

Simon Mainwaring:

We live in challenging and uncertain times. And everyone, no matter where you sit in business, has felt an emotional toll after the last few years, and it continues as headlines each day cause concern, especially around the climate crisis. So what can we do to take better care of ourselves, both personally and professionally, as citizens and leaders to address the fear, anxiety, and loneliness many of us feel in today's world? The good news is that there are mindsets and habits you can use to restore and protect your well-being.

Practices that have addressed trauma in the most extreme circumstances that can be applied to the mental burden of living and leading in today's world. It's vital to your health and happiness and to the well-being of every stakeholder in your business. Let's find out what we can do. From We First and Goal 17 Media. Welcome to Lead With We. I'm Simon Mainwaring, and each week I talk with purposeful business and thought leaders about the revolutionary mindsets and methods you can use to build your bottom line and a better future for all of us.

And today, I'm joined by Dr. Jim Gordon, psychiatrist and director of the nonprofit Center for Mind-Body Medicine, and world-renowned experts in using mind-body medicine to heal depression, anxiety, and psychological trauma. And we'll discuss how each of us can emotionally navigate these very traumatic times and share that with our employees and across our companies and how business at large can show up in new ways to foster healthy cultures and best serve our companies by best serving our people. So Jim, welcome to Lead With We.

Dr. Jim Gordon:

Thank you Simon. It's good to be here with you.

Simon Mainwaring:

I am so excited to talk to you, Jim, for a couple of reasons. Firstly, I think the unsung elephant in the room that we're all facing is trauma today, whether it's through the lens of the impending climate emergency, whether it's through rounds and rounds of layoffs, whether it's through just the uncertainty around our future and the toll that the last few years of COVID-19 have taken on everybody.

And I think mental health has become a much more public dialogue. But I don't think, secondly, that business has really taken that head-on, and that's why I'm so excited to talk to you about it. So I want to start at the beginning, Jim, help us understand what is trauma.

Dr. Jim Gordon:

Well, to begin with, Simon, trauma is a Greek word. It means injury or wound to the body, to the mind, to the spirit. And the understanding is that when that happens, when there is that wound, when there is that trauma, it may be emotional to begin with, but it can also have physical, mental, it can have spiritual, it can have social consequences, consequences. So trauma may be very specific in the beginning, but its effects tend to generalize and to affect every aspect of who we are.

Simon Mainwaring:

And I think there was general, broad awareness of dramatic examples like post-traumatic stress disorder in veterans or people having trauma after the loss of a loved one. But it feels like awareness has leveled up in the last few years, and there's much more nuance to the discussion. So does trauma come in different levels, and is it triggered in big and small ways? Give us a sense of what is the true landscape of trauma.

Dr. Jim Gordon:

Well, I think it's important to understand first that the trauma, the experience of trauma, and its consequences are at the root of all modern psychotherapy. It goes back to the latter part of the 19th century with Freud and Breuer and Janet looking at patients, looking at adults who have these strange symptoms, paralysis, obsessive-compulsive disorders, and nobody knew where they came from.

And the one of Freud's great contributions was saying these kinds of symptoms in later life come from trauma, come from damage done, emotional, interpersonal damage done, psychological damage done early in life. So I think we're beginning to rediscover, in a sense, the roots of our modern understanding of how people operate. Trauma may come from a specific cause in our history or our family history or our early life experience, or a loss a little bit later in life. But right now, the sense of having been wounded and of anticipating more wounds is distributed throughout the whole society.

With COVID-19, I don't know anyone here in the United States who wasn't traumatized by the abrupt change in how they lived their life, and who they could communicate with, and how they could communicate, and how they thought about their own health and what they had to worry about. Trauma disrupts our ordinary life functioning. And by that definition, just about everybody in this country was disrupted, and not just in this country, of course, around the world.

Simon Mainwaring:

I couldn't agree more. I think all of us felt the visceral effects of COVID, whether we were touched by the pandemic in our family or our own lives. We witnessed it on television. We saw it on the headlines. My question is this. There's been a lot of treatment of those who got COVID, there's been a lot of recovery.

