversations like this a lot. I'm, I'm very interested in conversations and how they work and when they go, well, when they don't go so well and it's very hard. Have you noticed to have an inclusive conversation, like even just four people there, can't remember when feeling they can contribute and feel like they're part that's, that's actually very tough.

So then you think, oh, how do I get a workplace or a classroom or an institution or a country to feel included? That that's, that's a project. That's a project. But that's an American project because I think we're, as a society so diverse, so wide ranging in our sensibilities and interests and sensitivities, it's, it's a real great American predicament.

And also I think an American skill set to create that inclusion among. You know, at a difference. And, and you know, that whole idea, uh, outta many one,

how do you do, it's like skill. It's not just a matter, it's not just a habit of heart. It is a, it is [00:49:00] strategy. And I think there's a lot of science-based strategies out there now that, that we can use to make things go a little bit better.

And I almost look at it as kind of like protocols of politeness, right? Politeness really works. Like if you're polite to people, say, please and thank you and mean it, that's actually a great way to establish connection and, and, and convey regard. But there's plenty of others. And, you know, I, I think that one is these, uh, another one are these, um, activities like values, affirmations, like just taking an interest in people's values and asking them about it.

That's another way to convey I see you and I, I am, I am interested in you.

Debbie Sorensen: You did some really interesting research on those values, affirmations and how they, just having people do some simple exercises around that had a huge impact. You did it with students and saw how later in the year they were doing much better. It's pretty amazing.[00:50:00]

Geoffrey Cohen: Yeah. Yeah. I think a lot of these things are, uh, yeah. So a lot of these things are kind of helping people to do what they wanna do, but aren't really having the opportunity to do and values affirmations. This comes outta research from Quad Steel, and I did it with my close colleague, Julio Garcia, unfortunately passed away a couple years ago.

But, uh, we were interested in this idea that if you give people the opportunity to reflect on their core values, like what I, what do I stand for? What would I die for? Just take a few moments to reflect, you know, Relationships, my family, compassion, empathy, like what is it that I stand for? Like giving people the, this opportunity might buffer them against stressful situations.

It kind of gives you an anchor, right? So I think, okay, this is who I am. It's like that Victor Frankl story where Victor Frankl, man search for meaning, he's like in the concentration camp on the [00:51:00] verge of cardiovascular collapse. And yet he stays in the game because he needs to finish his manuscript about logo therapy and meaning, and how that is so powerful.

And he's like writing bits of the book on little scraps of paper. And he claims that that kept him, kept him in the game. It kept him in the game and prevented cardiovascular collapse. I think if we do these things, visit and revisit our core values, it can really buffer us from a lot of the stressfulness and adversity that we encountered day to day in our day to day lives that could, could otherwise derail us.

And so in the study you're referring to, we just gave values affirmation activities to, uh, black students and Latino students making that really stressful transition into middle school, like sixth grade. Like that's when, that's when you know things hit the fan. It's like a

Debbie Sorensen: Don't remind me. I [00:52:00] have grader right now,

Geoffrey Cohen: just wait.

Debbie Sorensen: I know, I see it coming.

Geoffrey Cohen: what happened in sixth grade? It's like kind of crazy. It's crazy. Um, so anyway, we found that giving these values, affirmations to these kids that this transition was very helpful to them. It buffered their sense of belonging so that it stayed high regardless of adversity in school. The kids were more, got better grades through all middle school.

And then even years later, seven, eight years later, these kids were. 20 percentage points more likely to be enrolled in a four year college because we, we kind of insulated them or protected them, or they protected themselves through this activity from the harsh gaze of stereotypes and the pressures of adolescence.

They, they created a, a sort of pocket or, or, you know, kind of protective membrane for themselves that that helped them get through and had lasting effects. I think because a lot of life is like a domino effect. You get through that tough transition to middle school, you're on a good path and being on a good [00:53:00] path sets you up for later.

Success. Success begets success. So, you know, I, I do think that these kinds of activities can be very, very useful because they help people to, to kind of. To what they wanna return to, but what they're diverted from in their day to day lives. And, and the only thing I would, one thing I would just add is that none of these strategies are cures.

