

# Confidence, Self-Doubt, and Overcoming Limitations with Our New Team Member Michael Herold

[00:00:00] **Michael Herold:**

And the pilot turns to me and he says, dude, you should fly. So it reached around that pilot and he grabbed, the, that bar that steers the glider. and that's when I realized that. This was all a big lie that I've been telling myself, like these things are possible. And yes, maybe sometimes things don't work out, but what really stops me like nine out of 10 times, is that I believe this is not possible.

**Debbie Sorensen:** that was our new team member, Michael Herold, on Psychologists Off the Clock.

**Diana Hill:** We are four clinical psychologists here to bring you cutting edge and science-based ideas from psychology to help you flourish in your relationships work and health.

**Debbie Sorensen:** I'm Dr. Debbie Sorensen, practicing in Mile High Denver, Colorado.

**Diana Hill:** I'm Dr. Diana Hill practicing in seaside, [00:01:00] Santa Barbara, California.

**Yael Schonbrun:** From coast to coast. I'm Dr. Yael Schonbrun, a Boston-based clinical psychologist and assistant professor at Brown University.

**Jill Stoddard:** And from sunny San Diego, I'm Dr. Jill Stoddard author of Be Mighty and The Big Book Of Act Metaphors.

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

**Diana Hill:** Thank you for listening to Psychologists Off the Clock.

\ we're thrilled to be partnered with Praxis Continuing Education here at Psychologist's Off The Clock because we really value our own continuing education. And I know Jill you've participated in a number of Praxis events.

**Jill Stoddard:** I have. Praxis is my favorite. I think probably the most memorable was when I participated in an ACT Boot Camp after I'd already been learning and doing ACT for about 15 years. And I still got so much out of the training.

**Diana Hill:** I have a memory of Steve Hayes jumping off of a phone book to demonstrate how small your committed action can be. And sometimes I'll bring up that memory and use it with my clients. And that's probably from 10 years ago. Praxis also continues to evolve and change over time. It integrates [00:02:00] new therapies as they come out.

it has trainings in Compassion Focused Therapy and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and Radically Open DBT.

**Jill Stoddard:** If you go to our website at [www.offtheclockpsych.com](http://www.offtheclockpsych.com) and visit our sponsorship page, you can get a coupon for \$25 off. So check it out.

**Diana Hill:** We've had a number of guests on the show that we've been inspired by, and that are offering you our listeners discounts on their programs. If you go to our website [offtheclockpsych.com](http://offtheclockpsych.com), you'll be able to find coupon codes for the programs of Dr. Judson Brewer, Dr. Rick Hanson and Jen Lumenlun. So go check it out at, [offtheclockpsych.com](http://offtheclockpsych.com) and start learning today.

**Debbie Sorensen:** You all

**Michael Herold:** let's let's

let's do this. Ooh, turtle power.

**Debbie Sorensen:** We have a very special episode for you today. Yael and I are here together to interview our dear friend, Michael Herold who is talking to us all the way from Vienna. And he is a very special guests for a number of reasons. One is that he's a new member of the team, the psychologists off the clock team.

We're so delighted. He started working with us [00:03:00] recently as our content strategist, which is a funny title for him because apparently it's very. Difficult to pronounce. So, Michael, how's your pronunciation going?

**Michael Herold:** It's it's better. I'm I'm now a strat strat See, see this, this is what happens all the time strategy. Like this is not a word that goes well with a German accent, but I'm still working on it.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Okay, well, and if needed, we can always change titles just to make it roll off the tongue a little more smoothly, but we're so happy that you're on the team. Michael is wonderful to work with. And I'll tell you a little bit about his background. So he's a very multitalented person. In a former life. He worked as an animator for films like Penguins of Madagascar and Kung Fu Panda, which.

I don't know about you Yael but that blows my children away. That I know someone who was involved in those films because they love them.

**Yael Schonbrun:** It definitely increased my mom cache when I told them

**Michael Herold:** Glad I'm glad I could help.

**Debbie Sorensen:** We're cool. Now. [00:04:00] Um, and now we're going to talk a little bit about Michael's career trajectory, but now he does public speaking around the world. including a TEDx talk and he has spoken in front of parliament.

He does coaching on self-doubt, confidence, communication, public speaking. And we're going to talk about some of these things later. Does that pretty much capture your coaching, Michael?

**Michael Herold:** Yes. Yes, it does. It does. I'm primarily working around, um, confidence building and getting people outside of their comfort zone because as you two know. Growth only happens when you're out there. It doesn't happen on your couch. So that's primarily the work that I do. Like getting people outside of their comfort zone, where everything is a little bit like anxiety provoking and scary and also powerful and beautiful.

That's where I want to get people.

**Debbie Sorensen:** well, we'll be talking about that today and I would love to hear your thoughts about how people can do that. Michael also works for another podcast, The Art of [00:05:00] Charm, and is also their lead instructor for their core confidence program and helps also with that podcast as well.

So, Michael, can you tell us a little bit about how you made this transition? You went from working in the film industry to this career that you have now in coaching and podcasting. How did that happen?

**Michael Herold:** Oh, this is, this is a long story. I hope you, you brought like tea and a blanket this weekend. We can sit over this for a long time, but, , I'll try to keep, I'll try to keep this brief and remember I'm a public speaker. So if you give me a microphone, I go on forever. , but here's the gist of it. So, becoming a character animator, , was my, my big dream.

Like this is, this was one of the, this is what I want to do with my life. And as I was going through school to learn this and then starting to work in my first movies and series, , there was also a part of me that wanted to tell people how to go after their own [00:06:00] dreams. And particularly I wanted to work with.

Teenagers and adolescents that were living with a disability because that's my background. I live with a disability, um, spinal muscular atrophy for those listeners who are familiar with that. for those who aren't, I'm using an electric wheelchair and it was like, it was so dear to my heart to show people how to go off to their own dreams, despite the limitations they might have.

And so there I was, I was living this amazing life, traveling the world. And at one point, this was the highlight in my character animation career. I was living in New Zealand. Which back then, like blew my mind to get the opportunity to actually be paid, to travel there and then work for Nickelodeon on the Penguins of Madagascar and Kung Fu Panda. The TV series, I can't claim to work on the movie or on the TV series. And one day I, I sat at the [00:07:00] beach during my lunch break, which is something you can do when you live in New Zealand, you know, let's just hop up, you go to the beach. And I thought to myself, like, Why am I not doing this? Like my career in film, like this is, this is the peak.

Like, this is, this is as good as it gets. And I've been in the industry for over a decade at that point. And I thought to myself that I can take my life into two directions. I can either keep working in the film industry and I'll make good money. I'll travel the world or work on these amazing projects.

And then I'll retire and I die. Or I can turn this around and I can start teaching people, particularly people that live with some form of limitation. To go after their own dreams and not in a, Hey, you know, I can do it, you can do it way. But like, here are the steps, this is what you do. And kind of be the living proof, be the, the, the excuse that people can no longer make, because I can claim that, Hey, you know what, it, wasn't easy.

[00:08:00] I'm not going to lie to you. It's more than difficult than, you know, for you than it will be for others. But, but this is possible. And then at that beach, I decided, yeah, that's what I'll do. And I quit my job. Like two weeks later, I came back to Germany. That's where I'm originally from. If you can't tell from, from my accent and I became a public speaker and then I started building my life around that.

**Yael Schonbrun:** So I have a question to dovetail on that, which is what brought you over to Psychologists Off the Clock through Jill Stoddard is our shared interest in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. So I'm kind of curious. So from film industry to public speaker, to, teaching people about how to overcome limitations, how did you discover Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and, and.

You know, if you're willing to kind of go into why it resonated for you and how it changed your life. I'd love to hear that origin story.

