

MASTERS by Winn Claybaugh, November 2025

Mark Edgar Stephens

Creating Lasting Positive Change – One Conversation at a Time!



Mark Edgar Stephens is an acclaimed corporate coach, consultant, and communications strategist who helps leaders and teams transform the way they communicate, collaborate, and inspire. Recognized as a top body-language professional and a familiar face in the media, Mark has appeared on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, *Headline News with Dr. Drew*, major news networks, *The Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, and more. Interviewed by **Winn Claybaugh**, Mark shares tips for moving past the noise in the world and showing up with curiosity and compassion.

- Winn: Hi everybody, Winn Claybaugh here and welcome to another MASTERS Podcast with Winn Claybaugh. I am sitting with a good friend of literally over 30 years. I love that I have such good history with wonderful friends who are also wonderful teachers and mentors, and to be able to invite them to be a part of my podcast series is pretty exciting and that's what today is going to be all about. Actually, before I even tell our listeners who this incredible man is, Mark, thank you so much for saying yes to this.
- Mark: You are most welcome and thank you for asking me, Winn. Anything you ask me to do, you know I will say yes. Oh, I may come to regret that. [Laughs]
- Winn: Well, first of all, tell everybody where are you right now? Because I'm in Southern California. You are not in Southern California.
- Mark: I am not in Southern California. I am in an incredibly beautiful place in central Mexico called Tepoztlán. It's about an hour and half south of Mexico City. It is an area that is considered one of the *pueblo mágicos*, so it's a magic pueblo. There are no stop signs. There are no big box stores. Everything is mom and pop. There's cobblestone streets here—
- Winn: Wow.
- Mark: —and it is the most beautiful, magical, wonderful place that you can imagine. It is remote. Luckily, I have good internet, but once you are out here, you are out here. And I find that to be a real blessing.
- Winn: Wow. Good for you. I'm not suffering. I'm in Newport Beach, California. So, there are some stoplights but I'm not suffering.

Mark: [Laughs] Well, I was going to say, yeah, you're not suffering if you're in Newport Beach.

Winn: No, I'm not. I'm not. So, okay, so Mark Edgar Stephens is a sought-after corporate coach, consultant, and communications strategist who helps leaders and teams elevate how they connect, lead, and inspire. Recognized among the top 30 body language professionals in the world for eight consecutive years. And, by the way, I'm going to ask you what that all means because that was kind of fascinating to me. Over the past two decades, Mark has partnered with organizations across industries from Fortune 500 corporations and fast-scaling health care innovators to media networks and nonprofit organizations, guiding thousands of professionals toward more powerful presence, collaboration, communication, and trust. Man, that was a mouthful. Okay. So, Mark is a familiar face to television audiences. He has had recurring appearances on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, CNN, on *Headline News with Dr. Drew*, has contributed expert commentary to *Access Hollywood*, NBC, ABC, Fox, TLC, Lifetime, and more. His insights have also been featured in *The Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, and numerous online publications. Mark is an author, which we will ask him about. His mission: to help people lead with authenticity, communicate with impact, and create lasting positive change, one conversation at a time. So obviously, from Mark's bio, you can surmise that he is all about communication. And you would think in the world that we have today that, oh, of course we're communicating. No, we're not. I don't think we've been more divided than we are today, or at least I've never experienced more division today where people just refuse to speak with each other for who knows what reason. But, Mark, you say that everything rises and falls on how we communicate. What do you mean by that?

Mark: So, communication really is the cornerstone of how we connect. And communication is not just how we're expressing ourselves verbally but also nonverbally. When we look at the animal kingdom, so much of the animal kingdom is taking its signals from the way that a bird does its feathers or the way that a certain animal will stomp or beat its chest or the way—even mating calls that come from different signals that we're giving to one another. If we are not communicating, then we are not understanding. And this world is built on understanding. And if we are not understanding one another, that's what leads to conflict. So, even in business relationships or interpersonal, personal relationships, what we find is when we're not understanding one another, we fall out of appreciation with the person with whom we're supposed to be communicating. And when we fall out of appreciation, we start doing things like putting someone in “camp useless,” as a leader once said to me. Or we start thinking that that person is not worth our time. And once we do that, we actually start separating farther and farther from the people around us in both our personal lives and our professional lives. Our way to get back to communication is our way to get back to connection. And without that connection, there is no understanding. And without that understanding, we

end up in the sort of scenarios you're talking about, where we are disconnected from one another and no longer respecting the words or the communication that's coming from others.

Winn: Oh my gosh. We can talk about that all day long. That disconnection that you talk about. Again, it's prevalent. And maybe you've experienced this, where maybe there's people who don't want to talk to anymore because you have a different political belief or an opinion on something. And by the way, I'm tempted to do that as well: "My gosh, I can't believe they said that. I can't believe they posted that. I don't want to talk to them for a while." So, we hear about that. We experience that disconnect. And so, my gosh, this whole topic on how to communicate is just so profound and so necessary right now.

Mark: And Winn, with the exception of people who only want to talk at you, what I find is that very thing you asked me about: curiosity. The curiosity by my asking questions with people who think differently from how I think. That leads us into a deeper understanding of one another. We don't have to agree at the end of it, but if I will remain curious and if they will remain curious, that's how I think opposing thought systems or belief systems can actually come together. Again, maybe not to agree. But to at least understand at a better level.

Winn: You guys, isn't that how it used to be? That we would decide how we're going to vote, we would decide how we're going to lead our lives. It was based on, "Hey, let's all sit down and have a dinner conversation." And that's what made it interesting.

Mark: Yes!

Winn: Like if somebody was planning a dinner party, you would purposely want to invite people who had different belief systems, different backgrounds, different opinions, because that's what made the conversation and made the whole dinner interesting and valuable. Valuable because, you know, back in the day, and not that I don't have these opportunities now, but you certainly have to be careful. Back in the day, that's how I did change my belief system and my vote and my thought process. Because I would sit down and have a conversation with somebody who had, first of all, the patience and the wherewithal to say, "You know what, Winn, have you thought of it this way?" You know? And, "Oh my gosh, I never thought of it that way. Oh my gosh, you're right. You're right. I was uneducated. I didn't know that that was the true story. I didn't know that that's what was happening over there." And based on those conversations, well, now I just feel like it's too scary to have those conversations.

