

**Ep #253: How to Communicate Authentically with
Clients During a Time of Crisis**

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Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Maddy Roche

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Narrator: [00:00:00] Join your host, Maddy Roche, as she brings you into a community of fee-only financial advisors who are successfully building profitable businesses to serve the next generation of clients. Learn from innovative advisors whose unique stories will inspire you to dream big and take action on your goals. Are you ready to live your best life and help your clients live theirs? Then, you're in the right place.

Maddy Roche: [00:00:24] Hello and welcome to this episode of #XYPNRadio. I'm Maddy Roche, your host. I'm honored to have XYPN members Ian Bloom, Meg Bartelt, Brian Thompson and Leighann Miko on the show today as they talk about a particularly relevant topic: communicating authentically with clients during a time of crisis. This group of members is on the show today because each of them have taken it upon themselves to invest into themselves, their business and their clients by engaging in the George Kinder Five-Day Evoke® Life Planning program, where they learn the tenants and foundational principles of life planning, a process that has fundamentally changed the way each of them works with their clients. Today, in light of our shared global pandemic, showing empathy, compassion and patience is so important to the client relationship. You'll hear Meg, Ian, Brian and Leighann talk about how they've facilitated conversations with current clients and potential clients that have created deep and lasting meaningful connection and trust. Whether it's an extended pause on behalf of the advisor, a turn-around to refocus the conversation on how the client really feels, or if it's just holding space and sharing empathy, the tools of life planning have been invaluable for these advisors while they navigate our new world. You'll hear the passion in each of their voices, become inspired by their commitment to serving clients wholeheartedly, and you'll learn how you too can improve the discourse between you and your clients long into the future and hopefully keep our profession moving in the right direction. If you're

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interested in improving your ability to connect meaningfully and authentically with your clients during this time of COVID and into the future, then you won't want to miss this episode.

Maddy Roche: [00:02:10] Avocado toast. Selfies. A mountain of student loan debt. Gen Y is anything but traditional, and with over seventy five million people, it's a population you don't want to ignore. Learn more about how to serve this unique population in our guide called "Attract and Profitably Serve Millennial Clients in your RIA." Discover three key ways to tap into the millennial market and six things that they want from their financial advisor. Visit xyplanningnetwork.com/millennials for your free copy.

Maddy Roche: [00:02:42] You can find any of the resources we mentioned during the episode at xyplanningnetwork.com/253. Also, be sure to go to xyplanningnetwork.com/VIP to join our private group just for #XYPNRadio listeners. It's the community of advisors we've all been looking for that's there to provide support when we need it the most. Best of all, it's free! I encourage you to check it out. Again, that's xyplanningnetwork.com/VIP. Without further ado, here's my interview with Ian, Meg, Brian and Leighann.

[00:03:10] -- swish --

Maddy Roche: [00:03:12] Hello, everyone. Welcome to #XYPNRadio! I'm so thrilled to have all of you on today. We're all here to talk about something really important, and that is how we talk and communicate with clients in this profession. It's a super important conversation to have generally, but it's ultimately especially important today because of the

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environment that we're in. I imagine that a lot of the conversations all of our advisors who are on our podcast today have had have been a little bit more weighted - maybe a little bit more emotional, maybe a little bit more heavy. I know personally I felt a little bit more heavy over the past few months than I ever have - and I'm really particularly interested in having a conversation today with all of you about how you've prepared to be able to have these kind of conversations, and how they've been executed, and if - and whether - they've been successful, for the most part, in terms of establishing trust with your clients, acting as an expert and a friend to many of them, but most importantly, just creating a private and personal space for them to be able to experience the feelings that they're having. Ian, I think you're the first and only one on this call that has yet to be #XYPNRadio, so I would love, Ian, for you to introduce yourself and then we'll go around and introduce the other members on our show today. Ian, go ahead and do the honors.

Ian Bloom: [00:04:22] Sure. My name's Ian Bloom. My firm name is Open World Financial Life Planning, and I'm out of Raleigh, North Carolina. I serve nerds and other young accumulators and I have a client make-up about 20 clients. I've been in the business for about five years now, was owning my firm for about 18 months.

