Tuning In To A Grace-Based Approach To Leadership:

A Management Podcast Designed for Learning

by

Deborah Stephens Stauffer

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Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Leigh Graves Wolf, Chair
Amy Chapman
Sean Leahy

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ABSTRACT

My research explored two issues in leadership development: how busy executives can sustainably learn with flexibility and efficiency and how to cultivate a grace-based approach to leadership. This is a dissertation in practice that offers an alternative format from traditional research yet still advances professional knowledge, rigorous thinking and complex problem-solving. This reimagined manuscript includes a multi-modal presentation of the theory, methods, analysis and findings for an emerging leadership concept and an improved direction for mobile learning research. These findings can be experienced by listening to an embedded podcast series and reading draft articles for academic and business media journals that speak to the audience of influencers in my professional context of leadership researchers, advisors and coaches. The learning innovation involved is a podcast called *Giving Grace Matters* that includes narrative and interviews with high-performing executives about a grace-based approach to leadership, and the qualitative analysis of these interviews served as the basis for constructing the knowledge about this leadership concept using three guiding theories: Planned Behavior, Self-Determination, and Intentional Change. The research identified the novel concept of a grace-based approach to leadership that can be applied in organizations as well as the need for further evaluation of how a flexible learning framework for microlearning experiences, such as podcasts, can be intentionally designed.

DEDICATION

To my family for their grace to allow me to explore deeper learning while we unexpectedly moved everything and created a new life chapter.

To my sons, Weston, Boone and Cooper, for the lessons they are teaching me about the many ways that they are self-determined, curious and resourceful.

To my husband and partner, Scott, who learns with me about the value of giving more grace than grit and remains my biggest supporter and evangelist.

To my father, Dr. Wendell Stephens, who inspired me as his only child to seek his level of academic accomplishment and to pursue the ways in which I could make the greatest impact with my unique talents. He, the youngest of six children who grew up on a small farm in Tennessee, was never expected to earn a doctorate degree. But with the support of the U.S. Army and his humble fortitude, he did exactly that. The best version of me has always been to model his path, and I thank him for making this possible.

To my late mother, Marjorie C. Stephens, whose encouragement has never left me and whose integrity guides the kind of contribution I want to give for making better leaders.

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As a student of ASU, I acknowledge that the Tempe campus sits on the ancestral homelands of those American Indian tribes that have inhabited this place for centuries, including the Akimel O'odham (Pima) and Pee Posh (Maricopa) peoples.

I want to extend my gratitude to my committee for their guidance in my research and for taking the time to serve as committee members. Dr. Sean Leahy offered especially keen insight on the innovative aspects of audio podcasting and its potential for learning. Dr. Amy Chapman has not only been my committee member who has aided in the conceptual development of grace across contexts, but also she has been my instructor in multiple courses. Her reliable feedback on my work has held the ideal balance of encouragement, respect, contribution and challenge. Finally, Dr. Leigh Graves Wolf has exceeded my expectations for what was possible with a committee chair. Dr. Wolf consistently went above and beyond to offer support, direction, hope, feedback, guidance, collaboration, and joy to my scholarly research. As my instructor, she inspired and supported my ideas and helped me to shape my aspirations into meaningful scholarship. As my chair, she has served as a model for grace-based leadership with her gifts to me of authentic kindness coupled with high standards for work, her demonstrated design for compassion in nurturing my best thinking and her respect for me as a human behind the research and all the things that are required for a graduate student to produce a dissertation in practice. I am grateful for the partnership of all members of my committee to allow me to be innovative in how I have constructed and offered this research. I will be forever influenced by their mindset on how to contribute to meaningful scholarship in education.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of an action research-based dissertation is to close the time-bound gap between scholarship and practice and make an external contribution to addressing a problem (or opportunity) of practice in the field. I am a professional executive coach and advisor for high-performing organizational leaders. I observe a current need for leadership development to innovate the use of learning technologies to improve the quality of management styles to be more intentional, more effective and more human-centered. My research explored two issues in leadership development: *how busy executives can sustainably learn with flexibility and efficiency* and *how to cultivate a grace-based approach to leadership*.

In consideration of the potential product of my research, this dissertation in practice (DiP) is an innovation for professional doctorates in education and my intention is to share the contribution of this design with the foremost leaders who establish these doctoral standards and to the leadership field practitioners who can benefit from the findings. For those who are more familiar with the five-chapter dissertation format, I would like to provide a "mental map" for the reader on how dissertation elements are mapped onto the three sections of my manuscript. The first section is a podcast series that provides an immersive experience in the content and learning design of this research. In addition to the URL where the reader can listen to the podcasts, full text-based transcripts are included for inclusive design. My research is based on both the construction of and the response to this podcast. In this section, you will hear the application of learning theory in the construction of the narrative and the framing of the

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data that was collected and analyzed from eleven scholarly interviews with distinguished

leaders. While these actions are woven through episodes one - five, there is a final

epilogue episode which provides a "behind the scenes" reflection of this process. My DiP

allows you to experience my research by listening to the stories about a grace-based

approach to leadership and listening for cues for making a behavior change.

The second section is a draft article for *Impacting Education* (IE) which is the

academic journal of the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED) that serves

a relevant readership of faculty and student researchers who are influencing the progress

and value of educational doctorate research. In January 2022, IE had a special issue on

the "Evolution of the Dissertation in Practice" which highlighted examples of research in

various forms that were published as alternatives to five-chapter dissertations. The aim

of my DiP aligns with this design in that the "research advances professional knowledge,

incorporates rigorous and ethical methods, addresses a complex problem of practice,

includes innovative or interdisciplinary inquiry, and reflects an alternative format from

traditional research" (Tamim & Torres, 2022, p. 1). In this article, you will read about the

learning theory that provides the basis for my research, the research methods and data

analysis involved, and the findings that emerged about how to construct this type of

learning modality and new leadership lesson from the phenomenon of grace.

The final section in this DiP is a draft article for a popular business management

journal, *Harvard Business Review*, which is intended to disseminate the findings of the

learning content in this research directly to my professional peers and clients. This article

introduces a novel concept of how managers can cultivate a grace-based approach to

leadership and offers strategies for how to take action. This article offers additional data

analysis about the leadership findings in my research. By creating a DiP that is by design returning immediate feedback to peers and leaders, the benefit of this action research scholarship can be more immediate and relevant.

This study developed new insights around leadership learning and grace-based leadership. In this experience, knowledge was built (or *constructed*) by how the learner, or listener, thought, felt, perceived, and acted. The hope is that through this innovation, the learner was reawakened to the wealth of knowing what is available in better leadership through their experience of listening to leaders discussing grace-focused practices (Ladkin, 2010).

Methods and Limitations

The methods that I used in this research evolved with the discoveries of the emerging data. In the final phase of research, the primary data source was the interview content from business leaders. This data was coded, sorted and constructed to produce a learning narrative. After the podcast was launched, data was also collected from the listeners who completed pre and/or post surveys and from podcasting analytics for downloads and listening metrics.

There were limitations in dealing with data in this way versus a traditional approach to collection which might have an exact population, predictable participation rates and consistent information to gather. The listening and learning data that was available to this research was based on the cooperation of willing listeners who had to voluntarily remember to participate in both surveys as the podcast was discoverable and available regardless of survey compliance. While my goal was to evaluate the

effectiveness of learning in podcasting, there are no existing metrics to verify this at scale and with anonymous listeners who access the content through podcast discovery and recommendations. The available listening metrics simply yield popularity which does not necessarily correlate with quality of learning. This information can offer a list of the education-related podcasts with the most listeners, but not necessarily the most valuable podcasts for learning.

The construction of content in this research also presented an unexpected awareness that the voice of the subject matters. It is hoped that readers of this dissertation will also listen to the podcast and consider their interpretation of the message from both modalities. As an early investigator of this research opportunity, I encourage further consideration of how we evaluate learning of new technologies with distributed, remote and mobile users. This research offers a foundation for what is possible and opens new boundaries for how to capture, produce and present findings.

CHAPTER 2

THE PODCAST: *Giving Grace Matters*

The "Giving Grace Matters" podcast is available in audio format on
www.givinggracematters.com with links to the streaming services and media players of
Apple Podcasts and Spotify. There are five episodes in the series and an epilogue that
reveals the behind the scenes of the production. The full transcripts of these six episodes
are included here and a complete list of the interview guests in the series is located in
Appendix A.

In qualitative research interviewing, the question of correct and valid transcription
"cannot be answered" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 213). For research purposes, the
detail of verbatim transcription is useful for psychological interpretations, but the literary
style "may highlight nuances of a statement and facilitate communication of the meaning
of the subject's stories to readers" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 213). The use of
transcription throughout this research considered the intent and value of analysis and
communication.

The process of transcribing the interview from oral conversations to written text
has several considerations including interpretation, consistency, understanding, reliability
and validity. In this research, each of the 11 interviews were transcribed electronically,
but these versions were unusable for analysis because they were so truncated and out of
sync with the real time conversation flow. Further editing was required manually to
present clean data for manual and computer-based coding analysis. Finally, the
transcription used internally for analysis is not reader-friendly to include in the

publication of a manuscript that needs to communicate the narrative versus the interpretation.

The transcription included here is semi-verbatim which excludes most vocal disfluencies that were present in the original interviews. This was done in order to represent the essence and clarity of the ideas shared. A limited amount of fragmented sentences, some filler words, and repeated ideas are still intact because without them, there is risk of poor authenticity. In fact, when the disfluencies were cleaned up, the coding process and analysis was improved because the information communicated was much easier to comprehend. In one case, I sent a verbatim transcript to an interview guest who requested review in order to grant permission for use, but this guest returned it stating that it was unreadable for this individual to make a decision about its use. Therefore, I needed to provide a semi-verbatim version.

There is no existing style standard for podcast transcriptions represented in a manuscript. In a review of available formatting styles at large, there is neither a standard nor a recommendation offered by a respected source such as the journalistic organizations with the most popular podcasts: National Public Radio (NRP) podcasting or The New York Times Daily. These outlets offer two different format styles and currently also combine both digital and manual transcription techniques to produce inclusive modalities for their audience. At present, the New York Times is experimenting with more interactive designs for their transcripts (Shalom, 2019) which supports the latitude that I will use for presenting the transcript of the episodes in this document.

Transcript - Episode 1: Introduction to a grace-based approach to leadership

(Program length 14:45)

[Upbeat intro music]

HOST: Welcome to Giving Grace Matters. This is a short podcast series designed for leaders like you who would like to zoom in on your leadership practice and consider how the intentional use of grace might be valuable in your management and life experience.

        My name is Debbie Stephens Stauffer, and I am a researcher who studies leadership and innovation. I am also an executive coach and advisor, and I collaborate with leaders across different sectors on how to achieve their goals. I am often zooming out with them to reflect on their decisions, interactions and opportunities. This podcast allows for your similar reflection and will give you options to consume crisp leadership tidbits as well as construct a simple action plan about how to use them.

        The stories you are about to hear are sourced from the generosity of accomplished leaders across a variety of domains who were willing to sit down with me to explore the intersection of grace and leadership.   These executives collectively have had hundreds of years of significant leadership roles across industries and work in the US, Europe and Asia. They are current and former CEOs and c-suite officers, company presidents, board members, television journalists, principals, authors, and college faculty. We explored their concept of grace, how they've seen it show up in their experience and why it matters.

        I have curated their best thinking into this podcast to help you consider what a grace-based approach to leadership makes possible. Your take-away from this listening will not only be inspiration from their life lessons

learned, but also pro tips for how you can cultivate more grace in your practice. I'm really interested in how these ideas connect with your view of leadership and what you might intend to do about it.

This research is early stage, and we are co-creating in real time what a grace-based approach to leadership actually is. By participating in this podcast, not only are you getting something out of it, but you also are now involved in the discovery of whether giving grace matters in leadership. So thank you for being a part of this effort!

The podcast is divided into five short episodes. You can listen to the series all at once or break it up which allows you to set aside time to practice in between each one. If you listen to each episode separately, I recommend completing it within the bounds of one week in order to keep the momentum going for how you are exploring and experimenting with grace as a leader.

As we begin, I have three requests for you:

1. Be sure that you have completed the short pre-survey on the givinggracematters.com website. This is your contribution to the leadership and learning research of this podcast. I'll ask you to do a post-survey at the end as well. Thank you!

2. Record in writing somewhere what your definition of grace is. Just write down what is top of mind if someone asked you to describe it.

3. Think about how you will develop a plan of action to experiment with integrating grace into the work that you do. This is actually your re-action to what you hear. I know you will hear something that will make you think about using it, but how can you be intentional now about capturing the potential insight that is

coming? Are you going to start a journal entry, put a post-it flag on your monitor, post a giving grace matters commitment on your social, or find a willing partner to debrief with you over coffee or a refreshing hike outdoors? Make a commitment to yourself now to do something about this information that you are about to invest your time with. And if you choose the partner conversation option, you can find a short list of discussion topics on our website to be sure you cover the major themes.

To recap these three requests:

1. Take the Pre-Survey now
2. Record your definition of grace
3. Commit to how to launch a re-action plan to what you're taking in

[Upbeat transition music]

HOST: So what is grace? Is it a traditional message that we say before a meal as gratitude? Is it exclusively a faith-based term? By the way, to the extent that grace is familiar in faith, it's helpful to know that it's found in the teachings of not only in Christianity, but also foundational in Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism and more.

Grace, as a concept, is secular and is not exclusively found in religion. We see it in the news headlines and on social media. We hear people hope, when their circumstances shift, that someone will give them grace. And as a busy leader, you've likely received the feedback to give yourself some grace, too.

Given the variety of applications, the idea of grace can be confusing in interpretation and affiliation, and yet when it's mentioned, it often offers a

feeling of relief, support and even love. It often is the signal for an opportunity to have a second chance to demonstrate one's own truth.

Grace seems like an under-used asset to help people be more human-centered in solving problems which is especially relevant in an increasingly digital world of work and communication. For what reasons are we not tapping into this concept of grace more regularly?

The existing scholarship about grace has confirmed that we don't really know how it is showing up in practice, so I decided to find out more. I started with surveying people about what they thought about their own definition of grace, and then I taught a management course to find out how people could be intentional about using grace in their daily work and relationships. From this research, I was able to produce an initial framework for how grace was initially trending, and that resulted in four themes:

1. Unconditional kindness
2. Compassion for others
3. Compassion for self
4. Respect for human dignity

I'll talk more as we go about how this framework for grace shows up in the leadership conversations you're about to hear. Spoiler alert - this framework will evolve as you listen further.

Finally, I want you to also add one more filter to how you are taking this all in. I'd like you to think about your own leadership style. I'm not introducing a new one, but I'd like to suggest that there are three types of leadership styles that work really well with a grace-based approach to

leadership:

1. Relational Leadership. This is someone who believes that relationships to managers, direct reports, peers and all stakeholders are essential to getting things done. While that may seem like common sense to you, it is a distinctive type.

2. Adaptive Leadership. This is someone who can change their way of working in order to solve problems and help others thrive. In many instances, these leaders can create a figurative holding environment that is a space for people to deal with challenges.

3. Servant Leadership. This is someone who will place the good of the other person as a priority and help to nurture his or her success.

As you consider being more intentional about grace, I hope that you are also reflecting on the leadership styles that can enable it: Relational, Adaptive and Servant Leadership. You'll notice that all three of these leadership styles are represented in the stories ahead and hopefully by naming them, you'll notice some similarities in your own style, too.

[Upbeat transition music]

HOST: Let's start with a baseline understanding of what grace is in this management context. And keep in mind that you are listening for the themes of kindness, compassion, and respect for human dignity.

When I was interviewing a CEO of a large European company, she explained to me that she considers grace to be a mindset. In other words, having grace means to be mindful of what others are experiencing. By

recognizing the interests and needs of others, this approach shows respect for human dignity.

David Holquin, president of the nationally recognized de La Salle High School in Northern California adds that when we are giving grace to others by considering them, we gain in what they are able to produce. He sees this not only with students but also with faculty and staff.

HOLQUIN: I think, you know, grace what a beautiful topic because if we actually gave more grace to each other and gave more grace to ourselves I think life would be so much better and more importantly our output in our products would be so much richer if given that grace.

HOST: And David's belief underscores that grace isn't just about the moment of acting or the specific instance of giving grace– but he's speaking about the long term benefit of doing so. This investment of a grace-based approach to management time over time has results in both basic interaction and is available to be used in high stakes' situations when you put the time in to cultivate it. As former management consultant and international broadcast journalist Eyee Hsu explains:

HSU: It's foundational, right? Hopefully this idea of grace and developing that environment of belonging is there so that people can perform when it's time to be in those high stakes' situations, right? I don't think it's like "Oh, we 're in a high stakes situation; we're going to give grace." You are

doing

it all along the way so that they can perform well. It's a long-term play. It's not something that you're going to say like "Oh, I'm going to have a grace-based approach, and I'm going to, you know, see results in the next few months." No, I think it takes time.

HOST: So if you've put your time in to build a culture of grace so that you are sustaining your relationships for a long term play as Eyee suggests, then why take the time to do this? Because it will pay off. Chris Donnelly, a former executive at Nike and Oakley told me that when he was younger in his career, the perceived risk of taking time for grace was higher than it really was. But for Chris, he needed to go through credible experiences to prove its worth. To prove that believing in others, stepping aside for others to grow, and doing the right thing had dividends. And for him, he was very aware of the corporate risk in going against what was expected and sometimes, it wasn't an option. But when it was, it mattered.

DONNELLY: When I was young, I have many more examples where I didn't do it because you don't yet have an example where it came back to you. So, the risk you perceive is so much higher because you know the karmic equation is not linear nor predictable. And you have to have faith that those people that kindness truly is remembered in a way that is differentially deep than "I got you a promotion, you own me." That's just business. I've done it ten thousand times, and I remember very little of any of those interchanges. But you show me the one where either I know someone made a sacrifice or took a risk or came out of the blue.

HOST: The type of leader that you're hearing about believes in the goodness and potential of others. This application of a human-centered perspective is the case I'm building for why we might want to cultivate a grace-based approach to management. Grace is an inclusive mindset. It's a long term play that people remember. It generates results in the workplace. And it starts with your core values about other people. Here's how President Holquin at de la Salle affirms this foundational view for us:

[Upbeat transition music]

HOLQUIN: If you believe, and maybe some will say I'm Pollyanna, but if you believe that people want to do good in this world, then giving them grace is the only thing that we can and should do to allow them to be able to do that, right? So for me, I actually don't think that it's hard. I think it's consequential. I think it matters. But I guess maybe I've always believed in humanity more than than not so then it seems pretty natural.

HOST: Now let's zoom back to your definition of grace. If you haven't written it down yet, please do so before you go on to the next episode when we talk about the framework for a grace-based approach to leadership. I'll meet you there.