None of them are panaceas. There was a meta-analysis of values, affirmations that found an overall positive effect, but the effect depended on context. They worked best in certain situations, particularly where students had opportunities in their school to succeed that they could take advantage of once they felt like they belonged.

Um, so I do wanna make that clear because I think there is a kind of sometimes a sinism to psychology these days where it's seen as getting at these unalterable truths that are static, when in fact, um, the processes. That we're looking [00:54:00] at often have effects that really depend a lot on the context in which they're in, which they're done, and how they're done.

And um, so I, I just wanted to kind of add that, just to make it clear that I'm not saying this is a miracle drug. These are just things that, tools in the toolbox that can help help us make things go a little bit bit better. Uh, values, affirmations being won, especially in stressful situations.

Debbie Sorensen: Yeah. And I think you're really clear in the book it's not, I think that you're not the responsibility on the individuals, for instance, who are who are experiencing racism. Like, oh, well you just gotta, you know, deal with this, you know, do this values thing or deal with stereotyped thread in a better way.

It's, it's really, I mean, I think you're very clear about that, that it's not, not in a blame the victim kind of thing here. It's, it is more that sense of like, what needs to change. To make this better for people. And I think that's such an important distinction. I just wanna kind of [00:55:00] highlight that.

Geoffrey Cohen: Yeah. Thanks so much. Yeah, I, I totally agree. And, you know, while we're all pushing the ball forward on institutional change and creating more opportunities for people who have been disenfranchised so long, I, we, that's kind of, I would say, you know, the most important goal still. We gotta deal with the cards we've dealt down on the ground.

We, how to have to help kids get through the situations they're in. We have to get through the situations we're in. And these kinds of, um, strategies and tools can be really helpful in that.

Debbie Sorensen: So another thing that you mentioned earlier, um, when we were talking about work was this idea of perspective gathering versus perspective taking and as a clinical psychologist, okay, I think this is really interesting because sometimes I do perspective taking exercises with my clients I have them imagine what somebody else might be thinking or what would you say to this person or that person.

And sometimes my clients even ask me like, well, why do you think my spouse said this or that? And I. Well, maybe [00:56:00] this or that. You know what I mean? We're sort of guessing a little, and I, anyway, I, I'm rambling here, but I

think that what you're, this idea is so different. So could you talk a little bit about why perspective gathering might actually be helpful?

Geoffrey Cohen: Yeah. Well, it's, it's, uh, I like prospective gathering. That's a good way to put it. Actually. The term that Nick Epley and Julian Schroeder use the kind of progenitors of this idea is perspective getting,

Debbie Sorensen: Oh, that's Yes. I got the wrong

Geoffrey Cohen: is actually, that too. it's

Debbie Sorensen: thank

Geoffrey Cohen: fluid and,

Debbie Sorensen: Coming up with new terms here. Live on the air, right?

Geoffrey Cohen: kinda getting multiple perspective, not just one. So kinda like Um, the, and the, and, and there are ideas that, and what they show is that we're actually really bad at taking people's perspective. We're imagining people's perspective, even close friends, even romantic partners. When we try to imagine what someone else is [00:57:00] feeling or thinking or what their preferences is, are, we often get it wrong and we are systematically less accurate than we think we are. Not only that, they demonstrate that when you ask people to like, take the perspective of your spouse, you know, about this upcoming vacation, and imagine what they want, they actually end up being a bit worse at forecasting what their partner wants then in a control condition where they don't even make the effort.

And so why? There's a lot of reasons why. One reason is that when we try to imagine another's perspective, what we often do is we kind of put ourselves in that person's situation. And that can lead to all kinds of misses. It's like, well, they might not have the same preferences as you, as you, as as you do.

Uh, but the other thing that happens is, especially when the person has behaved objectionably, when we [00:58:00] imagine, I'm gonna put myself in their shoes, this person did something objection. , um, you know, they left the dishes in the sink and we lived together. And why'd they do that? I'm gonna try to imagine things from their point of view.