**Michael Herold:** yeah, just as much as, um, my, my work contract to travel [00:09:00] to New Zealand to work on the penguins was like the wow moment of the past life discovering Acceptance Commitment Therapy was the wow moment in, in the next chapter of my life. And here's how it happened. I. I was living in Vienna at the time I got invited to speak at TEDx Vienna, which was a huge event and I

**Yael Schonbrun:** by the way, just to interject, everybody needs to see the video of your TEDx talk. It is life-changing so we will link to it, but I cannot emphasize enough how beautiful and moving and just eyeopening it is. So.

**Michael Herold:** I agree. I agree everyone should watch it on the same page here. So, so, so, so this is, this is what was happening in my life back then. And I was, I was on that stage, which was a huge event for me. It was, it was huge. And at the same time, over the past weeks leading up to the event, I had seen this Meetup [00:10:00] that was happening in Vienna.

It was called the comfort zone crusher Meetup. We're going to get together. We're going to do some silly exercises to build our confidence. And I'll be honest. I was intrigued and I was also scared to go there, but I have this really great excuse because I had to prep for a TEDx talk. Right. I can't spend my Saturday there.

I need to rehearse. And then I gave this talk and. After the talk. I mean, I was in front of over a thousand people, I got standing ovations. I thought I had this entire like confidence thing, like nailed down. So the next week. I went to this Meetup and I thought, you know what? I don't have anything to do on this Saturday.

I'll just see what this confidence thing is about and what I can teach them. Right. Is this like speaker? And what happened was that there was like 15, 20 people that met in some guys. Uh, living room, there were three people organizing this free event in their own time for no money in their living room.

And it was about self [00:11:00] development. And at the end of the event, we would go out to a busy street in Vienna to do comfort zone challenges. And those are basically exposure exercises. Like, uh, we, we had a choice of a couple of them like high five strangers. Um, tell a stupid joke to strangers like photo bomb.

Um, Do the lie down in the public place, just lie down on the sidewalk. And, um, as we went out to do them and it's like, this is big, the main shopping street in Vienna with lots of tourists, lots of strangers, lots of exposure. And I completely froze. I was like, even now, just thinking back to this, I remember I came out of the tram.

I saw the street. I knew that now I had to high-five strangers. And everything froze. Like I couldn't, I couldn't speak, I couldn't move. My hand wouldn't come out of my pocket. My hand was like, no, I'm not doing this. Like you signed up for this. I didn't say I would do this. And [00:12:00] no, thank you exactly. Like see how you do this without me.

And luckily I had this one coach by my side, his name was David, and he was guiding me through this and he was asking me these weird questions. Like what's showing up for you right now. What's your, what's your mind telling you what thoughts show up? And that way he like guided me through this and I was, at the end I was high-fiving strangers. I was telling them stupid jokes. I high is like, Three year old girl. And then the dad came after me. He's like, Oh, well, what's happening now? And it's like, I want to high five to men. I want to high five too. And it was like half an hour later. I was smiling like all over my face.

I felt so alive because on one side, I, I brought a smile to so many people's faces out there. And on the other side, I felt so alive because my inner critic didn't hold me back. My anxiety didn't hold me back. And it felt so freaking alive that at the end of the event, I went to the organizers and I [00:13:00] said, guys, I know you do this every week.

I'm going to be here every week because I need to get this figured out. I want this in my life. This is the most important thing. Um, you'll see me every Saturday. And they looked at me and I said, well, sorry, Michael, this was the last time we're doing this because we're, we're leaving the Anna. We're not doing this anymore.

And I said, okay, like, this can not leave my life if it's okay with you. I will run these workshops. I have no idea how I have no idea what this magic is that you do here. But I have a living room. I have, I'm a public speakers. I can at least do the intro and I'll grab some veterans from those workshops.

And I'll BR that have done them a couple of times and we'll like cooperate and we'll make this our own and we'll run it. And that's what happened. And the next week, this was happening in my living room with like 20 people sitting on the couch, on the floor, sitting everywhere in my living room, like as people were sitting and I was standing there in front of

them, I was like, so what we're [00:14:00] doing here is based on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and it's exposure therapy.

And it was like bullet list that had learned by heart. And I had no idea what I was talking about. And, and so this entire thing unfolded. Every Saturday in my living room with, um, one and a half years, this thing ran except for Christmas. That was the only time we didn't do this. So like 80, 80 workshops with over 1500 people coming through.

And this was how I learned more and more about Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, because I was looking into like, how does this actually work? How can silly exercises like that be so powerful and acceptance and commitment therapy was the answer because it wasn't about high-fiving strangers. It was about what is your mind telling you as you walk up to that person to ask for a high five, [00:15:00] because I can tell you what shows up. Your inner critic tells you this is weird. You shouldn't do this. They're going to laugh at you. Your anxiety builds up. And then you can like feel that and you can realize that even with all of that coming up, I can still say, Hey, can I have a high five and move through it?

**Yael Schonbrun:** Yeah. I mean, it's, it's so powerful because I think, and this is what you're emphasizing that it's not that you're not feeling anxious. It's not that it's not scary. It's not that you're comfortable. In fact, you're terribly uncomfortable, but you've decided that there's a meaning and a purpose, and it's worth tolerating that discomfort in the service of, you know, doing, engaging living, participating, connecting. And that sounds like you you've had this really transformative experience that really, that you were open to and that you allowed it to really change the course of your life. It's it's really a powerful thing.

**Michael Herold:** it felt like detective work because I was, I was the speaker. [00:16:00] I was the animator. I didn't know about that stuff. And then, and then. People came up to me and they said, you know, Michael, like, I'm doing those challenges every day. Even outside of the meetups, I go to streets and I practice this again and again and again, but I'm still scared to talk with my ex-boyfriend.

Like, why does this not work? I was like, okay, I'm going to, you know, I'm going to look into this because I think there is an answer. And the answer that showed up again and again, and again, is that. It's not about the exposure. It's not about the high five. It's not about the lying down the sidewalk, but it's the ability to sit in that struggle and do what's meaningful despite that stuff.

And, and there were so many, like we built this community that was so like, So, so here's the story for you? There was this one young lady sitting on my couch and as everyone introduced themselves, she said, well, you know, I'm really shy. I'm so introverted, but I want to be a musician. I want to be a street musician.

And the guy next to her said, [00:17:00] Oh, we should talk because I'm here for the same reason. And then as we did these. Challenges out there we saw street musicians and we approached them and say, Hey, do you mind if like she sings the next song? And then we do let that as a group, you know, all of us like standing around and clapping and a couple of

weeks later, they would perform for the first time on the street, just before the meetup in front of my house.

And yeah. A year later, they formed the band and they're now Even If, and they have two albums out on iTunes, which is, which is crazy. And, and the, the magic that was happening there was that we're all in it together. It wasn't one person going through it. It was like all of us working on that.

**Debbie Sorensen:** I love it. It's willingness and action. Right? You're like, I'm not sure if I know what I'm doing and I'm going for it. And it's scary and hard and we're making it happen

**Michael Herold:** Yeah, exactly.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Yeah. So we want to also go back a bit more to your, your Ted talk and also your early [00:18:00] history. And one of the things in your Ted talk is about your experience growing up with SMA and spinal muscular atrophy and how, and one of the quotes from your TEDx talk, which I third, the recommendation that it's a must-listen, everybody should check it out for sure. Um, And the quote is things you will achieve in your life, you will achieve because of your disability, not in spite of it. And I think you tell a really lovely, personal story about that, but can you just share a little bit with our listeners about how your disability did give you a unique perspective and helped you get where you are in the world?