[Outro music]

Transcript - Episode 2: Adding a little more grace

(Program length 14:30)

[Upbeat intro music]

HOST: Welcome back to the Giving Grace Matters Podcast. This is Episode 2. In

the first episode, we started to make the case for cultivating a grace-based approach to leadership. In this episode, I'm going to share a framework for how to think about it.

Right now, you will be listening for the resonation between the definition of grace that you recorded and the framework I'm offering which has three parts: kindness, compassion and respect for human dignity. You also

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might be thinking about how much of this is enough to make the call that grace is in action?

Nate Walkingshaw can help us to think about the challenge of naming and measuring grace. Nate is an inventor, a successful serial entrepreneur, a current CEO of Torus, which is a pioneer company in sustainability, and by the way, a tree farmer. He's also a leader in human-centered product design which requires these attributes of grace, like compassion. When Nate was an executive at Pluralsight, a global workforce education company, he influenced internal corporate culture that was human-centered as well as how the Pluralsight platform could be designed to change the way opportunity and dignity has honored workers around the world. Nate understands how to tackle ambiguity with value-based reasoning.

| WALKING-SHAW | If I could counsel other leaders. It's not easy. It's actually very, very difficult. This leadership style is very unique because you do have to balance the binary nature of a business like credits and debits side, either things are or they aren't. There's a very black and white piece of organizations. And then there's this cultural and this core values, which is more art than science. And, people have a really hard time, kind of, parsing how to deliver value. They actually have to measure value. Like when we talk about grace…it's like when somebody asks me to measure grace…it's like, 'Well, how much grace did you give this week, or how much grace are you giving throughout this year?' I mean it's arbitrary. I think, when I say it's difficult, I mean it's literally hard to bucket it, put a metric around it, and then chase it down. It is a cultural lived and felt thing, and I'd say, maybe if there's any way to measure it, it lives in a vanity metric called like employee net promoter scores or employee customer satisfaction. But, trust me, when they're not happy, you're gonna |

hear about it in qualitative feedback, and you're gonna see it on Glassdoor. And the goal is to get ahead of it.

This is a call to action for us right now. How can we get ahead of identifying opportunities to cultivate grace in organizations? If we can't bucket it, as Nate suggests, then let's pour out what could be in the bucket and tag it. We'll discover that some buckets will have different balances of values that align with grace, and that's okay.

What I'd like to share with you are the three tags that I've noticed as being consistently present with leaders when they talk about grace in their organizations: compassion to self and others, respect for human dignity and a nuanced type of kindness that is grounded in authenticity.

Let's listen to a story from Jane Saccaro who is the former CEO of Camp Kesem, an incredible national program and summer camp for children who are affected by a parent's cancer. Jane is now an executive coach living in Chicago and recently shared with me a dilemma that she had at Kesem that required her to take a risk and lean into compassion to solve a sticky situation.

SACCARO: When I first started thinking about this, I had so clearly this example of an experience I had. I was running a non-profit called Camp Kesem. And just in a quick nutshell, the organization supports children whose parents have cancer. At the time, I think we were serving 10,000 children in summer programs across the country. So you can imagine [relatable laugh], 10,000 kids under our care - things, you know, for the most part go well, but once in a while, you know, all the same bumps, scrapes, everything that happens at home, happens to us at camp.

And, we had a situation with a camper parent where, I won't go into the details, but something had happened with their child. We had to contact them and get them involved. And, while we were doing our investigation trying to figure out what had happened, the parent sort of lost patience with us and got very, very irate. And the parent chose to use their anger and lash out on social media. You know, sharing all sorts of things that were not true: personally attacking me, personally attacking the organization, going after our donors – all while we're trying to get our arms around what actually happened here.

Where grace comes in is my board was surrounded by incredible people, but very risk averse people, and so when when this parent was lashing out, the consistent advice I was getting was: "stop engaging, don't talk to the parent any more, at this point it's only going to hurt the organization, there's the sense that he could use your words against us, like, just stop engaging, nothing, nothing good is going to happen out of this." I could not shake that there was something more to this parent and that the core of this parent was someone who was very, very afraid and very afraid for their child. Very afraid and very hurt because of what had happened to them, and so I kept on pushing with our board and said I'd really like to get the parent on the phone for another time. And they're like "no, absolutely not. Our council has advised against it." I couldn't sleep and I finally said "Hey, what would it take for you all to feel safe for me to have this conversation because I really think we owe it to this parent? At the end the day, we are an organization that serves children and parents in crisis." So, they agreed if we recorded the conversation and if I had a colleague join us, we could actually get on the phone with the parent and hear him out.

He got on the phone, and it was pure vitriol. I mean just anger, hatred; so much just fuming. And, we let him vent. We let him hear it all out. When he was done, we said, "Can we share what we learned through our investigation?" He took a breath. Listened to us, um, where we shared, you know, the facts as we understood them. And he immediately switched gears. He just calmed down. He shared that no one listened to him throughout his cancer journey. That no one had understood he had lost his job. He had lost his sight. He had lost so many other gifts. And this was just an angry, really really scared parent. By the end of the call, he literally agreed to pull all of his social media posts. He had threatened to sue the organization. He pulled back the lawsuit, literally everything. His only request was "Can I enroll my child for the next year?"

But where grace comes in for me is this, like, commitment to see the human on the other side. And to understand and approach with compassion and to be just unconditionally kind to that individual and to respect them and to treat them with dignity. I think the biggest take away from me in that experience was you know so often we get into leadership positions and we're advised to do things to protect and insulate the organization. And, I think many times that's absolutely the right strategy, but there are those times where it also serves to insulate us against the human that we're trying to connect with and we lose a lot. And, I think if had we followed the path of not engaging and that we probably would have had a lawsuit. We probably would have had continued social media, you know, PR crisis on our hands and instead, we were able, in this case, to connect with the human on the other side.

HOST: By choosing a grace-based approach to responding to that parent, Jane and her team were able to come to a positive resolution that exceeded

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expectations. Let's tag the way grace showed up: there was compassion for the parent who was hurt, there was kindness in honoring the conversation, and there was respect for his dignity by allowing him to negotiate a resolution despite a tough start in his negotiation tactics.

When we choose a human-centered approach, we can access innovative and wide-reaching solutions. Here's how Charles Humbard, the CEO of Uplift Entertainment media company, dives in to earnestly listen to understand what is important to his viewers and customers.

HUMBARD: "In our world, what we deal with a lot is, um, you know, we're an uplifting brand, a wide entertainment brand. But we tend to, you know, also attract a more conservative viewer base. The conservative viewer base doesn't always like some of the story lines, um, you know, if we get into different kinds of lifestyle with, you know, same sex couples and other things. And that has been something that, you know, you got to apply grace on as well as a leader, um, and how we respond to our customers. Because, look, they're our customers. They are people that like our brand, but they will write me and express, you know, their disagreement with things that we have on, you know, and it can be language issues that could be those kind of things.

And you have to have some grace in that and say, "Where is this person coming from?" And I, I go as far, sometimes, to reach out and call these people so I get a better understanding of what makes them think that way, right? And I think you have to show grace a little bit as a leader and do that. You can't just say, there again, "my way or the highway." I want to understand, you know, as much as I can about our viewers and our customers so I can have those considerations as we make programming

decisions and business decisions, um, that they may disagree with or may enjoy.

HOST: If we were to dump out this bucket of grace and tag the elements, you'd notice the compassion in Charley's willingness to engage with people who want to be heard, his kindness reaching out to call people back and his respect for others to consider and honor diverse viewpoints.

If it's "my way or the highway," then a grace-based approach to management doesn't work.

By now, you are starting to get ahead of understanding how to identify opportunities to cultivate grace in organizations. Before you jump to the next episode, I'd like you to first consider some recent interactions you've had with peers, colleagues, family or even the grocery clerk. Think about things you said, wrote or did. How do you think that compassion, dignity and kindness showed up?

Let's listen to a way that you might evaluate your grace-based interaction as told by Jane Saccaro from the Camp Kesem story and who also has had a dynamic career in a variety of corporate leadership roles.

SACCARO: I think when I am at my best as a leader, I have a mixture of grace and grit. And I'm using the two together. I'm, you know, using the grace to have this unconditional support and care and compassion and that. But the grit to make sure we're continuing to move forward, and when we hit obstacles, we're resilient, and we're creative, and we're hard working in that. And those, when they're going together, feel really good. When I'm out of alignment, I think I'm too far indexed on grit and not enough on grace. And so when I was reflecting, I'm like, okay, what are the really

yucky things that, you know, I wish I could undo. Or, you know, the, you know, the tough personnel issues that have happened over the last twenty five years. In each time, once I had your theme, and I could apply it, too, I was like, "there was not enough grace in that situation. There was not enough compassion for the human on the other side." And so it's, they're all small little instances, but like, if you asked me when I'm cataloging at night what, you know, what do I want to fix before I leave this planet, like, there's probably three or four instances where, I'm like, there was just not enough grace. And so that that's what's showing up for me, is like, in my, in my proudest moments, I've got that: the grace and the grit are there together. And in my least proud moments, what's missing is grace.

[Upbeat transition music]

Let's take action. I want you to use Jane's ratio of "grit vs grace" to evaluate that recent interaction you thought about. Make a note of one thing you can do in the next 24 hours that will bring a little more grace to something similar. What would happen if you dialed up the grace a little more than the grit?

[Upbeat transition music]

In the next episode, we will think about where we see grace showing up. I'll meet you there.

[Outro Music]

Transcript - Episode 3: Learning from mistakes

(Program length 14:47)

[Upbeat intro music]

HOST: Welcome back to the Giving Grace Matters Podcast. This is Episode
            3. In the first two episodes we established a reason and framework for a
            grace-based approach to leadership. You've taken action by defining
            grace for yourself and using a grace vs. grit filter.

            This episode identifies how people both show grace and operate at a level
            of excellence and it's all about feedback.

            [Music]

            One lesson that is coming out of this research is that feedback is a form of
            grace. When feedback is effective, it's not punishment. In many ways,
            feedback is a ticket to have a second chance which is often code for "I
            hope that I can get some grace on this."

            Let's back up from the workplace and look at how important feedback is
            when we start school. I spoke with Dr. Denise Pope who is a professor at
            the Graduate School of Education at Stanford University. She's also an
            author and co-founder of Challenge Success which is an organization that
            helps school leaders, students and families challenge the notion that there
            is only one way to achieve success. Dr. Pope counsels school leaders on
            how to develop a climate of care that fosters a safe space for students to
            learn and thrive.

POPE: The climate of care is one of the places where I see grace coming in and
            this notion of both how leaders are supposed to treat the people who they
            work with and really how they're supposed to create a community of
            people who treat one another with dignity, who treat one another, um,
            with a real sense of trust and care and foster belonging.

But then within that there are specific things like making mistakes. Be the perfectionist versus someone who understands that I learned from my mistakes. That we're all going to make mistakes. And you expect to treat people who make mistakes with grace. And you expect to treat yourself with grace, right? And that we're all in this together. Making mistakes is a really normal way of learning. In fact, some people would say you have to really make mistakes in order to really learn, reflect on those mistakes, and then do something better the next time.

HOST: It could be that in this race to the top, we've forgotten that we all need to learn from making mistakes and in doing so, we need to be in an environment of grace. Let's go back again to school with Dr. Pope, and remember that the end game still has expectations for performance.

POPE: For kids, we do this all the time. We wouldn't be teachers if we didn't show grace because they don't walk in perfect. And we have to allow them to make mistakes and that's how they learn. But I think when it comes to then, management, there's this feeling of "I can't make a mistake."

I don't want to confuse grace with having low standards. I don't want to confuse grace with relativism or everything goes and it's all okay. Like, that's not grace. So in my head, it's much more about [Nel] Noddings' ethic of care: like, you truly care for someone, you support them, you make them feel like they are valued and respected, and you treat them in the way that you would want to be treated. That, to me, is grace.

HOST: When we move into the workplace, a mistake can sometimes be labeled as failure. However, what I want you to really hold onto here is this: grace allows failure to be redefined as continuous learning. We are now seeing

that failure is considered as a way forward and is being reframed as an opportunity for feedback in order to get better.

Nate Walkingshaw, our serial CEO and human-centered design evangelist, offers a perspective about how the business sector has evolved with this reframing of failure. One of Nate's first jobs was as an EMT and from that experience, he solved a gurney transport problem by inventing a medical device called the Paraslyde.   But his first attempt in the market was a big miss, and it was hard for him to not feel like the failure was a dealbreaker. Fortunately, he was able to get feedback from the users he had not originally consulted and the consequential learning enabled his team to improve the product so that today the Paraslyde is used in a majority of all US emergency rooms. The grace he gave himself enabled him to move on and learn what he needed to build a better product.

| WALKING-SHAW: | I think just like this entire era, I actually really love where we are in corporate America and just larger corporations right now around diversity of thought, kind of, more of, like diversity and inclusion. It allows people, you know, to come, um, with a whole bunch of different backgrounds. And I think why that's so important is because we look at failure differently now. And, when you think about failure across an organization, you know, I'd say more old school was not loved. Failure was not acceptable. I come from the product and engineering world. So you know, there was no concept of like, "hey, this had to be eighty percent good." It had to be perfect when it went out the door, especially in the medical device world. It's heavily regulated, and so our ability to fail excepted. And then, when we did fail, we wanted a list of names of you know who those folks were and then what mistakes were made. And then we wanted to, you know, grab those those folks, in some instances, make an example of errant mistakes, either an assembly line or in an engineering drawing or |

in a product management decision. It created a lot of fear, a lot of uncertainty, and a lot of doubt– a lot of FUD across the organization. It ultimately kept a lot of silence. So if you look at grace today, it's pretty fun because you get to embrace failure. And I guess we've kind of redefined what failure is. And, it sounds a lot more like learning or continuous learning cultures that embrace a lot of psychological safety, and I think it's a very, very beautiful thing that's happening across corporations these days.

HOST: Dr. Pope has some experience with how we create that psychologically safe environment for feedback, and it starts with a better understanding of what feedback, or this practice of assessment, means.

POPE: So one, I think, is really setting up that culture from the beginning and saying you know we value loving critique, right, or whatever you want to call it. That's how we all get better at our jobs. And what we're really talking about is assessment. The latin root of the word assessment is assidere which means to sit beside. And to me, like, if you think about grace, this is such a beautiful thing, right? You sit beside someone and listen to what they're saying and help them learn, and give them feedback that they can then take in. Not in a "gotcha" kind of way, not in an evaluatory way where like your next paycheck depends on it or your next bonus depends on it. But we all want the same thing, and let's do this together. Nobody does good work alone, completely alone in silos. To set up that notion of assessment and critique as, as a way to help us get to the next step, then I think it's pretty clear that nobody is going to be perfect. We're constantly striving.

HOST: Now let's move from theory to practice. Can the loop of grace, failure, and feedback produce high value work? Celia Edwards Karam, President of Retail Bank, Capital One has a theory.

EDWARDS KARAM: I think in this performance context, you know, I've thought, a little bit about, um, maybe it's worth, like, backing up a couple of steps. I think it's probably seven or eight years ago now that I kind of came to a point of view about the role of what I'll call inclusion, or meeting people where they are, as kind of part of my leadership style. And that that wasn't always the way other people did it and that that would be okay. And it's okay for me to do it my way. And so one of the things I have to confront then is, well, how do I do it my way but continue to preserve a really high talent bar which I think is important in general terms but it's also very important in the company that I work in, right? Sort of one of our foundational principles that sort of, uh, maintaining that high talent bar is a really kind of important aspect. And so I felt like if I was going to do this thing differently, I had to be confident that I could still do that thing effectively, if that makes sense. But I realize there's an intersection there as opposed to a duality.

And so the intersection I think shows up in two ways. One is giving hard feedback actually about giving grace, right? If I don't tell you what's wrong, if I don't tell you how that could have been better, if I don't tell you that meeting didn't go particularly well, here's why here's how you might think about that. You know, that's actually not grace. That just doing a poor job of being a people leader. Those are two really different things. Now giving that feedback with empathy, right? Sort of, how do I give it in the right moment, right? It's, you know, in general, constructive feedback is best given one on one. Not in front of a large group of people. If I can, it's best given you know in a timely way, right? When it's like relatively

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close to when that thing has happened. Um, but also there's a way for me to deliver it that allows you to have time to hear it and ask questions and feel supported in the development of it. Um, so I do think grace and giving hard feedback actually go hand in hand. They're not opposed to one another.

I think the second piece of it is you. Upon giving feedback and trying to support someone through development, sometimes you're going to come to the conclusion this is no longer the right role for this person. While that moment is hard, it's actually a moment that very much leans on grace in order to do it effectively. So again, my continuing to have the person in the role if they're not succeeding isn't doing them or the team any favors. That's not grace. But, how do I have an honest and direct and empathetic conversation? Did I give them time to, like, hear the feedback and have time to work on it before we sort of got to this point? Do I support them through the exit? Right? What does that look like to give a graceful exit? Goodness, we've probably all seen examples of not graceful exits. [laughs] That isn't the way to do it. There's a way to drive to this outcome that still very much terms empathy and grace. And, actually I think you are, you're doing a better job for the whole team when you lean into those hard conversations and those hard moments. I think part of the key is doing it with empathy and directness at the same time.

HOST:　　This balance of being kind and firm is what changed my original framework for a grace-based approach to leadership. Initially, I was hearing that to be graceful meant to be unconditionally kind and perhaps in a different context, that can be true. However, in management, the kindness that we see affiliated with grace is specifically authentic. It is honest. It delivers the tough news and holds to a standard in service of being kind. This version of kindness is a long-term play.

And in this delivery of authentic kindness, our principal from de la Salle High School, who has had to make numerous decisions about the disciplinary fate of students, reminds us of the grace that is present when he does so:

[Music]

HOLQUIN: You can just tell what they need is the recognition that they are still good human being. More importantly, that that one mistake isn't going to define their life.

HOST: And that, is how you facilitate a graceful exit.

Let's recap. Mistakes are how people learn. When we create a safe space for the mistakes to be identified through feedback, then we can work through what Dr. Pope names as revision and redemption to do better the next time. This is how failure, in a grace-based context, can produce continuous learning. So when we assidere, or "sit with" others, we can be a graceful force for continuous learning and improving performance.

[Music]

HOST: Here's your next practice task. Let someone sit with you so that you can ask for feedback about you in service of how you can continuously learn. You might ask: How might I do this better? What am I missing? Who can help me?

[Music]

HOST: In our next episode, we will talk about some unexpected perks of a grace-based approach to management. I'll meet you there.

Transcript - Episode 4: Innovation and inclusion

(Program length 14:57)

[Upbeat intro music]

HOST: Welcome back to the Giving Grace Matters Podcast. This is Episode 4. This episode reveals how a grace-based approach to leadership gives us a net gain of inclusion and innovation.