But there doesn't seem to have been a watershed moment to address the emotional toll of the last few years. And from a practitioner's point of view, from an expert's point of view, how would you describe this situation? We have a global population that went through a dramatic and traumatic experience, and yet none of us have had a chance to process it. What does that tell you?

Dr. Jim Gordon:

Well, what it tells us is that trauma is difficult to confront. I mean, it's always been difficult to confront. It's difficult to confront. You may remember something from your own life or in my life traumatic, early events. Some of them I didn't recall till I was much older, and I was perhaps ready to confront them.

I think, on a collective level, we don't really want to face the level of uncertainty that there is about who we are, how we relate to each other, and what our future is. And COVID-19 brought up, it's not that it caused all that uncertainty, but it gave us an experience of uncertainty and made us begin to look at all the other ways, climate change being a prime example, all the other ways that we are potentially threatened.

Simon Mainwaring:

Exactly. And the reason I'm so thrilled to have an expert like you talking about the business context is because business showed up differently during COVID-19. We re-engineered our supply chains to make PPE equipment. We made meals for medical practitioners and first responders.

And since then, we've seen the great resignation by employees and quiet quitting, and suddenly business has been called to show up in completely new ways. And that expectation isn't going away because the public can't unsee the way that companies showed up during COVID. They saw what we can do, and that has created an expectation moving forward that they're going to take care of us in new ways. Would you say that's fair?

Dr. Jim Gordon:

I would say that's correct, and I would say that the sensitivity to any kind of inefficiency, inadequacy, inequity in companies has been heightened significantly. Everybody is more on edge. Everybody's looking out for what might be threatening them. So COVID has created that landscape and created that global sense of uncertainty that we now bring to all of our interactions.

I can see it in my own center where everybody is... No, everybody was traumatized by COVID. Everybody is sensitized to whatever is happening right now. And if we are wise, those of us who have the [inaudible 00:08:04] nonprofit, but it is a business, we all need to look at what's going on, and we need to give our staff, our employees, our colleagues a chance to express what's going on and we need to give them the tools that they need to help and heal themselves.

Simon Mainwaring:

I think that's absolutely right, and this creates an expectation on leadership, on HR officers, on chief people officers, on managers to factor in the mental health and well-being of their employees, of their customers, of consumers.

So your center, the Center for Mind-Body Health, is the leading center in the country, if not the world, in terms of this. So give us a couple of insights as to where you begin to address trauma to serve the health and well-being of anyone, whether it's an employee or a consumer. Where do you begin?

Dr. Jim Gordon:

I want to start at the top with people like us who are CEOs of organizations. We have to take people's distress not so personally, even if they're getting angry at us because of it. We have to understand. We need to listen to them. We need to see what is true. That is aspects or attitudes or behaviors we may need to change, and we need to not take it globally personally because people are on edge and they're likely to make accusations. So that's number one. Number two, what we've seen, what I've seen working with schools after mass shootings in schools or in communities where they've been devastated by climate-related disasters, people need a place that feels safe where they can go and talk about what's going on with them.

One of our major contributions in Parkland after the mass shooting there was to begin to create informal groups for the students and the teachers and the staff where they could just talk with each other. It's nice if there's a professional there, but that doesn't have to be just an opportunity to share what's going on. Next, we have to encourage people to learn techniques for self-care and give them a little time to do it. My book, *Transforming Trauma: The Path to Hope and Healing*, is about a program of self-awareness and self-care that anyone can learn. And I think it behooves us as leaders of organizations to give people access to resources that can teach them, give them the tools they need to deal with their own stress, to deal with the consequences of the trauma, which are anxiety, depression, irritability, et cetera.

And also to give them a sense from our own experience. This is important too. We as leaders need to deal with our own stress as best we can. We need to recognize the trauma we've experienced. We need to start using the tools for ourselves, including talking with other people, physical exercise, different forms of meditation, mental imagery, time in nature. Then what, as we learn to deal with our own stress, our own trauma, we become not only expert or at least efficient at helping other people, we become credible because we understand that we're dealing with the same kinds of issues generally that other people in our organizations are. Those are the things I think are most important.