**Michael Herold:** it was, it was freaking tough. Um, and thinking back to it now, like I have so much compassion for that little guy. Who was other than it was different than the other kids and who couldn't like follow along. Like they would, they would walk too fast. They would be too fast on their bicycles. They would climb up on trees and I couldn't follow.

And, [00:19:00] um, my, my mother got remarried when I was 12 years old. So my life shifted, we moved, I got came into a new school and this was when all came together like disability, puberty were like, what on earth is that? What's happening here? Right. And I was in a completely new environment where I knew no one and I was scared.

I was scared that back then, um, I was still, I was still walking. I was walking in like a funny wobbly way. Um, it wasn't the fastest, I wasn't the strongest, but I still seemed air quotes. Normal. And I was so scared that my, the kids in school would find out that it had a disability, because that was a big thing.

That was a negative thing, especially in the, in the German language. Like the connotation of disability is it's, it's negative, like slow traffic on the highway. In Germany, it's called a disability. Um, and, and there was the saying among teenagers, [00:20:00] that that TV show is totally disabled. So me coming out and saying guys, the reason I can't like.

Play soccer with you as I have a disability was a no-go. So I came up with all kinds of stories of why I couldn't do this and why I was walking in this funny way, because I just twisted my ankle and it's going to be okay next week. And, and I was just living in hiding with a lot of shame. And there was also a lot of bullying because the moment you have someone in your class who is insecure, I like that.

That's perfect victim. And so I went through a lot of bullying until. I was maybe like I switched schools and I went to what in Germany would be called, like the stage just before college. Um, whatever that might be in the States, but I was like 17 or 18. And that was when I slowly started to learn, to admit to it and ask for help.

And when I went to college and I lived in a, in a student dorm, [00:21:00] I actually had to ask people for help. And I was like, Hey, sorry, I can't like, can you help me with this? Can you help me with my TV? And that's when I just very slowly learned that it's actually okay to, you know, air quotes, admit to this. And, and it's not, it's not a burden.

And, and only after that, did I discover that it's actually a strength? It's actually a strength for me and. And that is, that is the story of the TEDx talk. And, um, the realization that those things that I did achieve in my life, um, for the longest time I thought that. I need to over-perform to compensate for this flaw that I had.

And later I learned that if I can go to college to one of the best universities in Europe, if I can do these, this, and this and this and this, even though I have a disability. That's impressive. That's really impressive. And I [00:22:00] know you guys had Janina Scarlet on a couple of weeks ago, and she has the same thing where she says, you know, sometimes people get up and they do their work.

And sometimes there are people that get up and they do their work and they battle like five dragons at the same time. That's that's impressive. And, and that was the realization that I had for myself that no, I'm I'm, I'm doing okay. I'm doing okay. Now it's time to get this out so that. Other people in the same situation, um, would realize that too.

But, but here's what happened. I gave my first couple of talks and I always thought I would talk to people with a disability, but what happened was that people would sit in the audience and they'd like, wipe their eyes and, and they would like come up to me afterwards and they say, you know what? Like I'm strong, I'm healthy, but what you just said.

I I'm afraid too, I'm ashamed too, I struggle with things too. And that's when I [00:23:00] realized maybe my message isn't for just those people, maybe it's for the entire world. And, and so, yeah, that, that happened.

**Yael Schonbrun:** this idea of not allowing the limitations of our body or our mind stop us is such a powerful message.

And I just wondered if you could even speak to the part about the bucket list that you talk about in your Ted talk, because that is just kind of mind blowing actually.

**Michael Herold:** Um, so when I was around 30, um, this was at the beginning of my career in film. I was at a really dark place. I was unemployed. I was living at my dad's place on unemployment money. So if you're like 30 years listening to this, you can imagine how that feels. And. And at the same time, my disability was like, still, like, it's still getting worse every year slowly.



Um, but at that point, like I've, I've really hit a low [00:24:00] point physically as well. Right. And just everything became exhausting. Uh, getting out of bed was difficult, not mentally, but physically like standing up, um, cleaning the kitchen, which, and was physically exhausting going shopping. I would only do that when I felt, like fit when I had a good day, that's when I would do the shopping and then I would be exhausted afterwards. And I was so 30 years old and I was thinking like, this is it like, this is, this is the life I'm living now. And one, so, so there was this one morning and I'm getting up and I'm making my coffee and I'm sitting down and I'm thinking I'm going to.

I'm going to have a chat with the universe and I'm going to write down all of the things that I can't do, all of the things that I want to do and that I long to do and that I dream of doing, but I'll never, ever physically be able to do them. Like this is completely off. And I wanted to have that written down so I can show it to the [00:25:00] universe and go like, this is what you stole from me for no reason.

And I've wrote this list and. I got, I got angry and I got sad because this is like forever. Like not, not even like try hard and you'll make it. It's like, no, no, this is not happening. And then I thought, you know what? I'm not living with that. I have nothing to lose. I'll try, I'll try this out. I'll give all of this a shot.

And if. What's going to happen is that humanity tells me you can't do this. It's not safe. You don't have the money. You're not strong enough. You know, this is not happening with your disability. You can't do this. I was like, okay, tell me, I want to hear it. I want to hear it again and again and again, and then I'll curl up and I'll cry, but not before that happens.

And. The, the biggest dream that I had in my life was flying in a hang glider. And this was a dream that I had since I was in kindergarten. And my dad had shown me this, this movie. Um, no, she covered the Valley of the wind, which is about this [00:26:00] teenage girl that flies in this like glider. And I watched this movie as a kid, like every, every weekend I was watching and I was like flying.

It is amazing. And. I wanted to fly, hang glider. And that's where I started. And I started calling like flight schools and organizations and everyone who would pick up the phone I'd call and be like, Hey, you know what, I'm Michael, this is my problem. This is what I'm struggling with. But I'd really like to fly.

And always, it was no, sorry, you know, you need to kind of run, you need to run a bit and then get your legs up. And then, you know, jump off the mountain and like fly. And you know, you clearly can't do that. And one airfield picked up and they said, Oh yeah, I think that's possible. Like, I think we have, we have a flyer that that's, that's going to work.

That's not a problem. Do you have time on Sunday? I was like, what? so I went there on Sunday and I mean, it still wasn't easy. So in order to get into a hang glider, you have to wear this flight harness. [00:27:00] That's like super heavy. You have to climb through all like wires and bars to get like under the wing.

And, , basically like there were six people that saw that I was struggling and they all came together and they kind of help my, my legs to go here and my arms to go there. And, and,

and, um, this was a tandem flight, so you're not allowed, like they wouldn't let me fly, you know, a hanglider all by myself.

exactly. So, so there was this pilot in, under the hang glider with me. And, uh, we went up into the air at goober at a, at a thousand meters. So for you and for you, uh, us Americans, that's over over half, over half a mile. So, so, but instead of numbers, like you look down and you don't see people anymore. Um, you look down and all the cars, they look like.

You're looking at a, at a toy set and you'll see like these tiny white dots below you. And then you realize those are actually birds. And before you saw those tiny white dots above you, and now they're below [00:28:00] UN and we're up there and the pilot is flying. And I was like, my mind was blown. I was like, this is, this is happening.

Like, this is possible. I have, I, there was no S there's no sound there's no, all you have is like wind and the feeling of air, like rushing past, and all you have is that little bar below you to steer. And the pilot turns to me and he says, dude, you should fly. Come on here. This is be fun. You'll if you fly.

So it reached around that pilot and the grabbed the, that bar that steers the glider. And I started making turns up there and that's when I realized that. This was all a big lie that I've been telling myself, like these things are possible. And yes, sometimes my disability will require to think outside of the box and, and yes, maybe [00:29:00] sometimes things don't work out, but what really stops me like nine out of 10 times, what stops me is that I believe this is not possible.