As you continue to listen, I want to remind you of the experiential design of this podcast. At the end of each episode, you are invited to do a small activity that helps to build your fluency with grace-based actions. To access the complete activity guide, visit givinggracematters.com.

[Music]

HOST: In our last episode, we identified how a grace-based approach to leadership can show up in second chances and convert mistake-making into continuous learning. Now, we will explore how grace can leverage inclusion and innovation.

Let's start with inclusion which is a state of being valued, respected and supported. It is about ensuring that the right conditions are in place for each person to achieve full potential. Keep in mind that maximizing one's potential is for both the follower and the leader. The benefit of inclusion is not one-sided or zero-sum. It's synergistic which means that the whole

is greater than the sum of its parts. Synergy in organizations is when inclusion is ripe and to get there, leaders benefit from the grace-based groundwork of compassion, authentic kindness and respect for human dignity.

Celia Edwards Karam, the Capital One Retail Bank president, not only considers grace as a space for learning from mistakes, but she also thinks about it as inclusion.

EDWARDS KARAM: I do think there's a version of grace that also extends into what I might call inclusion in the sense of giving grace and space for a broad variety of perspectives, feelings, ways of interacting, sort of along that path. So there's a version of grace that also connects to the word inclusion for me.

HOST: No doubt that you have heard leaders make pledges to promote inclusion, but research has shown that these commitments fail when there is no system for following through. This is where a grace-based approach to leadership comes in.

When managers can ongoingly demonstrate a commitment to listening, managing bias, and recognizing others, then more of an inclusive culture is available. A manager who has a "my way or the highway" style of leadership is simply not available to hear alternatives, to identify blind spots or to collaborate on building something better.

Celia shared with me a story about how she almost missed a critical decision, but with her inclusive framework, she was able to change her mind and achieve a better and unexpected outcome.

EDWARDS KARAM: I lead an organization in the banking space. And so obviously one of the, the big things we're constantly doing is thinking about how best to create the right outcome for customers while also creating the right outcome for the business. How do you make those two things line up? And there was an individual on my team, I'll call him Paul, who was sort of advocating for, you know, this product that we should be pursuing. Um, and, he was fairly relentless in his sort of advocacy for the product. And I think after a while the thing I started to hear was a bit of self-serving because if we had gone down the path of building this product, his team would have to get more resources, he'd have a big result on his plate for the year which is obviously, you know, beneficial from a performance perspective. And so I started to hear everything he was saying in this context of, sort of, solving for himself which you know but I then had a pretty negative reaction to it.

And then at some point, I realized that I needed to pause and, and sort of think about the assumptions applying to what he was saying, as opposed to what Paul was actually saying. So I sat down. I had a conversation, and I actually just sort of named it honestly. And I said, "Hey I'm actually kind of struggling because this feels a little self-serving, but I also think that there's maybe a different interpretation that I'm not, sort of, being aware of. And I didn't use the word grace in that dialogue, but I think that's where that was going, right, is sort of giving grace and space to say "what if there's not a self-serving motivation here? Like, what if there's a different thing, and I'm missing what that is which might be really important to my team?" And, you know, true to form, what he talked me through was actually understanding in this particular case, there was a set of, like, fraud outcomes that were occurring that were very bad for customers. And so if we went down the path of this product, we would really help customers in this way. But he had this, you know, unique

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visibility to these fraud outcomes that I wasn't seeing. But had I not thought to ask him the question, I would have dismissed his idea out of my perception of it being, sort of, a self-serving, driven thing. And instead, leaning on the idea that actually the vast majority of people are not self-serving, and there might be some other thing going on. And then, kind of, using that to ask some questions led to a much better outcome.

HOST: One potential barrier to inclusion is time. By increasing participation and allowing for more and different input when appropriate, there may be a concern that efficiency can be compromised. When I challenged Celia with that assumption of risk, she countered that the front-end investment in inclusive decision-making both saves time and improves quality in the long run.

EDWARDS KARAM: I think there are a couple of aspects there, and again, I'm going to leverage our "grace as inclusion" framework. One is even when trying to move fast, I'm going to make a better decision if I've been able to get the points of view from all the kind of key players in the decision making. And so if in my desire to move fast, I seek the input of two when what I really needed was the input of five or six, I may have made my decision quickly, but the error rate of that decision is going to be higher so it's going to cost me more time in the long run. I feel like I've proven that point to myself a couple of times over with mistakes [laughs].

Um, and so I, I, you know, I feel very confident, then, that we get to better answers when we pull in, you know, what I'll call the full team. That's kind of thing one. Thing two is when I invest on a, in a regular basis of creating space and inclusion in my team so that they know that I'm genuinely listening to their contributions, it actually then can move very quickly, right? So, sort of, I can open up a point of view. I don't have to

invest a bunch of time to say, "Hey this is just my point of view. I really want to hear what you have to say" because they've seen me demonstrate the fact that I really want to hear what they have to say time and time again. So they take it as a point of view in an opening of a conversation not a declaration. Is kind of Thing one.

Thing two, when I'm creating that environment on a regular basis, the team is more likely to jump in with their points of view. I don't have to fish for it, right? So it doesn't have to take that much time. And then lastly, I think technically it's actually quite easy to say, "Hey, we've heard from half the group on this thing. Let's pause for a moment. Are there any places where people are worried or concerned that we haven't heard from yet? This is a great time to kind of put your voice in the room." And then just shut up for a moment and see what happens.

Sometimes that's enough. Sometimes the people who are quiet, it's actually that they're on board. They just didn't say anything because they were trying to, you know, move the meeting along. And if someone had something to say, that that is the moment, um, in which they get to say it. And so I think the speed that's lost is actually relatively minimal if you're investing in grace-based leadership on an ongoing basis.

HOST: Now let's talk about grace and innovation which represents not only the brilliance of breakthroughs but also something as simple as making a useful upgrade.

Kiran Handa Gaudioso, the CEO of the United Way of Northern New Jersey, works closely with her team to create opportunities, and with many people to serve and limited resources to do it, they constantly have to innovate their way

forward. At her organization, they are able to be more innovative because of how they cultivate a grace-based environment.

HANDA GAUDIOSO: To me it's the ability to take risks. Maybe make a mistake, you know, have a Monday morning quarterback moment and know that your boss and your team has your back. I think especially in our sector we are forced to innovate on the fly every day. I mean, it's what I love about it, right? But now you can't you can't innovate, be reactive, and responsive, and opportunistic, and community centered, if you don't have that foundation of grace in the workplace.

HOST: The example of Kiran's team highlights how the quality of the relationships enables the task to be accomplished. Let's hear again from Eyee Hsu, the journalist we met earlier in this podcast series. Eyee seeks to create breakthrough conversations with divergent viewpoints having hosted meetings with Al Gore's Climate Reality Project and MountainTowns 2030 which seeks collaborative agreement on challenging climate issues from varied stakeholders. She contends that the value of grace is influential when it tempers fear and judgment so that innovation can emerge.

HSU: When you have the inclusion, you achieve even greater outcomes. When you think about environments in your past experiences whether it's work, or, or in teaching environments. When you're in a state of fear because you're going to be judged or there's going to be negative consequences, you don't take risks. You may not try to innovate. When you create an environment of openness, everybody can contribute. The innovation, the ideas that come forth, you know, there's a cascade of them.

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HOST: We heard so far that when grace-based leaders have your back, diffuse judgment, and respect opinions, then the focus can be on the work to innovate rather than relationship breakdowns.

Innovative work requires fresh thinking to stay competitive and resourceful. Having the grace to understand that is what sets leaders apart even when it means that their own roles might need to change to make room for someone or something else. When a team sources similar backgrounds or familiar experiences, it can end up magnifying limitations, not eliminating them. This is when the type of grace that includes compassion for self can access a mindset of abundance instead of scarcity.

Chris Donnelly shared with me a story from his experience at Oakley where he had the instinct for how to be innovative, and as a senior executive, he intentionally disrupted the leadership composition of the company which ultimately shifted his career path. His strategy combined inclusion and innovation, but in order to do that, he had to use his personal capital of being a trusted leader.

DONNELLY: When I went to Oakley, Oakley was about ninety-three percent male, seven percent female. Nature of the business. Highly military. Highly athletic. Very macho and that just, that came with a founder and everything that was in the business. But when I hired in, I had some experience that said, "Actually, no, man, the greatest advantage I'm going to have is that I'm going to make my team fifty/fifty. Because I already know from prior experience the value that women bring to my teams. I have, in a selfish context, used that benefit for my own success. At Oakley, that meant I went out of my way to do it. But when I proposed three years down the road that a woman would become the lead VP of

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men's sunglasses at Oakley, that was a shock to the rest of the company. It, I would take some hits for that, but I wanted to backher into that role because I truly felt she would be the best. I, you know, I recognized both it came at a cost, but it was a perceived cost that isn't as high as you think as long as you're willing to show the courage and truly believe in it. And, then that actually came back to me in spades which was she not only succeeded, she, you know, she exceeded my expectations and everyone else's. And, that's a, that's a context you have to be willing to make that kind of a bet to come back and see that these twenty-five women at Oakley, now essentially run Oakley. [laughs] You know, it's ten years later.

HOST: In this episode, we explored two benefits of a grace-based approach to leadership: inclusion and innovation. Let's continue to name it when we see a space for grace.

The next activity in your plan of action to apply these ideas is to create a simple 3-question scorecard about your current state of inclusion and innovation. Give the scores a range from "one to five" with one being "never" and five being "always."

The first question is, "To what extent do I create a space for inclusion in my organization?"

[Background music fades in]

The second question is "to what extent do I create a space for innovation in my organization?"

The final question is "Am I the type of leader who will respond to what is showing up in this assessment?"

In our next and final episode, we will talk about setting an intention for a grace-based approach to leadership. I'll meet you there.

[Outro music]

Transcript - Episode 5: Beginning a practice

(Program length 15:48)

[Upbeat intro music]

HOST: Welcome back to the Giving Grace Matters Podcast. This is Episode 5 and the last in our series.

Ln the last episode, we explored two benefits of a grace-based approach to leadership: inclusion and innovation. Our final episode here suggests how to practice a grace-based approach to leadership.

[Music]

The experiences you are hearing in this podcast represent naming the phenomenon of a grace-based approach to leadership. Grace is valuable, as well as novel, in a management context, and these findings are an innovation on how to consider grace in leadership.

You now have the knowledge to notice, name, consider, practice and reflect on this grace-based approach and by listening to this podcast and doing the short activities, you have accomplished a complete cycle of how to innovate your leadership with grace.

To that end, we'll map out the cycle again for how you can increase your fluency in a grace-based approach to leadership.

First, I simply want you to notice grace. For many of us, grace has been an untapped resource for how we lead. Jane Saccaro, the Camp Kesem CEO, said that she had never thought about grace as a leadership approach before which she found so bizarre because grace has been so important to her throughout her life. Not only does her name literally mean to be gracious, but also in this study, she had the insight that she actually has been applying grace in numerous work and life contexts for decades including even using the word as a mantra with her sister to rescue their resiliency in a trying circumstance. This basic recognition is helping her to capture this approach to use it with more intention for the future. It's likely that you are noticing something similar.

Charley Humbard, the Uplift Media CEO, has practiced grace in his faith, but is noticing it for the first time in a business context.

HUMBARD: It's a subject that I've never been asked about in the business, uh, world so it's really interesting to have to think about it. And hopefully a lot of us practice it anyhow. We haven't consciously said, "Oh this is going my, my moment of grace." I come at grace probably from my faith background and my faith perspective to it. And as I look at it as, as you define it with faith, I think it's kind of that spontaneous, what they say, unmerited gift of divine favor. And maybe as you look at it in the workplace you could take the word divine out and say, "What do you do when your, you have that opportunity? You have that opportunity to make the right decision about some situation with a person. Did you really consider holistically everything that's going on with them you know? You know, what their life

might entail that you might not know? I come at it from a faith perspective, but at the same time I think it is a human, the human practice.

HOST: Next in our cycle of practice is directly naming grace. We want grace to belong in your leadership repertoire. President Holquin noted that when we name something, it allows it to belong.

HOLQUIN: Thank you for naming it. I think it's really important that you're, you're naming a grace-based leadership model. It is in the naming that we truly get to belong. And when I think about what, what you're doing and what we're supposed to do as leaders, is "Do we truly know people and do we see them?" For me, I think that is both grace-filled and and grace being given.

HOST: After we notice and name grace, then it's available for you to consider how to use it and to really think deeply about what it means. Kiran Handa Gaudioso, the United Way CEO, has worked hard to keep grace at the forefront of how she genuinely shows up as a manager.

HANDA GAUDIOSO: It's something I've always thought about, and I've always been very, just, mindful about through life with myself. This whole notion of grace and what does grace look like and giving myself grace at various times but then coming into this leadership role and then everything with covid and the pandemic and just, all the stress and everything we know, right, what, what people and families are experiencing. It's just, I find myself in one on one conversations with staff. Someone sharing a very, you know, incredibly stressful personal situation they were managing. Or in a team meeting, talking through fifty thousand things that have to get done by weekend and always coming back to we have to give ourselves grace. We have to think about what is the priority. What can we handle. And we can

only do the best we can. Like, it's, it's very basic. But I found myself saying it over and over and over again, and then the team saying, "Okay." And so I think people in leadership roles and organizations have to vocalize it. You know, we all know it: do the best you can, one day at a time, you know, all the cliches, but it's really looking deep to say, "Well, what does that mean?" And making sure leaders and managers and you know, all throughout organizations, are really thinking about grace as a strategy for motivation and retention and planning and all of that.

HOST: We want you to see the value-based behaviors of grace – compassion, kindness and respect – as your foundation and recognize them when you are navigating different situations. Charley Humbard offered an excellent metaphor of a dock And a compass for how he taught his children about how to recognize their core values.

HUMBARD: It's something I have talked about in my life and taught my kids. And I look at what I'm to do is to help them understand who we are and what we value as a family and as humans. And I call that the dock. So I think it's like a sailing analogy or boat. And the dock is something that's there for you to return to. And then I say, "but you have a compass and I'm going to give you that as well. You're going to go out onto the sea. You're going to go out and your beliefs may change. You may be influenced in college to believe this and try this and experiment with this. And, you know, in your thirties you might believe something different as you continue to gain knowledge and experiences in your life. But what's important are your values. Your values should not change. Your values are that dock. That place that you know after I've done my journeys and experimented and done these things, I have a place to come back to. And I'm going to give you that compass of knowledge to help you find your way back, um, to the dock."

So I think that's, you know, a little story to share about how I think about raising kids. And I think that you know in society what's happened is a lot of people aren't spending time with the values piece. So people don't know where home base is. And they just keep experimenting, keep wondering, keep trying new things. Humans love to know certainties. Humans have to have some certainties in their life. It can't be all experiment, all varying, all the time. I think it's very important that people know what their values are and can come back to those. And at the same time, live and learn and experience things and try things and understand new things because your beliefs will change throughout your life.

HOST: For a grace-based leadership approach, your job is to align your dock (these values-based behaviors of grace) with the voyages that you captain. Your dock position is grounded in grace when you represent the kind of grace-based leadership actions like having your team's back, inviting and listening to ideas other than your own, modeling self-positive behavior and being human-centered.

            Once you notice, name, and consider the grace-based actions, you are ready to exercise them. As President Holquin points out, the complete practice is about how you treat others as well as yourself.

HOLQUIN: I also think practice, uh, practice is really important. Both giving grace to myself as well as giving it to others. My team here is probably annoyed at how often I say "be kind to yourself, be kind to yourself." When folks are really stressed out and they're worrying about a b or c, I find that not only are they not saying kind things to themselves, right? But they're so overburdened by something, whatever it might be, that they're actually becoming less effective. Um, and it becomes the self-fulfilling prophecy

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of "Oh God, I'm overworked and I'm overburdened and I've got all this stress. And, okay, well, let's try to cut some of that out. Then when we do, suddenly they're in a better place.

HOST: The theory of practice for this innovation is demonstrating the three value-based behaviors that form the dock: compassion for self and others, authentic kindness and respect for human dignity. We offered specific examples in this podcast of how it might show up: leaders went the extra mile to honestly listen to customers and managers took the time to include alternative viewpoints and hear out team proposals.

          Finally, to reflect on how this cycle works for a grace-based approach to leadership, you might be considering what could be an obstacle. We heard earlier that grace to self cannot be overlooked. It is not easy for managers with high expectations for performance to also be kind to themselves. Jane Saccaro sees this perceived challenge with her executive clients. She believes that our ability to connect and relate to one another starts with showing compassion to ourselves.

SACCARO: For hard driven motivated leaders, it is a hard thing to, to tap into. We use all sorts of practices of "Hey how would you talk to your best friend? How would you talk to your younger self or a younger child in that? And they can so easily do it for someone else. And then when it's, when it's reflected back and they're asked to do it for themselves, it's really hard. It's a really, really difficult shift.

HOST: Then, why bother?

SACCARO: Because if we can't allow it in ourselves, we will never allow it in others. Hard stop. And I think it starts with a good, healthy dose of giving grace.

Presuming the best in others. You know, giving someone the benefit of the doubt. Understanding that you have no idea what the other person is going through that day. And if we can't extend that sense of grace to ourselves, it is virtually impossible to extend it to someone else.

HOST: In this episode, we reviewed the practice of a grace-based approach to leadership. You have everything you need for it to begin right now. Start to notice, name and consider the opportunities that are in front of you.

Some key takeaways from this podcast for you are:

#1 - Balancing the grace and grit of your interactions. Some of the executives on this podcast were very clear about the authentic kindness that supports this kind of grace. It's not being endlessly accommodating or rolling over. It's not compromising safety, legality or well-being because those choices are clear. It is noticing, as a relational leader, how compassion, respect and kindness can improve the potential of a mutually beneficial outcome.

#2 - Allowing grace to redefine failure as continuous learning. Grace and feedback go hand in hand. Investing, delivering and receiving feedback is a grace-based way to be an adaptive leader and make progress.

And 3 - Leveraging inclusion and innovation that a grace-based approach genuinely opens up with better listening, communication, and collaboration. Accessing more ideas and decreasing blind spots is a competitive advantage. Grace simply invites this faster.

When you start your intentional practice of cultivating a grace-based approach to leadership, remember to zoom out and look for how you can

tag authentic kindness, respect for human dignity and compassion for self and others. Kiran offers a final thought, encouraged from her team, about how grace will allow you to make an impact.

HANDA GAUDIOSO: There's so much out there now in the leadership, and you know this, right, about being an authentic leader. And being vulnerable and being yourself, you know, bringing your whole self to work. Right? All of that. Any podcast you listen to. And I really feel like grace is intrinsic to that. Because in order to be authentic, you're taking a risk yourself. You know, you're sharing of yourself. And so, that means you need to give yourself grace in those moments where you feel uncomfortable or you're not sure. But you're gonna, you're going to get up there and say it anyway. And then also, I think what you've really called out for me is that grace goes both ways: giving it to yourself and giving it to others.