Mark: There's that feeling of, wait a minute, am I stepping into a landmine here? Is there something here that I'm going to step into that's going to blow up? Because you are right, Winn. I was thinking, even for all of those of you who weren't alive in the nineties. In the nineties, I remember that was how I was

forming a lot of my belief systems or changing my belief systems. There was so much I didn't know—and again, going back to curiosity and compassion—that I didn't know. And if I wasn't staying curious and asking questions and being with people who thought differently from how I think, I would not have evolved to be someone who wants to come and spend months at a time in Mexico or Colombia or Spain or anywhere else in the world. I might want to stay in my own little bubble and that becomes the danger, is when we stay in our own little bubble, we don't expand, we don't grow. Our communication about the world stays with only what we have known, which is limited.

Winn: Hmm. Okay. You also brought up in the animal kingdom, how they communicate through body language and you were named, I got to read this, “Top 30 body language professional in the world for eight consecutive years.” What does that mean?

Mark: Okay. So, there's an organization called Global Gurus, very interesting. So, they look for the top 30 professionals in lots of different realms. So, within coaching, obviously with body language. And one year I made the list. I was number 20-something. I was doing a lot of work in the media at the time and some of the words that I was saying, they were appearing in publications in different places. I was very fortunate to have a public appearance with the work that I was doing. So, I ended up on the list and then the next year I went up the list a bit and the next year I went up the list a little bit. And so, I was appearing on their list and then people were reaching out to me as one of the top 30 body-language professionals in the world for my advice about different things. And then I watched colleagues of mine, people with whom I had worked, body language communication. And I watched them also going up and down the list. A lot of it is based on how much work are you doing publicly in the world? How much are you appearing in social media? How much are people looking to you as an expert in the field? And I will say this: that word *expert*, when I first started doing this work, I was so uncomfortable with it because I said, “Well, wait a minute, what makes me an expert?” And I had a dear, dear friend, body-language expert. who said to me, “Mark, I will tell you what an expert is. An expert is someone who knows what they're talking about and they're unafraid to talk about it. Be an expert.” So, I went, “Wow, okay. That's a pretty good definition. I think I will be an expert.” So, I was really fortunate, Winn, and even when you read my bio, I have to say what comes up for me is a sense of gratitude. I just happened to be in the right place at the right time doing something I really enjoyed and was really passionate about. And life seems to have given me all of these wonderful opportunities. I'm not saying I didn't work for it. I'm not saying that I didn't put effort out, but a lot of times I was just in the right place doing the right thing and one thing led to another. And gratitude is the feeling that I have, especially for where I am right now in the world.

Winn: So, when you are called by some of these TV shows. Again, we mentioned Oprah Winfrey, CNN, Headline News, Dr. Drew, Lifetime, TLC. Is it because

they've got a hot topic or they have a subject that they want to address and, well, gosh, who's the expert who can speak on that topic? And so, you're on their list somehow. Is that kind of how that plays out?

Mark: Yes, I found out—it's a good question you're asking because I also wondered, *Where are they finding me?* So, for instance, *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. Turned out that one of her producers enjoyed a television show I was on at the time for TLC and she liked the segments I was doing. And so, I got a call out of the blue from the producer of the show for TLC who said, "*The Oprah Winfrey Show* has called and they would like for you to come on and, you know, do this segment." And I went on and I did the segment and then they said, "Would you come back on and would you do the show where we reveal all of this?" And the same sort of thing with CNN and *Headline News*. I would say, "Where did you get my name?" Oh, this producer talked to this producer, talked to this producer. So, evidently I'm on some sort of list of experts to reach out to for all of this. The thing that they often say is, "We want someone who's authoritative but friendly." So, evidently I come off as authoritative but friendly. [Laughs]

Winn: There you go.

Mark: So, I guess I've got a lot to be grateful for there. Rather than—one of the things that I don't like and that I always want to keep myself honest about, and I hope you will as my friend keep me honest with this—I don't ever want to come off as the person who knows everything about everything because no one does. In fact, I don't even trust that. When I feel like someone's speaking as if they know everything about everything. I know what I know, but I'll also tell you what it is that I don't know. And I will tell you this: a lot of times with television, they'll say, "Because they did that, does it mean this? Because they did that, does it mean this?" They're looking for a good sound bite. And I never give them that because I can't say exactly why someone is feeling what they're feeling. I can tell you what someone's feeling based on body language, but I can't tell you why. And that's always the distinction I make.

Winn: So, give us an example. So, are you saying that these shows would show you a clip of somebody and they would ask you to translate their body language or—is that how that plays out for you? Or are you training people, are you training leaders or people who are trying to scale their business: "This is the body language that you would want to have"? Because I've done that. You know, I'm a speaker on a stage and that's a scary place to be. Even though I've been doing that for 30 years, it's scary every single time. And you've got 100 people staring at you or a thousand people. And sometimes I even tell my audience that, "Each one of you right now are sending me a message. Whether or not it's the message you intend to send to me, this is the message I'm picking up on. And some of you are sending the message that this is the most boring guy I've ever listened to. When is he going to stop talking?" And maybe people—of course that's not the message I want to send out to other

people, but maybe people don't have an awareness of that. So, I'll shut up so you can answer my very, very drawn-out question.

Mark: [Laughs]

Winn: I'm still trying to figure out how this body-language expert plays into helping people.

Mark: Okay. So, in the early days, the first television show that I did, it was about coaching people who were getting back into the dating world. They were uncomfortable because—it was a documentary-style show and we worked with them for period of a month. And they were uncomfortable with being back in the dating world for various, different reasons. So, we would help them not change who they are but to optimize who they are, to bring out the best—

Winn: Oh, that's a good word.

Stephen: —of who they are. So, yes. So, it was helping people to bring out the best of who they are in terms of their communication and their body language. What that led to, then, was me being asked to observe people. Sales teams: I got to judge sales teams for a company in terms of their effectiveness with connecting with the client, connecting with a panel that they were working with. I got to work with leaders who were presenting or who were going to be doing work in the media. So, people who weren't necessarily completely comfortable with communication with body language. And I would be called in to do all of these sorts of things that were mostly live, which was more interesting and more fun for me. When I did *Headline News with Dr. Drew*, that was over a period of two years and I kept doing recurring segments with Dr. Drew. And finally, the producers called and said, "Listen, Drew would like for you just to sit next to him for the whole show." So, there were several shows where I just sat next to Dr. Drew who, by the way, was wonderful and really giving and very curious about my perspective on things. He was not a know-it-all; he was really fantastic. I loved working with Drew Pinsky and he would ask these wonderful questions. But with those episodes, what we were looking at were people of interest. A lot of times, it was the court cases like Casey Anthony, Michael Jackson's doctor, that sort of thing. And I would watch clips, but I got to watch them beforehand, before the segment, so I could slow things down and look at what was going on in those cases. So, I could say, "This is what this person is feeling." Not why they're feeling it, but this is what this person is feeling. Justin Bieber, I remember when he was going through something and they wanted me to watch some of those clips. I was doing the same thing for *Access Hollywood*. So, all of that culminated into my doing this with executives who also wanted to make the very best impression, either with their teams or something that was very cross-functional within their corporation, or with external clients, or for speaking engagements that they had. And so, that work continues on all the way

through till today and I am a self-admitted geek about it. I love body language and I love communication. I love constantly learning and if I can share something that's helpful to someone that helps them to make a bigger impact, that's what I enjoy doing.