And. And what unfolded from there was that, um, half a year later I was in New Zealand and I was working with these shows and I was skydiving and I was bungee jumping and dancing and, and surfing. And, um, how do you call that, that motorcycle in the water? What do you call that thing? Um, jet-ski yeah, really glad that none of my friends had brought like a camera to film and that, that endeavor, um, and, and all of those things.

And, and then, yeah, and then came the day where I sat at the beach and I realized I have a purpose here. Like I'm cheating the universe, if I'm selfish. And I follow like this film thing, I have a purpose here that maybe very few people have. That they can go out there and they can make change [00:30:00] happen. And, and with that purpose in mind, that was like, okay, you know what?

That's, that's what the universe is. Kind of feel weird to talk in terms of like, the universe tells me, but, but I w I felt like I can't go back and tell my younger self, you know, this is all going to be okay. And this is how you do it, but I can tell thousands of other people, like it's going to be okay.

And this is how you do it.

**Debbie Sorensen:** It feels very driven by values, right? If going back to acceptance and commitment therapy, that there was behind all of this, there was a lot of, you know, perseverance and whatnot, but all for the sake of values of having meaning and doing some things that felt really important and meaningful.

**Michael Herold:** Yeah, exactly. Exactly.

**Yael Schonbrun:** I was also gonna say that you and I, Michael, have a shared fondness and I'm sure many of our listeners do too, of Viktor Frankl. And he talks a lot about, you know, Responding when the [00:31:00] universe asks of us to do something. And it sounds like you were, open to receiving that message. The other thing that keeps going through my mind, whenever I hear you talking about your story is just how inspirational it is, but there's, there's sort of like this Connotation that I now have with the idea of inspiration, which was discussed in a past episode that we did episode 91 with psychologist and disability rights activist, Erin Andrews.

And she talks about "disability porn" as a microaggression that we can participate in. And when we say, Oh, it's so inspiring that somebody with a disability overcomes it, that we're almost minimizing it or using it in this way, that just feels kind of. Really disrespectful .

So I was just kind of curious if you would be willing to

**Michael Herold:** This is,

**Yael Schonbrun:** on that and what your experiences

**Michael Herold:** is, this is such a, such a big thing and something that I only learned about maybe half year ago. And that made me go up a little bit, this idea of motivational porn. [00:32:00] And I like the first time I became a public speaker, I was like, Oh, I'm a motivational speaker. And now, I, I hate is the wrong, no hate is the right word. I don't like to be called a motivational speaker anymore because it's so much around the feel good in the moment. And yeah, I can do this. And then, you know, The talk is over you jump to the next YouTube video and you're on your own again. And, , I wouldn't always mention my disability actually, when I talk with clients or when I do interviews and stuff like that, , I mentioned it when it kind of is necessary to tell my story, but I never go the way of saying, Hey, you know, if I can do this in a wheelchair, you know, what excuse do you have, even though I have to say that sometimes, , this is like a joker that I played with clients and clients have told me that as well. They said, Oh Like, how can I make excuses when you know, Michael, Michael pulled this off. So, so I feel a little bit torn on one side.

I know that if I pull this [00:33:00] card, like I take away your excuses, you know, and then it's in the service of you because now I'm helping you because I pull the rug out from under your feet and he's like, you know what, no, I'm not taking that. Like, like clients were telling me, well, you know what, I struggle with dating because I'm too short.

And I'm like, really like really you'll come to me with that. Right. Really? And they're like, ah, Yeah, this is not working here. So, so in that regard, I kind of like to use it just because it has that extra power, but at the same time, it's weird for me to describe what the world looks like when you're using a wheelchair, because you might go into an elevator to go down to the subway and the lady next to you in the elevator turns to you and says, Oh, I admire you for your strength.

And I don't even know my name. Like what are you talking about? Um, so, so this is, this is a weird line to walk and I think if, if [00:34:00] disability gives a foundation to your mindset and shows, Hey, if, if this mindset works, even given a disability, it probably works in other circumstances as well.

What, what I don't like to do is, , pull this like tear card, all this, you know what, you know, the cry, cry, cry, and so on and, and tough, tough, tough. like the, just do it. , that's one of my pet peeves. Like, no, that's not how it works. You don't tell people to just do it. You tell them.

How to do it. And then you use the disability as kind of a proof of concept that, Hey, if it even works in this situation, maybe it's valid. I hope, I don't know. I'm getting sidetracked. I hope I answered that.

**Debbie Sorensen:** yeah, I think that that woman in the elevator who said, what was it about, Oh, I admire your strength. And it's like, for what? Existing? I think it's different. You're using it to like illustrate something the way we might use a number of other examples as well. It's a different thing.

**Michael Herold:** Yeah. [00:35:00] Yeah. I'll, I'll give you that as a strength though. I always stand out. I always stand. I can't go to a party and be the guy that no one sees because I'll drive over your foot. Like if you're in the way, you know, I'll, I'll like ask you twice to please step away and then I'll just roll over your feet.

So. And, and, um, I can go back into a sushi restaurant two years later and they're like, Oh, you're back, blah, blah, blah. Because they remembered that they had to move like the table and the chair for me to get there. So I'm always standing out and I'm using that to my advantage because people are going to look at me in any case.

There's nothing I can do about it, but what they see that's up to me. If they see the grumpy person and he's like, Hey, what are you looking at? Or if they see the person that smiles and says, Hey, I have a joke, what do you call a pile of cats? I meowntain, and then they look at me and they shake their heads.

It's like, what is that about? And, [00:36:00] and, um, and I can't wiggle

**Debbie Sorensen:** A Meowntain?

**Michael Herold:** A meowntain. I mean,

**Debbie Sorensen:** Did I catch that, right? Okay.

**Michael Herold:** 10 seconds later. It's like, Oh, wait,

**Debbie Sorensen:** Okay, thank you.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Well, I just, I wanted to just make a comment about that. About your memorability because Michael, you made such a huge impression on me. I didn't make the

first POTC meeting where you met with the other co-hosts, but I watched the video and I was like, wow, this guy is just amazing.

I want to be his friend. I want to learn from him. And I think it was like two meetings later. You were on a train. I had no idea that you had a disability. We were chatting and I was asking. Where you were coming from or going to, and you said you were coming back from the hospital and I was so confused and I think it was only at that point that I watched your TEDx talk.

So you're not simply memorable for sitting in a wheelchair. You're memorable because you have a presence, you have a [00:37:00] humor, you have a wisdom. And I think that is for me, what's inspirational.

The other thing I wanted to This is maybe an extension of what we're talking about, but you know, you really do know how to engage people to better themselves and to help others too. And, and I think when you look at your history in the film industry, and then as a public speaker, and now, you know, teaching Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, one of the, one of the things that sort of ties those all together is teaching through story.

And I, and I'm curious what you see as the central ingredients of a story that inspires and enhances lives.

**Michael Herold:** Struggle. Struggle. When I, when I coach people, to go up on stage and give a talk. Um, this is what I tell them that there needs to be. First of all, that needs to be a story in there. If you present in a, in the scientific realm of the business realm, it's easy to make this all about numbers and stuff. In which case, you know, five minutes later, everyone's going to have their phone out and check if there's any [00:38:00] new notifications coming in from Facebook.

But, but if it's about the story, now, it's more of that. Oh, I'm going to be entertained like right now, I want to listen. But, but to add to that, Once we have that foundation of a story in, um, if you give me a story where you come up and you say, Hey, you know, so I built this business and I have like \$10 million a year and here's my third Ferrari.