The only other thing I'll say, a lot of my team wanted me to make sure I talked about it a little bit is, and we said it a little bit, but that grace is not like one thing. You know, it's not like, "Okay, today we're giving grace!" It's a series of multiple things. It's a culture. It has to be in the air.

[Music]

HOST: In closing, I have three final requests for you.

#1 - please complete the short post-survey found at givinggracematters.com.

#2 - If you want to revisit the short activities for your plan of action, look on the website. This is especially helpful if you are planning to increase your commitment and discuss this with an accountability partner.

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#3 - If you found this experience to be useful, please share this with others.

My hope is that the next time you have a space for grace in whatever way it may be manifesting…giving, asking, sharing, hoping… you can name it as a gift and are more fluent with how to take action.

Thank you so much for listening and for taking the time to consider how grace-based actions will influence your leadership and your relationships.

[Outro Music]

Transcript - Epilogue: Behind the scenes of the podcast production

(Program length 18:45)
[Upbeat intro music]

HOST: Welcome to the bonus episode of Giving Grace Matters. This is the behind the scenes edition about how the podcast was produced. This is an additional part of my contribution to the scholarship of this research.

The intention of the Giving Grace Matters podcast is to support the professional development of busy leaders by using a flexible learning framework about the opportunity for a grace-based approach to leadership. The mobile format of a podcast offers a familiar modality that enables learners to quickly access this content.

There were two requirements in the production of this podcast:

First, being mindful of how to design a learning experience in the audio-only format of a podcast that is dependent upon the user's choice for when, where and how much content is accessed. In other words, there is no captive audience that receives information in a controlled environment. In order for the information to be delivered with a purpose of knowledge-building, then how the information is constructed in this digital format is primary.

Second, being responsible for offering new knowledge about the topic of a grace-based approach to leadership required a many stage analytical process to generate transferable information to the listener. Additionally, the learning opportunity for this content needed to resonate with the listeners in a way that makes them curious, engaged, and motivated to take action.

Again, the two requirements for this podcast were:
1. The design factors for podcasting as a learning technology
2. The knowledge building elements for the topic which in this lesson was a grace-based approach to leadership

[Upbeat transitional music]

HOST: The foundational work for creating this podcast required specific technology, dynamic and expert-level interview guests, and background research on the subject matter. I am currently in the process of writing articles that will describe this in more detail, and when published, I will make them available on the GivingGraceMatters.com website.

The rest of *this* episode will discuss the learning design and then the technology used in the podcast.

Let's pull back the curtain and explore the *learning design* of the podcast.

There was a deliberate effort to structure the information that was communicated in this podcast. While we know that myriad podcasts are produced with an educational goal, I question that just because there is informational content available to the listener in a podcast, it does not necessarily create or maximize the learning. Likewise, if you construct a classroom and load it with books or digital tablets, a learning possibility exists, but the design of how the students learn in that classroom with those resources will make a difference for how effective that learning is.

The epistemological approach for how listeners will gain the knowledge in this podcast about a grace-based approach to leadership is based on three guiding theories: Planned Behavior, Self-Determination, and Intentional Change.

The Theory of Planned Behavior from Azjen tells us that a person's intention to perform a behavior can predict achievement. Therefore, in this narrative, I was regularly naming opportunities for the listener to attend to a plan of action to apply what they were learning about a grace-based approach to leadership. I offered activities at the end of each episode to make incremental steps towards this learning. This theory relies on the learner's perception that there is ease in making an intention to engage in a particular behavior so the activities offered in this podcast were short, directive, and had clear outcomes. It was also important in the stories and explanation that the learner could see how immediately accessible the knowledge is to make the change.

Self-Determination Theory from Deci and Ryan contends that if competency, autonomy and relatedness exist, then there is the opportunity for optimal motivation for the learner. Throughout the podcast in an effort to influence the listener's confidence in the concept, I was repeating the framework for a grace-based approach to leadership and sharing multiple examples to reinforce the concept. In order to design for the autonomy of the learner, I also offered choices for how the listener could develop skills and reinforced the message that there was not a rigid one way to have a grace-based approach to leadership. Finally, I underscored the importance of developing the practice within relationships and offered stories that could have experiences for the listener to feel connected to and invested in the topic.

Lastly, Intentional Change Theory is something that is present in the art of coaching which is my professional expertise. Richard Boyatzis explains his theory as requiring the compassion and the sincere demonstration of care and concern for the learner in a "resonant relationship." It was important to me that the listener felt supported in listening to this podcast in a manner that was respected, challenged, serviced, and inviting as well as worth their time. They needed to hear a relatable message that spoke to their needs as a leader. Additionally, I encouraged an element of accountability for the development of their practice.

To recap, how the construction of the narrative was based on learning theory. When the following phrases were offered, I was signaling learning behavior:

[Subtle background music]

HOST: "Your plan of action for cultivating grace."

"You, as a manager,..."

"Your leadership…"

"Your values…:

"Do one thing…"

"Find an accountability partner…"

"Consider your impact…"

"Grace-based approach to management"

"Compassion, kindness and respect"

[Upbeat transitional music]

HOST: The last part of this episode will review the technology for this podcast.

The full production utilized eighteen different technologies. I'm going to list each one now with a brief explanation of its relevance:

Tech Tool #1: In order to gather feedback and share resources, I needed to have a landing page instead of just having a listing in a podcast directory. The website was created with *wix.com* and this company was also used to secure the domain name of GivingGraceMatters.com. In the process of identifying the website name, it was important that this title could be easily pronounced on the podcast so that it would be remembered by the listener to look up later in case they initially found the podcast through podcast directories. While the concept of a grace-based approach to leadership was being discussed on the show, this term would not be useful for website naming because it has to be carefully articulated and therefore not suitable for an on-air domain name.

I found wix.com to be a simple site to use for constructing websites for both desktop and mobile interfaces, but the layout functioning was not

intuitive and had several limitations for ease in mobile-facing design. I am a former professional website designer, and I found this platform to be unnecessarily complicated.

Tech Tools #2 and #3: I conducted two practice interviews and 11 formal interviews. I used *Riverside.fm* as the recording platform for all of my interviews except for one that I conducted on a *Zoom* video conference due to connection difficulties. Riverside offers an appropriate recording environment with virtual studios and supportive sound management tools. While I thought that I would also use this platform to edit my interviews, I discovered that I could not combine interview tracks from different studios into one podcast so I had to abandon Riverside for editing. I did pull transcripts in text-based files from Riverside and exported them for qualitative coding.

Tech Tool #4: I used *MAXQDA* which is a SAAS (or software as a service) platform for qualitative coding analysis. Before I entered my eleven transcripts into MAXQDA, I edited the files to eliminate time stamps/speaker labels, batch comments from the same speaker that were truncated into phrases, and make quick speech-to-text corrections. After I uploaded these files, I analyzed the data using both grounded theory and in vivo coding techniques. I went through the data for a second time to identify intact quotes that would work well in a podcast, and I tagged stories that would be considered for replay in the podcast. I had 536 coded items in the full data set. In my article, I will go into further detail about the findings from my coding and how that influenced a change in my framework and identified new discoveries about the influence of the phenomenon of a grace-based approach to leadership.

From my work in MAXQDA, I identified 100 clips to potentially use in the podcast. In order to sort and prioritize these ideas, I created a color-coded wall map of 100 post-it tags with the clip topic and author. I colored for either key quotes or stories. Then I grouped them on the wall to identify themes and then named each theme with a different color tag. I would revisit codes from MAXQDA to iterate on best labels. Next, I regrouped themes onto large poster paper sheets that represented episodes which started to naturally emerge into five potential episodes. It was helpful to visually see a balance of quotes and stories within each episode. As I sorted the tags, I made choices to delete some clips based on redundancy, lesser impact ideas, and lack of generalization. This sorting process identified 74 potential clips for the podcast.

Tech Tool #5: Now that I had the clips identified, I needed to clean them up for the purpose of attractive use in the podcast, and I used *Garageband* for this editing. While Riverside could edit a single track, the editing options and interface of GarageBand is far superior. While the content of the clips were excellent, most had to be cleaned up to remove vocal disfluencies or filler words like um, you know, and right. There were also times when my questions or verbal agreement as the interviewer needed to be removed because it was out of context. I was also mindful of lag time in quiet pausing and tried to close those gaps in order to manage a short time window for each total podcast. I created one project in GarageBand for all of the master files of the 74 clips and I made a backup. Then I created a GarageBand project for each episode. As I built each episode, I would copy over the potential clips for the outlined topic. I had many tracks in each project that would represent music, narration, each featured clip, a spacer to delineate alternatives, and then unused clips that would remain on the proverbial cutting room floor.

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Tech Tool #6: While a word processing tool is a minimally relevant tool to list, I want to recognize the importance of scripting the podcast versus extemporaneous narrative. While I briefly considered recording my voice without a script and then adding in clips like a DJ, I quickly realized that the quality of narration would not carefully maximize the learning design in the message and also hold to a tight timeline of 15-minute episodes. It became clear to me that I needed to create a script for each episode and spend the time on intentionally laying out the theme as well as the design of how I wanted the learner to receive it.

I used *Google docs* to write the scripts. I would start with a list of the clips that I pulled for the episode and then sketch a story line. In each case, I had to reduce the number of clips that I was going to use, and I also needed to search for alternatives that were better suited for the evolving narrative. It was helpful to use Google docs because when I had to re-record bits due to changes that were apparent after listening, speaker requests, response to feedback or a change in overall design, I was easily able to flag and edit changes in the Google doc so that I was especially precise in recording the correct parts.

Tech Tool #7: Music plays an important role in the texture of the podcast, and it offers an emotional connection to the spoken word. I used *Soundstripe* to find a royalty free theme song that I could use throughout the series. In order to avoid a lyrical conflict with the podcast narrative, I elected to only use instrumental music, and I sorted through many options with tags that evoked the feeling I was seeking for the listener: hopeful, calm, reflective, inspiring, and especially happy. I chose the title, "Cause for Celebration" by Reveille [ruh·vay] which is marked as happy and hopeful. Incorporating music into Garageband required attention to mixing music and being intentional about where and for how long to

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include it. I chose to offer a 20-second opening, a 5-second interim bridge between the episode agenda/announcements and the main narrative, a 5-second bridge to the final assignment for the plan of action, and an outro.

[Sample of transitional music]

HOST: Tech Tool #8: After the episodes were produced on Garageband, I used *Simplecast* as a podcast management platform that would host my podcast and its settings, send it out to and update podcast directories (Apple, Spotify, etc.) and be the central source for analytics. Every time I make an update to an episode or add more, I can use Simplecast as a central repository and very importantly, it provided the RSS feed required to send to these directories. Additionally, I can easily get the meta metrics from listener engagement from all directories under one roof here.

              Tech Tools #9 and #10: After a podcast is launched on a podcast management platform like Simplecast, then the distribution channels need to be determined. As a creator, I also had to initiate accounts with *Apple Podcasts Connect* and *Spotify* to enable these players to offer my podcast.

              Tech Tool #11: Artwork is also an important part of the presentation of the podcast and communicates a level of legitimacy and quality. I used *Canva* to create the cover and episode pages as well as artwork that could be distributed in social media to promote the program.

              Tech Tool #12: I used *Qualtrics* as the survey tool for capturing user data in two surveys for pre and post listening. I originally was going to ask listeners to go to the survey after the first episode, but that felt like a barrier to completion. So I asked listeners to begin with the survey and

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end with it. I included prompts in the first and last episode for the listener to go to the website to find the survey links especially if they missed it initially. Qualtrics is a sophisticated survey tool and offered a lot of flexibility in presenting format types that were multiple choice, open-ended and scaled. I asked for listeners to confidentially share their email addresses for two reasons: to link their two surveys and to follow up with respondents who had pending post-surveys to complete.

Tech Tool #13 - #18: I conducted my interviews with regular Apple Airpods. For the narrative, I recorded on an Apple MacBook Pro via a Yeti stereo microphone and pop filter. I also used Apple Airpods Max for my headphones to manage the sound editing and final production because they offered more precise detection of the audio input and made for more accurate revisions.

[Upbeat transitional music]

HOST: The Giving Grace Matters podcast serves to further the evaluation of how to create podcasts for the purpose of learning. This work requires consideration of both the design factors for podcasting as a learning technology and the knowledge building elements that generate behavior change from instructional podcast delivery.

For more information, please visit GivingGraceMatters.com. I'll meet you there.

[Outro music]

CHAPTER 3

ACADEMIC JOURNAL ARTICLE DRAFT: *IMPACTING EDUCATION*

Criteria for Submission

My submission to IE will be in the category of a research manuscript derived from dissertations in practice. To follow are the requirements for this 5000-7000 word article:

An article derived from a *Dissertation in Practice* will be considered if the author/s shape the scholarly piece in a way that improves the understanding of how a *Dissertation in Practice* (i.e., process and product) advances the notion of preparing the *Scholarly Practitioner*. IE challenges author/s to explain a problem of practice and attend to both the process of inquiry and the particular context-specific research outcomes that fostered improved understanding of the problem and value added to the field of educational practice. In addition, author/s should include a personal reflection that:

- Addresses one or more of CPED[1]s Principles for EdD program development (available at cpedintiative.org),
- Describes how inquiry and research skills are now an integral part of professional practice and how these skills have or will help impact pressing problems found in practice beyond the *Dissertation in Practice* experience.*(Submissions, n.d.)*

Abstract for article

The submission guidelines for IE's empirical manuscripts request a structured abstract, no longer than 200 words, that includes the following sections: purpose, research methods/approach (e.g., setting, participants, research design, data collection, and analysis), observations/results, and integration into previous research and implications for research and practice (*Submission Format*, n.d.).

Draft IE Abstract

This article explains the production of a dissertation in practice (DiP) that utilizes a podcast for the research and analysis of the phenomenon of a grace-based approach to leadership and offers an innovative, multi-modal format for the formal dissertation. The podcast was constructed as a flexible, mobile, micro-learning framework that explored an issue of relevance to improve leadership for busy executives. This is a qualitative action research study which included interviews with distinguished and diverse executive level leaders and participating listeners. Data was collected from 11 recorded interviews, pre- and post-surveys from listeners, and listener engagement data. The phenomenological analysis of the leadership interviews established an emerging theory of a grace-based approach to leadership, and the qualitative analysis from the listener data was scaffolded by the learning theories that supported the construction of the podcast. Future research about the learning effectiveness of podcasts may consider applications of different learning content, more listeners and more directed assessment of engagement. It is recommended that the mutli-modal,

immersive format of this DiP be supported for future research to allow for more immediate duplication and application of the findings.

Impacting Education **Full Article for Submission**

I have dedicated my career to the development and study of leadership. Currently, I am an organizational advisor and executive leadership coach with a global practice that helps leaders to see things differently, discover deeper learning, and effectively manage change and innovation. Most of my clients are executives who have limited time for personal development such as workshops, in-depth book reading and long-term study. In my experience, they benefit from bite-sized learning concepts that can be immediately applied in their context, and together, we reflect and iterate on what that trial makes possible for future practice.

In particular, I work with designated, elected, emerging and aspirational leaders from diverse backgrounds, ages, and places to help them become more effective and ethical in how they lead and serve others. I believe that everything gets done in relationships, and therefore, the more we understand how to work together with respect and dignity, then we can achieve more of what we want.

As a research practitioner, I am completing my professional doctorate in education in order to advance the knowledge and practice of my peers who train, advise and coach adult leaders. My experience has been at the intersection of how emerging technologies enhance learning, and I have been curious about the effectiveness of podcasting as a factor in how learners set intentions to change behavior. My dissertation in practice considers two factors that influence the learners in my context: 1) how busy

executives can learn effectively through micro-lessons in a modality of podcasting and 2) how a grace-based approach to leadership can contribute to better relations and outcomes.

It is not common for those in my professional practice to seek terminal degrees in education. Most coaches and advisers receive at least one or more post-baccalaureate specialty certifications that align with subject-based client needs. Coaching methods are typically mastered at this level and kept current with supervision and professional development often sourced from trending business needs and ideas. Coach educators offer the most fidelity to evidence-based practices, and this knowledge trickles down to the coach practitioners. A beneficial use of my action research will be to disseminate the experience of my findings to other leaders and coaches in service of knowledge-building, a learning product model and a baseline for generating improvements.   Therefore, it was important to me that the design and format of my dissertation was immediately accessible and relatable through a digitally immersive format of a podcast and through dissemination of my research through article publication in both academic and business journals. Instead of designing a five-chapter dissertation, my version presents my findings as a scholarly experience through engaging with the podcast and publications.

In the production of my work, I relied on mentor texts produced by other scholars who have successfully navigated pushing against the traditional structures of dissertations (Samuels, 2021; Williams, 2019; Miles, 2016.) There were three tangible scholarly "products" that resulted from this dissertation inquiry:

1. The podcast series.
2. A draft of an article for publication in this peer reviewed academic journal that includes required and relevant literature review, methods, and results sections.

3. A draft of an article submission to the *Harvard Business Review* that will benefit the work of executive leadership coaches and consultants as well as active organizational leaders.

Defining grace

A grace-based approach to leadership notably exhibits positive examples of compassion to self and others, authentic kindness, and respect for human dignity. This working definition is the result of my three cycles of action research using a coding system and grounded theory to identify themes among survey, workshop and podcast participants about their definition of the combination of grace and leadership as well as supported by the findings of Thomas and Rowland (2013) regarding their research on kindness and compassion as attributes of grace (Thomas & Rowland, 2014, p. 99).

Grace is defined in multiple ways for how one might interact with the world and often this interpretation is within a context of faith. The ontology of grace is simply about a way of being, and this in many ways is metaphysical in nature; thus common knowledge about grace is sourced from religious foundations. With such an origin, grace as a leadership practice has the potential to be overlooked or dismissed in social or business applications when in fact, its use can provide opportunity for personal development as well as even greater excellence in performance.

From an epistemological perspective, grace offers a knowledge of acceptance for self and others. Polynesian folklore likens grace to the varied movement of a wave of water (Tiburtius, 2019). When a pebble splashes through the surface of water, it causes additional ripples and then returns to its original state. In this analogy, grace, as water,

accepts the experience it receives without judgment and with strength to keep its own consistent state. For leaders, this practice of acceptance and resilience could be transformational in impact.