Simon Mainwaring:

I think those steps are absolutely critical, and I think the need for this in business was dramatized with the tragic murder of George Floyd, which traumatized so many people around the country. But we were caught so flatfooted in business in terms of how to respond. So could you speak directly to a crisis of any type?

It could be the war in Ukraine. It could be a tragic incident of police violence that suddenly becomes a cultural flashpoint and the leaders of that organization or the organization as a whole needs to respond. What should that first response be to best serve the health and well-being of everyone involved?

Dr. Jim Gordon:

Well, I think you put your finger on it. The first and most important response is to understand that something is happened that is affecting all the people around us or that may be affecting all of them. I think part of the problem has been that many people in business and elsewhere say, "Oh, well, that's just for those people may be traumatized, but that doesn't really affect us."

The particular people in that community or particular people of that ethnic group or parents of young children if there's a shooting of young children. But we have to understand that everyone may be affected. That's the first thing, the most important thing to understand. The second is to give people an opportunity to talk about what they're feeling. One of the things that we've done from time to time is we brought our whole staff. Now our staff is small compared to most businesses.

We have 35 people on our staff. We have an international faculty of 150. We bring those groups together individually or in small groups or larger groups. We give them an opportunity to talk about what's going on, and that is a major step. The second piece may have to do with, well, what do we do? What do do about it? And I think that there are at least two levels of that. One is what can we do about it in individually, socially, or politically?

We have to come into balance. If we're out of balance, we're not going to be very effective in our response. So the contribution that I can make the Center for Mind-Body Medicine can make that perhaps CEOs and other leadership can make is creating some opportunity to give people some basic tools to deal with their stress. Beyond that, what can each business or each company do?

I think that's going to vary tremendously. It may have to do with more attention to equity in the company to answering concerns about hiring practices or discrimination of any kind that may be there. Concerns about parenting may be brought up by a school shooting. You're going to have lots of parents working in your company, and they may be more anxious. They may need to be more on the phone with their kids. They may need a little bit of early leave time in order to pick up kids because they're more anxious.

So we need to help... allow people to express what their concerns are and, if possible, to figure out some practical modifications to help. There may be opportunities if you're in that community to make direct contributions to funds, to provide a space for people to come together, to give employees time off to go to meetings that are meant to address community problems. I think there are a whole variety of answers that businesses can come up with.

Simon Mainwaring:

That list is really, really powerful and specific, which is what I was really hoping to learn from you. And the other thing I want to ask about is trauma to me seems cumulative these days. If we look at the last two or three years, we've had COVID-19 and all the variants and the murder of George Floyd and the

BLM Movement around the world. And then global supply chain. And then the war in Ukraine. And then inflation and recession and layoffs. It just won't quit.

And at the same time, you've got this daily diet of click-head headlines that are traumatizing you when you look at the news every day. So it's cumulative because of these real-world events, and it's this daily diet of anxiety through the news. So what would you say we as leaders or HR officers or team managers should tell our employees or our community about the digital diet that is healthy for [inaudible 00:15:51]?

Dr. Jim Gordon:

I think it's time for a little abstinence from the excesses of that digital diet.

Simon Mainwaring:

Right.

Dr. Jim Gordon:

I think the important thing, Simon, is really just as you're doing now, is you're speaking from your own experience. Leaders need to be real about what's going on. Rather than saying, "You should do this, or you shouldn't do this," is to talk about the situation and perhaps share some of the ways that you are dealing with it. I don't pay too much attention to what's on social media.

Simon Mainwaring:

That's why you are so healthy and happy. There you go.

Dr. Jim Gordon:

I do some posts. There are a couple of people I follow, but I can't get involved in that constant back and forth, which because of the nature of social media, is often anonymous. It brings out the worst in many people who are harboring resentments and who are then expressing it.

Not to mention all of the communication that is just meant to propagandize us. So I think first of all, we have to hone our self-awareness and our critical abilities to know what's bull and to not pay any further attention to it, to not indulge except perhaps as a kind of unfolding tragic, comic drama that's happening.

Simon Mainwaring:

Right.

