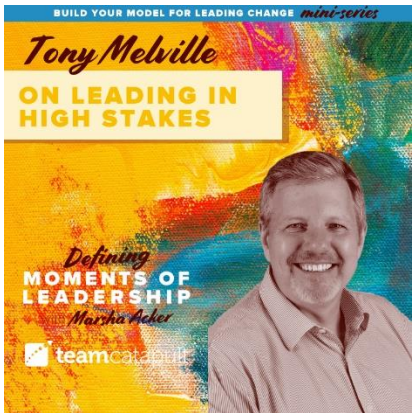
Defining Moments of Leadership with Marsha Acker and Tony Melville on Leading in High Stakes



Marsha Acker: Hi everyone. I'm Marsha Acker, and this is Defining Moments of Leadership. This is the third episode in our miniseries on Model Building here on the podcast. And today my guest is Tony Melville. He was actually on the podcast in season one, talking about co-leadership with Sarah Hill. Today he's back and sharing about his personal journey of model building. In his role as a senior leader. We cover a range of topics, everything from how do you carve out personal development time as a senior leader? How do you lead change? And what are some of the benefits to knowing yourself and your model for leading? And how can that serve you when you're leading in high stakes? Because let's face it, leadership is a high-stakes activity.

Let me introduce you to Tony. Tony Melville is the co-owner of Dialogix. He coaches individuals and senior leadership teams of large corporate organizations, government, and public sector bodies, as well as charitable organizations worldwide. He works globally and has recently been working in the Middle East, Australia, Latin America, USA and the UK, helping CEOs and their organizations identify and transform stuck patterns of behavior.

Tony began his career in the police service, where as a detective and hostage negotiator, he first became interested in effective communication in crisis. Later as a chief constable in the United Kingdom, he led a large organization through the most challenging circumstances strategically and operationally. His expertise was recognized when he was appointed as the national leader for transformational change across the UK policing service, leading organizational change, and interacting at a strategic level and policy level with government ministers, senior officials and corporate contractors. He left the service in 2012 after 34 years service.

Tony holds a Master of Arts in Organizational Development from Manchester University and a postgraduate diploma in Criminology from Cambridge. He is the graduate of the United Kingdom Police Strategic Command Course and the UK Prime Minister's Top Management Program.

Tony has been recognized for his integrity, humanity, and equality, which he brings together with his experience of leading systemic organizational change to support all those he works with. I'm excited for you to meet Tony. So let's dive in.

I am so excited to have Tony Melville with me today. Welcome to the podcast.

Tony Melville: Thank you, Marsha. I'm looking forward to our conversation. As ever.

Marsha Acker: We're taking a slight detour from defining moments of leadership, although I would argue that there's quite a lot of defining moments of leadership in the process of the conversation that we'll talk about today. But we're exploring this concept of leading change and how model building around your behavioral model, your model for leadership, your model for living and a model for leading change can serve. And you were on the show with Sarah Hill back in season one, and I know not only do you do this work with other people, but I know that you've done quite a lot of work yourself about model building. And so I really wanted to have you back so that we could take a deep dive into that process. And you and Sarah had quite an impact on me in terms of my model building process. So I really want to bring your story forward so that other people can learn from it. So I'm really looking forward to our conversation today.

Tony Melville: Me too. Yeah, Marsha, thank you for the work that you are putting in to make this more accessible. Because what will emerge in the stories that we share is that I think it's such an important part of the work to do for any leader, is to just get their head around. If I'm leading change, how can I know myself really well and understand myself? How can I understand what gets me into what we call high stakes when I may not be at my best? And model building can be a great way, a great lens to look at that through as I know to both my benefit and cost.

Marsha Acker: Yeah, and I appreciate that, and I really want to dive into it because I think that one of the... I know for me, certainly early on in my career, if I heard the phrase leading change, there's certain places that my mind would go to. Often it was really about, "Okay, I know that a change needs to happen. How can I tell other people about the gap that I see from where they are to where they need to be and how do I tell them to get there?" And I think what I've learned along the way is that, well, that doesn't quite happen like that. Human beings don't work like that. And I think so much about leading change is about us and how we show up, how we talk, how we engage. And so yeah, I'm hoping we'll unpack a little bit of that today.