From my initial research findings, I was able to construct a definition of grace that most strongly aligned with the four concepts of Human dignity, Unconditional kindness, Compassion to self and Compassion to others. Managers are seeking alternatives to demand-based workplace behaviors that affect the engagement, production and retention of employees. They are also open to evaluating their relationships with others with regard to incorporating grace-based strategies for communication, planning and evaluation. Yet without support and guidance to act with "values that foster human well-being" (Proctor-Thomson, 2019, p. 375), managers do not feel adequately prepared to offer this approach. The advancement of the Smart Machine Age of technological industry (Hess & Ludwig, 2018) suggests that success is dependent on output; yet without the thoughtful human relationships to produce work, this reward is not sustainable.

Research questions

In my work with high performing organizations and especially during Covid-19 when workflow and relationships were reimagined, I have noticed the opportunity for, and benefit from, individuals choosing to lead with grace. The content for this flexible learning framework is intended to learn about how grace-based leadership can be cultivated. Additionally, I addressed whether this learning modality of podcasting might be able to support additional and different content for other developmental purposes.

Through this research, I was able to critically reflect on my role in curating stories of lived experiences of leaders in a podcast format and in designing for the engagement of the listener to prepare them to operationalize the lessons offered. This action research serves to inform not only my work as a consultant and coach, but also the work of others in my field.

My research was designed to address a leadership learning problem. Through dialogue with leaders shared via a podcast and coupled with mediated reflection exercises, my innovation of a flexible learning framework informed action related to the following research questions:

1. How is the knowledge of a grace-based approach to leadership constructed through the perception of the lived experiences of individuals?

2. How can reflections on grace-based leadership be captured and shared within a flexible learning framework?

3. How do microlearning experiences, and the modality of that interaction, influence the self-determined effort and planned behavior of learners?

Mobile Learning and Podcasting

Mobile learning, and especially audio content that does not interfere with fixed visual attention, is a robust solution for how to layer the intake of an educational experience with performing another synchronous task like commuting, exercising, carpooling, household chores, eating and more. We know that Americans in particular are increasingly tuning in to more audio content in order to access learning,

entertainment, and information gathering. Edison Research (2021) reports that in the United States, 73% of the US population (or 209 million people) consumes audio content (radio and streaming) on a monthly basis (Edison Research, 2021). Listeners are absorbing audio content for more than 16 hours of time on a weekly basis, and active digital audio listeners will consume over two hours of content per day (Jaworski, 2021). Podcasting is a format that engages 74 million people, or 26% of the US population over age 12, per week, and these listeners average listening to eight podcasts over this same period of time (Edison Research, 2021).

The listen-through rate (LTR) for audio versions of new articles and blog posts is over fifty percent which means that listeners are making it through the end of the entire piece of spoken word (Jaworski, 2021). In fact, the highest LTR is for content longer than five minutes (Jaworski, 2021) which indicates a strong ability to sustain attention in this format. This sustainability of listening time is a remarkable outcome in a notably attention-deficit society and signals an opportunity for maximizing learning.

Podcasting, a term coined in the early 2000s, is the audio transmission of content in a structured format for the purpose of delivering a particular message. Podcasting is a term coined by journalist Ben Hammersley in 2004 who proposed blending the words from Apple i<u>Pod</u> MP3 player with broad<u>casting</u> as he foresaw "a new boom in amateur radio" (Hammersley, 2004). This tool was considered at the time as a breakthrough method of using the Internet to deliver freely open audio files to listeners using really simple syndication (RSS) feeds to create, for the first time, a broad (and level) ability for anyone to become a publisher of audio content. The development of the RSS technology is what created the core functionality of how listeners are automatically notified when a

new episode (file) has been added to a podcast series. In education settings, podcasting has been reported as being used as lectures, as supplementary content, or for student-created presentations (Coens et al., 2011).

Mobile learning is the use of educational technology that can be consumed anytime and anyplace through a device or application, and this allows for people to "receive from and contribute to a variety of digital information sources" (Udell, 2014, p. 7). Mobile learning is contextual, cost-effective, re-usable and convenient (Udell, 2014, p. 32) which enables its use to be scaled quickly to many audiences. The nature of mobile learning through podcasts offers strong potential for engagement success in terms of both attention and longevity in delivery.

By design, podcasting offers customized content that has the potential for adult learning, or andragogical, success. The andragogical learning framework requires that learners need to know why they are learning something before they start, to have a self-concept of being responsible for their own decisions, and to recognize that the richest source of learning lies within the experiences of adult groups (Knowles et al., 2005, p. 64). As with any innovation in practice, the technology is secondary to this design of a learning experience.

Podcasting also offers a human interactive experience between the listener and the medium, and with the learning outcomes set with intention at the center of the design, this medium is the method that can support change in behavior and mindset (Kidd, 2012, p. 55). For the purpose of the subject of my research, the literature supports podcasting as an "excellent pedagogical tool for leadership education" (Norsworthy & Herndon, 2019, p. 62).

If podcasting serves as an innovative technology for mobile learning and this application can contribute to just-in-time leadership education, then what content design in this technology will also drive engagement for the learner? We know that audio listeners are compelled by stories and that character-driven stories with emotional content result in a better understanding of the key points a speaker wishes to make and enables better recall of these points weeks later (Zak, 2014). Moreover, leaders are finding that they are developing leadership through defining moments and crucibles instead of exercising authority through position power (Bennis & Thomas, 2010; Klenke, 2016, p. 32) and these defining experiences are the stories that this research hopes to capture and mediate in a way that promotes learning.

The existing literature about podcasting in education emphasizes the flexibility of podcasting as a modality, the format substitution of audio for capturing lectures, and the versatility of subjects that can be addressed as listening content. In both academia and popular media, the advice for making an effective podcast typically identifies content curation, sound production techniques, and most notably, audience building strategies. However, what is missing from this scholarship is the evaluation of how people learn and change their behavior as a result of listening to a podcast.

Podcasting is increasingly used as a tool for professional education and development. In graduate schools for social work, the student creation of podcasts has been used to build social work competencies (e.g. engagement, communication, and self-awareness) and the consumption of lectures via podcast can supplement reading as well as promote marginalized voices that are critical for effectiveness in this field (Hitchcock et al., 2021, p. 174). Similar efforts are seen in graduate studies for conservation,

entrepreneurship, sports management and medical education (Diaz Vidal et al., 2021; Johnston et al., 2021; Strickland et al., 2021; Vijay & Gupta, 2021).

In particular for nursing training, podcasting has been used in different environments, and in a study that reviewed 26 podcasting programs over a ten year period from 2008 to 2018, the educational outcomes were positive and contributed to knowledge and skills acquisition as well as improved confidence (O'Connor et al., 2020, p. 3). However, most of the learning evaluation in this study was based on external design factors like the flexibility of use, speed, and comfort with social media. When the internal factors were considered like the quality of information, there was not a definitive method for learning effectiveness except that when the information was named as accurate, consistent and easy to listen to, it seemed to improve learning (O'Connor et al., 2020, p. 11). The most relevant outcome of this study to my research suggests that how well podcasting was organized as an educational intervention seemed to affect the level of engagement from students, which could have impacted learning" (O'Connor et al., 2020, p. 9). My goal is to explore more deeply what is required for the learning design of podcasting. In my research, my initial consideration is how to influence the motivation of learners to have the self-determination to take action on what they learn and absorb from the podcast.

In the nursing and podcasting studies, personal motivation was reported in varying levels when other priorities conflicted, but when it was present, it seemed to impact participation (O'Connor et al., 2020, p. 9). However, this does not provide evidence of how this modality was designed to promote motivation for the learner. In this large study of podcasting used in nursing education, there was no specific evidence

that learning was enhanced through the podcasting application and more research is recommended to evaluate if podcasts improve learning (O'Connor et al., 2020, p. 12). Another study of nursing students using podcasting for enhancing learning concluded that using this modality for skill acquisition offered a personal learning experience that can be accessed anytime, anywhere (Clay, 2011, p. 586). My goal is to better understand how to convert experience in action.

Learning Theories

Epistemologically, the learning theories I chose to guide my study were aligned with constructivist ways of knowing, and my analysis considered how the learners developed thoughts and behaviors from engaging with the podcasts both by listening and reflecting on the content as it applies to their own circumstances. Because the success of the learning is reliant upon how the learner responds to the content, my andragogical innovation - the Giving Grace Matters podcast experience - was designed with support from the Theory of Planned Behavior, Self-Determination Theory and Intentional Change Theory (ICT).

The **Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)** (Ajzen, 1991) focuses on a person's intention to perform a behavior, and intention and control can predict achievement. TPB presumes that strong intentions will result in greater likelihood of performance of the new behavior. The design of the learning framework was made to influence the intention of the learner by providing strategic content and narratives that were both motivating and practical to drive action. After the listeners learned in the podcast how to incorporate a grace-based approach to leadership, the design supported them to establish an intention to use it.

Intentions are plans of actions and "most intended behaviors are best considered goals whose attainment is subject to some degree of uncertainty" (Ajzen & Madden, 1986, p. 456). Therefore, it is important that the intention must relate to a desired named behavior, remain consistent from concept to outcome, and that behavior stays under volitional control. If factors are missing to support control (e.g. resources, training, etc.), then intention alone will not produce the desired outcome. Therefore, the intentions are better considered as plans of actions with identified supports in place in order to make progress towards a behavior goal. An intention is not a goal in and of itself.

Until individuals begin to act, it is unclear as to whether they possess what is needed to achieve their goal or whether they are in a situation where there is an opportunity to move towards a goal. With this podcast series, I created opportunities for the learners to practice in between each episode so they felt the momentum of relevance and success in their ability to make the change. It is "possible to measure perceived behavioral control, the person's belief as to how easy or difficult the performance of the behavior is likely to be" (Ajzen & Madden, 1986, p. 457). In the pre-survey (Appendix B), I asked learners to assess how easy/hard it would be for them to practice their developing behaviors in their interactions with others, and less than three percent of 89 respondents predicted it would be difficult and a majority felt it would be easy. When goals become too daunting, complex, or big, then learners do not change behavior to attempt them. When challenges are broken down into more realistic goals, then progress is in greater reach. The micro-learning lessons in this framework supported realistic goal-setting for these plans of actions.

In the full podcast series, there were several prompts in the script for the listener to set an intention and as the show host, I explained how intention-setting would predict achievement as a return on their listening investment. In addition to a verbal request to set an intention, I also followed up with suggesting to the listener potential systems for acting on that plan, offering companion worksheets to download from the website (Appendix D) and included questions about intentions in the pre- and post-surveys (Appendix B and C). I encouraged the listener to set easy tasks for themselves to make progress with their practice so that it was feasible and available for them to retain in their working memory from listening to the podcast while they were doing other tasks like driving and exercising.

Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) extends the investigation for motivation of the learner and contends that if competency, autonomy and relatedness exist, then there is the opportunity for optimal motivation. In the microlearning progression, the development of the script reinforced evidence to the listener of their progress for competency, their authority of choice in how to practice, and the development of a personal connection to the leaders in the podcast stories and practice partners at home.

In this innovation, it was important to establish early a sense of competency in a grace-based approach to leadership so that the learner felt confident in their ability to practice it more. The listeners were offered choices not only in how they listened to the podcast, but also in whether they wanted to participate in the exercises or the companion online worksheets. There were multiple ways available to be successful with the practice

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(listen on a paced schedule, all at once, opt into different sections as needed; use worksheets to repeat the practice, etc.).

The podcast series established the definition of grace and the elements of the leadership approach in the first episode and then reinforced the application of it in different examples in each subsequent episode so that the learner would be confident in their understanding. There were stories throughout the episodes from leaders across different sectors and backgrounds that offered an opportunity for the listener to identify with the content. Additionally, by identifying the listening audience as leaders and managers, they would feel like the lessons were relatable and realistic.

Intentional Change Theory (ICT) has its roots at Case Western Reserve University and was initiated by Richard Boyatzis as a method of envisioning ideal self, exploring real self, developing a learning agenda and experimenting with new behaviors and roles (Boyatzis et al., 2019). For many people, change is not easy and a process to move through change to a satisfactory and sustainable outcome is how my coaching practice supports leaders. ICT is designed to be a process that is enabled by compassion and the sincere demonstration of care and concern for the learner in a "resonant relationship" (Boyatzis et al., 2019). This relationship is important because change takes time. In fact, researchers at the University College London found that "it takes 18 to 254 days to form a new habit" (Boyatzis et al., 2019, p. 6).

ICT is the platform from which individual change can be evaluated. In the learning framework of this innovation, I was interested in the change, at a minimum, of aspirations that the learners will have about grace-based leadership as a result of the engagement in the podcast series. If, over the course of the series, learners practice and

change actions, then that will be considered a success. To follow are some of the intentions that learners shared in the post-survey (Appendix C) after they practiced the approach:

- Half of the 42 respondents who completed both surveys wanted to **improve the quality of their interactions** with others by sharing the framework and specific approach with others including managers, direct reports, teams, external stakeholders, colleagues, friends, mentors, and family. There was a desire to "seek to understand before judgment," "talk with at least one person in management about it," "use it in my team's 360 evaluations," "use it to explore how to shift culture," and "use it for problem-solving and team-building."

- One-quarter of these respondents prioritized **increasing their explicit awareness of using grace**.

- Some **followed through on the proposed plan of action** and were going to identify accountability partners, ask for feedback, incorporate grace into giving feedback, review grit vs. grace to lead better, use it to increase inclusion, and "pause to listen to my team more often and make sure everyone knows that their voice matters."

- Some will directly apply it to **changing the way they lead**; "bring grace-based leadership more to the forefront of my leadership role at work."

- Some will **focus on specific types of grace**: kindness and compassion to self and others.

Finally, if learners will identify a supportive and trusting relationship to help sustain their change, then that would fulfill the ICT cycle of discovery from awareness to creating a learning agenda to experiment and practice to sustainability through supportive relationships for accountability (Van Oosten, 2006, p. 708). As a host, I suggested several times that the listener do this listening with a buddy or an accountability partner or be public about it on social media to create more support to continue the practice.

Research Methods/Approach

The innovation in this action research was the production of a podcast series that included (1) analyzed interviews with accomplished leaders who evidenced a grace-based approach to leadership in their reputation, work and self-reflection and (2) a mediated podcast learning experience. The learning experience was mediated by a design that reinforced the learning theory for this adult listening audience that can see themselves as leaders and come to the podcast ready to absorb new information. The narrative included requests for action, clear definitions, repeated terms, progressive knowledge-building, checks for understanding and relatable and reinforced examples. In this research, I designed a flexible learning framework that used a mobile, microlearning modality of a podcast series to support leadership development. At present, there is minimal scholarship that considers how to intentionally design podcasts for learning in corporate contexts which is something that I see as both missing and crucial in current leadership education.

Podcast Production

The content for the podcast was the result of 11 interviews with chief officers of organizations across industries, sectors, geographic locations and backgrounds. These leaders were identified through my professional and personal networks. Some were clients and colleagues and others were referrals from colleagues. All of these individuals were asked to participate based on their reputation for thoughtful leadership, willingness to explore the topic, and history of professional success that would appeal as a model to the listeners.

Each semi-structured interview was conducted by over video conference for 30-60 minutes per guest. The interviews were both coded (in vivo and grounded theory) and then the coded audio segments were sliced into 74 clips that could be used as either strong stories or brief comments within the series. The coding process is essential to support theory development (Charmaz, 2005) of presenting codes that are "immediate and short and define the action or experience described by the interviewee" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 227). This process allowed the meaning and practice of a grace-based approach to leadership to emerge and also improve from my initial heuristic in a previous action research cycle.

After the interviews were analyzed, a script was developed that was based on the relevancy of data collected and a learning design for the audio lessons based on the theories previously identified. Each episode contained a variety of interviewee voices versus offering only a host dialogue with an individual interviewee. The original design for the series was going to address each of the four types of grace-based leadership that were identified in the early research; however, the interview analysis changed that initial

thesis and narrowed and improved how to orient the learner to a grace-based approach to leadership that was appropriate for a management context.

Table 1

Podcast Series Titles

	Original	Final
Episode 1	Introduction; heuristic of four types of grace-based leadership	Introduction to a grace-based approach to leadership
Episode 2	Theme 1: Unconditional kindness	Adding a little more grace
Episode 3	Theme 2: Compassion to others	Learning from mistakes
Episode 4	Theme 3: Compassion to self	Innovation and inclusion
Episode 5	Theme 4: Respect for human dignity	Beginning a practice
Episode 6/ Epilogue	Conclusion	Behind the scenes of the podcast production

Action Research

My study was based in an action research paradigm which has a dual purpose "to produce theory (or at least understanding) and to inform action" (Dick, 2017, p. 7). Action researchers tackle learning problems by using theory to support their experiments and then gather evidence for what is the next best step. My research was conducted real time through socially constructed knowledge about grace, and I extended what is known about learning theory within the context of podcasting. This iterative

process for contemporary action research follows a cycle of identification, analysis and action (Dick, 2017, p. 2; Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 6).

Two prior cycles of research guided me: the first cycle conducted in the fall of 2020 was an evaluation of responses from a manager survey that explored concepts of grace, leadership, and management training and the second cycle in the spring of 2021 was a synchronous, interactive, and video-based small group training program of non-profit managers on concepts and learning methods of grace-based leadership. The DiP cycle built on these findings to offer an improved heuristic about grace-based leadership within a flexible learning framework for a desired and appropriate form of management training.

Qualitative Inquiry and Fit For This Study

Qualitative methods are important for leadership studies because people can understand leadership through stories and cases that suggest patterns for theories and practices (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007, p. 25). Yet much of leadership research has been about the quantitative successes of individual leaders rather than understanding leadership (Klenke, 2016, p. 3). To understand leadership is to understand the meanings that people make in their context as leaders. For what reasons was a particular decision made? What made the outcome successful? What did the leader learn as a result? These answers cannot be suitably collected with surveys and questionnaires in a quantitative study.

Stories bring relevance to understanding the phenomena of leadership. There is no meaningful way to collapse the experience of one story into a truncated situation and quantify the results that offer realistic replication as a leadership lesson. Leadership

happens in context. Qualitative research offers a more critical lens to leadership because it offers the context to explore deeper structures of the phenomena of leadership (Klenke, 2016, p. 4). There is no longer the archetype of the typical, front-of-the-room, extroverted, directive leader who can proffer keen negotiation skills for collaboration and win-building. The dominant paradigm that produced a hegemonic model for leadership is now opened up to an expanded view of greater possibilities for leadership.

In 1979, Van Maanen, argued in an influential special issue of *Administrative Science Quarterly,* for the "unrealized value of qualitative research and called on organizational scientists to utilize more qualitative techniques" (Klenke, 2016, p. 5). This perspective, or the legitimacy of qualitative methods, launched the rise of research in leadership-learning disciplines like sociology and political science, more studies and articles in the literature, and textbook creation. In particular, publications such as the *Academy of Management Journal* have evidenced over ten percent of its articles about qualitative research despite the fact that the potential of this research is still to be fully realized (Klenke, 2016, p. 7).