Dr. Jim Gordon:

I live here in Washington, DC. I have, as my patient, a number of people from Congress. I've worked with several presidents and several administrations. I watch it, but I have a certain sense of distance from it. It's not that I'm not appalled at times, particularly by the sort of the misinformation and the deliberate hypocritical presentation of information. But I have a certain distance, and I think we all need to cultivate that kind of... Erik Erikson, the great psychoanalyst, called it informed subjectivity.

That is that, yes, we have to respond, but we also have to see, "Okay, let's take a distance from what we're seeing." And that's something that we can encourage. To all this disinformation, all these harangues, all these frightening and traumatizing events, there has become a greater emphasis on

mindfulness, and I think that's very healthy to bring mindfulness to ourselves, our interactions with other people, and our interactions with this larger political, social, ecological world in which we all live.

Simon Mainwaring:

And I want to sort of lean into younger demographics specific to that. I think as a dad of a 23-year-old and a 20-year-old daughters growing up here in LA, I hear firsthand how difficult life is for young people. And I think they're very worried about their future. They're living with the toll, the negative toll of social media, and yet these are the future consumers of companies out there.

These are your future employees. Their health is the lifeblood of your company. Is there any advice you could give us on how to best serve younger generations, those in their mid-20s and below, who have grown up with a lot of trauma as the very kind of air in which they bring you?

Dr. Jim Gordon:

Well, I think the first thing for people who are older, and I'm a good deal older than you, I grew up in a much better time. I grew up in a much more optimistic, less anxious time. Yes, I grew up in the 50s and 60s... 40s, 50s, and 60s. There was a lot of political ferment, to be sure, but there was a sense of hopefulness that just about all of us had.

Now we have to acknowledge that it's a more threatening time, and there are more threatening sources of information coming in on young people. So we have to say that we understand that for them. The other thing is that they really need to develop this kind of self-awareness, and we need to encourage that. I encourage that in my son. My son is 20 years old. He's focused on being an elite football player.

But what's interesting is also I've been encouraging him. His mother's been encouraging him to always be a little more self-aware, a little more critical of himself, a little more aware of the situations that he's in. And over time, he's become much more so. Instead of getting in arguments and fights all the times, he's beginning to see the other person's point of view.

Simon Mainwaring:

Right.

Dr. Jim Gordon:

He's beginning to become less overwhelmed. Instead of being so fixed on, "I have to do this in order to get security," he's opening himself up to other possibilities. "Oh, if I can't go this way and if I'm not completely satisfied there, then maybe there's something else that I can do." I think we have to help our young people cultivate that kind of self-awareness, help them understand that there are choices, there are options, there are possibilities, and help them deal with the onslaught of negativity.

Simon Mainwaring:

A great attitude, a great attitude. And actually, to that point, you mentioned earlier on how, in some cases, trauma has been stigmatized, or in other cases, it's just for those other people over there that unfortunately went through a very sad event.

But really, as you're sharing, everyone is suffering trauma, and they're bringing it to the workplace, they're bringing it to their careers, they're bringing it to the culture of our companies. How should all of us inside organizations make sure that people aren't having their trauma dismissed, that it's not being diminished?

Dr. Jim Gordon:

Well, I think that we have to come to that understanding in ourselves and not dismiss, as leaders, not dismiss the trauma that has come to us. As leaders, and especially I would say as male leaders, although women leaders also have these issues, we've got to make it happen all the time. We're moving ahead. We're the ones who are the engines for innovation, the engines for development, the engines for profitability, whatever they are. And we tend to ignore a lot of emotional issues that may come up.

I'm making a generalization, but I've seen enough of it. I think we have to admit in ourselves the trauma that we are experiencing and how it's affecting us. And then, because we're leaders, hopefully, we have an understanding. That understanding will help us develop forums for people to talk and to feel comfortable talking. One of the things I know that interests you is that people compare their drama.

"Oh, this one's really bad. Mine is not so bad. Don't worry about me." And so I think that everybody has been affected, and everybody has an opportunity to talk about whatever it is that's going on with them.

And comparisons are a bit odious in this kind of situation. They don't serve anyone. "My trauma's bigger than yours, or mine isn't as important as yours." It's all important. We're all human beings. One of the insights that I've seen working in war zones and post-war situations is that those people who are most traumatized, who've lost members of their families, for example, that when they get in a group of other people who've not suffered as much, they tend to be enormously compassionate to other people who say, "Oh, you know, my house was damaged, or I'm worried about my family."