Tony Melville: Yeah, that's great, Marsha, because just as you were mentioning that, I was thinking, oh, one of my previous models about leading change been over a 30, 40-year career, and I can think about different phases of my leadership journey. Early days, I probably was much more into the more technical aspects of change. What does the program look like or what are the outcomes that we're looking for? What's the plan? And then I think towards probably the last third of my career, I suddenly realized so much of it is about behaviors, others, and perhaps even more importantly, my own in a leadership role. So yeah, I'm right with you with that.

Marsha Acker: Yeah. Well, Tony, let's dive into your story. Can you introduce us to how you came to know or learn about this whole concept of model building?

Tony Melville: Yes. I suppose the context was really, I'd had a long police career starting at sort of entry level, working on the streets as a police officer. And then now roll forward 25, 26 years later, and suddenly I'm about to be appointed as the person in charge. In the UK we call it a chief constable, but it's the chief of police in charge of a police force. And so I spent so many years moaning about leadership, and then I chuckled when I thought, "Oh wow, now look, they're going to be moaning about me. I'm the one in charge. I better get my act sorted out."

So I'd done a load of thinking about the new organization that I was going to be the leader of, and I'd done quite a lot of what we would call personal work on oneself. So understanding oneself better. I'd been a hostage negotiator for a bit of my career, and that process involves quite deeply knowing yourself.

But anyway, when I arrived in the role of chief constable, the first thing that struck me was that so often when leaders get appointed, the appointing board or governing body or the board, that kind of thing, they appoint you on the basis that you are what they're looking for, and you are the complete article. And I remember having this moment sort of drinking a cup of coffee and thinking, "Oh dear, well, I've got the job now, and they think I am the complete article. I know I'm not. I've got so much more development that I need to do about myself in this role." So I think that can be a bit of a trap that leaders can fall into. The appointing body thinks they're completely ready for the job and have all they need. And I think as leaders, the trap would be that we buy into that narrative. And what the consequences would be is that in our very high stakes roles leadership, we take our foot off our own personal development. How do we know ourselves? How do we know ourselves in different situations?

So it was great because when I was appointed, I made it part of my conditions of appointment that they would support my own personal development as I sought to lead and help the organization through change. And that's really where I first got involved with this approach that we call structural dynamics and worked with a coach and brought it into the organization and really began to think about, "What are my behaviors? Why do I behave the way that I do? What are the sort of things that get under my skin, push my buttons, put me

into high stakes, which means that I'm not going to be at my very best?" So I was doing that sort of work while I was also in the top position. And so really, that was the context of me bumping into and beginning to do more deep personal work about myself whilst in a leadership role. And I think that's tough actually, as I look back on it, leading an organization and working on yourself I think is a tough ask.

Marsha Acker: So there's two things that I want to say about that. One, I am really appreciating this flag of just because I've been selected to be in this position and there's at least two, there's myself and another person or group of people who have said, "Yes, we think that you are the right person for this job." I love this catch of not falling into the trap of thinking that I'm done. It's not a finished place. And this idea of ongoing personal development, which I would say I hear is maybe part of your model about-

Tony Melville: Yes, good spot.

Marsha Acker: ... leadership development. Yeah. So can you say a bit more about what it was like to be in the role and then also working on yourself? You said that was a little tough. What was tough?

Tony Melville: It was tough because you've got all sorts of different challenges that you are facing depending on the organization that you are leading and all sorts of pressures. So I think just the basics of carving out the time and having the commitment to do that. And also, of course, the organization got to know me in one way behaviorally. And then as I was thinking about myself and thinking about them, they had to cope with some of my behaviors changing whilst I was in role. That actually can be a little bit disturbing for people in the organization. Expecting one thing and getting another. And yet again, this would be part of my own model. I felt it was really important to model that I was prepared to do the work. I was prepared to change for the benefit of the organization. And in so doing, encouraging others to do likewise.

