



You are the key

Stress Detective Series for Leaders

Hi, everyone. This is Dr. Kristie Pretti-Frontczak and this is the second from a four-part series that I've been calling the Stress Detective Series for Leaders. It's a series about how we can be the most effective leader possible, especially during times that are so challenging, or when uncertainty seems to be the most certain thing. This was originally recorded on May 23rd, 2020 and a short time after my post aired, colleagues shared with me something that felt uncomfortable or something they weren't quite sure about in terms of a phrase that I had used in the original audio recording and in the original download. And that was about a phrase, "All Lives Matter." So, I would invite each of you to pause this recording and check out another post on my website. So, go to kristiepf.com, click on the blog, or you can go to kristiepf.com/mirror-mirror-on-the-wall. So, mirror mirror on the wall. You can also search for it using the keyword "mirror".

In that new post, I will keep you updated on what I'm learning through my conversations with my coach, Ijumaa Jordan, as well as my own study into how my white supremacy is showing up in my work and where it's causing harm. So, I won't go into detail in this little postscript other than to let you know that there is an additional recording and an additional post and a revised sort of side by side of the download from its original version to where it is evolving. And you'll notice that I am a little bit clunky in how I describe this other post, because I'm just now figuring out my words and Ijumaa reminds me that it's okay not to be perfect and it's okay not to truly understand, but that I have to continue to try to learn.

My goal is not to teach anything, but to show what I'm learning and to apologize for the harm that I've caused, and then to repair that by correcting it. So, again, check it out at kristiepf.com blog, or kristiepf.com/mirror-mirror-on-the-wall.

Now, we'll go back to what was originally the second part in this series about feeling seen and is probably my most favorite part of the four S's. So, it's maybe even doubly hard that I'm struggling to talk about it well. And so, just as a reminder, this series is all about building upon what we know or leveraging from things we know with children and how can we generalize those concepts. So, I'm pulling from the work of Dr. Dan Siegel and Dr. Tina Payne Bryson in terms of attachment science and the four S's. And so, part one was on how do we help people feel safe, this is on seen, the third is on sooth, and the fourth is on secure.

We're also building upon the work of Dr. Stuart Shanker from the MEHRIT Centre in terms of what do we mean by stressors. And then, how does stressors play a role in how we as leaders show up in the world and how we help lead people through a revolution. When we think about what it means to feel seen and why it's kind of my favorite of the S's. It's like you get me. In fact, the other day, during a really challenging coaching call with Ijumaa, I was like, "Yes, exactly Ijumaa and she said, "This is because I see you, Kristie." And it just makes me even want to cry when I think about it now. Because it's like, "Oh, you do, you get me, you see me."

The download for this part of the series has a bunch of synonyms in what it means to be seen. And so, it's that I really see that others see how I feel, that people notice my point of view, that they kind of get me, who I am right now. I know that that might change, and so they really hear and empathize with what I call shark music, or what neuroscientists call shark music. So, it's not just that they physically see me or maybe that they know me well, but that they truly understand what causes me to feel not my best self, feel anxious, feel not enough, feel like I need to be a perfectionist, feel like I've messed up, and I just want to shut down and forget about it. That's what we mean about shark music.

Not only do they notice it, but they want to address my needs. They understand my perspective. They understand who I am as a whole person. They understand about my ideas, my thoughts, my feelings, my intentions, and they uphold my rights. So, that's some synonyms that I'm trying to offer up to you as leaders about what it means to feel seen.

Now, the most important part I feel about this series is that we take action. That not only do we understand what it means to feel seen, but that we really create an opportunity to do practical things every day so that people actually feel seen. And so, again, in the download for this post, there are tips, ideas, action steps. If you read my Mirror Mirror On The Wall blog, you'll see that not only did I have some places where I made errors and caused harm in my use of this phrase or this word, matters, but I also sort of softened some of these action steps and made them more into attributes.

And so, I think that alone would be something you want to take a look at to say, "Am I really thinking about actions, not who do I want to be my ideas and thoughts about being a leader? But what am I doing on a day-to-day basis to show up as a leader who helps others feel seen?" The ones that I'm going to highlight, poll from some of the people that do some of the best work that I know around working with young children. And so again, we're leveraging what we know about young children and applying that to adults. So, be watching rather than listening for some familiar names.

The first question, ask ourselves, but it's an action step, is why and why now? And this comes from Stuart Shanker, really wanting to disrupt, maybe going into the red or the blue zone, becoming hyper or hypo-aroused. But if we can ask, "Why is this adult doing it, and why are they doing it now?" Sort of allows us to trigger our upstairs brain, and to stay in our thinking brain as we work through it. It's also a way to help us see the adult behind the behavior. If you've listened to any of my Pre-K Teach and Play podcasts before, you know that one of my repeat guests is Laura Fish and she often talks about seeing the child behind the behavior. And so, equally, when we think about adults, we want to see the adult behind the behavior, not an adult who is resistant, not an adult who is being confrontational, not an adult who doesn't care or is unmotivated, but asking why are they experiencing this? Why do they have this perception? Why do they have this mindset? And why now? And then we can begin to see the adult behind the behavior.

We also really want to listen to understand, and we want to avoid rushing to fix things. This can be really thought of as our work around being an emotion coach from Alyssa Blask Campbell. And so, this idea of really allowing people to process emotions, listen deeply so that we understand, and that we're not there to judge and we're not there to

rush to fix things. We want to help people process those emotions and then help develop coping strategies. That whole thing about not rushing to fix is going to be really hard for a lot of us. Many of us pride ourselves in being able to find solutions, enabled to connect dots in order to offer solutions. And so, if we want to offer something, we want to offer an opportunity for people to process and to enact a coping strategy. Again, that comes from Alyssa Blask Campbell.

We also want to really tune into what others are thinking and feeling and experiencing, and I like to channel my colleague, Jen Lopez, and really think about what are they dreaming about? How can I really get attuned or in tune with their dreams? What do they hope for the future? What's their best outcome that could take place? And how do I trigger that in the adults I work with? How do I get them to be in that dreaming state, even when we're feeling beat down and worn out and so uncertain? How do I help them think about what is possible? And what are they most hopeful about?

So, those are just the first couple of ones that we're going to really leverage from Stuart Shanker. We're going to leverage what we know from Laura Fish, and Alyssa Blask Campbell, and from Jen Lopez, and appreciative inquiry.

That's really going to put us in these action steps, where we're going to take the perspective of others. We're going to work with backs. We're going to try to create calm, and we're going to affirm and empathize and validate. Then, as we move into the last three bullets. We really want to notice our own biases, both implicit and maybe not so hidden from us so that we are really being accountable for our impact, not our intention. We want to really challenge those stereotypes, those prejudices, those discriminatory practices, those of us who are white and who pass for white. We need to take responsibility for the power and privilege we have and we need to really make sure that we are disrupting and dismantling and speaking out and up against things that are divisive, things that are dominating others, things that are causing harm.

And so, you can see that all of this begins to really call us to keep our own wits about ourselves, right? We got to keep our upstairs brain intact. So, we need to think about, "I'm going to make sure others feel seen. What am I doing on a day-to-day basis to make sure that I feel seen? So, again, my appreciation to my coach, Ijumaa Jordan, and my appreciation for my colleagues in Illinois for bringing things to my attention so that I can do additional work. Again, I encourage you to check out my [Mirror Mirror On The Wall blog post](#) to understand where I'm learning and where I've done some corrections from the original post.