They get it, and they understand it. They're not as judgmental as people often are of themselves. So I would advise an atmosphere where you sort of leave judgment, that kind of judgmental attitude outside the door, and you just give people an opportunity to talk about whatever's going on and acknowledge whatever effects it may have and refrain from comparison and discourage that kind of comparison.

Simon Mainwaring:

And having researched your career and contributions to so many desperate situations, I want to ask you for maybe a few steps we should each take so we can manage our trauma as leaders, as employees, as effectively as possible because you have probably seen more difficult situations than any one person deserves to see in their lifetime, and yet you have had to process it. You've had to maintain your own mental health and well-being. So are there a few tips that you can give us so that we can show up in the best way possible in our lives?

Dr. Jim Gordon:

Sure. And I think it's going to be slightly different for each person. So let me give some general ways of approaching some specific tips and then a few that may be more relevant for some people than with others. I think some kind of meditation practice is so important to dealing with trauma. Now that doesn't mean you have to sit upright for an hour totally silent. There's so many practices. Find a technique that is relaxing for you that [inaudible 00:24:25] releases your tension. Number one.

And I encourage people to use both a quiet technique like slow, deep breathing and also some kind of active technique. It could be a walking meditation. It could be fast deep breathing. It could be dancing. It could be shaking, something like that. Number two, begin to bring an attitude of greater awareness, mindfulness is a slightly fancier name, to various tasks that you do. I find that washing dishes mindfully is very good one for me. The dishes need to be done, so [inaudible 00:25:02]-

Simon Mainwaring:

[inaudible 00:25:02].

Dr. Jim Gordon:

... sooner or later. And if I can do it in a relaxed way with relaxed moment to moment awareness, it calms me down as well as gets the dishes done. Third thing, physical activity is really important. One of the reasons that we're so buffeted, and it's so hard for some of us to let loose of the trauma that's grabbed a hold of us, is that we're not... as a contemporary species, we're not very physically active. We have the genes of hunter-gatherers. Everybody keep that in mind.

They haven't changed over the last 200,000 years, and those folks were on the move all the time. We need to move our bodies more and more. That will help to release the stress. [inaudible 00:25:48] is to spend some time in the nature, in the natural world. There's so much research that's come out now on the healing effects of simply spending 20 minutes, half an hour in a natural setting, and it doesn't have to be the Amazon. It can be a local park that's nearby. So those are some basic, basic ways to deal with the trauma that comes to us.

Simon Mainwaring:

Yeah, I think we all found during COVID, we were drawn to nature. It kind of reset us and allowed us to feel centered and okay again. And I mean flipping to the powerful effect of the tools and techniques you lay out in transforming trauma, can trauma be reversed, even microtraumas that most people don't see?

Dr. Jim Gordon:

Yes. And the reason I begin transforming trauma with stories of people who've been horribly abused in childhood, who've gone through almost unimaginable hell, and who've suffered from it and developed symptoms from it.

I tell the stories of those people because they have been able to move through and beyond their trauma, not only to be relieved of symptoms but also to become extraordinary human beings who have learned from their own experience and are able to share what they've learned with others.

I think it's really important that everyone who is watching us understand that the capacity to move through and beyond trauma is there in just about every human being, regardless of the situation.

Simon Mainwaring:

That resonates very, very deeply. And I want to ask about traumas of different magnitude. So someone may lose a family member, and that's so personal and direct. And at the same time, someone may be fearful of a climate emergency that is 10, 15, 20 years out that will affect their children's life. Does the proximity to the crisis impact the trauma? And how do we deal with the fear of the future in that sense?

Dr. Jim Gordon:

Well, that's a very good question, and that's, in a sense, harder to deal with. I think that for those people who are dealing with the reality of climate change and its potentially disastrous consequences, I think people need to become intimately aware of it in order to deal with it. If you're dismissing it. If you're saying, "Oh, it's not going to come to me, or we're going to find solutions. There's not really a problem. It's exaggerated." It doesn't mean they may not be suffering from it.