Marsha Acker: Nice. I do think I run up against leaders doing that all the time where I think it does create... They might be seeing something different or they want to do something in a different way. It's a behavior change that's coming, and then they encounter their organization that's saying, "Hey, wait a minute, you don't normally do that. Or, "What happened to you?" Or, "Did you go after something over the weekend and learned some new..." So I think it's finding a way to have that conversation with the folks that you're working with can also be helpful.

Tony Melville: Yes. And my experience was that as I was doing work about my own behaviors and encouraging the senior leadership team to do likewise, after about six months, the organization then became curious because they noticed that leadership behaviors were changing. In effect, everyone was working on their behaviors and their models for leadership, their personal models around knowing themselves better behaviorally. And the organization got curious and went, "What's going on? Actually, we'd like some of that." And that's how we

began quite a big approach to behavioral change in the police service, which I was leading at the time. And of course, I'd love to sit here, Marsha, and go, what a great job I did. It was fantastic. It all went so well. And I'm not denying that we did really make progress and things did go well, but I would not be honest if I didn't sit here and say, I still carry some scars from that and some things that I learned and some things that... And if I could go back 12 years and do it again, I am a different person than I would lead differently.

Marsha Acker: Yeah. Well, let's unpack that, Tony, because it sounds rich. There's a couple things that you've said. The first one is that there are some things that went really well. So you embarked on a process of model building, it sounds like, for yourself and for the team that you were leading. What are some of the things that you really appreciate about that?

Tony Melville: Okay, yeah. I think the gift, if you like, to the organization through that trajectory that I just mapped out was that more and more people began thinking about their own behaviors and being curious about what their range of behaviors were, which behaviors they used in different situations. Began to think about what were some of the things that might be high stakes for them so they wouldn't be at their best. So I think it just opened up a real curiosity in people to know themselves better. And that really, I think is also the beginning of model building. It's a starting point. How can I understand my own behaviors, why I behave the way that I do? When this helps and this is unhelpful? And I think that's almost like if we were going to put some levels on it, that would be the first level for me of model building, is doing some behavior work.

You and I are familiar with this thing that I've already referenced called Structural Dynamics from David Kantor's work. It's a way of understanding behaviors. It's not the only way, but we found it a really helpful way to embark on that.

One of the things that I noticed was that the previous leader for many years had had a different leadership style to me, or a different set of behaviors. And so giving the organization a language and a way of thinking about how they behaved, it opened people up. For example, in that organization, it would be very rare for the leader, the chief constable, to be opposed for anyone to hold a different view, quite a hierarchical organization. What the leader said must be right, and therefore we do it. Well, hey, guess what? The leader's not always right, and we shouldn't always do it. And so what I really wanted to do was encourage people to speak their perspective, say what they were noticing, oppose if they held a different view, and then we would work it out so that we made great decisions that benefited the organization and the communities rather than just decisions. And I think that was a key thing.

Marsha Acker: I really love that story because I think the idea of leaders being opposed or even offering a different point of view than what the positional leader has to say is challenging. I know here in the States, I think we encounter that all over the

place in corporate organizations where they're just... It seems like we've factored out a pose from our daily conversation.

Tony Melville: Yeah, I see that, Marsha. And so it's one thing... As I reflect on that time, it's one thing to do stuff that helps open up an organization, but you also need to know yourself pretty well because in those moments when you are being opposed as a leader, what's your reaction to it? Is the very thing that you've asked for starts coming back at you. And then you've got to think to yourself, "Well, hang on. Do I really like this? Is this really what I want? How do I react when it's happening?" And I think that's a helpful way to name why it's important to know ourselves and what can get us into high stakes when we press our buttons if you like.