Winn: You know, as you're telling this, I'm reminded of a video clip I saw on Michelle Obama. So, it was, again, before he was or he was getting ready to campaign for president and I guess she was coming across as being very, very angry. In fact, so what they had her do was they had her watch a video of herself doing presentations with no sound and then asked her questions. You know, "What are you viewing right now?" She's like, "Oh my gosh, I'm coming off as super angry and that's not who I want to be. That's not the person that I want to represent." So.

Mark: And Winn, for your listeners or for anyone that's interested in being better at body language, the very thing you just pointed out is something that is highly suggested. Turn off the volume on the news or on a reality show or with a movie where the actors are really good. Not bad actors, but really good actors. And try to figure out what is it that they're feeling, what's going on? Are they angry? Are they excited? Are they turned on? You know, what is it that's going on in this particular segment? One of the things that I was tasked to do was to—this is way back in the day—was to go and sit in public places like a restaurant, or Central Park, I was living in New York at that time, and watch people from a distance and try to guess what their relationship is and what it is that they're feeling with one another. Now, there was no way to be able to confirm or find out if you were off track with it, but it was a really fun thing to do. You do end up being someone who's staring at people a lot, but if you enjoy, you know, understanding humans, it's a really fun thing to do. But for anyone that doesn't want to go to a park and stare at people. A really funny story. So, in eighth grade. There was, I had moved to a new school and one of the cheerleaders that was in my class, she came up to me one day after class and she said, "You're so strange. You just stare at everybody." And I'd only been there about two weeks and she was right. I did stare at everybody. I was always trying to figure people out. That was something that I always did. So, if you are someone who likes to figure people out, you can do it safely by turning the volume down and just trying to guess what's going on in this scene or with these people or in this news clip.

Winn: Well then, along those lines, then, give us some advice. What's the biggest mistake that people are making with their body language in terms of trying to—whether it is to attract a date or to sell something or to get a job or to convince a customer. What are some of the mistakes? And then, of course, I'll ask you the flip side to that.

Mark: So, there's a thing that we call—it sounds horrible, but we call it body language leakage. And leakage is basically that you're trying to appear confident or you're trying to appear that you know exactly what you're

speaking about, but your body language is actually giving you away. And we know this from a few different things. People start to fidget a lot with their hands or they completely want to hide their hands. You know, if you ask a child, "Did you eat the chocolate chip cookies?" They'll sit on their hands and say, "I didn't eat the cookies." And of course they did. So, when we try to hide ourselves, that is another big no-no. Also crossing ourselves off, like when we're crossing ourselves off. Or when we start to occlude part of ourselves, we're trying to actually hide from what it is that's going on. What's best is to breathe very, very deeply, open up, and have that open body language. And a big key for me is what I call the spotlight effect. Instead of going into your own head and thinking, *What are they thinking about me and what I'm doing?* What do I think about them? What do I appreciate about them? What do I enjoy about them? Oh, I'm watching Winn smile a little bigger than he did before. So, then that actually affects my body language because we are constantly sending messages back and forth. There is this wonderful thing that we have between our eyes where we can just read about another person. When we read that about another person, if we're really paying attention to them, that affects the way that we feel and that's what brings us into body language or communication rapport.

Winn: Wow. Great advice. Okay, so you wrote this book called, *Who Are You Choosing to Be? A Playbook for Finding Life-Changing Answers*. Tell us what that book is all about.

Mark: So, in my early days, I had clients that I was working with by phone. Again, for those of you not of a certain age, Skype was something that was brand new, so Skype was something I had started to use really early on. Now nobody uses Skype. But I was coaching people by phone and I would give a paragraph or two based on something we had spoken about. I would send it to them through email and say, "Hey, remember this from the coaching session that we just did?" And one of my clients said, "You know, Mark, this would make a really great book. You're giving a lot of really good advice. And I think that this should be a book." The idea of doing a book was very daunting. So, I originally started it out as a manual. So, it was a coaching manual. And I always started with the idea of, *I don't have your answers, but you have your answers. And if I can ask you the right kinds of questions or powerful enough questions, you will answer the question and come up with your own answer.* And so, I conceived the book as a coaching partner for people in their personal lives to be able to say, "Okay, this is what it is that I'm experiencing. What is possible? How am I feeling right now? What have my belief systems created?" So that people would question themselves. And I gave some of my own personal experience, either from earlier in my life or as a coach, trying to help people to better understand and answer that question for themselves. That book ended up finding its way into what they call advanced placement psychology classes throughout the state of Florida. And the teachers were having their students do this so that they would do their own self-analysis, so that they would do their own self-assessments. And that

was the intention of the book, was not that you were going to open it up and find all the answers. You were going open it up and read a lot of questions with exercises that were going to help you get to your own answers. And I'm currently in the process of taking the foundation of that book and making it into a leadership executive book. So, that's what I've been working on in the past year. And you know, if all goes well, that will see print next year.

Winn: So, give us an example of, like, an exercise. And just so you know, Mark, people who are listening to this, I get a lot of brand-new, 20-something, just starting out their career, trying to build themselves as an entrepreneur. Not so much—maybe not as an entrepreneur but meaning somebody who's in charge of their own and responsible for their own personal growth, business growth. And so maybe they're acting as though they are an entrepreneur even though they might be working for somebody else. So, I get a lot of those types of listeners and so maybe you can direct the answer to that audience. What are some examples of activities that you would have them go through?

Mark: Perfect. So, we start with the three cornerstones: authenticity, so getting to the truth of who you really are.

Winn: Wait, wait. I've got to write this down.

Mark: Okay, authenticity.

Winn: Okay.