Qualitative research is "a process of naturalistic inquiry that seeks in-depth understanding of social phenomena within their natural setting or context. It focuses on the "why" rather than the "what" of social phenomena and relies on the direct experiences of human beings as meaning making agents in their everyday lives" (Klenke, 2016, p. 6). Again, a quantitative process can track the who, what, when, where and how of leadership, but without the "why," that is derived from the qualitative process, we lack the context for the leadership decision. While we can copy the environment through

replicating data points, we cannot recreate the choices that make the leader. We need the narrative that is captured through a qualitative collection.

Dr. Alan Bryman wrote in the *Leadership Quarterly* in 2004 that quantitative studies are an insufficient to guide change and that "leadership researchers would know next to nothing about leadership in relation to the change process, other than through popular business press accounts, were it not for qualitative studies" (Bryman, 2004, p. 764). Leadership is not algorithmic. The dynamism and humanity of leadership is what sustains the leader model.

The social phenomena under investigation in my research considered both the modality of the learning framework and the learning content about leadership. The knowledge that was created was sourced from both the podcast modality and in how the podcast listeners chose to engage with that knowledge.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

A grounded theory approach was used to analyze the interviews and open-ended participant survey questions. A constructivist approach for grounded theory enabled the collection of the explanations of the feelings from individuals as they experienced a phenomenon or process (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019, p. 441) because the self-awareness of leadership was a factor in the design of my innovation.

A unique factor of data collection in qualitative research is that it is an iterative process by which "data collection impacts revisions of the research design features" (Klenke, 2016, p. 71). These data require a narrative to illustrate how they work together to define an experience. Therefore, how this data is reported is one of the most important aspects of my study which was based on collecting and presenting narratives from

different leaders. It is important that a research-based story-teller like me include all of the factors in data collection: categories, patterns, explanations and generalizations (Klenke, 2016, p. 33).

Grounded theory is about the data dictating the framework for analysis, and it offers a way to analyze data by coding the words in a dialogue. These resulting data can be "words, lines, segments and incidents" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 108) which expands the context beyond just what was said. The grounded theory approach allows for the researcher to move beyond statements to making sense of the stories and consider the indication of particular theoretical categories. The first step in coding is to notice what is coming from the emerging data and what possibilities it suggests. Adding this method and theory driven approach to audio editing and podcast production was a unique contribution to scholarship. Moreover, offering the context of the words including tone in my DiP allows that audience to gain deeper meaning from the research.

There is an interesting relationship between coding and leadership development. Charmaz suggests that "we know the empirical world through language and the actions we take toward it. In this sense, no researcher is neutral because language confers form and meaning on observed realities" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 114). In coaching leaders, it is a core practice to learn that we give meaning to things, and we therefore have a choice about what we want things to mean. In my work as a researcher with grace and leadership, I felt empowered in my data analysis to offer more meaning to grace as a practice for more effective relationships and consequently more positive outcomes in work and life. While this definition is not fully formed, it is emerging and the

understanding is now named to develop over time with more reflections from leaders and scholars.

Capturing Reflections On Grace-Based Leadership In A Flexible Learning Framework

The learning framework is a two-way interaction with learners: participants listen to content on the podcast and then they complete two surveys over the course of the series to indicate understanding of the concepts, demonstrate engagement in the microlearning content and represent intentions for a plan of action.

The first part of the learning design is to edit the audio interviews with leaders about a grace-based approach to leadership and produce an episode with the most relevant narrative that supports the learning topic. The original interviews were automatically transcribed with Riverside.fm in order to code and categorize the content line by line to generate each episode (or "lesson"). Transcriptions are considered to be the "rock bottom empirical data of an interview project" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 204). However, transcribing recordings does not provide a true transformation from an oral to a written mode (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 213) and by offering original audio clips in the dissertation itself, the data is provided as an enriched and robust source of data. My DiP can be an emerging new format for qualitative methodology that suggests that this research is currently on the precipice of a methodological shift, specifically in the transcription of audio and visual data (Markle et al., 2011, p. 1).

Editing the audio into six episodes with progressive and succinct lessons about grace and leadership allowed the organization of the data to be manageable, be analyzed by an unobtrusive observer, and contain more context (Crichton & Childs, 2005, p.

42). Working directly with audio files "help[s] to create a holistic picture, so that the findings do not lose their credibility and impact" (Crichton & Childs, 2005, p. 41).

The second part of the learning design used surveys to collect data from the participant's (in this case, the listeners of the podcast) learning experience. The post-survey asks for the participant's definition of grace which contributes to the innovation's existing intake that informed the heuristic for a grace-based approach to leadership. Additional questions assessed the management views of the learners with regard to aspects of a grace-based approach to management and this data can inform future research opportunities.

Learning Framework Design For Microlearning Experiences Of Leadership Development

The flexible learning framework in this innovation is a structure that is intended to be replicated in use for other learning concepts. An outcome of this innovation is to share recommendations for further use and study for leadership development practitioners and researchers. This innovation evaluates how the microlearning experiences in the framework as well as the modality of the podcasts influences the thoughts and intentions of learners. The participant survey responses informed this research along with the technical data available from the podcasting platform that included metrics for:

- Episode listening completion from the LTR (listen-through-rate)
- Series listening completion that will determine the rate of engagement in podcast series
- Repetition of listening to the same episode gathered from the frequency rate of episodes

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Findings

There are three categories of findings for this work: exploring a new research model for the dissertation in practice, establishing the concept of a grace-based approach to leadership, and understanding how to design podcasts for learning.

For field practitioners like me, the most useful scholarship is the kind that is evidence-based, relevant to my client service needs, and easily digestible and applicable. CPED supports the evolution of the traditional format of dense, text-based manuscripts by expanding reporting options that allow the potential readers to benefit from the research by receiving it in multi-modal and media-based formats. With alternative modes, there is an opportunity for the practices to be understood by a greater and more diverse audience that can in turn elevate and accelerate the knowledge-sharing from this work. It was important to me that my contribution to the field be recorded in a manner that is of its best use which this alternative format made possible.

The introduction of the concept of a grace-based approach to leadership had an enthusiastic and positive reception among participants in all of my cycles of research. For many, using grace as a way to improve relationships, performance and well-being felt like a reawakened and accessible asset. And yet, the practical application of grace has not previously been considered as a concept in mainstream management. The opportunity to explore the possibility of identifying grace as a resource allowed new thinking to unfold and this research indicates a high potential for more discovery and refinement.

This initial research produced a heuristic for a grace-based approach to leadership: authentic kindness, compassion to self and others and respect for human

dignity, and this can serve as a baseline for confirmation or adaptation. Additionally, the applications for grace in management and organizations began to emerge in the analysis which identified feedback, inclusion, and innovation as primary opportunities for the presence of grace-based action. This was reported in the podcast series. However, there were more themes that were left on the proverbial cutting room floor that can be further explored such as a deeper analysis of grace to self, influence in organizational culture, developing a sense of belonging, integration with servant leadership, and better listening.

The research suggested that grace is not something that is developed as a method; rather it is a mindset, a lived and felt experience, a posture, or something that is in the air. Notwithstanding grace as an essence, the ability to scale and transfer a recognizable approach for grace-based action requires a framing, a means to measure awareness and growth, and a way to discuss it with others with a shared understanding. As this shaping of a grace-based approach evolves, there is an opportunity to enlist input from a greater plurality of leaders from diverse cultural backgrounds, industries and levels of experience. Additionally, collaboration with researchers on grace in faith-based contexts might offer particular insight on secular applications.

Finally, this research identified an opportunity for podcast development with regard to understanding how to design podcasts for learning. While there are existing resources on how to produce a podcast, there is no evidence-based guidance on how to construct a podcast to enable the most effective learning experience for the listener. There is more to explore with the technical design and evaluation of how podcasts can be produced from an educational perspective and how to evaluate their

benefit. The wild west of podcasting currently suggests that the best podcasts are those that are most popular. In respect of the listener's time, attention and influence, it is time to change that paradigm to investigate what could make mobile audio broadcasting more valuable and productive.

The actual production of the podcast informed the research on the need to be intentional about analyzing the design factors as they relate to learning. Initial data from the listeners confirmed that they had a value of importance (88%) for their listening autonomy and ability to choose from different ways to engage in the learning activities associated with the podcast. Over half of the 42 respondents who completed both surveys predicted that it would be easy to practice behaviors in their grace-based interactions with others, which flags an opportunity to provide more support for how to be successful with this practice at least initially so that listeners continue in the series. Notably, almost all the listeners who completed the podcast reported that practicing would be easy perhaps because they had completed the full experience.

Listeners who submitted the post-survey completed the entire series and most finished listening in three days or less which suggests that companion activities need to avoid friction of completion so that they could be done with this pace of learning. The respondents confirmed that the 15-minute episodes were just the right amount of time. There was strong agreement from the listeners who completed the series that they would try small things related to the practice, that they had options for how to practice, that they were prepared to cultivate a practice and that they were confident about how to do it. Finally, a majority of listeners wanted to learn more about a grace-based approach to leadership as well as other leadership lessons in this podcast format.

Integration into previous research and Implications for Research and Practice

This research is not the first DiP to offer a multi-modal format, but the process is still nascent. There are no standards yet for production quality, reliable sample audience sizes, verification of content, and transcription in publication. If this format continues to be accepted for demonstration of professional research, then alternative criteria for successful creation will help to advance this work.

Future research for a grace-based approach to leadership will benefit from gathering more feedback from the *Giving Grace Matters* podcast listeners and learning about how they used the content and distinguished it from other leadership tools and education.

Additional investigation into how listeners learn best from podcasting will inform the production design. In this series, listeners were prompted to develop plans of action as a critical exercise in reinforcing the learning. For this study, about half of the listeners were driving in cars and about half were at their desks which leads to a question about the relationship between their location and attention with their ability to take action.

Professional education research demonstrated that some competencies were able to be learned via podcasting, but there is no evidence of how this learning was evaluated. Further research could explore measurements of workforce training outcomes with different modalities of learning modes. This might be more conducive to evaluating with intact teams which offers another consideration of how team-based learning be designed as a podcast.

In summary, this research has offered two new areas of exploration for leadership development and learning: grace as a leadership concept and the effectiveness of learning through a podcasting modality. The evidence produced in this work has identified that both topics impact the improvement of leadership capacities. Finally, this DiP has also demonstrated the potential for disseminating this work to field practitioners in a timely and executable format that advances the work of leadership educators, coaches and researchers.

CHAPTER 4

BUSINESS MEDIA ARTICLE DRAFT: *HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW*

Rationale for author's contribution

As an action researcher, my goal is to share the findings from my problem of practice about developing a grace-based approach to leadership and a flexible learning framework for busy executives with professional coaches, advisors and leadership educators as well as senior managers across sectors. This audience will more commonly search for thought leadership in trade publications, and one of the nationally recognized publications for management practices is *Harvard Business Review* (HBR), available in both print and digital formats. In my own coaching and advisory practice, I regularly source information from this publication for my clients and for deepening the knowledge of my own work. *Harvard Business Review* is not only a resource for management insights, but it also offers content that will "make a positive impact" ("About Us," 2022). The outcome of my research aligns with contributing to positive scholarship for organizations, and therefore, I am designing part of my dissertation as a submission to this publication.

Description of audience and topics for readers

Harvard Business Review has identified a specific business audience and curated topics that are most relevant to business practices and management education including leadership, operations and strategy which correlate to the research in this dissertation. The following description of HBR readership illustrates what is considered as an appropriate submission:

HBR's articles cover a wide range of topics that are relevant to different industries, management functions, and geographic locations. They focus on such areas as leadership, organizational change, negotiation, strategy, operations, marketing, finance, and managing people. While the topics may vary, all HBR articles share certain characteristics. They are written for senior managers by experts whose authority comes from careful analysis, study, and experience. The ideas presented in these articles can be translated into action and have been tested in the real world of business. Proposals for articles demonstrating fresh thinking that advances previous knowledge whose practical application has been thought through in clear, jargon-free language are those most likely to meet our readers' needs. When evaluating an idea, our editors often look for two things first, what they call the aha! How compelling is the insight? and the so what? How much does this idea benefit managers in practice? ("Contributor Guidelines for HBR Authors," n.d.)

HBR's five qualities for evaluating what to publish

The following description is provided directly from HBR's Review Guidelines for Contributors and presents the five qualities that need to be reflected in article concepts:

1. Expertise: You don't have to be well known to be a contributor, but you must know a lot about the subject you're writing about.

2. Evidence: It's not enough to know your subject deeply — you have to prove it to the reader. Referring to supporting research is one good way to do this; describing relevant examples is another. If you have interesting data, let us know.

3. Originality: New ideas in management are rare and precious — and one of the primary reasons readers turn to HBR. If you're writing about a well-worn topic, we'll be looking for a unique argument or insight. We'll also be looking at how well it builds on what we've already published and whether it might inform or delight the HBR audience specifically.

4. Usefulness: HBR readers come to us not only to stay on top of new developments in management thinking, but also to change the way they and their organizations actually do things. If you can explain your thinking so that the reader understands how to apply it in a real situation, that will make it more powerful.

5. Writing that's persuasive and a pleasure to read: HBR readers are smart and skeptical and busy. If you don't capture their interest right away, they will move on to something else. ("Contributor Guidelines for Harvard Business Review Authors," 2016)

HBR Article Proposal

The HBR editors request receipt of a short pitch in order to receive initial feedback. Without a relationship with an HBR editor, general pitch ideas are to be sent through the Submittable platform. Upon review of the pitch, editors may request a formal proposal and narrative outline. The only option available on the Submittable platform is to respond to following questions that are assumed to serve as the proposal. The first five of these questions are publicly available on the HBR website describing contributor guidelines, and two of the questions (#6 and #7) are only viewable inside the Submittable form:

1. What is the central idea of your article?

2. What is important, useful, new, or counterintuitive about your idea?

3. Why do managers need to know about it? How can your idea be applied today?

4. What is the source of your authority? On what previous work (either your own or others') does this idea build?

5. What academic, professional, or personal experience will you draw on? ("Contributor Guidelines for Harvard Business Review Authors," 2016)

6. Please describe your research methods (field study, lab study, survey, sample size, etc.)

7. Upload any supporting documents (draft, white paper, journal article, etc.) (Submittable, n.d.)

If there is an opportunity to also submit a narrative outline, it "should be no more than 800 words and should lay out the structure of the proposed article" including argument, evidence and real-world or an extended example. ("Contributor Guidelines for Harvard Business Review Authors," 2016)

To follow is a draft of the article proposal:

What is the central idea of your article? A grace-based approach to leadership is an untapped opportunity for cultivating better relationships, improving business results, increasing innovation and inclusion, and accelerating continuous learning.

What is important, useful, new, or counterintuitive about your idea? Grace is a novel concept often reserved for faith or used as a colloquial plea for a second

chance. Whereas, an investigation of its intentional use in a management context reveals a practical opportunity for leveraging better results as a leader.

Why do managers need to know about it? How can your idea be applied today? Managers need to know how to tap into this approach, not as another method, but rather as an opportunity to elevate interactions in service of more positive outcomes. The research that supports this grace-based concept offers a framework of three ways that this application presents in management: authentic kindness, compassion to self and others and respect for human dignity.

What is the source of your authority? On what previous work (either your own or others') does this idea build? Cultivating a grace-based approach to leadership is sourced from my doctoral dissertation in the Leadership and Innovation program at Arizona State University.

What academic, professional, or personal experience will you draw on? I am an executive coach with a PCC (Professional Certified Coach) designation from the International Coaching Federation, and my clients are senior leaders from across sectors and around the world. I have thirty years of experience in leadership as a trainer, consultant, director, appointed civic leader, educator, entrepreneur, coach, and researcher. I have worked in diverse communities throughout the United States from farm worker communities in California's Central Valley to boardrooms on Wall Street. My educational background includes an Ed.D. (Leadership and Innovation) from Arizona State University, M.Ed. (Learning, Design and Technology) from Stanford University, and a B.A. with distinction in Public Policy from Occidental College.

Please describe your research methods (field study, lab study, survey, sample size, etc.). The core of this phenomenological research is the qualitative analysis from the participants in my Giving Grace Matters podcast: leader interviews and listener respondents. This was an action research project that enabled me to address a problem of practice in coaching and conduct several cycles of research on how to make evidence-based recommendations for improvement.

Upload any supporting documents (draft, white paper, journal article, etc.) Submitting the Giving Grace Matters website with the podcast link is a potential supporting document.

HBR Full Article Draft: How Giving Grace Makes for Better Management

Future-ready leaders in our complex and current world of the Smart Machine Age (Hess & Ludwig, 2018, p. 55) are managing work that is increasingly technology-driven and remotely distributed, but their ability to sustain relationships and act with humanity is also critical for success. Managers need to consider behavior-based changes in leadership to adapt to these circumstances that arise in the work of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Leadership behaviors have been normalized around hegemonic traditions that advance power structures rather than necessarily cultivate human dignity. Organizations are now less hierarchical and more fluid, and they are evolving into new collaborative work designs that support a transformation to a new type of information industry. In my work with diverse leaders from around the world who are trying to navigate this changing environment, I regularly observe the need for leadership to be more human-centered which is an approach that can be cultivated by giving more *grace*.

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As a coach and advisor for busy executives, I observe the constant demand they receive, as well as self-impose, for a leadership competency that influences the management of the organization, relationships with people, and output and impact of the operation. In order to keep pace with change, business leaders must become infinite learners who are "distinguished by the speed at which they zip up the learning curve" (Hoffman et al., 2019, p. 2). A common learning problem for these leaders is how to address their own leadership gaps with a training strategy that is targeted, time efficient and appropriate for their individual development. While highly capable, these individuals need innovative strategies for how and when they can learn and a clear path for how to practice and evaluate the knowledge gained. In my doctoral research, I created and evaluated a flexible learning framework that can be adapted for content, time availability, urgency and modality that is responsive to these learning needs. For this purpose, I produced a podcast series called "Giving Grace Matters" that includes short episodes methodically constructed for the listener to create a plan of action in accordance with cultivating a grace-based approach to leadership. In my analysis of the listener engagement, there is strong interest in advancing leadership to include a grace-based approach to managing others and producing quality work.

Grace seems like an under-used asset to help people be more human-centered in solving problems which is especially relevant in an increasingly digital world of work and communication. For what reasons are we not tapping into a concept of grace more regularly? The existing scholarship about grace has confirmed that we don't really know how it is showing up in practice, so I decided to find out more. I started with surveying people about what they thought about their own definition of grace, and then I taught a

management course to find out how people could be intentional about using grace in their daily work and relationships. From this research, I produced a framework for how grace was trending, and that resulted in three themes: 1) authentic kindness, 2) compassion for self and others and 3) respect for human dignity. In a grace-based approach to leadership, one or more of these characteristics is present.