Marsha Acker: Yes. I have to tell you, just one quick aside. I think it's so important to know ourselves. And as much as I talk about move, follow, pose and bystand how much I constantly in my own system I'm asking for it. Just a couple weeks ago, we finished a retreat internally and I got opposed multiple times. And in my morning reflections, one morning before we were getting ready to meet, I had written to myself, "I really hate being corrected." And so just acknowledging that that just still sits inside me, and that was my work to do. So anyways, that was my... I can identify with what you're talking about.

Tony Melville: Do you know what, Marsha, probably that speaks to that next step of model building. So it's one thing to know what our behaviors are, and then we might get a bit more practiced at some of the ones that we don't use so much and all that kind of stuff. And then I think the next step is do I understand why I don't like certain behaviors? Or when certain things happen in the room, we're talking about being opposed, but there's lots of different things. Why is it when certain things happen in the room, I find myself slightly quickening heart rate, clammy hands, feeling a bit uncomfortable right the way through to something more dramatic happening because we've ended up in high stakes. Or another way of putting it is, in that moment what's happening has reminded us of some things from the past, from our formative years. And now all of a sudden, rather than being the leader, this would be my story, a leader who's in command of themselves, calm and consistent. All of a sudden, I'm not in those moments. And that's not great. It's not great.

Marsha Acker: No, no. Well, Tony, is that a segue into, you also said there were parts of your work in the policing organization that didn't go well in this process. Is there something that comes to mind for you where you found yourself in high stakes or where a model building supported you?

Tony Melville: I'm really happy to talk about this. And here's the thing. Even in this moment, I noticed that I feel slightly embarrassed. I might feel a bit ashamed because I've got this one view of myself, this kind of... In model building, we call it an expressed view. Tony Melville the leader who is X, Y, and Z. And yet there are some situations, and I'll talk about one, where that wasn't the case.

Just before we get into that, it was a funny thing. I was getting ready for our chat today because you can see this, because we're on camera. It is a little black book, isn't it, Marsha?

Marsha Acker: Yes it is.

Tony Melville: You can see it on the camera. And then if I open it up, in there it's got written in my handwriting, "Leadership statement." And this was my leadership statement when I was going into the role of being chief constable. So I talked about being inspired and motivated about possibilities of the future, about thriving on that. I talked about being really aware of the feelings that run under the surface and helping to work with difference to get productive outcomes. And there's lots more confident in conflict. So I'd written all these things. That's what I thought about myself as a leader. And yet, I'd been in role a couple of years. There was some huge budget cuts that were coming because of government pressure. The whole place was a bit of a Tinder box, if I'm honest with you.

And at the same time as this, the governance arrangements for policing were changing. So moving away from having a board that oversaw the work that I did to electing a single politician who would become the political police chief, if you like. And I got myself into such high stakes around it. I felt that I couldn't get my voice heard. I felt that people were trying to silence the professional voice that I had and had something to offer. I remember falling out with the Home Secretary in the UK government at the time. I remember trying to point out some of the things that I felt needed addressing in these changes that were happening.

Anyway, I could talk for hours about it, Marsha, but the point was, in that leadership moment, the very things that I'd said were important to me were the things that I was unable to achieve about conflict, about bringing together difference, about helping people to work, about facing into the future. Because I'd got into high stakes and I'd got into high stakes because what was happening really pushed my buttons about being silenced, being viewed as not having integrity and those kind of things. And so I ended up in high stakes, which meant I wasn't at my best behaviors. And eventually having tried everything, I left my career early probably about three or four years before I needed to do. I resigned, actually. I resigned from my position. So it was quite a big moment.

Marsha Acker: What happens to you in high stakes? We talk a lot about that phrase, and I think that phrase can mean a lot of different things to a lot of different people. But just it would be helpful to hear you define it. And then at that time, what do you know about your behavior? What happens to you in high stakes?