Mark: So, it's really the truth. Not just what do you want the world to see, but what are you really feeling underneath? And then curiosity. So go to the next layer of it. So, it's not just, "Wow, why is that person not cooperating with me?" There's something deeper with that. There's more questions to be able to ask. And then ultimately compassion. And it's compassion for the self and it's compassion for the other person, because we are all getting stuck in different ways based on the belief systems that we have in place. And a lot of those belief systems come from our childhood. So, the first thing I would ask a leader to start with—and this is whether it's a CEO of a company or it's someone who is a startup with two employees—is start with what have your belief systems created? And are your belief systems part of what is leading your company, either in a positive way or in a not-so-positive way? Because our belief systems are constantly coming from our mouths, coming from our body language, they're telling a story and it is informing all of the people around us. So, there's an exercise to be able to take a look at what are the belief systems and what are the belief systems around teams, why someone's following you or why they're not. Or what is leadership? All of these types of questions, if you will approach it from a place of curiosity and you will question your own beliefs, just like we were talking about earlier in this conversation, when you open up to the idea that you don't have all the answers based on your past, that your answers might come from this present

moment or from looking a little more deeply, then you can actually start to make very real change in your life. So, there is an exercise and I'm going to share this one. This one is called "mind monsters" and mind monsters come from the same thing that your daughter, Sofia, would have felt when she was little. "Daddy, there is a monster in the room." "Well, where's the monster hiding?" "I think the monster's under the bed." "Well, let's look under the bed." "No, I don't want the monster to see me." "Well, you know what? Let's turn on the light and let's get together and put a flashlight under there." When you shine light on something, it is no longer as scary as it would have appeared, just like *Monsters, Inc.* Once you get to know the monsters, once you name them, once you're able to call out what they are, they lose their power. And we have mind monsters like this. *I went through a divorce, went through bankruptcy. I made a very bad decision for my business. The last time I did this, I got reprimanded for it. I don't know that my team is going to follow me because the last team that I worked with, they sabotaged me.* Whatever it is that's happened to us, they create the mind monsters and those mind monsters will stop us from moving forward in a very positive and very powerful way. So, we have to shine the light on them, we have to name them, and we have to ask, "Are they doing anything to hurt us in this moment?" And the answer is always no, in this moment. It's the thought or the memory or the fear of what happened that is affecting us in this moment. Then we choose one small, little action step that is different from what we were doing when we were paralyzed by the fear to move into making friends with that mind monster. And before we know it, our mind monster is actually the motivation that moved us into a new behavior and into a new outcome.

Winn: I love this conversation and it's reminding me of a recent mentor who was talking about building trust and leadership and why that was so important. And he was saying, "You could have people who have been working for you for 20 years and yet there's still a lack of trust." How trust is just like a cornerstone for effective leadership for a success in a company. And the reason why there might be a lack of trust is because, again, things that are happening on this planet right now with division and fake news, and so people are less trusting than before, even of their boss or even of somebody that they've known for 20 years. And that was one of the things that he was talking about: one of the first steps of building trust is through authenticity. And, you know, I was the type of leader for many years that thought, *Well, the way I'm going to be a really good leader is just to quote and dictate what I learned from leadership books.*" And so, I'd stand up and, you know, "This leader, this mentor taught me this. This is who we are. This is how we should be." And it wasn't until—and I'm going to say it was by accident that some of my own personal experiences leaked out to my team or, for example, I'm 23 years clean off of drugs. Well, I shared that literally within six months of becoming clean. And again, it slipped out. I didn't intend to share that I was recently clean off of drugs and it just kind of slipped out. Let me tell you something. The shift that it made in terms of building trust with my team. That authenticity. It wasn't Winn quoting or preaching to us what he learned in

some leadership book. It was Winn being authentic with us. Is that kind of what you're talking about?

Mark: That's exactly what I'm talking about, Winn. And it's that whole thing when we don't come in and act like we already know everything. It's when we come in and we don't act like our lives have been perfect and we've made all the right decisions along the way. I have made so many poor decisions. Again, this is where the compassion comes in. But being able to say, "This is who I am," or "This is where my thought process is right now." I saw a leader once with a very high-level leadership group with a very big company, very big company, say to the team, "I don't know what to do next. And I am coming to all of you to find out what should we do." And you saw everyone in the room, all of a sudden it was like any defenses melted. And everybody wanted to be of help to this leader because they understood this is someone who's genuinely saying, "Please help me." Winn, this has happened several times. High-level companies, high-level people, super intelligent, more intelligent than me, where once the trust has been built up, they'll say, "Mark, what am going to do?" And I go, "Okay, I don't know exactly what you're to do, but let's talk about it. Let's figure this out." Once they've done that, I know that we have a trust between us that is going to allow us to build something new that we couldn't have built before. And that trust doesn't come in unless I'm truthful about what I'm feeling right now.

Winn: Wow.

Mark: So, for instance, if your back is out, don't come in and try to act like you can stand up straight. Your back is out. If you haven't prepared and you're not exactly sure what's going to go on with that meeting, I say share it. If something awful has happened in your family or your dog died this morning, don't try to act like it hasn't happened. I believe, this is my big personal belief is, we were sold a crock of crap that we could separate our professional and our personal life. We don't separate. We are one person. So, when you try to separate that, you become inauthentic. You're now trying to be two people. This is who I am at work and this is who I am in my personal life. We even look at some of the assessments that people take. I use a lot of assessments in the work that I do around motivations, around thought processes, around typical behavior, personality types, communication styles. And when we look at that, we sometimes say, "Oh, here's the adapted style." And the adapted style is because it's not okay for you to be yourself in that situation. I am not saying come in and air all your dirty laundry. I'm not saying come in and make it all about your personal life, but don't try to separate the two. Find how to be one fused, whole, caring, authentic person. People will follow that person. If I detect from you that there's falseness, I don't want to be in the room with you for very long. And people can feel that.

Winn: I don't think that there's a person listening to this right now who wouldn't agree that, gosh, for their boss to say, "I made a mistake" would be just, "Oh

my gosh, thank you for admitting that!" Or for a boss to say, "I don't have the answer to that" would just make them that much more of a leader that they would want to follow. I hear exactly what you're saying. So, congratulations. That's great.

Mark: And Winn, I want to say this, too. I have had the great good fortune of working for a few leaders, working with a few leaders where they can say that. And I watched the room almost embrace them with a sense of, "Well, we want to help you. We want to help you to be better." And they lack a sense of hierarchy. They flatten everything out. They will treat the new hire or the person that is most junior and their opinion as high as they would the CEO of the company. So, I have had the great good fortune to watch a few leaders do that and watch what that does to a room. So, every now and then maybe, maybe you've got a bad player that says, "Ooh, I'm going to jump on that person's weakness that they don't know." But most people are not that way. And I don't believe that that's what most people want. Most people want to be a part of a team and an organization that is successful. And the way that you're successful is you get behind the leader and everyone else and you try to help and you make it grow and you make it be better. And that vulnerability of who we are and what we don't know and where we are not yet fully baked goes a long way toward people feeling like they can trust you and that they want to help you.