Grace-based leadership is evident when leaders, of any type, are authentically kind and compassionate to others and to themselves. Grace is a powerful, yet unrecognized strategy, for leaders to elevate and cultivate better results both personally and professionally. My interviewees consistently acknowledged that this is something they had not thought about before, and there also is not a wealth of pre-existing literature on the topic. A grace-based approach to leadership is an opportunity to sustain relationships, improve retention in organizations and develop capacity in teams, leaders and organizations.

Business leaders call out grace as a missing character trait (Dodgson & Gann, 2019), yet perhaps its absence is a result of not knowing how to use it in a secular context and the lack of clarity in how to identify its meaning. Grace is most commonly associated with faith and often used as a synonym for a higher and divine power. To the extent that grace is familiar in faith, it is found in the teachings of not only in Christianity, but also foundational in Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism and more. Yet grace is not bound to religious application, although its common use in faith provides a familiar recognition for many to transfer it to other contexts.

The use and application of grace is left to the discretionary effort of workers and volunteers who find that it becomes crucial to goal achievement (Thomas & Rowland,

2014, p. 99). In a review of 24 articles relating to compassion and kindness as indicators of grace, Thomas and Rowland found that there is conceptual confusion between their relationship to leadership theory (Thomas & Rowland, 2014, p. 109). Management education could consider the impact of grace which is often an invisible force in facilitating positive relations and quality work.

Much of the research about grace, though in scant amount, regards grace as treating others unconditionally and showing kindness, compassion, and generosity (Bufford, et al., 2017; Winans, 2015; Thomas & Rowland, 2014). Those in business tend to position grace as an action that requires others to willingly receive grace which creates pressure for the recipients who are potentially incapable of returning the kindness shown (Bufford et al., 2017, p. 57). And while the business sector is also concerned with the loss of grace from the leadership vocabulary (Federer, 2015), educators, like James E. Ryan, the former dean of the Harvard Graduate School Education and now president of the University of Virginia, are contributing to a new discourse and calling on recent graduates to lead with the courage and selflessness of grace (Ryan, 2017).

Opportunity for Human-centered Work. Our world is witnessing significant change in almost every industry, from transportation to payments to education to product delivery. In a 2019 McKinsey report on redefining the role of leaders in the reskilling era, Tim Welsh, vice chairman of consumer and business banking at US Bank, responds to an emerging service-leadership profile: "We may need to think about a whole new definition of leadership, a whole new set of attributes that a leader should have for this new working environment we're talking about. Most of all, we need humble leaders—in part, because increasingly they will need to be enablers of others, not in charge of others. This requires

a very different mind-set. In a world of reskilling, a leader will be a person who needs to act in service to others, empowering a group of employees to do things on their own" (Gratton et al., 2019, p. 3).

This leader understands how to balance excellence and innovation with respect for humanity which is a challenge in a world disrupted by changes in technology, climate and wellness. The World Economic Forum presents that society is in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) - an emergence from the past revolutions built on water and steam power, electricity, and electronics and information technology, which is generated by the "fusion of technologies that is blurring the lines between the physical, digital and biological spheres" and "disrupting almost every industry in every country…herald[ing] the transformation of entire systems of production, management and governance" (Schwab, 2006, para. 3). In this time of accelerated change, our society is coping with demands for adaptive new skills, and leadership is becoming increasingly important to help people shift to work differently when workplaces are distributed, technical skills expire and traditional structures shift to meet new product, service and resource demands. Business leaders must consider "potentially reshaping their organizational structures, cultures, and processes to fit these changing developments [while] the speed of technological updates often surpasses the speed at which current and future talent can be upskilled and trained" (Global Business Coalition for Education, 2018, p. 16). In addition to the importance of workforce readiness, technical and entrepreneurial skills are the soft skills considered to be the "personal attributes, social skills, and communication abilities that support interpersonal relationships and interactions with others" (Global Business Coalition for Education, 2018, p. 17). What is distinct about these soft skills, or

social emotional learning competencies, is that they are not machine-based. They are human.

The Future of Jobs Report 2020, composed from a data set of 291 global companies representing more than 7.7 million employees covering 15 industry clusters and 26 countries which represent 80% of the world GDP, described that a top level finding for in-demand skills across jobs change by 2025 include "self-management such as active learning, resilience, stress tolerance and flexibility" (The Future of Jobs Report 2020, 2020, p. 5). Technical skills are not enough to be successful; the ability to understand and work with diverse groups of people is essential. In fact, social intelligence, adaptive thinking and cross-cultural competence rank among the top five skills for the future workforce (Davies et al., 2011).

Compounded by business-based changes and new organizational adaptations, KornFerry found two-thirds of 2,000 professionals responded that they were more stressed than they were five years ago due to factors such as "keeping up with changes in technology, increased workloads, and interpersonal conflict" (Korn Ferry, 2018, para. 2). Additionally, the largest culprit for stress for over one-third of the respondents was the manager, and eighty percent of this group identified heightened stress levels from a change in positional leadership (Korn Ferry, 2018).

Good management is critical not only for the well-being of employees, but also for business health. In the absence of large-scale data on management, the University of Chicago did a study on what drives productivity with the result that management matters the most. In a comparison of 35,000 manufacturing plants in the United States,

management techniques accounted for the greatest change in performance improvement with R&D, employee skills, and IT spending as additional drivers (Bloom et al., 2017).

Workplace stress is commonly influenced by manager innovation. According to the World Health Organization, the most stressful type of work is that "which values excessive demands and pressures that are not matched to workers' knowledge and abilities, where there is little opportunity to exercise any choice or control, and where there is little support from others," (Occupational Health: Stress at the Workplace, 2020, sec. 2) in particular colleagues and supervisors. The top five things that make employees feel stressed are factors that managers can often control or influence: "low wages or salaries, lack of opportunity for advancement or growth, too heavy a workload, unrealistic job expectations and long hours" (Wilkie, 2020, para. 12). In order to reconcile this, the Society for Human Resource Management recommends that "managers might ease up on deadlines and meet with workers and help them prioritize projects" (Wilkie, 2020, para. 13). In other words, leaders may extend compassion, empathy, and a temporary reprieve which is also known as demonstrating grace.

Opportunity for responsive agile leadership shifts. At present, leaders are challenged with how to improve performance in ways that are more humane to both them and others. As we emerge from the covid pandemic, we saw how the global workforce has shifted priorities for employment motivation and employee output. Managers are realizing that a more compassionate style of leadership - one evoking grace - can sustain better relationships and consequently, better outcomes.

Defining grace. We see grace in news headlines and on social media. We hear people hope, when their circumstances shift, that someone will give them grace. Given

the variety of applications, the idea of grace can be confusing in interpretation and affiliation, and yet when it's mentioned, it often offers a feeling of relief, support and even love. It often is the signal for an opportunity to have a second chance to demonstrate one's own truth.

By recognizing the interests and needs of others, a grace-based approach shows respect for human dignity, and this mindset is valuable for organizations. One of my CEO interview guests explained that having grace means to be mindful of what others are experiencing and that businesses can underestimate how important dignities are for individuals. This CEO has demonstrated that you can both reconcile business results and treat people with dignity, "It's interesting because we believe that in order to have high performance, you need to be tough, you need to be brutal, you need to be cruel, you need to be cunning. That hasn't been my experience; actually, leading with grace can lead to very strong business results and outcomes. I have seen that in the financial, customer and employee metrics in my business." Like this CEO, the managers that I interviewed said that grace isn't just about the moment of acting or the specific instance of giving grace– but it's about the long-term benefit of doing so.

Grace as feedback. One lesson from this research is that feedback is evident as a form of grace. When feedback is effective, it is not punishment. In many ways, feedback is a ticket to have a second chance which is often code for "I hope that I can get some grace on this." It could be that in this race to the top, we've forgotten that we learn from making mistakes. So often in the workplace, a mistake can sometimes be labeled as failure. However, grace allows failure to be redefined as continuous learning. At one of the companies where I profiled a CEO, this leader explained to me that she is trying to

increase empowerment for her teams and to hold them as more accountable. She is doing

that "in a way that gives them the freedom to make mistakes and not have their dignity

hurt."

Jane Saccaro, a former Bain management consultant and CEO of Camp Kesem,

shared that she can still viscerally differentiate between the grace-based approach of her

early managers. On one hand, she had a supervisor who had underlying faith in her

contribution and gave a lot of grace to her for showing up, learning, and giving her best

effort every day. This contrasted with another manager who was there to point out

everything she wasn't doing right, the failures, and all the things that needed to

change. Jane's learning trajectory under her grace-based manager "was probably 10x"

versus when working under a leader who was consistently looking for errors. For the

first manager, Jane wanted to show her best work, keep on stretching and growing, and

when she needed help, she felt comfortable asking. With the second manager, she recalls

being afraid and not able to do her work optimally because if she approached an

unknown task, she was not able to go to the person who was there to support

her. Managers who have established their capacity to give grace through compassion,

respect and kindness are able to get the very best out of their team.

Grace as Innovation. When I interviewed Celia Edwards Karam, Capital One

Retail Bank President, she explained that business success now is about enabling teams to

collaborate effectively and to innovate quickly. However, if people are feeling like

they're on walking eggshells to present alternative ideas or if their success requires

someone else's failure, then those kinds of things are not going to lead to

collaboration. They will not lead to the kind of risk-taking that one needs in an

innovative company. Therefore, creating the space for grace to show compassion and respect for people to do this creative work is simply a way of getting the best out of them for the goal that the company desires. Karam stated that "It's not just being nice, it's actually just good business" (Stephens Stauffer, 2023).

Another CEO that I interviewed appreciated the grace that her mentors gave her to learn and grow which increased her appetite and desire to innovate which often includes taking greater entrepreneurial risks. While accountability to safety and service is paramount, creating an environment of trust for giving grace when mistakes are not intentional or significantly consequential, can create more space for employees to innovate, take more risks, be more creative, and this CEO says, "ultimately that's in the best interest of a company." She sees the art of leadership as finding the right balance for encouraging that trust in each individual personality.

And in the social sector, the results are similar. Kiran Handa Gaudioso, CEO of the United Way of Northern New Jersey leads a team that must make magic out of limited resources and create solutions where public policies can leave gaps in services. She notes that "especially in our sector, we are forced to innovate on the fly every day" (Stephens Stauffer, 2023). However, Handa Gaudioso finds that without a foundation of grace in the workplace, her team and partners cannot be responsive, opportunistic and community centered. They need to know that there is a backstop of respect and compassion, as represented in grace, when another adaptation is needed.

Grace as Inclusion. In organizations and communities, inclusion is a state of being valued, respected and supported. It is about ensuring that the right conditions are in place for each person to achieve full potential and the ability to maximize potential is for

both the follower and the leader. The benefit of inclusion is not one-sided or zero-sum; it's synergistic. A grace-based approach to management allows ideas to be safely and freely shared.

Edwards Karam identifies that grace allows for inclusion by expanding a broad variety of perspectives, feelings, and ways of interacting. She recognizes that when she invests on a regular basis to create space and inclusion in her team, then it is known that she is genuinely listening to contributions. As a result, her team can move very quickly which allows her to get input more efficiently because her team has seen her demonstrate the fact that she consistently and reliably wants to hear what they have to say. Moreover, when she's creating an inclusive environment sourced by grace-based management, on a regular basis, the team is more likely to jump in with their points of view, add value to decision-making, and operate with efficiency.

Setting intentions for grace. Grace as a leadership practice has the potential to be overlooked or dismissed in social or business applications when in fact, its use can provide opportunity for personal development as well as even greater excellence in performance. Under the helm of the CEO that I interviewed who could balance rigor with kindness, she offered the belief that "You can have high expectations and still do it with grace. You just have to find your way of doing this."

In so doing, managers can give grace to themselves as they set intentions to lead with authentic kindness, compassion to self and others and respect for human dignity. Charles Humbard, CEO of Up Entertainment Media, emphasized the grace-directed importance for managers to not rush to judgment about others and to look holistically at who they are and what might be going on for them. He shared that "the

core of so much in leadership is understanding intention, and the thing that keeps me grounded in a form of grace is don't just look at what happened." As such, Humbard advises that leaders consider these questions: "Did they really intend a bad outcome, were they driven by a bad intention or was it a mistake? Was it something in their life that tripped them up and took them off course?" In order to understand intentions, a leader has to put the time in to engage with the lives of others, and as Humbard has learned, "so much of grace comes from that engagement."

The ability to cultivate a grace-based approach to leadership extends beyond a lesson. This fitness is achieved by developing a capacity for grace that is, according to the leaders in my interviews, lived, felt, a posture, a mindset, or something that is in the air. As recent tributes emerged for the ailing United States President Jimmy Carter, he was described in numerous media articles as a man of grace (Givhan, 2023). He was committed to bringing dignity to others by helping to build safe homes and neighborhoods with Habitat for Humanity. He negotiated global peace dialogues with authentic kindness that measured principle with fairness for people from conflicting nations and territories. To those who interacted with him, it was known that President Carter was committed to compassion for others as well as himself for how he humbly crafted his post-presidential legacy as a statesman, citizen, Sunday School teacher, and family member. President Carter was a leader who knew that giving grace mattered.

For grace to matter to today's leaders, they will gain the related benefit by being intentional about making this adaptation to their leadership practice. As leaders self-evaluate how they learn best and make changes, their bespoke practice will emerge. As a coach, I know that change can be expedited and more sustainable when done in a

resonant relationship (Boyatzis et al., 2019) with someone who has sincere dedication to the care of and concern for the learner and who can support and hold learners accountable to their goals.

By setting a strong intention to cultivate a grace-based approach to leadership, there is greater likelihood of performance for this new behavior (Ajzen, 1991). One of my CEO guests, who is responsible for a large, global company, is another example of an exceptional grace-based leader as demonstrated by her business management during the Covid-19 pandemic that nearly crippled her industry. For her, setting intentions for how she leads is fundamental to her management. She identifies as a "huge believer in the power of setting intentions. In my career, I wake up every day, and I set an intention to be of greater service to all in my sphere of influence. I believe that if you thoughtfully set your intentions and then make sure that your words, actions, and behaviors line up with those intentions, that you can enhance your impact for the greater good."

With the combination of intentions, a resonant relationship for support and the resources to identify opportunities for grace-based action, there are expanded opportunities for leadership in this new era to elevate relationships, increase innovation and inclusion and be more responsive to continuous learning and be more human-centered. For those seeking greater leadership competency, giving grace does matter.

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APPENDIX A

LIST OF PODCAST INTERVIEW GUESTS

Interview Guest	Organizational Affiliation	Geographic Location
David Holquin	President, de la Salle High School	Concord, CA
Dr. Denise Clark Pope	Co-Founder, Challenge Success; Author; Professor, Stanford University Graduate School of Education	Palo Alto, CA
Kiran Handa Gaudioso	CEO, United Way of Northern New Jersey	Livingston, NJ
Celia Edwards Karam	President, Retail Bank, Capital One	Arlington, VA
Nate Walkingshaw	CEO, Torus; Former CXO, Pluralsight; Serial Entrepreneur	Salt Lake City, UT
Jan Swartz	Group President, Holland American serving Princess Cruises, Holland America Line, Seabourn and P&O Australia	Los Angeles, CA
Charles Humbard	CEO and President, UP Entertainment	Atlanta, GA
Jane Saccaro	Executive Coach and Speaker; Former CEO Kesem National	Chicago, IL
Eyee Hsu	Strategic Communications Advisor; Former Television News Anchor and Producer	Park City, UT
Chris Donnelly	Former General Manager, Nike and Oakley Companies	Park City, UT
Kumsal Bayazit	CEO, Elsevier	United Kingdom

APPENDIX B

PRE-SURVEY FOR LISTENERS

There are five short episodes for you in this podcast series which will offer content about a grace-based approach to leadership. We are interested in how this podcast works for you as a learning resource especially when it is short and focused on stories.

In the spirit of research, we are going to ask you to complete two short surveys: one now and another after you finish listening to the series. In this first survey, we are going to ask you some questions about your background, your concept of grace-based leadership, how you think you will use the podcast and what might be possible for you to learn. It will take 10 minutes to complete this survey.

1. What is your email address? (This response is required in order for you to access the post-survey. It will be kept confidential.)

2. What is your age?
    o   18-24
    o   25-34
    o   35-55
    o   Over 55
    o   Prefer not to say

3. How would you describe your gender?
    o   Male
    o   Female
    o   Non-binary/third gender
    o   Prefer not to say

4. What is your ethnic background?
    o   White/Caucasian
    o   Asian- Eastern
    o   Asian - Indian
    o   Hispanic/Latinx
    o   African American/Black
    o   Native American
    o   Mixed Race
    o   Other
    o   Prefer not to say

5. How many years of management experience have you had?
    o   No direct experience

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o   Under one year
o   1-3 years
o   4-10 years
o   More than 10 years

6. Have you ever considered using the concept of grace in a management context?
    o   Yes
    o   No
    o   I don't recall
    o   Prefer not to say

7. In your career, how often have your direct reports informed you that they were not able to meet their intended production/performance goal?
    o   Never
    o   Sometimes
    o   Frequently
    o   All the time
    o   I don't know

8. In the past month, how many times have you expressed appreciation to others in your organization/network?
    o   None
    o   Once
    o   2-3 times
    o   4-10 times
    o   More than 10 times

9. In the past month, how many examples can you identify of how you have given grace to yourself (as you define the concept)?
    o   None
    o   Once
    o   2-3 times
    o   4-10 times
    o   More than 10 times
    o   Unsure

10. To what extent do you feel prepared to cultivate a grace-based approach to leadership?
    o   Very prepared
    o   Prepared

- Slightly prepared
- Slightly unprepared
- Unprepared
- Unsure

11. How important is it to you that you are able to self-organize (i.e. make choices about) how you develop a grace-based approach to leadership?
    - Very important
    - Important
    - Somewhat important
    - Somewhat unimportant
    - Unimportant
    - No opinion

12. How important is your desire to feel connected to others?
    - Very important
    - Important
    - Somewhat important
    - Somewhat unimportant
    - Unimportant
    - No opinion

13. What is more important to you: Relationships or Task Completion?
    - Relationship-building/maintaining relationships
    - Task completion
    - They are both equally important
    - No opinion

14. How easy will it be for you to practice one of these behaviors about a grace-based approach to leadership in your interactions with others?
    - Very Easy
    - Easy
    - Neither easy nor difficult
    - Difficult
    - Very difficult
    - No opinion

15. From a scale of 0-10 (with 10 as 100%), what is your commitment level for participating in this podcast series?

16. Where is the most common place that you will be listening to this podcast?
    o While I exercise
    o In the car
    o In another transportation mode to work
    o While I do household chores
    o At my desk
    o I'm not sure yet
    o Other

17. When will you be listening to the podcast?
    o At work
    o During my commute to work
    o During my commute from work
    o In the evening after work
    o In the morning before work
    o During a break that I initiate at some point
    o On the weekend
    o Other

APPENDIX C

POST-SURVEY FOR LISTENERS

Thank you for completing the podcast series about a grace-based approach to leadership. We would like your feedback on the experience. This survey will take 10 minutes to complete.