What often happens is we, we think, yeah, you know what? They're even crazier and meaner than I thought, because I know if I were in that situation, I wouldn't

have done what they did. So, uh, what Nick and and Juliana recommend is perspective getting where you, you just ask people and it's, it's sort of blazingly obvious.

You, you ask people, but of course you have to ask good questions. You can't just ask any questions. You have to ask questions that get at people's underlying value structure, preferences that aren't putting people on the defensive or just confirming your preexisting beliefs. Good questions are hard to create, but if you ask good questions, then people's empathy, their empathic accuracy source.

And in fact, um, you know, the other nice finding is [00:59:00] that people don't do this on their own because. They don't think it's going to buy them any empathic gains. They're like, why do I have to ask? But it turns out they should ask. So I really love that because it suggests that, you know, kind of blazingly, simple antidote to many of the, the kind of misunderstandings in our world.

Just, you know, try to ask people in a non-confrontational way. It's tricky. And timing has to be, you know, you gotta have good time. You have to, you know, if my kid misbehaves, like when they were little, I, it's like that's the time when they're acting out. May not be the time to perspective get, but maybe later on at bedtime it'd be like, Hey, you know, you remember early in the day, it seemed like something was what happened?

What was going on there? timing's important. So there is an art to perspective getting that I think is, is, uh, worth learning.

Debbie Sorensen: Yeah. Sometimes it's hard to get a good perspective in the heat of things being high emotion.

Geoffrey Cohen: That's right.

Debbie Sorensen: Well and I think that actually if you, this idea of just having these open [01:00:00] dialogues and conversations is really essential to a lot of your work, I think because, know, part of helping people, you, you kind of, you mentioned this in a number of areas, I think around, you know, people for instance on how white and black people in America respond to each other and political divisiveness and, you know, we can't agree on anything anymore with our, our friends and family with different political views than ours and kind of thing.

But there is really something about helping people feel. Heard and understood and having that kind of dialogue that can can move the needle,

Geoffrey Cohen: Yeah.

Debbie Sorensen: can be difficult, right?

Geoffrey Cohen: It can be difficult. It can be difficult. Um, yeah, it can be very, it can be very hard. It can be, especially when tempers flare, especially when you feel under threat. I mean, I would just recently, just take an example. I was in the store, it's like getting coffee and someone's like, comes up to me and they're like, [01:01:00] uh, and I was just waiting for my coffee.

Someone's like, you cut in line. I'm like, no, I didn't cut in line. I'm just waiting in line. I'm, I'm waiting off to the side. But they thought I had cut and I'm like, I couldn't help in a moment. I felt like saying something kind of retaliatory in response. Like, cause I felt offended to be seen as somewhat offensive, but I didn't, I was like, no worry.

I'm just waiting. And kind of casually pointed out, I, I think that these kinds of moments like that in our everyday encounters are really key. I, I see this all the time. They, they, even these encounters between stranger. It's like kinda spiral really quick because we feel offended to be seen as someone offensive.

Then we attack the other person and it kind of spirals, spirals. And I think, you know, this kind of advice to turn the other cheek even in these kind of ordinary social encounters is, is really kind of a good idea because a lot of times people are, they kind of make these heat of the moment, um, [01:02:00] judgements or actions that don't really say much about who they are.

So having a little patience there I think is, is really good. And then in, in terms of, um, conversations, the same thing. Just don't escalate. Don't escalate. Because as soon as people get outraged or feel threat, that's like one of the worst states in which to. It's one of the worst states in which to argue he's become indignant.

Uh, by contrast, the only thing that I've seen in the literature that really works to reduce polarization and create lasting change across the political divide, lasting being a key adjective here is good empathic conversations. And this is worked by David Brookman and Josh Kaa, who is in science and they've had several subsequent publications.

But to make a long story short, basically they hold conversations between canvassers and voters on many different politically sensitive [01:03:00] issues. And what's notable or noteworthy about the conversations. Just what's in them,

but what's not in them, that they don't argue, they don't bombard the voters with facts and information.