Winn: Do you have a story that you could share with us? Something that was in your life that you felt like, by being authentic and open and honest about that, actually endeared you to people and helped you boost you as a better leader?

Mark: I would say it's when people ask me, "So, how did you decide you wanted to do this work? Winn, it was at a moment when my entire life was falling apart.

Winn: *[Laughs]*

Mark: Romantically, the relationship had ended. There was no money in the bank. The career that I had chosen was petering out. Nothing was going well. I truly was living hand to mouth, just trying to make my rent, just trying to make things happen. I was not successful and certainly I didn't feel successful in my mind at all. And it did not feel like success out there in the world. I was deep in debt. I was borrowing money. It was all those sorts of things. And a friend of mine said, "I'm back in school and it's behavior modification. And it's a lot of corporate coaches and consultants and it's nurses and it's psychiatrists and psychologists." And I said, "What kind of a program is this?" He said, "It's federally funded and it's federally recognized. You can even get scholarship money," because my first response was, "I don't have the time and I don't have the money to be able to go back to school." He said, "Just come to an orientation," my friend Craig. And so, I went to an orientation and halfway through I went, "I'm going to do this." It was body language, communication,

hypnosis, hypnotherapy, hypnotherapeutic tools. It was NLP, neuro-linguistic programming. It was all of these things, all in this one program for people that wanted to make a difference and add something more to their toolbox. I loved this program and I had teachers that were asking me, professors that were asking me, "Have you ever done this work before? Because you're really good at it." And as it turned out with body language, another thing from my past, my father was a binge drinker. So, he could go two years without having a single drink and then he might be drunk for four months at a time. And what I found out is people who are really good at reading body language is because they may have had one or both parents who are either drug addicts or alcohol. Because as soon as they walk through the door, you're trying to assess, *What's going on and how do I keep the people around me safe?*

Winn: What version am I getting today?

Mark: What version am I getting and where are they at in their level? Is there a danger here?" So, the very thing that I tried to hide growing up, or that I tried to, you know, keep out of sight, was actually one of the things that's led to success. And so, I'm not embarrassed by it anymore because I'm not embarrassed by my father and I'm not embarrassed by what happened. Do I want to tell all the details of it? Just like you said, no, I do not and I will not, but I can say part of that story is what has led to success because it's helped me to be very good at what it is that I do. That moment when everything was falling apart in my life, that's what led me to what it is that I'm doing now. I wanted to understand. I wanted to coach and help people to get to a better place in their life because my life had fallen apart. And so, I can share that very freely, and again, not all the details, but I can share that very freely because it's that vulnerability and it's that honesty that allows you to go, "Okay, this is why I'm good at what I'm doing and this is why I have a passion for what I'm doing." And it's also that realization of, "I didn't do everything right." And I'm putting that in quotes for anybody that can't see it. I'm, I didn't do everything right, but it's not the right that led me to where I wanted to go, it was all the things that felt like they were so wrong or what I call incongruent. And when you know what that incongruency is, it's usually a signpost that says, "Well, how can I get congruent?" or "How can I get aligned?" So, that's my story in a very big nutshell.

Winn: I think that's a powerful story for people to hear because it is when we're in the depth of "life sucks right now" that sometimes, well, first of all, we're building character. We're becoming tenacious, hopefully. But what you just said, it was when you were at a low point in terms of your life was falling apart that all of a sudden you had that compassion or you had that idea that, "Gosh, I don't want people to feel what I'm feeling right now. I want to help people." And had you not gone to your knees, so to speak, and felt so desperate, you would have never come to that conclusion. It's like people who want to raise money for breast cancer research because they lost their mother to breast cancer. It's because people have been through some type of a crisis that then

gives them insight into what other people might be struggling with and therefore, “Gosh, I want to be part of the solution.” As they say, hope is born at a participation in a hopeful solution. When we're standing on the edge of a crisis and we don't get involved, that's when we continue to be hopeless. But we choose to roll up our sleeves and jump in and do something about it. Now all of a sudden hope is born.

Mark: And Winn, you said something right there: it's how you show up during those times of crisis or those times when it's falling apart that makes all the difference. And if you can get to the authentic place within yourself, you can find the strength to show up. And as I strongly believe, and I know that you do as well, having people around you that will help you get to your truth, the truth that's inside of you, that's the key. And I couldn't have done it without some friends around me. I know that you couldn't have done it with friends around you. And I hope that is something that I'm providing for the people that I'm working with, both in the business and personal world now.

Winn: You know, well, you just said something that I got to jump on. You know, “the people around you.” Gosh, I get so concerned of people who think that they need to have a large, large, large circle. And then that that large circle are the thousands or millions of followers that they have. “That's my circle. I've got to be honest.” No. My gosh, I don't know if Oprah really is the person who said this but I give her credit for it all the time and so—and I never let the truth get in the way of making a good point. *[Laughs]* So Oprah said—maybe she said this. Oprah said that “everybody wants to ride in the limousine with you. The people that you want in your life are those who are willing to take the bus with you when the limousine breaks down.”

Mark: Yep. I agree with that one.

Winn: Well, because everybody thinks that they're supposed to have this large circle and I think you're supposed to have a very, very small circle. You talk about that small circle, because to be authentic, to be open and honest and to have the right people around you to say, Gosh,” like that friend did for you: “Mark, you're down and out. Maybe this is what you need. Maybe, have you considered this, Mark?” And we need those people around us. They're not putting us down because there's some people, I heard it once said, that people who abandoned their dreams will now try to steal yours. There's all kinds of people who can't wait. Those naysayers, to point their finger and say, “Aha, I knew it! You're a fraud! You screwed up!” Right? But it's a small, small circle that's going to have that authenticity or that being honest with us. What you said, again, is one of those three things, and I keep on coming back to those three things that you said: authenticity, curiosity, and compassion.