Tony Melville: Yeah, I know that some of my themes and triggers that are likely to get under my skin and take me into high stakes are things like being silenced, having my ideas ignored, having my integrity challenged. Those kind of things are going to be the ones that are likely to get me into high stakes. And then when I go into high stakes, I'm going to have less behavioral range. There's a whole technology

behind this, but for me, you are likely to experience me speaking with more and more assertiveness and certainty.

I remember Sarah Hill that you've mentioned and I were in David Kantor's office at Kantor Institute years ago now, and we were having a business meeting and there was something that was a bit tricky going on. And David lent forward and he said, "Tony," he said, "you are shouting." He said, "When you are ready to tell us what's happening, we'd love to hear." And I sort of rocked back in the chair and I went quiet because I thought, "I'm not shouting. I'm not being that kind of very assertive sort of voice that can come with it." And we stepped outside to get a coffee, and I said to Sarah, I said, "I wasn't shouting, was I?" And she said, "Oh, you, so were. You so were raising your voice." I just use it as an example about sometimes we might not even know that we're behaving differently, but the people around us know and it has an impact on them as well as having an impact on us.

The other thing back to the policing story was I know when I get into high stakes, I get into this kind of position where I tell myself that I can survive. I can survive this. It doesn't matter how big the pressure is, it doesn't matter how difficult it's, I can survive this and work a way through it for myself and for the organization in this case. And then I reach a point where it just gets too much and I might just flip and I'll want to abandon. And that's actually what happened in this case because at the time, I had a great story about the moral position I'd taken and how I'd stood up to government and I'd spoke on behalf of the service. But as I look back on it with the benefit of 12 years hindsight, I was in high stakes and I decided to leave.

Marsha Acker: First off, I really appreciate you telling that story. I also really appreciate you naming the high stakes, and I talk in the book about the heroic mode, but you're naming that heroic mode of the survivor and a little bit of what it can look like on the darker shadow side of, I call it the flip table moment where it's like, "I'm out. I've abandoned."

Tony Melville: Yeah, yeah, absolutely.

Marsha Acker: And I think the other thing that I appreciate about it, Tony, is that none of us are immune from it as much as we'd like to think that we are. Or I think at one point early on in my professional coaching career, I thought if I go off and invest in coaching skills and use them in my leadership, I can master a way around behaving in a way that I don't particularly like or appreciate. And what I have since come to understand and learn is that none of us, no matter how many skills we have, can work our way out of behaving that way. But I think what we can do is work our way around not hanging out in it for a long period of time, or not doing greater harm or damage, being able to catch sight of it faster. That's my perspective. I'm curious about your perspective.

Tony Melville: I agree, and I noticed my heart sort of racing with joy when you were saying, of course none of us are immune from it. And I agree with you. 12 years on, now

coaching and working with people's behaviors for a living. And I don't know how many hundreds of people I've coached. So I would say that that's my truth for sure anyway.

Marsha Acker: I'm certain there are many people listening to this today who there's no lack of uncertainty, unpredictability, constant change at places that are high stakes. I mean, I think over the last two years, I'm not sure that there's an organization that I've worked with in the last two years where I wouldn't describe them as just simply being in high stakes as a collective a majority of the time. So there's a lot happening, I guess. I hear it in your story, and I also imagine there are many leaders today listening who can identify with finding themselves in high stakes. Can you say a little bit about why would leaders embark on model building? Why would they spend the time doing it?

Tony Melville: Well, I think what model building does at its very heart is it offers us number one, perspective, because that can be so tricky to get hold of for anyone in any situation. But if we just stay with the context that you are talking about, the leaders and that kind of external pressure that's being felt and the internal pressure because of the way we react to it, very often the first thing that we lose is perspective. And I think model building, because it's a way of working through, "What are my behaviors? What am I stronger at? What am I weaker at? What are the kind of situations that I know lead me to be in high stakes?" Then beginning to explore, "Well, why is that?" And that's likely to be thinking about our formative experiences. We know our behaviors are hugely influenced by our formative experiences. All of that is helping us to get perspective around our behaviors and the risks that we ourselves carry around with us. So I think that's number one that the process helps with.