If you look at the news and you see people's houses being swept away by hundred-year floods that are happening every three years now, you're being affected by it. But unless you've become aware of that effect, at least imaginatively, if not personally and intimately, because it's your house that's being swept away, you're not going to be able to deal with it very well.

So I think that those of us who are concerned about it, who feel the potentially damaging effects, who are, in the sense, traumatized by that prospect, we need to be able to do something to address those potential consequences. Now we all can do something, and I think that each person's going to find different things that they can do in addition. And to do something, to do those so things most effectively, we need to come into balance in ourselves. We need to use the trauma healing techniques.

Simon Mainwaring:

No, absolutely. Action is the antidote to hope, as they say. And I think that's what is so sort of almost positive about these challenges we face because when else have we been given an opportunity to come together as a species to solve such an important issue as the wellbeing of our planet? I mean, it's almost epic in its proportions in some ways. And I want to ask you, Jim, someone said to me not long ago that you need to disassociate yourself from the idea that you are a person who carries stress in their body.

And by simply letting go of that idea, you can preserve your body and not carry that stress internally. And so I wanted to ask you, as someone who's been in so many tough situations from the war of Ukraine to school shootings to the capitol insurrection and so on, can you experience trauma without being directly involved in it because that could make you a good leader or a happier employee or a healthier culture at work? Can you be involved in trauma without actually it affecting you?

Dr. Jim Gordon:

Well, I don't think that it can be dismissed. I think it has to be metabolized. And that's what I do when I'm in these situations. We've been working in Gaza for almost 20 years. I see someone who tells me, "26 members of my family were killed." How can I not take that in? How can I not be affected by it? So I take it in. I cry. This man is telling me amidst the ruins of his own house, "I've lost 26 members of my family." He's showing me a video of a child's birthday party. He says, "There's only one child I have left, only one member of my immediate family. Everybody else, brothers, sisters, parents, children killed."

How can I not be affected by that? So I think it's not a question of not being affected. It's a question of having that compassion and then having with that disciplined subjectivity to take care of ourselves. I might go off and be somewhere and yell and scream at the universe for this having happened to this poor man. I may want to share my experience with other people. I may want to write something down in my journal. The techniques we teach involve helping people access their imagination and their intuition. So I may use an imaginative technique and ask my intuition, "What should I do?" And the answer. I don't know what the answer may come back. And this particular case, in Gaza, the answer when I asked my internal guidance, "What should I do?"

It said, "Take care of the people who are still here. Spend time with the children who have lost family members. Go listen to other people. Come together with the people who are helping, the ones who've suffered this trauma." So I'm paying attention. Again, we come back to action. We need to take care of ourselves, and then we need to see what else we can do. I can't bring back the members of that man's family. All I can do is be present with him, be compassionate to him, listen to what he has to say, and then do whatever I can do, either with him-

Simon Mainwaring:

Right.

Dr. Jim Gordon:

... or with other people, to address the situation.

Simon Mainwaring:

And I know you had such amazing career, and you've done work with two administrations and so many institutions and communities over time. And I feel like the work that you do at the Center for Mind-Body Medicine is almost being transposed over to the business world now as its role becomes much more of a steward and caretaker of the stakeholders in its keeping. So can you just give us some sense of what are the type of innovative solutions you come up with in the Center for Mind-Body Medicine so that we in business can start to understand where things might be headed?

Dr. Jim Gordon:

Well, I want to start off with something very simple that we do that you can do and other business leaders can do. We give people the time, paid time to take care of themselves. We were working with a major hospital system, and we were teaching employees there who were... some are clinicians, some are administrators, some are the CEO, the CFO. We're teaching them how to work with other people to teach them some of these skills of self-care. And then the leadership of the organization of this massive hospital system said, "And we will give you one of these groups where you can deal with your stress and your trauma, and while you're on work time for an hour or an hour and a half every week for 10 weeks, you can be part of a group." And other people were being trained to provide these groups in the institution.