Mark: Mm-hmm. Those are the three. And if we hold those, then you've got really great communication. Even if you're not saying a word, you've got really great communication because the listening even has authenticity, curiosity, and

compassion in it. And Winn, the very thing that you just said, it's so interesting at this moment in my life. I have made my inner circle very, very small and I don't want it to be much bigger. In fact, one of the things I'm learning right now, Mr. Communication Strategist, and I'm learning it at a deep, deep level right now, I would always say, you know, "Communication is balancing the speaking, the verbal and expressing, along with the listening that allows you to reflect and formulate." But there's another level of communication that I've always been aware of but I feel like I'm deepening in my own life right now. And that is the being alone and just listening to the silence or just listening to the nature. For instance, the place I'm in right now is surrounded by nature and listening to those birds sitting out quietly at night, not doing anything, but just reflecting with that own communication that's going on inside of me, which is not always my mind. I'm aware of the fact that there is, you know, and again, I don't want to step on anybody's belief systems, but aware of the fact that there is something larger and grander and greater at work. And if I stay open to that, I'm communicating with something that's going to give me answers that my mind can never think of. So that's where I'm at right now in life, is exploring even that next level of that communication. And that doesn't have to do with people in a wide net. That has to do with being very quiet and allowing myself to go in and even the humility of giving up anything that I think that I know, because all I know is what I know. And is it helpful? I hope so. But it's not everything in the world and it doesn't mean that it's always the right way. It's just what I know and it's proven to be very helpful in most situations, but I'm still open to the idea that there's a lot more to learn.

Winn: I'm going to switch gears here a little bit because normally what I do in the beginning of these interviews is I want to ask about your personal story, which I didn't do. Now you shared a couple of things. Maybe I read it, that you were a TV addict growing up. You just shared with us the story about your father and his struggle with alcohol. You also shared that some girl was saying that you were staring at everybody. So, what else did we miss from your personal story that would add value to this conversation?

Mark: I will tell this part of the story and this would be for any young entrepreneur that thinks, "Well, I can't do it because I don't have an Ivy League education," or "I didn't have the financial backing of a rich parent or grandparent," or "I'm missing this particular talent or this particular skill." I look at my own life and I'm extremely grateful for every gift that has been given to me. The one that I did not get was coming from a socioeconomic background that was privileged. So, I didn't have the money and the means to be able to do everything that I wanted to do as a child: high school, putting myself through college. And there was a great learning in all of that. So, a big part of my story has to do with, I say, the humble country playground. So, I grew up in the humble country playground. You know, we lived in very modest places. And what it taught me is you can either act like you have everything in the world or you can be exactly who you are. And I remember, one of my best friends, inviting him home in grammar school and he lived in a big, beautiful house.

And we had just this little old country house. And I remember being feeling embarrassed, but I still wanted my friend to be able to come over. He had a great time with me because he wanted to come over and he wanted to be with me. I remember saying to my mother once—we had someone coming over that we had been to their house and it was all done beautifully and everything was perfect. And I said, "Well, Mom, what do you think they're going to think when they come over here to the house?" My mother said, "If they want to come and visit my house," she said, "I will leave and then they can visit my house and I'll come back when they're done. If they want to visit with me, they can visit with me." And I got it. I understood, which is, don't act like you've got something that you don't have. And I remember friends years later that met my family at this event. And they said, "Mark, your family, what you see is what you get. They just are who they are and they're not going to change and be anything for anybody else." And I said, "Yeah, that's pretty much the truth of who my family is." So, what I thought was going to hold me back—not having the ability to be able to buy the best of everything—was not what held me back, it's what kept me real. It's what kept me real because while others were trying to measure themselves, and I'm not going to say I didn't try to measure myself. I did. Believe me. There were things I wanted and I wanted the best of this and I wanted the brand-name that and I wanted, I wanted all those things, too. Believe me, I had that ego. But there was a reality in it that I didn't have to have it in order to be happy. And that was the key part for me. I didn't have to have the best of the best or the most money or the name-brand this or the biggest house on the hill to be happy. I could be happy no matter what. And I did feel like, Winn, that I had some sort of secret then, because I knew that I could laugh and enjoy my life and be a storyteller and do things that other people felt like they couldn't do, even though I didn't have the socioeconomic backing that others had had. So, if there's something in my story that I would hope would be inspiring or, you know, going from this to this or from that to that, it's that humble country playground taught me things that now that I'm on global stage, as they say. Now that I'm on global stage, that Mark is still there and he still knows how to be happy without anything because here's the deal: today, you and I are talking and we say, "Oh Mark, you know, works with Fortune 500 companies and he's been successful and he's done this." And when you read that bio, yeah, there's a big part of me that goes, "Wow, it's really great. That sounds wonderful. I wonder who that person is." But underneath it all, I know it can all go away. Like, in a moment, it can all go away. Nothing that we've built, this is meant to be temporal. None of this is going to hold up as something that I say, "This is all of who I am. This is my identity. It's never going to change." It's always going to change because we're always going to evolve. But the thing that I know that I have, because of what I grew up in, I can find my happiness in anything. I can find my happiness staring at a stranger in central Mexico and wondering what their life is about. I can be very happy eating rice and beans. I can be very happy sitting and looking at the rabbit that's jumping across the way. I can be happy with those things. Do I like the nice stuff in life? I do. I do.

And I really, really like it and I appreciate it. But I know I can be happy even without it.

Winn: I've heard you say, "We don't need more noise in the world." What do you mean by that? And what's the noise you're talking about?

Mark: So, I've gotten, again, the great, wonderful opportunity to sit in conference rooms with incredibly smart people who are working on strategy and strategy as it's going to affect operations of their companies. And I'm usually learning about these companies as I'm sitting there. and writing down every little acronym, the PQRST of this, that, and the other, and then going and Googling it and trying to figure out like what everything is. Cause I'm working with them on leadership, communication, all of that. The noise becomes when someone becomes so positioned in what they want or what they think is right or in their way of communicating, that it actually creates even more static around them. So, the world doesn't need more noise. What it needs is more flexing into other people. "Why do you think that way?" Not, "Why do you think that way" but "Why do you think that way? What's behind that?" How does this person communicate? This person needs to process this information. This person wants to talk all of this out. This person needs for this to be about the people. This person needs for it to be about the ideas. This person needs for it to be structured and organized. What is it that this person needs? The noise comes from not asking. What does the other person need or what is this individual trying to get across? And if we were all doing that, there would be less noise. There would be less static. There would be more communication and more understanding. And that's what I work to coach people through and teams through. When someone says, "I cannot believe that Winn Claybaugh *ba-ba-ba-ba-ba*." And I go, "Okay, so why do you think Winn is doing that?" "Well, because he just wants to be an obstructionist." "Ah, do you think that's what it really is?" "Well, yeah, because he does that in every meeting." "Could there be another reason?" "Well, maybe." And I start taking them through the questions. And as I take them through the questions, they go, "Oh, I get it." I go, "Hey, let's try something new. In your next meeting with Winn, try XYZ because I also have insight to how Winn operates, how he communicates, what he thinks about." And the person comes back and says, "Mark, it was like magic. It worked!" There was no magic to it. It was just that you got out of your own head long enough to flex into the way that person is communicating, identifying their motivator and what it is that they want. And I call it feeding the dog. Feeding the untrained dog. If a dog is untrained, it's not sure if you're going to feed it or not. But if you teach that dog, and by the way, I love dogs so I mean this in the best possible way. If you teach that dog, "I am going to feed you, but I need for you to sit and just wait a minute. And I'm going to put it right in front of you at the same time every day. And you're going to get it. And we're going to get along." Now you and that dog have a great relationship. People are not dissimilar from that. They may not be as easily trained, but they can be trained to know you're going to bring to them what it is that they want. And everybody has a motivator and they have a

communication style that if you will flex and speak to them, it will reduce the noise, reduce the static, reduce the conflict and increase collaboration, connection, and communication.