And then there's this, and then we're doing this and five billion people. And I was like, yeah. So how do I relate to that? Because you're not, you're in a different realm. But if you, if you come up and you say, so this was a problem that I was having. And I was really struggling with that because when I was in, when I was in high school, like kids bullied me and they were pushing me over just to see how funny it would look of me getting up.

And there was something that was really struggling with. And then I came up with this idea that maybe if I fill in the blank, this could, you know, do something. And [00:39:00] now you're like, Okay. So I'm not, I'm not struggling like this, but I'm also struggling, like, look at the guy on the stage and me, we both struggle.

Like that's so amazing. We both struggle. We're both. Yeah. And, surprise, like we're both humans. Of course we both struggle, but, but now, um, I can relate to you because you

struggle because you're human and I struggle because I'm human and now we have that bond and now I'm listening and, and if now your story unfolds in a way that says.

And I did this and this and this and, and I'll look at me. Um, I'm just, you know, buying my third Ferrari. No, it's still kind of the same, like really a Ferrari, like really, but, but it's that hate if that person makes it through, if that person is where I am now and they made it through, maybe I can do too. And, and that is, and people don't want to talk about their struggles because it's scary and you admit to failure and fear and vulnerabilities.

[00:40:00] So you want to talk about all the successes, but that's not what you relate to. And, uh, one of my former mentors, he talks of the idea of he, like, he uses the metaphor of a Teflon pan. Like you have this pan in the kitchen. That's so amazing because nothing sticks to it. It's beautiful. And. And we humans, we want to be like Teflon people where nothing sticks were so perfect that everything just runs off.

But guess what, if you want to connect with someone, if you want to stick to someone, you need that scratch, you need that damage. You need that struggle. And then of course you are, if you do that with your Teflon pan, your bacon suddenly sticks to the pan and that's not really what you want, but with other humans, that's exactly what you want.

So, so being perfect doesn't get you there.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Yeah. and when we're telling a story or we're teaching a therapeutic skill, what we need is that connection because connection helps us translate [00:41:00] information. It helps motivate. It helps connect to the larger concepts and the values. And I love that. I had never quite thought about it that way, but, but yeah, struggle is sort of the core and just from it.

Therapist's perspective. It's, it's an interesting question because as the therapist were sort of disincentivized to share our own struggles, and that is something that we do a bit of on this podcast. And I do think, you know, as a listener to other podcasts, that is what I connect to. Like when a host is sharing, you know, this is, you know, something that has been difficult for me, or that has pained me in some way, that

your, your ears perk up and your heart opens. That is what connects you

in.

**Michael Herold:** is, this is what, um, what sometimes happens in, in when I do my, my online training, which is eight weeks. And in the first session, I would like tell them, you know what? I sometimes struggle with anxiety. I'm not always confident. And like, what? You know, I signed up for this eight week program and now the coach tells me the first session.

[00:42:00] He's not always confident, like what on earth? But yet that that's it. This is, this is it. And, and. Telling anything else would, would be lying. Like, you know, if, if I, if someone comes up to me and says, Oh, you're a confidence coach. I never struggled with that. Like, I'm always on point, like, we'll run it just, you know, don't get a business card.

Don't don't get caught. Just, just run. Right. That's and. When I remember one of the first things I did when I became a coach was I wrote this like dream map. And the idea was that I got this all figured out and you know, I never struggle again. And then I can coach, and then I asked myself like, how on earth can you coach people through their fears out of their comfort zone?

If you don't even know what they're going through? Like how on earth can I, can I tell you? Yeah, this is scary. I know. If I clearly don't like, I'm glad that I struggled with this. And I'm glad that every [00:43:00] day there's still things that, um, you know, make me a little bit anxious, like jumping on this call because what I can do is like, Oh, look at that.

Like my clients feel like that a lot too. And it's beautiful to see that, that overlap, like to get that glimpse into, into someone else's world.

**Debbie Sorensen:** You know, this was perfect set up because I want to move right into talking about some of these coaching areas. And I think confidence is a big one. I who, who among us can't relate to what you're saying, right? That nobody, I mean, maybe a few severe narcissists out there, but the rest of us, you know, we're not always confident and yet, we don't want that to hold us back.

And I hear it from my clients a lot. They, they come to me all the time saying like, I want to be more confident. I want to. You know, have the confidence to be able to do this or that. Can you give us just a few thoughts about how you work with confidence in your coaching work?

**Michael Herold:** Yeah. So when it comes to [00:44:00] confidence, most people use, use the wrong tool to solve the wrong problem. And I think confidence and anxiety can loosely be the same, like flip side of the same coin. So saying, Hey, how can I stop being anxious? Or how can I start being confident? And, you know, in popular terms, it's kind of the same thing.

So if people come to me and they say, well, Michael, how do I stop being anxious? How do I start being confident? It's a bit like. If, if you, , just started working on your pilot license and your client been to this, like, , passenger chat and you sit in the cockpit and you look around and you go like, , Michael, which button do I need to press?

So we don't crash. It's like, that's a good question. It's a good question. It's a noble question, but, but you're trying to apply a very simple solution to a very complex problem. And, and, and this is where [00:45:00] people try to solve the wrong problem, because the fact that you're anxious, , most many of my clients will say, okay, I'm anxious when it's a business meeting, a job interview, a party.

Um, so I'll use those examples. , how do I stop being anxious when I go into a party? And the problem is not that you're anxious, the problem is that you're not going to the party. Or the problem is that maybe you go to the party, but you don't talk to people because you wait for that magical moment where the anxiety goes away.

So, so that is, and that is not, I realize that's not the magic solution. Everyone wants out there. In which case I say, try some alcohol that does the trick, but we all know that doesn't work in the longterm. So, uh, let's, you know, we're not endorsing the use of alcohol to become

**Yael Schonbrun:** there's simple

**Michael Herold:** exactly, exactly.

**Yael Schonbrun:** consequences.

**Michael Herold:** The next morning.

We're like, did I really send this text or no. Exactly.

**Debbie Sorensen:** but then you have the next day shame of what have I done?

**Michael Herold:** exactly. So, so apparently, you [00:46:00] know, you have an N of three here. Alcohol really doesn't work in the longterm. So, so now the question is, do you wait until the anxiety goes away? Or are you willing to learn, to say hi to people? How do you, how are you doing? What brings you here? How do you know Jeff? Um, how long have you worked here while you're feeling anxious and as like, yeah, but I don't want to feel anxious.

Yep. But guess what? That's what's happening. That's exactly what's happening. So, so instead of, , foolishly and childishly, hoping for the day where you'll be super confident forever, Can you maybe instead accept that, you know, this is on the, this is part of the ride with you. And, , Kelly Wilson said this so beautifully when he said, um, whenever you try something for the first time that anxiety is the price you pay for admission.

And we all are really, really good at living the life we currently live. We're really good at it, but the moment you [00:47:00] change something, you're not the best person at that anymore. You're trying something new. And you're probably going to make some mistakes and that's probably the anxiety provoking. So if you don't feel, if you don't, so here's my solution.

If you don't want to feel anxious, get a Netflix subscription, get a PlayStation and get a lot of ice cream and get a couch. Now, congratulations. But now everyone's like, no, but that's not the life that I want. Well, yeah. Then maybe anxiety is the price that you'll pay for admission. So, but to, instead of all the, now that I've lowered the energy, it's like, Oh no.

So here's something I like to tell my clients, like, first of all, we do a lot of work around like being able to live with the anxiety. So we do a lot of work around defusion, acceptance, present moment awareness, all of that good stuff, but. Um, one of the things that sticks with them is that I say, can you do this 20 times, 20 times?

Can you go up to someone at a [00:48:00] party and say, Hey, hi, my name is Michael. W what brings you here? 20 times, regardless of how it goes. Can you do it 20 times? Because what's usually happening after 20 times is that they'll come back and say, actually I did it 30 times. I completely forgot about it in the end.