And what the employee said is, "This is the most profound and important thing that our organization has done for us. They have acknowledged that we're going through a stressful time, and they've given us time on their nickel to deal with that stress." I think that's the fundamental piece. To really acknowledge what's going on with people and then give them some time. It's also important for leadership to recognize how they're being stressed, how they're being traumatized to deal with their own stress and trauma, and then to bring the lessons that they come up with to employees. So we were talking about nature earlier. So giving people... At this hospital system, they'd done a wonderful thing.

They created like a little park in front of the hospital. They've created a garden on top of the hospital. Where do they get some of the food that served to the patients and served to the staff? So I think each organization will come up with ways that support the employees and give them a way to get rid of the stress. I think there are many things that can be done, and it's a question of creating those opportunities and of being committed to creating those opportunities and taking it seriously. I don't mean seriously like that, but I mean this is a reality and that everybody needs to have the opportunity to understand and help themselves and that we're appropriate without diagnosis, without stigmatizing. They need to have a place where they can talk about what's going on.

Simon Mainwaring:

And within that context, I think one of the big shifts in the corporate world has been to look at the whole human being, the individual employee, to take a really personalized approach. And what you lay out in the Center for Mind-Body Medicine is a very sort of algorithmic approach, something that's sort of standardized and scalable. So as leaders within business or founders of startups, how do we calibrate between a kind of singular approach and the need to personalize to each individual?

Dr. Jim Gordon:

Great question. The algorithm that we have is we're teaching these techniques, same kind of techniques, the same techniques that I teach in transforming trauma. We have an order in which we teach them. This is the way we do it. But the end result is to help each person decide what works for

them. So we give... I think part of the lesson, the wider lesson is create options and look at outcomes. This is really important. We need to sort of let go of a reductionist model. "It has to be all this way, and it's only this one approach that we're going to measure."

I think all of us have to adopt a much broader perspective. "Here are some options. Here are some possibilities. Let's look at the outcome. Let's look at measures that make sense for everyone." So are you happier? Are you less anxious? Are you more hopeful about the future? Do you like working here better? All of those measures don't depend on a rigid structure of an intervention. They depend on giving people... Just as you said, each person is individual, and any kind of program needs to be personalized. So encourage people to create their own programs and perhaps give them some aid in creating the programs. That's what's happening.

We're working with the largest division of the Veterans Administration. The 80-year-old guy who was in Vietnam is a lot different from the 30-year-old woman who was in Iraq or Afghanistan. For each one, they're working to create programs that make sense for that particular person. And there's no stigma. This doesn't require diagnosis. This doesn't require fitting into any category. The program, and this is really important I think for business, is you don't have to say, "I'm depressed. I'm anxious." You don't have to have a diagnostic and statistical manual psychiatric diagnosis. You just have to want to learn how to better help yourself and to live more happily and productively.

Simon Mainwaring:

And I have to say, Jim, I don't know anyone who has shown more light into the darkest corners of the human spirit and soul in moments of tragedy. Is there one... Is there anything you'd share from what you've observed about the human spirit and how it navigates these very, very challenging moments?

Dr. Jim Gordon:

Well, people are amazing. Being in Ukraine, I've been there are three times over the last year, and I'm going back another few weeks, and we're in the process of developing what we hope will be a population-wide program of trauma healing. What I have seen is that in moments of enormous danger and trauma, that people have the capacity to come together to support each other.

And that when they have the opportunity, the kind of opportunity that we and other groups are presenting, to learn from that trauma and to move through it and beyond it, they're not only able to let go of many of the symptoms. They're able to bring the learning that they've experienced, the change that they've experienced, to other people and facilitate it with other people.

Simon Mainwaring:

Jim, I can't thank you enough for how you've healed us by teaching us how to heal ourselves, especially during those acute moments of life that happen despite our best plans. And I would encourage everyone to go to the CMBM website. It's cmbm.org, just to see the solutions that are being offered that are going to be transposed over into the business world, whether we like it or not, given the future we face.

And also to check out *Transforming Trauma*, the book where Jim lays out very practical action steps that you can apply to yourself, to others, to your families, and also those in your care, in the companies that you work with or for. So thank you, Jim. We're lucky that people like you in the world, and thank you for your insights today.

Dr. Jim Gordon:

Thank you, Simon. It's a pleasure. We're lucky to have people like you as well.

Simon Mainwaring:

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