Winn: Can you name a common topic or a common issue? I mean, you're talking in generalities here. Is there something that's come up often as you're coaching people along these lines and sharing with them the steps and the activity, but is there a common challenge or topic that comes up a lot?

Mark: I would say the biggest challenge that we have right now or the biggest challenge that I'm experiencing with the teams and the individuals with whom I'm working is collaboration. So, we're working, a lot of us in these virtual worlds. And so, the advantage that we had when we were working in offices together is on the way to the restroom, you might stop and have a two-minute conversation with someone and go, "Oh, there's that piece of information that I didn't have before." Or you could walk over to someone's desk or knock on their door and you could get the information right then and right there. These days we're scheduling the meetings. "Okay, well, we're going to meet from this time to this time. This is when we get the information." And then everything else is done through maybe an email or Slack or, there's one more. Anyway. And so, it's written and what we have to remember is that words are only 7 percent. The theory of it is 7 percent of how we communicate. Verbal body language: that makes up the rest of it. Seven percent. So, we are lacking that deep communication to be able to understand what does this person really want? Why are they really asking it? Because we are working together in this world that is virtual. When teams come together in a virtual setting—I was just working with a wonderful, wonderful team of leaders and they said, "We don't get together in person often enough. When we get together, we work these things out. We need to get together more often." Yes, you do. I get it. I love this virtual world. I can work from anywhere in the world. But this virtual world also has its limitations because we only have these small slices of time that we are connecting, hearing one another, getting together. So, there are pieces of information that we're missing. Collaboration right now is one of the most difficult things that I'm seeing executive teams and leadership teams having to figure out. And that's a big part of the work that I'm getting to do.

Winn: I was smiling as you were talking about that, because I, for the minute that I was doing one-on-one coaching with business leaders, we would talk about their delivery of information and their expectations and the communication that happened in the team meeting. I'm like, "The real staff meeting is happening after, at the bar."

Mark: Yes!

Winn: Go hang out with your team after your supposed staff meeting and, to really learn what's going on in your company, be a fly on the wall there at the bar to see what they're all talking about afterwards.

Mark: Winn, you are 100 percent correct right there. So, it's at the bar or the restaurant. So, a lot of times, you know, you finish with a team and then we go immediately—we don't have time to go to the hotel. We immediately go in and we have dinner, but then it's at dinner where a lot of the other work gets done. “Hey, let me ask you a little bit more about what you were talking about today in that presentation because I know you gave it a high level, but what does this mean for our Q4,” you know, *blah, blah, blah, blah*. That's when people are getting more of the information and we don't have enough of that right now. So, we're attempting to put systems—I'm going to use that word for lack of a better word—in place so that people are getting the information that they need. And part of that is saying, “Hey, how do you prefer to receive information? Do you want to be in on the beginning of this? At what point should you be looped in? At what kinds of decisions would we pull you into this meeting?” Or, you know, going back to the old model, the RACI, are you someone who just needs to be consulted or informed or are you someone that we need in, even as we're having ideations around these things? So, and I don't think it's going to be solved 100 percent but it can be made better. And I do believe even if something gets better in communication, even 15 to 20 percent, that can make a marked difference in terms of outcome.

Winn: I loved it when you brought up the word *collaboration* because, what's that old-school advice they tried to share with us: if you want something done right, you have to do it yourself, which I just think is like the worst advice. Because I have prided myself. Actually, I've grown and thrived and survived and overcome a lot simply because I acknowledged a long, long, long time ago that I am not the smartest person. And so, I absolutely need to collaborate with people who are much more talented than I am, much smarter than I am. I love collaboration. So—

Mark: Winn, I'm going to tell on you in a good way. So, even as we were preparing for this, you know, looping in Nancy and looping in Vance, and you said, “I surround myself with people that are smarter than me.” And because you make the realization, as do I, that it's never just one person that's doing or making everything happen. And I love it when a leader says, ‘I've got really smart people around me who know how to do things that I don't necessarily know how to do.’ And one of the things I ask leaders is, ‘Where is your biggest challenge within yourself? Do you have someone who bridges that gap? Do you have someone with that skillset? Because you can't be all things to all people, great at all things.’ I will even say this. Oprah Winfrey, we've brought her up a lot. Oprah is surrounded by a huge team of people doing all sorts of things. There's no way she could do all of that herself. It is done with the help of a huge team. And I think the best leaders do recognize that. And I think the leaders that make me nervous are the ones that think that they have

all the answers and know exactly how to do it. Or they've had previous success, they've sold that company for millions or billions of dollars so they're going to do the same with this. And they come in with such a mindset that doesn't allow them to stay curious. And then sometimes we see those startups go down the tubes and that is a heartbreaking thing but it's the reality of it because the person has decided that they know best because they've done it in the past. No, it's a team. It's Nancy and it's Vance and it's everybody else on the Winn Claybaugh team.

Winn: Thank you. So, switching gears again, you wrote a children's book called *The Very Best Christmas Tree Ever*. What's that about?