18. How many episodes did you listen to in this series? (check all that apply)
     o Episode 1: Introduction to a grace-based approach to leadership
     o Episode 2: Adding a little more grace
     o Episode 3: Learning from mistakes
     o Episode 4: Innovation and inclusion
     o Episode 5: Beginning a practice

19. How many episodes did you listen to in one sitting? (check all that apply)
     o Only one at a time
     o More than one at a time
     o All five at once

20. How many days did it take you to listen to all five episodes in the series?
     o 1 day
     o 2 days
     o Between 3-5 days
     o 1 week
     o More than 1 week

21. When did you listen to the podcast (check all that apply)?
     o At work
     o During my commute to work
     o During my commute from work
     o In the evening after work
     o In the morning before work
     o During a break that I initiate at some point
     o On the weekend
     o Other

22. Where was the most common place that you listened to this podcast?
     o While I exercise
     o In the car
     o In another transportation mode to work
     o While I do household chores
     o At my desk

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      o Other

23. How did you feel about being able to dedicate 15 minutes to listen to each episode?
    - o It was just the right amount of time to keep me available and engaged.
    - o It was too short; I need more time to understand the content better.
    - o It was too long; I was not able to sustain my attention.
    - o It would have been better in this amount of minutes:

24. What is your definition of grace?

25. Which part(s) of this framework for a grace-based approach to leadership aligns with your definition of grace? (check all that apply)
    - o Compassion for self and others
    - o Authentic kindness
    - o Respect for human dignity
    - o None

26. How easy will it be for you to practice one of these categories about a grace-based approach to leadership (compassion, kindness and respect) in your interactions with others?
    - o Very easy
    - o Easy
    - o Neither easy nor difficult
    - o Difficult
    - o Very difficult

27. Please indicate any of the activities provided in the podcast for your plan of action that you completed (check all that apply):
    - o Writing your definition of grace
    - o Reflecting on grace vs. grit in a past interaction
    - o Creating your innovation/inclusion scorecard
    - o Asking for feedback from someone in service of your continuous learning
    - o I did not try any activities (yet)
    - o I'm not planning on trying any of these

28. "As a result of listening to this podcast, I am going to try small things that are a grace-based approach to leadership."
    - o I strongly agree
    - o I agree
    - o I sort of agree
    - o I sort of don't agree
    - o I don't agree
    - o I strongly don't agree
    - o No opinion

29. After listening to this podcast, do you feel like you have options for how to develop a grace-based approach to leadership?
    o Yes
    o No
    o I don't know
    o No opinion

30. To what extent do you feel prepared to cultivate a grace-based approach to leadership?
    o Very prepared
    o Prepared
    o Slightly Prepared
    o Slightly Unprepared
    o Unsure

31. "As a result of listening to this podcast, I am more confident that I can make an impact with a grace-based approach to leadership."
    o I strongly agree
    o I agree
    o I sort of agree
    o I sort of don't agree
    o I don't agree
    o I strongly don't agree
    o No opinion

32. How important is your desire to feel connected to others?
    o Very important
    o Important
    o Somewhat important
    o Somewhat unimportant
    o Unimportant
    o No opinion

33. How motivated are you now to be aware of giving grace to yourself (as you define the concept)?
    o Very motivated
    o Motivated
    o Somewhat motivated
    o Somewhat unmotivated

o Unmotivated
o I don't know
o No opinion

34. Have you identified, or do you want to identify, an accountability partner to help sustain a grace-based approach to your leadership practice?
  o Yes
  o Maybe
  o No
  o No opinion

35. As a result of listening to this podcast, I intend to…

36. From a scale of 0-10 (with 10 as 100%), how useful to you was listening to this podcast series in your development as a leader?

37. Are you interested in learning even more about a grace-based approach to leadership?
  o Yes
  o Maybe
  o No
  o No opinion

38. Are you interested in listening to another leadership lesson in a similar podcast format?
  o Yes
  o Maybe
  o No
  o No opinion

39. Additional comments:

APPENDIX D

COMPANION WORKSHEETS ON WEBSITE

There were four documents available on the Giving Grace Matters website that served as companion worksheets for the listener to use to build their plan of action for cultivating a grace-based approach to leadership:

1. Your Plan of Action - Activity #1 - Create your definition of grace.

2. Your Plan of Action - Activity #2 - Bring grace to your interactions.

3. Your Plan of Action - Activity #3 - Ask for feedback.

4. Your Plan of Action - Activity #4 - Inclusion and Innovation Scorecard.

Giving Grace Matters
Your Plan of Action - Activity #1 - Create your definition of grace.

What are some of the values that you associate with grace?

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

What does it mean to "give grace?"

_____

_____

What are moments where you have seen grace in action?

_____

_____

How does the concept of grace make you feel?

_____

_____

"To me, grace means...

_____

_____

_____."

Giving Grace Matters
Your Plan of Action - Activity #2 - Bring grace to your interactions.

Describe what happened in a recent interaction:

Who was involved	When did it happen	Where were you	What was the issue

Evaluate how you communicated in this interaction. How, if at all, did grace show up?

Types of grace	Presence in this interaction
Compassion for self and others	
Authentic kindness	
Respect for human dignity	
<u>Your</u> definition of grace	

What is one thing, in the next 24 hours, that you can do to bring a little more grace to something similar?

_____

_____

_____

Giving Grace Matters
Your Plan of Action - Activity #3 - Ask for feedback.

What are some current areas (personally and professionally) where you could benefit from receiving feedback?	Who can "sit beside" you and offer a perspective that will help you grow and learn about it?
_____ _____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____

Questions to solicit:
What is possible with how this skill/behavior/effort, etc. could show up?

_____

_____

How might I do this better?

_____

What might I be missing?

_____

Who can help me to learn more?

_____

What does the grace look like that I can give to myself in order for me to be open to this feedback and learning?

_____

_____

Giving Grace Matters
Your Plan of Action - Activity #4 - Inclusion and Innovation Scorecard.

To what extent do I create a space for **inclusion** in my organization/community/family?

1	2	3	4	5

Never   Rarely   Sometimes   Frequently   Always

To what extent do I create a space for **innovation** in my organization/community/family?

1	2	3	4	5

Never   Rarely   Sometimes   Frequently   Always

Am I the type of leader who will respond to what is showing up in this assessment?

How will a grace-based approach to leadership influence what I notice about this rating?

What is one thing I can try to influence this potential change with grace?

APPENDIX E

LISTENER DATA

This listener data is from Simplecast, the podcast management and analytics platform.

Unique Listeners: Show   172

Unique Listeners: Episodes   393

	EP 1	103
	EP 2	84
	EP 3	81
	EP 4	67
	EP 5	62

Global Listeners

United States	376
Singapore	5
Ireland	5
Mexico	4
Philippines	3
Germany	2
India	1
United Kingdom	1

Total Downloads   435

APPENDIX F

DISSERTATION DEFENSE PRESENTATION DECK

Context of the Researcher

Professional Role:
- Executive Coach
- Organizational Advisor
- Leadership Researcher
- Learning, Design and Technology Expert

Clients/Peers:
- Leaders across sectors
- Organizations
- Coaching and professional consulting service colleagues

This research explored two leadership issues: how busy executives can sustainably learn with flexibility and efficiency and how to cultivate a grace-based approach to leadership.

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Dissertation in practice

The purpose of **action research** is to produce a theory (or at least understanding) and to inform action; it follows a cycle of identification, analysis and action.

IDENTIFICATION:
grace-based approach to leadership
creating socially constructed knowledge

ANALYSIS:
learning behavior in a mobile modality
influencing grace-based leadership using evidence-based learning design

ACTION:
podcast innovation
producing a flexible learning framework that extends the knowledge and influences learning effort

"Repeat"
Continue to explore

Dissertation in Practice (DiP)

The **Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate** (CPED) is the guiding organization for professional doctorates in education that promotes "academic rigor, practical impact, relevance, and value while providing space for innovation and collaboration" across its institutional members (CPED).

Dissertations in Practice (DiP) are distinguished from five chapter dissertations (Perry, 2016) and DiP research provides a unique bridge between the researcher-practitioner gap. According to CPED (2021), DiP research "advances professional knowledge, incorporates rigorous and ethical methods, addresses a complex problem of practice, includes innovative or interdisciplinary inquiry, and reflects an alternative format from traditional research."

How to explain and communicate ideas with
Texture

Podcast

The 5-episode podcast series (and bonus episode) is found on **Apple Podcasts** and **Spotify**.

Listen on
Apple Podcasts

Listen on
Spotify

Giving Grace Matters

Mobile Leadership Lessons

research study

Articles

After the revisions are completed for the dissertation, articles will be submitted to these academic and business journals.

ImpactingEducation

Harvard Business Review

The Busyness Trap

Activity is not a metric for success.

Manuscript

This alternative format
for a dissertation
manuscript will be
submitted to **ProQuest**
in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for
the degree.

Research and Production

Flexible Learning Framework:
Podcast ▶

How can reflections on grace-based leadership be captured and shared within a flexible learning framework?

How do microlearning experiences, and the modality of that interaction, influence the self-determined effort and planned behavior of learners?

Grace

The definition of grace in this research was constructed from grounded theory:

Compassion to others	Unconditional kindness
Compassion to self	Respect for human dignity

Cycles of Research

Cycle 0
Fall 2020

Manager survey

Created a working definition of grace: "*recognizing the opportunity for kindness, courage, or compassion to self or others.*"

Cycle 1
Spring 2021

Online group Coaching Program for a Grace-Based Approach to Leadership

Offered an applied direction for what a grace-based approach to leadership makes possible both for others and for leaders themselves.

Cycle 2
Summer 2022 - Spring 2023

Giving Grace Matters podcast

Produce a podcast series about a grace-based approach to leadership based on 11 interviews with executives; surveyed 89 listeners on engagement.

Learning Design
Guiding the innovation

Microlearning

Small, short-term, focused and manageable units of instructional content that offer a meaningful lesson and enables better retention (Nikou & Economides, 2018, p. 270).
Considers the factors for the learner of timing, on-demand delivery, and modularization (Armstrong & Sadler-Smith, 2008).

Podcasting

Can be widely place-based, on-demand, and asynchronous; offers a human interactive experience, and with the learning outcomes set with intention at the center of the design, this medium is the method that can support change in behavior and mindset (Kidd, 2012, p. 55).

Podcast and Article Production
Data collection and analysis

Leadership Interviews

Identified 11 executive leaders in business, education, media, and non-profits as interview guests.

September 2022 - January 2023

Interview Analysis and Podcast Production

Coded and analyzed interviews; used emerging themes to create narrative.

November 2022 - February 2023

Podcast Launch and Survey Analysis

Created podcast with five 15-minute episodes, website and learning resources, and pre- and post-surveys

January - March 2023

Media Publication of Findings

Dissertation in practice includes peer-reviewed article for *Impacting Education* and submission to *Harvard Business Review*

March - April 2023

Episode Design

- Quote (coded)
- Story (coded)
- Theme (identified)
- Episode (constructed)

Story and Quote tags include "key message" and "author"

Sample Episode Production

Data sources
A grounded theory analysis

Transcription and Coding

What is coming from the emerging data and what possibilities does it suggest? (Charmaz, 2014)

AI (Riverside.fm) and manual transcription; digital (MAXQDA) and manual coding (by hand on pages and with posters).

Survey Analysis

Reflective questions that help leaders give meaning to leadership opportunities (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019)

Pre- and post-surveys were requested as bookends to podcast. About half of respondents from the pre-survey completed the post-survey.

Platform Data

Repetition of listening to the same episode gathered from the frequency rate of episodes (Jaworski, 2021)

Listener data was collected including episode downloads and LTR (listen-through-rate).

Learning Theories
Integrated in the podcast

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)
Focuses on a person's intention to perform a behavior, and intention and control can predict achievement (Ajzen, 1991).

After the listener learns about grace, they need to establish an intention to use it. The podcast prompted this intention change in the podcast scripting over the course of the series and ask for the learner to write about intentions in the post-survey.

Self-determination Theory (SDT)
If competency, autonomy and relatedness exist, then there is the opportunity for optimal motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

The podcast design helped to establish early a sense of competency in grace-based leadership so that the learner felt confident in their ability to practice it more.
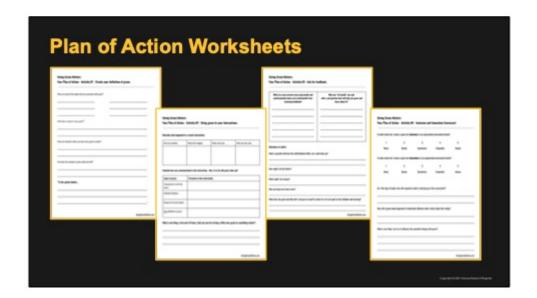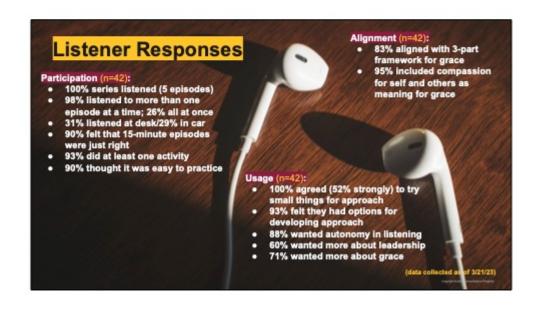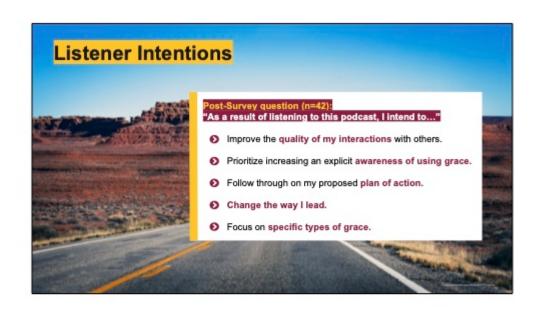
Intentional Change Theory (ICT)
A method of envisioning ideal self, exploring real self, developing a learning agenda and experimenting with new behaviors and roles (Boyatzis, 2019).
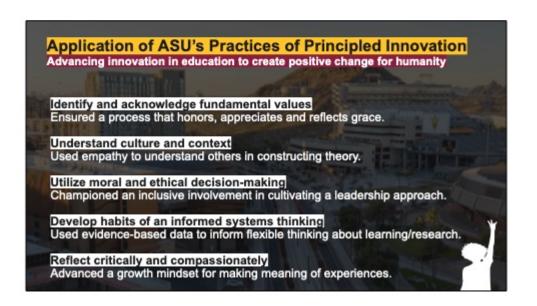
The learning framework supported developing the aspirations of the learners as a result of their engagement in the podcast series.

Plan of Action Worksheets

Listener Engagement

Podcast Downloads:
519 all-time downloads
375 unique listeners (episode)
234 total listeners (show)

Survey Completion Rate:
89 pre-surveys
42 post-surveys

(data collected as of 3/21/23)

Listener Responses

Participation (n=42):
- 100% series listened (5 episodes)
- 98% listened to more than one episode at a time; 26% all at once
- 31% listened at desk/29% in car
- 90% felt that 15-minute episodes were just right
- 93% did at least one activity
- 90% thought it was easy to practice

Alignment (n=42):
- 83% aligned with 3-part framework for grace
- 95% included compassion for self and others as meaning for grace

Usage (n=42):
- 100% agreed (52% strongly) to try small things for approach
- 93% felt they had options for developing approach
- 88% wanted autonomy in listening
- 60% wanted more about leadership
- 71% wanted more about grace

(data collected as of 3/21/23)
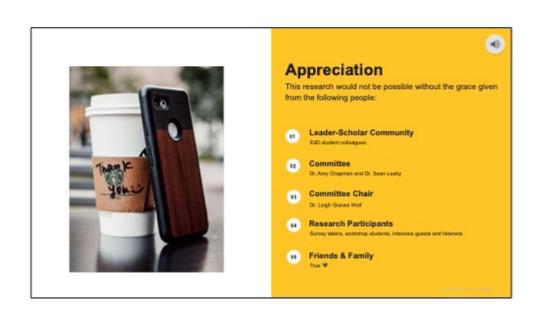
APPENDIX G

IRB EXEMPTION

ASU Knowledge Enterprise Development

EXEMPTION GRANTED

Leigh Wolf
Division of Educational Leadership and Innovation - Tempe
-
Leigh.Wolf@asu.edu

Dear Leigh Wolf:

On 9/14/2022 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Tuning In To A Grace-Based Approach To Leadership: How To Design A Flexible Mobile Learning Framework For Busy Executives
Investigator:	Leigh Wolf
IRB ID:	STUDY00016500
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• Consent Form (Listeners) Stephens Stauffer 9.13.22.pdf, Category: Consent Form; • IRB Social Behavioral for Deborah Stephens Stauffer 9.13.22.docx, Category: IRB Protocol; • Listener Survey_ Episode 1 Stephens Stauffer 9.13.22.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • Listener Survey_ Post-Episode 6 Stephens Stauffer 9.11.22.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • Recruitment Consent Letter (Interview Guests) Stephens Stauffer 9.11.22.pdf, Category: Consent Form; • Recruitment Email Stephens Stauffer 9.11.22.pdf, Category: Recruitment Materials; • Reminder Email to Survey Participants

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	Stephens Stauffer 9.13.22.pdf, Category: Recruitment Materials; • Semi-Structured Interview Questions Stephens Stauffer 9.11.22.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2)(i) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation (non-identifiable), (2)(ii) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation (low risk) on 9/14/2022.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

If any changes are made to the study, the IRB must be notified at research.integrity@asu.edu to determine if additional reviews/approvals are required. Changes may include but not limited to revisions to data collection, survey and/or interview questions, and vulnerable populations, etc.

REMINDER - - Effective January 12, 2022, in-person interactions with human subjects require adherence to all current policies for ASU faculty, staff, students and visitors. Up-to-date information regarding ASU's COVID-19 Management Strategy can be found here. IRB approval is related to the research activity involving human subjects, all other protocols related to COVID-19 management including face coverings, health checks, facility access, etc. are governed by current ASU policy.

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Deborah Stephens Stauffer

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

       Deborah Stephens Stauffer, Ed.D., is a leadership and learning expert, organizational advisor and executive leadership coach with a global practice that helps changemakers to see things differently, discover deeper learning, and effectively manage change and innovation. In prior experience, she was a startup founder and entrepreneur, worked in venture capital, and was an educator. She researches and speaks about grace, leadership and management and is the host of the *Giving Grace Matters* podcast. Follow her on LinkedIn.