And then the second bit of perspective that model building offers is we often talk about having an expressed model of something. So in this story that we're just talking about, that leadership moment in policing, I had an expressed model of leadership. It's in that little black book I was waving around and I thought I'd done a good job. I'd written it out. It was my guiding thing about being a leader from 30-odd years experience. So I thought I knew myself pretty well and I'd written it out. That's my expressed model for leadership, but here's the kicker. If you'd ask people to describe me in certain moments, they'd have seen and described something a little bit different from what I'd written in that book. That's my displayed model of leadership. And where it started to go awry was when I got into high stakes.

So the second great thing that model building can do around perspective is it can help you see the gap between what you say you do and you think you do and what you actually do in different moments. And if you can see it and you can see what's missing between the two, then you've got your work to do as a leader. And back to my point from earlier, I think a big problem is for many leaders, it's about time and it's about the board, the appointing authority, kind of holding a view, "Well, you've got it all, why would you want to do any work on yourself?"

Marsha Acker: Yeah, that's tough. How did you catch sight of your displayed model being different than your expressed model?

Tony Melville: Well, yes, there's all sorts of little vignettes, I suppose. So in the middle of this high stakes' year that was going on, I found myself earnestly holding a big town hall type meeting packed full of politicians and senior people. And I'm earnestly up there mapping out what the future could (and in my view should) be. I'm up there on the stage and a person towards the back who's a politician, very overtly looks at their watch. Now, even notice now as I'm telling this story, I never knew I was going to say very overtly. Listen, this is what happens. So actually all he was doing was looking at his watch, Marsha, right?

Marsha Acker: Right.

Tony Melville: But I ended up in high stakes. Why? Because I thought, "This is really important. You are not listening to me. Is there somewhere else that you'd rather be?" So I got into high stakes because of my own triggers, but rather than noticing it and just calming it down and carrying on, oh no, no, no. I had to be the one who stood there on the stage in front of the master audience and throw my arm out towards the person at the back, name them, name the politician, and say... I think I said something like, "Is there somewhere more important that you need to be right now than talking about the future of policing?" Now that is a drop the mic moment because everyone... There's no hiding from that once you've done it. Everyone sees it, it says something about you.

And that absolutely was not my... That's what's written in that book. That's not how I viewed myself as a leader. That's not how I could sound like I'm beating myself up and I'm not because 99% of the time, I think I was doing the things that I said I would do. But there's an example about how expressed model, displayed model, boom. And there it is. There's a difference.

Marsha Acker: Yeah, I really appreciate that example. I think in moments of reflection, it can be really helpful to just catch sight of, "That's not how I showed up today. What's that about?" But I love the grounding that your defined little black book gives you around just clarity. Was it that way for you?

Tony Melville: Yes it was. It's an evolving thing is what I'm saying. So it's not a static thing. It's helpful, but it's not static. And the reason that it changes is because we catch sight of what's the difference between what I say I'm doing and what I'm actually doing? What's the gap that's happening there, the difference? And what work do I need to do to improve on that? And that's that continual. The work's never done, is it Marsha?

Marsha Acker: No, it's not. One of the phrases that I say often to groups of leaders that I'm working with is, "Your assignment, should you choose to accept it, is to engage in this lifelong process of defining your model for leadership, your model for change." Looking at your behavioral model and I think the gifts that all of those

bring. And not everybody says yes to that, and I think that's okay, but if you choose to accept it, it's not done.

Tony Melville: Yeah, I agree. It's ongoing. And just as you're saying that, maybe there is something about picking your moment, really thinking about, "When am I ready to enter into this, given everything else that I've got going on for me?" Let me rephrase that. Not whether I enter into the work, but how far do I take it at different stages? Because in the middle of the crisis, sitting down and doing a deep piece of work about model building, I don't think it would've worked and I don't think there would've been the time. So there's no time like the present really.

Marsha Acker: Yeah, I love that and I love thinking about the context. I'm curious, when you reflect back on that moment in time, what do you think about when you look back on it?