Maddy Roche: [00:04:41] Awesome. Thank you so much for that intro. Brian Thompson, how about you?

Brian Thompson: [00:04:44] Hey, I'm Brian Thompson. I am the founder of Brian Thompson Financial. My firm started in August of 2016 and I serve LGBTQ entrepreneurs who run mission-driven businesses and I have about 25 retainer clients right now.

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Maddy Roche: [00:04:59] Awesome, thank you. Meg Bartelt. How about you?

Meg Bartelt: [00:05:02] Sure. My name is Meg. The name of my firm is Flow Financial Planning. I started it just a few months before Brian started his in May 2016. I work with women in their early to mid-careers in the tech industry and currently we have about 45 ongoing clients.

Maddy Roche: [00:05:18] Awesome, thank you. And Leighann Miko, how about you?

Leighann Miko: [00:05:22] Hey - my firm name is Equalis Financial and I am based out of Los Angeles, California. I have about 35 clients right now, split evenly between retainer-only clients and then Investment Management and retainer planning. I'd say the common thread between my clients is that they're all progressives and largely creatives. January 2020 actually marks the lucky 13th anniversary of being in the business, but 3rd anniversary of owning my own firm.

Maddy Roche: [00:05:46] Awesome, congratulations!

Leighann Miko: [00:05:49] Thank you.

Maddy Roche: [00:05:49] I hope that's helpful to all of our listeners just to set the tone from some of the advice and perspective that these advisors

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are going to be giving us over the next hour or so. I'd like to just kind of do a check-in! Acknowledge the elephant in the room that we're recording here mid April. We're kind of in a new world order. We don't have to go into the details of where we find ourselves, but the conversation today is really going to be around how we're feeling in terms of the effectiveness of our conversations with our clients. So, Brian, I'd love to start with you and just check in: how are you feeling? How are your clients feeling?

Brian Thompson: [00:06:18] Yeah. I mean, it's obviously a pretty wild time right now, so my approach has always been to take things one day at a time. So, I'm trying to make sure that I'm staying present and staying in the moment and taking things as they come - and I try to urge my clients to do the same. I want to make sure that... Obviously, there's a lot of anxiety and worry that are - and stress - that are going around, and I've tried to emphasize to my clients that this is a place that you can be wherever you are and whether you're feeling anxiety, stress or excitement about opportunities in the market or shame around you having a job and nobody else... Like anything and everything that you're feeling, I want them to know that they can come to me and that they'll be OK.

Maddy Roche: [00:06:55] Have you e-mailed them directly, Brian, offering that?

Brian Thompson: [00:06:58] I have. I email them directly. I usually use three modes of communication: I write for Forbes and so I use- try to get stuff out there as well. But I send a weekly email called "Five Minute Fridays" where I'm -

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Maddy Roche: [00:07:09] Mmm!

Brian Thompson: [00:07:09] - sort of sending out a... Just something really short that helps establish where we are, things that my clients think about, questions that I'm getting. I'm sure if I'm getting a question, other clients are asking the same question.

Maddy Roche: [00:07:21] Mhmm.

Brian Thompson: [00:07:21] And so helping have a space to do that, but then also emailing them directly and saying if you need anything - especially with my business clients right now. There's a lot going on with the CARES Act, so making sure that they know what's happening and dealing with somewhat overwhelming-ness of having everything to make sure that they can come to me and let them know that this is a space.

Maddy Roche: [00:07:40] Awesome. So much to dive into. Leighann, how are you feeling? How are your clients feeling? What's the status?

Leighann Miko: [00:07:45] A lot of anxiety. There's definitely a lot of anxiety. I work with a lot of freelancers, a lot of self-employed people, especially in the entertainment industry. Right now, a lot of them are looking at it going, "Okay, so there's a good chance I'll be out of work for an extended period of time." They're used to going kind of "on-off" season, but you know, I think it's worked to my advantage that I've been prepping them pretty much. It's like a client signs on and my first comment is, "hey, just want to let you know we're going to prepare for the worst here because

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things are going to be shaken up soon." So, you know, keeping that in mind, because they are freelancers, their emergency funds tend to be... The target is nine to twelve months versus, you know, the standard three to six, so there's been a lot of, you know, ease with that. But, you know, I think they, for the most part, they're recognizing that this is a part of the game, so to speak, and so some of them have even called me and said, "I know-I know exactly what you're gonna say. I just need to hear it one more time. I just" -

Maddy Roche: [00:08:36] Oh!