And I was just keep going. And that's what they learn with those comfort zone challenges because in the first week I tell them, well, you know, your homework this week is go to a public place. Are you listening? Go to a public place and then again, and then lie down on the sidewalk. And they're like, what? I can't do that!

And then everyone checks in and they send photos and everyone's laughing about everyone's photo. They send in and they comment and like, and all of that stuff. And then we do that every single week. The next week I have them out there standing in the corner, somewhere with the hands up in the air for no good reason.

And the same thing repeats. And every time they come back and they say, yeah, you know what? The first time was difficult. The second was easier. And the third one, I didn't even, I had to push myself actually a little bit more. And by the [00:49:00] fifth time, I really didn't care anymore. And like, okay. Maybe, maybe it's with other things.

That are the same way. Maybe, maybe that's where it starts. And maybe that's not easy, but maybe that's a solution that works.

**Debbie Sorensen:** it's like the, the doing, instead of waiting, like waiting for confidence, like, well, I'll do this as soon as I'm confident. It's like, you could spend your whole life, you know, on the couch with ice cream and Netflix waiting for the confidence to kick in, but you're talking about doing it and actually just getting out in the world and practicing it.

I love this confidence, these confidence building actions. It's the. Do it part, the confidence may or may not come later.

**Michael Herold:** Yeah, exactly.

**Debbie Sorensen:** like we can't just keep living our lives, waiting for confidence to show up.

**Michael Herold:** exactly. And, and so, so we would like in, in the chorus, we would get together. Um, and the weekend for two hours and we'd do like exercises around, say defusion, for [00:50:00] example, work on the inner critic and all the stuff, the practice, some exercises around that, and then sent the guys out there for the rest of the week and be like every day, go to a public place, lie down.

But before you do that, Check your inner critic and practice those defusion skills. And then week two, we talk about experiential acceptance and prep doing some exercises around that, and then go out there and stand in the corner with your hands up in the air. And then week three is present moment awareness and so on and layer and layer and layer.

And. At one point, like usually in like week three, four or five, someone will come back and they will say, you know what? At work, this thing happened where my boss gave me some really bad feedback. And then I realized it felt just like that day, where I was supposed to lie down on the sidewalk. So instead of blowing up, I was using exactly the same stuff I was practicing for weeks and I did it with my boss.

And guess what, like I was [00:51:00] able to do what was important, even though it felt uncomfortable and then silently I'm like, yes, that's it.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Let's tie it to an example that's near and dear to your heart as a public speaker, because don't they say that public speaking is one of the most feared things like people fear, speaking in public, more than death or something. I don't know.

**Michael Herold:** Um, I'm not, uh, I heard the anecdotal evidence as well. I didn't read the studies, but apparently. You're more afraid of being the person that gives the, the, the speech of the funeral than you are being the person that's actually in the coffin. Um, yeah. So public speaking is terrifying and I mean, for good reasons, you're, you're up on stage.

Everyone's eyes is on you. If, if that's the point where you drop your pants or you realize you, you wear your sweater, your inside out, that's the wrong moment to realize that. So, so that, that is number one. Um, [00:52:00] number two is you're probably up on stage because you have something that's really important.

Otherwise you wouldn't bother. You're not up on stage to say, hi, my name is Michael. And I like, like chocolate flavored ice cream. It's not like people go on stage unless they are like, salesperson's for chocolate flavored ice cream. But most people go on stage because they have something really important that they want to get across.

So if I screw up a hundred, people are going to see it. If I don't get this message across. I will have missed like a major chance and then three, everyone's recording this and it's going to be up on YouTube. So, so that all of that together, of course, it's scary. Of course. It's scary. Yeah. And, and again, Um, the way around that is, first of all, it's important.

So I'm glad that you are a little bit scared because the last thing I want you to do is go up on stage and be like super, Oh, I don't care because that's exactly when you accidentally show up in pajamas with your [00:53:00] sweater inside out and not knowing what you're going to say next. And, and that's also when, when you put in the.

The effort that's required to do it because while, while you're up on stage for say 20 minutes, , have a hundred people in the audience and that gives you what, , 20,000 minutes of time accumulated that you could potentially waste because people sat there to listen to your zone. So I'm kind of glad that this is something that, , is serious business for most people, because it should be.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Yeah, right. So it's sort of this idea that Steve Hayes says, you know, we hurt where we care. Like it we're nervous because there's something really important about getting up in front of people. And one of the things that just to kind of go back. Back to what you were saying in terms of like the practicing, regardless, like practicing, even in this space of being uncomfortable isn't necessarily the discomfort is ever going to go away.

You just get more skillful at tolerating it. [00:54:00] I just, a few weeks ago released an episode with Sian Beilock on, on choking, under pressure and. For me. And I showed this on that episode too. Like there's never a time that the record button goes on when I'm podcasting that my body doesn't have a really strong reaction.

And, you know, I can notice my inner critic and, and sort of, you know, unhooked from those thoughts or challenged them. And I can tell myself, you know, there's no reason to be

nervous and you know what you're talking about, but. Regardless, that is how I'm going to respond. But if I'm willing to show up, even in the space of that discomfort, which is exactly what those kinds of exercises that you teach your clients to do helps you to get more skillful than then I can do it anyway.

Right. Anxiety is going to be along for the ride. Hopefully I can build some confidence and some skill and actually doing the speaking, but it's not in the absence of the discomfort. It's sort of alongside it.

**Michael Herold:** Yeah, exactly. And another [00:55:00] one of those eye opening moments that I throw my, my clients often into is that I like, I, I sell this by saying, you know what? There are people out there. They don't have any fear. There are people out there. They can read other people like magicians and manipulate them to do the things that they want.

Like these people are out there. It's like 1%, you know what they are. And everyone's like, no, I was like, they're called psychopaths. I was like, Whoa. So, so yeah. Yeah. So, oops. Oops.

**Debbie Sorensen:** that's not good.

**Michael Herold:** Yeah.

**Yael Schonbrun:** So related to public speaking is, and this is sort of like the reading the room piece. you know, people are stuck in their homes a lot these days, and we're all getting a little bit rusty on connecting and communicating, and I'm just curious. For you, what are some of your favorite tips for enhancing conversations and enhancing connection?

There's sort of this idea of like sharing your struggle, but how about sort of on the other side, are there ways that you help [00:56:00] your clients learn how to deepen conversations to get beyond small talk or connect, on a stage to, to people more on a on a heart basis?

**Michael Herold:** um, yeah, this is, this is a weird time for that. Isn't it? with, you know, , this, this entire like, uh, wanna-be zombie apocalypse happening out there and, uh, Vienna or Austria went into the second hard lockdown, just, uh, just this week. So the, the idea of actually going out there and having conversations with people is a little bit weird right now.

So, so I'll do two things. I'll tell you what you can do. While we're all like stuck at home and what you can do when all of this is over and you're, you're finally out there and there's a lot of overlap here as well. Um, so I found the pandemic in terms of social connection, actually really powerful, like this, this, how long has it been now that we're in?

It's like three years now since this thing? No, it's like eight, eight, eight months.

And I met [00:57:00] so many and I don't use the word likely, but I met a lot of new friends in this time. Like real friends, people that I've never met, I've never hugged, but we have friends now because a lot of things happen online.

so one of the first things that happened, uh, was, uh, I got invited to assume karaoke party and I was like, wow, that sounds like fun. So I jumped in that was like, March or something. It was actually, um, Emily Sanders who organized the entire thing.