Tony Melville: I'm really proud of what the leaders in the organization and the organization got behind at that time around behavioral work and the difference that it made for the communities that we were serving. I mean, suddenly to have police officers who better understood themselves and the people that they were there to serve, better quality of conversation with victims, the highest levels of confidence in policing that had ever been recorded in that police service. It won't all have been down to the behavioral work, but I'm pretty sure part of it is down to it. So I think there's a lot to be proud of. I also feel very proud that I found my voice in a very high stakes situation.

Marsha Acker: Tony, what do you wish for leaders today?

Tony Melville: My hope would be that more and more leaders see the value in continuing to think about themselves, to think about their leadership in behavioral terms so that they can be the most effective they can be in taking up their leadership roles. And so I do think it's really incumbent as part of a leadership mission to really think about oneself and how to make sure that we're doing good and not harm.

Marsha Acker: What does harm mean to you?

Tony Melville: Well, I think harm, it's not in the physical sense, which is where we might go to immediately. Harm for me, is more about in the interaction between people. How when it's off, when it hasn't been a skillful conversation, when somebody else has got into high stakes and we haven't recognized it or we have, I think that can be the beginning of harm that happens in relationships, in interactions in organizations. And without a way to name it, I'll do something about it. It doesn't just fester, it grows and can almost become overwhelming and impact every decision-making conversation. Every conversation that's going on can have that as a backdrop. So when I talk about harm, I'm talking about the harm that can come from our behaviors and the impact on others and on ourselves.

Marsha Acker: Yeah, I think about it as you're describing. It's almost like the little tiny barbs or the phrase death by a thousand cuts, every kind of interaction or conversation that you might have with someone that does just a little tiny bit of damage, but over time it builds up to be almost insurmountable when people have conflicts that they just can't work past.

Tony Melville: Exactly. And it was my story about leaving policing. Nobody was physically hurt in that story, but huge relational harm was caused by my and others' actions, but I can only take responsibility for the things that I played a part in. So did I harm the relationship with the governing body, with politicians, UK politicians? Absolutely. I harmed the relationship by some of the things that I said and the way that I said them. There was a march...

Police officers in the UK were so frustrated at not getting their voices heard that literally thousands of them on their day off went to London and they lined up to march on parliament in London. And as a chief constable, I decided I was going to go there, not to march with them, but to say, "Look, you are off duty. Remember that your police officers. Be true to your oaths and values, but you do have a right to have your voice heard. Make it heard today and tomorrow, I look forward to seeing you back on the streets serving people to your very best." And that's what I went to say to them, but I did huge harm in doing that. The police officers loved it, of course, but my relationship with politicians, once I had done that, it was completely over that a senior leader would go and support their people to have their voice heard, but carry on doing their job. It was too much. It was too much difference.

Marsha Acker: Wow. Tony, there's so much richness in that. There's the relationship aspect of it, and there's also the theme through your story, both for yourself and for the folks that worked with you, being in a place of not feeling heard or seen. And I know it seems like today, no matter where I go, what organization I'm talking to, and where that theme of not feeling seen, not feeling heard, losing my voice seems to play such a strong, compelling, almost first priority of the ranked priorities of what's happening in the harm or the conflict in organizations. So as you think about that, what advice would you give to someone who might be experiencing that theme at the moment, who might be in high stakes and who might not feel heard?

Tony Melville: I think the advice for anyone who's in high stakes is pause, breathe, take a beat, take a moment, see what's happening and see if you can get hold of it quickly and get some perspective on it. And that will just help take the edge off the high stakes because while we remain in high stakes, we are not going to be at our best behaviorally. Some of those behaviors are going to get shut off. We're unable to access them. We just cannot be at our best. So the first advice would be do that, whatever you need to do. Get yourself out of the high stakes, even if it's only by a couple of notches so you can function nearly at your best with some behavioral range.