Leighann Miko: [00:08:36] - "need to hear it repeated."

Maddy Roche: [00:08:38] I love that.

Leighann Miko: [00:08:38] I do- I do that. I let them air out whenever they need to say. I sit there, I am there for them, and I just say, "okay, how are you feeling now that you got it out? And are you feeling good?" And they're like, "Yeah, I processed it. I got it out in the open. And now it's not as much of a burden or weight."

Maddy Roche: [00:08:52] Yeah. And we're gonna- we're gonna talk a lot about what allows you to be able to create that space and have that conversation confidently as we get into the conversation. Ian, I'd love to ask you next just for a general check-in with your clients and how you're feeling right now.

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Ian Bloom: [00:09:05] Yeah. My clients have kind of been in a couple of different boats. I would say like half of them are kinda unaffected. I work with a lot of people who already had largely virtual careers. So those people are working their virtual careers and things are going smoothly; but, I also have some clients who have a lot of stress and anxiety. I had a client who was preparing to retire in July and thankfully we've prepared him for what this looks like. But there was a moment where he-he called me and he's like, "So, I haven't checked my portfolio in three months because I'm afraid." And I was like, "Well, you don't need to be afraid, but I understand where that emotion is coming from." So...

Maddy Roche: [00:09:43] Mmm! It's such a, such a common theme for a lot of your work to involve emotions just generally. And so I imagine that right now the amount of emotion is really, kind of right there on the surface. Meg, how are you? How are your feelings and how are your clients feeling?

Meg Bartelt: [00:10:00] Oh, yeah. Thank you for asking. I will say from a client perspective, as I said, my clients all work in the tech industry, and for the most part, their jobs are secure. I mean, a lot of the tech companies are in fact, doing gangbusters nowadays. I do have a few clients who are going through income reductions; you know, their companies aren't laying off, but they're reducing everyone's salaries by 30%.

Maddy Roche: [00:10:26] Mmm.

Meg Bartelt: [00:10:26] I do have one client who is fearful she will actually lose her job entirely, but much like Leighann was alluding to, really the first thing we work on with clients is resilience planning, which is emergency

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funds fundamentally. And that really... I mean, I might have to remind clients of the fact that we've prepared for this, but then once they are-are reminded of it really feels so much better knowing that even if they were laid off, even if their income were chopped in half, they could survive. They're just disappointed that they're having to use this money for emergencies as opposed to, say, traveling somewhere fun. We are reaching out to all clients to make sure that we're at least offering one-on-one, "Do you want to meet?" It's possible people don't want to meet with us, right? They've got enough crap going on in their lives right now, but we're making sure to do that. We have met one on one with most of our clients. There are some elements of, you know, practical discussion about making disaster plans, finally doing that estate planning that they've delayed doing; but, in large part, it really is just checking in, honoring their humanity, their lives, just leaving the space open for them to say "whatever!" Whether it is, you know "traditional financial planning oriented" or not. And for me, I am being, frankly, much more attentive to my own self-care.

Maddy Roche: [00:11:43] Mmm!

Meg Bartelt: [00:11:43] Trying to pour more into myself because I see it being poured out at a faster rate than normal.