Mark: Okay. So, Winn, I'm going to go a little farther with this. Somebody asked me a few years ago, they said, "What would you want your legacy to be?" You know, would you want it to be that you worked with these companies that, you know, you wrote this self-improvement book, that you went to all these places? I go, "No." I said, "Honestly, even if every"—and I mean this. Even—I mean, we all have an ego and, yeah, it's great when people say, "Oh, you're so great. You did this, that, and the other." But I said, "Even if people completely forgot my name, I would hope that this little book and its message goes on way beyond me." So, the book is called *The Very Best Christmas Tree Ever*, and it's about a little tree named Zoe. And Zoe is a tiny, little tree and she's got crooked little branches and little cross eyes and she wants so much to be of value in the world, to be of purpose. And she wants to be someone's Christmas tree. She wants to be loved and she has this vision of being surrounded by lots of presents and the perfect home and all this vision that she has of what the perfect Christmas and the perfect Christmas tree is. And along the way she learns lessons about adoption. And she learns lessons about what it is to not be picked first. She learns lessons about what it is to be not perfect. And she learns lessons about what love really is because, I won't give it away, but her Christmas does not end up being what she imagined but it ends up being exactly what her purpose is. So, it's a book about purpose. And year after year, I've had people, they'll send me photos. "Oh, we read our book this year," or, you know, "Zoe is on our tree again." And I would love to see it made into an animated short film because I was so affected. My favorite Christmas movie of all time is *A Charlie Brown Christmas*. So, when I thought about that little tree, I would love for my little tree to be a purpose in people's lives. And I have to say this, I've got to give credit where credit's due. A dear friend of mine, psychiatrist, her nine-year-old daughter, it was one year and she said, "My daughter," whose name was Zoe, "is very concerned about the Christmas trees that don't get adopted by Christmas Day." She goes, "I know you're a writer. Would you write the story?" And it started out as a three-page story that we read out that Christmas. And then every year for seven years, I kept coming back to that story and rewriting it and rewriting it and rewriting it until finally it became *The Very Best Christmas Tree Ever*. And now, Winn, Winn, I can say this: we turned it into a play version and it's been done twice.

Winn: Really?

Mark: And once it was done by—yes. Once it was done by a group of special needs children and it, and I—I get emotional about it because I got to watch these beautiful children with such purpose and such heart saying the words that—I say I'd written but I guess I was inspired to write because I feel like Zoe wrote her own book and she just wrote it through me. And I really mean that. I'm not, I'm not even like trying to be humble. I really feel like it came through me. And to watch these children reenact all of this, it was so beautiful. And I was just crying at the end of it, you know? So again, no one has to say, “Oh, Mark wrote that book,” but I would hope that 50 years from now, people are still doing the play or still reading the book and having a sense of purpose. Even if everything's not perfect or the way you think it's supposed to be, it turned out the way that led you to the greatest purpose. And that is something that I believe to the core of who I am. Maybe I won't believe it in 20 years, but today that is what I believe and that's what wrote the book.

Winn: Okay. Well, a sidebar. You and I are buddies. Surely you have a video or photos of that performance, right? You're going to send it to me?

Mark: I do. I do.

Winn: You've gotta send that to me, Mark. Congratulations. That's great. Okay. So, I can't believe we've been talking almost—actually, well over an hour. So, I got to start to wrap things up. So, Mark, just for anyone listening to this who feels stuck, unseen, or they feel like they're just surviving the noise of life, what's like one simple shift that they can make to start showing up differently?

Mark: Number one, take the spotlight off yourself. And this may be a very hard thing to do when there's so much happening to you. You may be going through divorce, you may be going through disease, you know, the four D's. You may be going through the death of someone that you care deeply about. You may be going through one of those really hard periods in life, like I was, which was the moment that turned my life around. What Winn went through, which turned his life around. But if you focus too much inside and everything that's wrong and you keep asking yourself all the things that are wrong, because you remember the brain, our minds, it's like a Google search: whatever question you put into it, you will find a corresponding answer. And if you say, “Why is my life such a mess?” you're going to get a hundred reasons why your life is a mess. And a lot of them have to do with blaming yourself or blaming other people and not having compassion. Instead, use that curiosity to turn it around by putting the spotlight out in the world. What is that thing that I can do that's out there today that's going to change something? That could be a walk in nature. That could be helping a little old lady across the street. I'm using such a benign sort of example. It could be just watching people that are laughing and having a good time. My mother, in her last years as she was—as her health was declining, her favorite thing to do was go to

parks and just watch children playing and laughing and singing. That made her happy. That's all she wanted to see. She wanted to experience that. Just the happiness of the people around her. Turn that spotlight, not on what's wrong inside your head. Turn that spotlight out into the world and find for yourself that little moment that's beautiful. And it may sound cliché, but it's really a true thing. And here's the reason why. I'm going to support it with a little bit of neuroscience. Our minds can only focus on one thought at a time. And if the singular thought is on what's wrong or why you're not doing well or why you have every reason in the world to not feel good—and I'm not taking your reasons away. But if you turn that around and now the focus is on that one thing that's beautiful, that one thing that's right, that little step starts to take you to the next step and to the next step. And before long, you're starting to feel a little better and a little more unstuck. It doesn't take away all the problems. It doesn't make everything go away. It doesn't turn you into Pollyanna. But what it does is it allows you to feel just a little bit better in that moment. And from a better feeling place, the world looks a little different. And you also make more room for new possibilities to come in. When you're very narrow and very small, you can't see anything else. But when you start to open up that aperture just bit by bit, you see more possibilities. And that's the key: to be able to see those possibilities.

Winn: I like that word *possibilities*. It's along the same lines of hope, because I feel like the best thing that we can do is to sell hope. When we pedal hope. Because somebody can be down and out in every way but if there's just that glimmer of hope, well, then there's a chance that they can do something about it. And *possibilities* is the same meaning, that same sentiment.

Mark: Yeah, because when there's that loss of hope or that loss of possibilities, again, the way is so narrow and you only see it leading to more dread. But if there's just these other little possibilities or you've got the good folks in your life, they can help you see that one other step. It gives you something to latch onto. And then there's the chance that you start going someplace new. I know that that's happened for me and I know it's happened for you and I know it's happened for many people. Again, I'm not asking people to act like everything's fine and, you know, just put a smile on your face and, you know, get through the pain. No, you're probably still going to have the pain, you're still going to have the problems. But it's that moment, that possibility, that hope that allows you to possibly get to something else.

Winn: Well, now we all know what Oprah was looking for in Dr. Drew. Somebody who's an expert, but you're kind and you're approachable and you're not harsh. So, that's who you came off today as being. And for that, I'm so grateful not just for this interview but for the last 30 years of being your friend. Thank you for that.

Mark: Winn, I will never underestimate the value of your friendship. Thank you.

Winn: This has been incredible. So, Mark, thank you so much. And hey, everybody, just please share this. This was a lot of information. And so, I just invite you to take your time with it. I just invite you to let it play over and over again for you. During your commute, during your gym time, during your time getting ready in front of your bathroom mirror. Just let it play and let it just wash over you. So, Mark, thank you so much for all of this.

Mark: Winn, thank you. Thank you for doing what you're doing. Thank you for bringing on so many wonderful people with so much great information. I'm very grateful to you for that and so many other things.

Winn: Thanks, Mark.