People don't like that. It kind of threatens them. People never like to be told that they're wrong or for that to be insinuated. Instead, what the canvasers do is they have a conversation, they listen, they ask good questions. They engage in a lot of perspective getting, and critically they share stories that are relevant to the political issue that they're talking about.

And this is the only thing that, that I've seen that works. It's only a 10 minute conversation, but has enduring effects on people's, uh, political attitudes. Um, you know, even in the context of presidential elections and sensitive issues like transgender rights and immigration. Uh, so I think we need more kind of conversations like that where we're just kind of the, the word conversation actually means to turn over together.

You're turning [01:04:00] over an issue together. I love that you're kind of. It's almost like you discovered an object on a trail and you're just kind of looking it over together to figure it out. And that's what a conversation is at it's best. I think we need so many more of those. Too much of our lives are being dictated or being of our political relationships are being defined by these pundits, media pundits and politicians who are trying to get us to villainize one another.

See, think in us them terms. Uh, and, and that's just gonna, that is corrosive and, you know, and just undermines the opportunities for these kinds of connections that could really bridge divides if, if they happen. Um, so a lot of the, a lot of what we're talking about here is finding little. All and all almost can just to fight back against the larger culture, the noxious elements in the culture.

And that includes the media and the social media that includes cultural biases, like the fundamental attribution error includes stereotypes. Each of us, [01:05:00] I love Irving Goffman, the famous sociologists you would see in the minutia of everyday encounters, a moral battleground. And so I do really feel like in these like little encounters across lines of difference, we can make a choice.

We can be inclusive and open and curious and really believe that there's something in the other person worth hearing or we can go on the offense. And I think that unfortunately, or fortunately, I mean going on the offense and being righteous and indignant and threatening ultimately does more harm than good and actually undermines, ironically, undermines our ability to kind of send the message we want to to promulgate, and that that applies both to the left and the right.

I think.

Debbie Sorensen: Well, that's a beautiful note to end this conversation on. Very inspiring and actually perfect timing because when this episode comes out, it'll be right in the middle of the holidays between Thanksgiving and Christmas, and so there'll probably be plenty of opportunities for [01:06:00] bridging family divides

Geoffrey Cohen: know, I'm thinking that we should do a study

Debbie Sorensen: talk to Uncle Joe at the table and, have maybe the conversation go a little better time

Geoffrey Cohen: right. Maybe you can go just a little better. That's actually brilliant.

Debbie Sorensen: Uh, well, so again, Geoff, thank you so much for coming on. The title of your book again is Belonging, the Science of Creating Connection at Bridging Divides. What's your website? Cause you have some of your and articles and that kind of thing up there,

Geoffrey Cohen: Yep, that's right. It's uh, geoffrey l cohen.com. So just my name, uh, but spelled

Debbie Sorensen: with a

Geoffrey Cohen: with a g? Yeah. G e o f f r e y. L Cohen, c o h e n.com. So just my name without any, any periods in it.

Debbie Sorensen: And one thing that's kind of cool, I was checking this out on your website earlier, is that you have some different exercises for different ages. So if you kids, I'm gonna try some of them out with my kids. I think if you're a teacher and you have students or something like that, you can put some of these into [01:07:00] practice.

And there's some for adults and then also some for younger people. So it's pretty cool

Geoffrey Cohen: yeah, that's right. Absolutely. Yeah. And, and you know, we're, we have like a little, if anyone wants to submit their own, that would be great too. It's, you know, we're they, they can be tweaked and, and uh, and changed. So, you know, there's a lot of room for creativity.

Debbie Sorensen: Great. Well, thank you again so much. It was really a

Geoffrey Cohen: Thank you, Debbie. Yeah, likewise. I really appreciate the opportunity to have a great conversation with you. Thank you.

Debbie Sorensen: Thank you. Take care.

Geoffrey Cohen: Okay, take care.

Yael Schonbrun: hey psychologist off the clock listeners. I'm going to guess that if you are listening to this episode, that you love to geek out about books in psychology.

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