Meg Bartelt: [00:11:49] Oh, that is so true. I talked to a member yesterday and she said that this is the first time her clients are calling her to check in on her. And I thought that was really beautiful, that this is- this is a shared experience, really, between all layers of society. Globally, this is not just a U.S. thing. It's not just our industry thing, like 2008 was. It's-it's so much more than that. The reason all four of you are on this call today - not only

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because you are all independently awesome - but you all have a shared experience together over the past couple months as you all invested into yourselves, your business, your clients, by engaging in an academic program of sorts that that allowed you and focused your energy on being able to facilitate really meaningful, important life conversations with your clients - and that is the George Kinder Institute Life Planning Program - and I really want to spend a little bit of time at the front of this call to be able to give our listeners a little bit of context around who George Kinder is, what the program was that you engaged in, but I want to spend a majority of our time together talking about what kind of what's resulted since you've had this training and how it's impacting you and quite frankly, helping you and your clients continue these conversations. You all went to this engagement even before coronavirus was - was the term of the century, so I'm interested in what brought you in there. So, Ian, why don't you just lay the groundwork for our listeners about who George is, what the program was, where you went. And then we'll dive into the fun stuff.

Ian Bloom: [00:13:13] So George Kinder is the founder of the Kinder Institute, which you alluded to, and he is credited with being kind of the father of life planning within our profession. And life planning is this idea that financial planning isn't just about the facts and the figures, right? The actual data that will build into a financial planning. It's about helping the client live their ideal lives. And so he has a process called the EVOKE® process that we all went down to Hana, Hawaii, to do a really, really deep workshop on and try to understand for ourselves that we could integrate it into our practices. And it was really cool. We spent five days down there, working with each other and with the trainers on how to become better life planners, more empathetic listeners and all those kinds of things.

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Maddy Roche: [00:13:59] Wow. Well, it sounds like a really fun event anyways, but I'm-I'm interested in what brought you there. It's not always an easy pitch to get financial advisors to invest in themselves and their businesses in the way that-that Kinder has inspired you to do so, so Leighann what-what was your "why" for-for diving into this life planning?

Leighann Miko: [00:14:18] The Kinder Institute popped up on my radar about 10 years ago when I was relentlessly researching, as I do, the various paths in the industry, you know, how... the different ways to work with clients. I've always felt really confident on my technical skills. I spent the first eight or nine years just focusing on that. And then, you know, when I-I started at my firm and I recognize that my biggest weakness probably was the softer side of things... Really being able to connect with clients on a human level. I knew I had the feelings and emotions in my head. I just didn't have the right tools to actually get them out of my mouth. And so, you know, I was finally in a position where I had the support of people around me, and I had honestly the financial means to go through the process, so I put my big girl pants on and I reached out to Meghan Bryant. I was like, "hey, so are we doing this thing?" So it was really good to have the two of them kind of along for the ride and kind of give you that boost of confidence and what have you. And so, you know, kind of piggybacking on Ian, you know, explaining the life planning process, what have you. You know, the way I kind of look at it is like... It's... It's a detailed process to help advisors naturally tap into the true passions and desires of their clients without ,like, this feeling of being poked or prodded - like some of those like 14 page questionnaires that some advisors make people fill out before becoming a client. And that's what really spoke to me, is it was a very natural way to actually communicate with clients effectively, pull information from them and gain a deeper understanding of who they are and where they wanted to go.

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Maddy Roche: [00:15:48] Awesome! And what great self-awareness. I think that's so impressive to hear people say, "I knew I have the feelings in there. It's just a matter of the training." What a unique and honest answer. Meg, what was your "why?" What-what prompted you to invest in the life planning aspect of your firm when you work with women in tech?

Meg Bartelt: [00:16:05] Part of it was I try to set goals for improving myself as a financial planner each year. You know, sort of one major initiative each year. So that is sort of a high level "why I did it." When I attended #XYPNLIVE in 2019, it offered the two-day Kinder training as a pre-conference and that honestly just lowered the hurdle to-to start this; I was already going to be there, the two day training is, you know, it's not free, but it's manageable. And so I attended that because it was, it was just easy to do and then kind of felt like I was hit by a truck. I didn't know, like, "what just happened during that two day training?"

Maddy Roche: [00:16:51] Hahaha!