And I fell in love with the concept of sitting in my living room, drinking wine, and singing, like, Let It Go from Disney's Frozen. My neighbors still hate me for that, but because especially since I haven't stopped doing it, but, um, I was like,

**Debbie Sorensen:** you to go ahead and do

**Michael Herold:** a musical interlude?

No, no, I'm, I'm legally not allowed to do that anymore. I'll I'll go back to jail.

Um, so now I get thrown out of the, um, so. So that was something that I then started doing. It's like, Hey, you know, all my friends get together Friday evening. , let's have a fricking Zoom karaoke party. And then my [00:58:00] friends brought their kids and the kids couldn't have birthday parties because of the lockdown.

So they said, Hey mommy, can I have a karaoke party instead of a birthday party? And, and so that thing kind of grew. And then they were all over the internet. There were more and more Meetup groups that kind of came out of this necessity to stay in touch. And suddenly all over all over Facebook, you could find a Meetup group for this and a Meetup group for that.

And we're going to talk about this and stand up comedy here. I was like, wow. Like, I don't even have to leave my apartment for this. Like, this is freaking like, don't get me wrong. Like, I'd still love to go out and hug people and all of that stuff. But, but given what it is, So many people have adopt, have adapted to the situation by, by creating these online platforms, like the, the ACBS world conference, being all online and, and, and those are so much fun.

Like I could do the entire thing in my pajamas, which was, you know, fantastic.

**Debbie Sorensen:** I mean, I look, I actually love that doing remote sessions with my clients [00:59:00] now. And I have clients that I've taken on since, since March that I've never met in person. And in the beginning, I was really reluctant because I thought, Oh, I'm going to miss being in person. And I do, but we still form a really meaningful therapist, client relationship.

And it's, it has some upsides I can wear my sweatpants and they don't even know,

**Michael Herold:** Yeah, except if you have to get up because you have to get something out of yourself and you're like, oops, I forgot about that.

**Debbie Sorensen:** you can see my sweat pants now, the real me.

**Yael Schonbrun:** but I think that really speaks to the concept of flexibility. Psychological flexibility is sort of adapting, being flexible, figuring out how to connect to your values and

changing circumstances. And as Diana said, in one of the previous episodes, , this pandemic is just like a huge exercise.

For all of us to build psychological flexibility. And when we do it with that intention of connecting to other people, as Michael was saying, like, there's real power, like we can do it. We just have to be willing to, you know, adapt and be creative [01:00:00] and, and lean into it.

**Michael Herold:** Um, so, so here's some practical advice around Zoom, be there early, and this is so mad, like be in a Zoom meeting five minutes before it starts. Because this is, and this is, this is for like parties for work meetings because in the five minutes before the PSU meeting, that's when there is no agenda, that's when the room is not full that's when the small talk happens, Hey, how's your weekend.

You know, because everyone waits for the meeting to start. And, and this is so underrated and its power because there might be a team member you only communicate with, through email and Slack. And meetings, but suddenly you have those five minutes where you can talk about the weekend or, you know, what's the, what's that flower in the background, or did you do that yourself?

And you know, what are your hobbies? And, and it's just five minutes, but that's all that it takes. And then also like plan to be the last one to leave the meeting. I have like 10 minute buffer at the end. So, you know what we [01:01:00] had, we had this happen with one of our meetings here. I'm not going to drop any names, but.

We had a special guests in one of our team meetings and ask the team meeting closed. I was like, I'm not going to click on the end, leave and leave meeting button. And that other person didn't either. So we're chatting for another 20 minutes after the meeting was off, the, all your guys were gone. There were like, Oh, this is really fun.

Like we should do stuff together and yeah. See, see ya. The magic that happens outside of the meeting.

**Debbie Sorensen:** I've never done this before, so I'm learning new tricks here.

**Yael Schonbrun:** That's a great idea. Yeah. I love that.

**Michael Herold:** So, so that's the, that's the digital stuff, um, and in the real world, or also in, in the small talk part, in any meeting is that I see most people in their conversation. This is very tactical advice. Um, but most people in their conversation, they go, what I call it horizontal. So where are you from? What do you do?

How many siblings do you have? What's your favorite meal? What's your favorite restaurant? How long have you worked in that job? I think it was [01:02:00] sideways with that questions. And that doesn't create vulnerability and it doesn't create connection because you're always staying at the surface. But, , if I were to ask you, Debbie, what's your, what's your favorite food? No, I'm asking. I'm asking you, I'm asking you. Yeah.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Sushi.

**Michael Herold:** What do you like most about it?

**Debbie Sorensen:** Um, well, it's delicious. And usually when I have sushi, I go sit at a restaurant and enjoy the time and it kind of it's like something I usually savor and eat slowly. And.

**Michael Herold:** Boom. Suddenly we went from a one word answer to us, learning something about Debbie, that she likes to go to the restaurant and slow down and have that entire ceremony around meal the meal. And this is where this is what people leave out in their conversation. Because they are so frantic to jump to the next thing that they don't bother to go like vertical, to go deep and, and think about asking [01:03:00] someone what they do for, for a living.

Um, most people don't want to talk about that work because they do it all week long. So, you know, in a party on Saturday, the last thing they want to talk about is their, their job as a dentist because they do that all week long. But people still ask that question, but now take it vertical and ask that person.

What do you like most about being a dentist? And, and suddenly a, you go just a little, you're not going like fully, Brene Brown, vulnerable on that poor person. You just go a little bit below the surface, right. And, and by asking something like, what do you like most about it? That person suddenly thinks about something that's very positive.

And maybe something that that person has never thought about before is like, you know what? People come to me and they leave and they have a brighter smile. It's like, wow. I never thought about that. You know, it's actually cool. And. And so this is, this is actually a question and all of you listeners trying this out, what you'll see is that people actually have to think they [01:04:00] can't answer this question right away.

They actually have to think about it, which a means that you've just asked them something about their life. They don't know the answer to, and when they find the answer. It's something positive. What do you like most about sushi? What do you like most about being a dentist? What do you like most about living in Oregon?

What do you like most about driving a hundai? And then it's like, wow, look at that. I never thought about that, but what I really like about Oregon is, you know, insert blank. And you, you conjure that smile on their face and it's those, and it's not, you're not jumping into the deep end of the pool by, you know, going all the way to vulnerability, but it's just that little nudge towards.

You know what? Let's leave the surface. Let's talk about something that's just a little bit below the surface. Let me know something about you.

**Debbie Sorensen:** Yeah, you're not asking people to bare their soul or their deepest, darkest secret. That's too much. But to get a little bit past just the superficial, the small

**Michael Herold:** Exactly [01:05:00] exactly.

**Debbie Sorensen:** To just go to a slightly deeper, closer place.

**Michael Herold:** Once you're in the conversation a little bit, ask them what's the funniest thing that ever happened being in a sushi restaurant, the funniest thing that ever happened, um, as a Marine biologist, right? Or, or whatever, and, and at the same thing will happen. They'll think for a bit. Because they don't know the answer and then they'll start laughing because they totally forgot that day where they like walked into, you know, the, the, the dolphin part of the aquarium and, you know, something, air quotes, fishy was going on.

**Debbie Sorensen:** I was at a sushi restaurant and this couple was all lovey-dovey and by the end, they were screaming at each other and left separately. That was pretty, as soon as you said, now that story just funny. It's really the right word. It was a little

**Michael Herold:** sad too.

We all laughed. So I think it's funny. I, uh, if, if, if, if, if that couple listens to the episode, we apologize, but it sounded pretty cool.

**Debbie Sorensen:** It is exactly what you [01:06:00] said. You were asked that question and I had this moment of huh, and I was like, Oh yeah, I remember that. You know what I mean? It kind of like,

**Michael Herold:** I am.

**Yael Schonbrun:** I wanted to ask one more question about yourself and there's a little bit of a backstory to this because Michael's a big cartoon fan but I told you about my youngest son, who's now four, his love of the teenage mutant Ninja turtles.