And then if you are someone who is feeling unheard, ask yourself the question why? What is it that I could do different to get my voice heard? What would it take to offer it in a different way? So I think really thinking about the way that we offer our voice in different situations. And again, there's a whole technology around the behavioral work that can help with that.

Marsha Acker: Here's the question I have for you. How would you describe in a really high level way your model for leading change today? If you were going to summarize it or offer it up as an example for people, what would you say?

Tony Melville: I'm ending this podcast feeling really glad that I continue to do the work around model building because I've talked a lot about what was missing in my leadership around change, and I'm feeling good about the fact that I've got it now in my model and I'm at it, as it were.

Marsha Acker: I love it. I also really appreciate. One of the things that's been so clear to me, Tony, as we've talked today, is the evolution even that you've been able to share over the last 20 years. I'd love to end with just a couple of speed round questions and because this series of the podcast is a little bit different, I have different questions. So these will be different than the ones you answered the last time you were here.

Tony Melville: Okay.

Marsha Acker: You're up for it?

Tony Melville: Yeah. Go for it.

Marsha Acker: All right. Leading change is...

Tony Melville: Difficult.

Marsha Acker: One thing people get wrong about change is...

Tony Melville: Thinking it's quick.

Marsha Acker: One thing you wish for leaders today.

Tony Melville: That they know themselves broadly and deeply.

Marsha Acker: A moment where having a model for change helped me was...

Tony Melville: When I was coaching someone and they rejected me, having a model for change was super important.

Marsha Acker: That's perfect. I love it. Tony, thank you so much for coming on today. I genuinely appreciate the storytelling through all the conversations. We so

greatly appreciate it. If people want to get in touch with you, what's the best way for them to reach out?

Tony Melville: They could go to our website, www.dialogix.co.uk. And if you want to get in touch with me personally, my email is on that website, so that's the place to go.

Marsha Acker: Awesome. Well, we will send everybody there. I'll put the links to those two things in the show notes. So Tony, thank you so much.

Tony Melville: I'll see you next time.

Marsha Acker: You hear a key theme in my conversation with Tony about having his voice heard and supporting others and having a voice, which is deeply important to him. As Tony tells various parts of his story, this is one of the key themes that are in his model for leading change, and it's only with the personal work Tony has done that he can describe this part of his model with clarity and succinctness.

I love those examples, and I love what Tony says about one of the key benefits of model building is its ability to help you take perspective when the stakes are low, and most importantly when the stakes are high, because leadership in and of itself is a high stakes activity. And I don't think I've talked to anyone who has brought that to life as much as Tony does with his storytelling. It's really a great example to be able to reflect on actions that you took and then see an example of when your expressed model may have been different from your displayed model in the moment, and being able to sort out why that is and catch yourself in the moment the next time.

You hear Tony and I referring to a language, a technology if you like, called Structural Dynamics that enables us to name the behaviors and communication in a morally neutral way, and that helps separate out judgment and gives us a shared language for naming what's happening behaviorally.

Tony also talks about the deeply personal work of knowing ourselves behaviorally, like how we show up, why we behave a certain way, what raises the stakes for us in the room. You hear those themes come through in the stories he shared about when the stakes were rising for him, and then knowing how to be more in command of ourselves when it happens. It's such a rich conversation with so many of opportunities for personal reflection. I hope you found it expiring in your own model building work.

Tony talks about his behavioral range and deeply knowing himself and how it served him as a leader. If you're curious and want to know where you might start on your own journey, I'll invite you to buildyourmodel.com and you can download a free excerpt of the Build Your Model for Leading Change book. It's called The Seven Junctures for Self-Awareness. And you have heard Tony refer to many of those from David Kantor's work. If you're interested in engaging in

this level of leadership and team development, reach out to us at info@teamcatapult.com. We'd love to have a conversation with you. And if you're interested in learning more about structural dynamics, we offer public programs for coaches and private programs for leaders and leadership teams.

I really appreciate you being here. Thanks so much to Tony. Keep growing your leadership range and defining your own model for leadership and living and change. And I'll see you next time.