And they told you that he wanted it to be Donatello for Halloween. And then you kindly informed me that that was a poor choice because Donatello was the odd man out. He died before the high Renaissance, when the other three teenage mutant Ninja turtles, uh, the fellows that they are named after are from high Renaissance.

So you highly recommended that he choose a different Ninja turtle, which he did Michelangelo,

**Michael Herold:** very history conscious. I like that. So

**Yael Schonbrun:** He took your advice to heart. He was very proud of himself, but in the, in the exchange that we had about the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, you sent me some of the videos that you had created. And I showed my [01:07:00] kids all of them and they loved them.

But the one that was their favorite was the video called When I Grow About a little kid imagining all the things that she could be, and they loved it. They watched it like 18 times. They kept wanting to watch it again and again, and they were cracking

**Michael Herold:** Yeah. Make it go viral.

**Yael Schonbrun:** We should cause it's really good that

**Debbie Sorensen:** Can we link to it. I haven't seen it yet. I'd love to see it in for our listeners too. Awesome.

**Yael Schonbrun:** so, so sweet. So the end of the video, can I do a spoiler

**Michael Herold:** of course you can, you can do a

**Yael Schonbrun:** So spoiler alert the end of the video, is that the answer to this question of what do I want to be when I grow up? Is that the kid realizes that what she wants to be is a kid, right. That that's where the magic is. So I was just curious, in what way do you think that that's an important message and how, how do you think that you embody that idea?

**Michael Herold:** Ooh. Okay. So a little bit of backstory to this movie, just to set the set, the set, the environment right for this answer. Um, this was my [01:08:00] graduation film that I did at the end of my studies on character animation. And so I started this entire thing for like, 12 or 18 months. And then in the final final class for six months, we would produce a movie and we were told like, this is a lot of work, make this a, what did they say, make this a 30 second movie? Like no more than 30 seconds. Seriously guys. So Michael starts right. Planning everything. And it turns out to be like 60 seconds. And then they're like, okay, Michael, you can, you can do this, but you need to take the last semester. You need to take that twice. I was like, yeah, I'll I'll, uh, I'll do that.

And then I ended up with, I think like two minute movie at the end, which took like nine months to, to produce from beginning to end or even longer than that. So, so this was a project that I totally loved and it was a project that I did want, I was still in love with character [01:09:00] animation. So there's no like self-development or act III story behind the idea that this protagonist wanted to end up as a kid.

This was, uh, Michael, , geeking out about the potential there, but yeah. I remember how I came up with the idea because, um, I knew I had the idea for this kid thinking about what she wants to be as the homework assignment. And I saw a photo from one of my friends, I think on her website, which showed her as a little kid, like jumping into a Lake.

And, and there was such a magic, I think it was even a Polaroid photo and it was so magical because it was that, that lightness that you have when you're a kid, when you don't have to worry about taxes and you know, all of that stuff. And I was like, yeah, you know, being a kid is pretty freaking cool.

Especially since I went through high school. And, and I kid you, not, my thought was my career choice was based on okay. Being an adult is going to be boring. So at least I can find a job that gives me a lot of money. That, that was [01:10:00] me coming out of high school, which is a really sad thing to do. And, and, and then, you know, came college university and all of that stuff.

And the realization that. Uh, the world can be pretty fun, like going out of university. Um, now the options were like do a work in film or work in cartoon to work in video games. And my first job my thesis at the end of university, I've wrote around, drama models and computer games. And I worked as a story writer in a video game company.



And, and that was, to me, like the start into age was 21 at the time, uh, starting to life, or it realized, you know, what, it's as much fun as you want it to be like that's. And the cool thing about being at when, uh, I think the last time we had our call and I was on the train. Oh yeah. I was at the dentist. I wasn't in the hospital.

I was at the dentist and I was at the dentist to have a tooth pulled and. I left the dentist and I was like, [01:11:00] screw this. I deserve a treat. So I went into electronics store and upload Potter PlayStation pro because I realized I needed a pro. I just had them normal PlayStation. I wanted a pro and that's one of the things you can do.

You're an adult, which is fricking awesome. And my, my living room table across from here. Has the entire Harry Potter, Hogwarts castle built in Lego on the, because that's the amazing stuff you can do when you're an adult. And no one tells you, Oh, you know, when you buy a sweater that shouldn't be like a Star Wars sweater.

No, of course it should be. Why don't you say even saying like, of course it's going to be a Star Wars sweater, like, and, and it's that I think. I think, I don't know where this comes from. I don't know if, if like, um, our culture gets this idea of being a child out of our system, or if we feel obligated to abandon it, or if we're ashamed to admit to it, or maybe it just naturally leaves.

But for me being a child is like [01:12:00] super important. Uh, there needs to be. I just recently I went just before the last lockdown, I went grocery shopping and they had those winter catalogs lying around for Lego, the Lego winter catalog. I was like, ah, this is great. So it's like lying next to me on my desk.

And whenever, you know, something saves, something reboots, something restarts. I'm like leaving through the Lego catalog because I can do that. That's, you know, that's the freedom that comes with being an adult and paying your own taxes and stuff. Sorry. I got sidetracked on geeking out about PlayStation and Lego, but, but, but that's the idea of be more, be more kid, be more Ninja turtle.

**Debbie Sorensen:** well and true to yourself, you know, you're, that's what you're into and you don't have to squash that just cause you're supposed to be a grownup now and have, you know, boring old life. It's like you have something that's true to you.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Yeah. And just to bring it back to ACT, too it's, it's sort of like, you know, if you do what you love and you find that joy, you're [01:13:00] probably going to have some uncomfortable emotions that go along with it. But you also have the joy and how fun is that to like fully live and not to be afraid of having an uncomfortable experience

and to me, that, that, that is a bit where it comes back to and I think we can all. Try to do a bit more of that, have more fun, more joy in life, even if there are some things that come along with it that, you know, we might wish away. We can have the joy.

Well,

**Debbie Sorensen:** Michael, thank you so much. It's been really fun. I feel like we could talk all day,

**Michael Herold:** I know, I know.

**Debbie Sorensen:** down here and, and just, um, really enjoyed the chance to get to know you better and introduce you to our listeners and really appreciate all the wonderful work that you're doing. How can people find you online?

**Michael Herold:** Oh, so people find me online at [overcomelimitations.com](http://overcomelimitations.com). Um, you find me on Instagram at Michael underscore Harold underscore coach. [01:14:00] Um, I don't do I have to admit I don't do much, um, in the, in the social media world, uh, because I find myself too busy building Lego castles and stuff like that. So, you know, I can't be posting all the time, but that that's the best way to get in touch with me.

For all my core confidence work the eight week online training program that runs through the art of charm.com, um, was a check out, check out their podcast. It's it's really great. And, , I don't say that because I'm, co-producing the show.

**Debbie Sorensen:** It's great. They have some wonderful episodes and you, yeah. Listeners who are looking for another good podcast. Definitely check it out.

**Yael Schonbrun:** And we'll be, having both Michael and the Art of Charm co-hosts at our mental health summit that we'll be sharing more about in the coming weeks. So, so you'll get a chance to meet them through our work as well.

**Michael Herold:** Yeah, that's and that's it. That's where people find me and, uh, looking forward to getting some, some messages. Uh, let me know what you liked, what resonated with [01:15:00] you. , if you have any more questions around the topic of being silly, Lego, Ninja Turtles, or confidence building that's, that's where you can direct them.

Thank you. Thank you so much for having me on this was, this was a lot of fun.

**Yael Schonbrun:** Awesome. Thank you so much.

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