Meg Bartelt: [00:16:51] I was intrigued, but felt completely out of my league. But part of that training, which George Kinder himself led, was him demonstrating, in a very shortened, very compressed amount of time, the EVOKE technique on one of the planners who was attending - George Kinder was in the position of the planner. The-the actual attendee planner was in the position of the client. And he genuinely life planned that person in front of 70 of us. Right? A process that we have now learned to do over the course of, you know, three-hour, two-hour meetings, George Kinder did in basically 20 minutes. And it genuinely changed the direction of this person's life and it was amazing to behold. I mean, I thought it was some sort of black magic. So I felt like, "Okay, that is obviously powerful. I have

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no idea how to do it," having just gone through, you know, two 12 hour days of training. But now I see that that's the motivation to go to this five day training, because at the end of that, I should have a clue as to how to do this. I don't think I would have been able to do the five day training by itself just because it's such a huge time and financial commitment. So I sort of think it's a two day training as almost having been really effective marketing for the five day training.

Maddy Roche: [00:18:07] Yeah. And Ian, I'm interested for you, given your clientele: why was life planning a draw?

Ian Bloom: [00:18:13] Sure. So I actually started in the profession under my mentor, Steven Brody, who spent an RLP® the whole time, which is the designation banned for life planning from the Kinder Institute. And so I started in the profession, oddly, as a life planner. I'd already been doing this work with all my clients. I just hadn't been doing it well, I guess, or as well as I could have. So when Steve brought me on... Part of the kind of implicit contract in this is like, "hey, I want you to be another me. I want you to become an RLP® eventually. You need to be a CFP® and you're gonna become another RLP®." And so I already knew at some point I was going to go to the trainings. And then it just kind of all clicked when I went to the two-day that I needed to be at the five-day in Hawaii, because that was the next step. I had been in the two-day with all the people on this call and then some other really amazing people who I knew were going to be at the five-day, and I couldn't convince myself that it wouldn't be better to do it with the people that I already knew I enjoyed. So once I found out that the same group of people who I both admire and adore were going to be at the five day, I was like, "well, I guess I'm going to punch my ticket and be there."

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Maddy Roche: [00:19:22] I love it. Awesome. I remember seeing the picture after, it must have been on your last day of all the planners at George, and I just looked and I said, "that is an AWESOME group of people!" Really life changing group of people. It's amazing that the kind of power that each of you have in terms of the impact that you have with your clients. Brian, what was missing for you before you took this? Did you ever experience like a rub or something wrong with your... conversations? Like, did you ever hit a wall, where you were like, "Oh, I didn't do that well"? What prompted you?

Brian Thompson: [00:19:49] I don't know if it was really something that was missing or was always something that has been of interest to me. I was a philosophy major in college, so I've always been about living a good life or living the well-examined life. And I've done a lot of personal work in my own around emotions and being in touch with who I am and using the resources around me to live a better life. And so when I started my firm, I was looking for this from the very beginning. And luckily found Elizabeth Jetton through Meg, who was a life planning coach to her course, and started really diving in deep to what life planning looks like. And then took a bunch of other courses like the listening with the Klontz brothers, some more research in "how to effectively communicate with clients and really engage with clients." So, to me, it was just a progression and, like everybody's alluded to, I also went to the two day and realized this is something that is really powerful and something that I want to learn how to do. And, the fact that everybody like Meg and Leighann and Ian and Shane and everybody else who were already saying, we're gonna go. They had signed up for that like the next day. I couldn't help but tag along. To me, it's been a progression of where my life has led. And so I'm glad that I've got to experience that and it's been so powerful since then about how it's then helped me in my life and also my practice.

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Maddy Roche: [00:21:06] Mmm! Awesome. Meg, did you feel like you had room for improvement when it came to hard conversations? Was there kind of the starting point that you felt as an advisor needed improvement?

Meg Bartelt: [00:21:16] Oh, absolutely. As Brian mentioned, I've been working with Elizabeth Jetton as a business coach since month seven of my firm. And she is... She's such a star of the financial planning profession. She always describes it: "We are a helping profession first and foremost." And that just shines through in every way that she tries to counsel or guide me (and, I assume, all of her other coaching clients) through the decisions we make about how we work with our clients, how we run our business, and so I was already attuned to this, I'll just go with, a different way of doing financial planning. This is not how I learned to be a financial planner in the CFP® curriculum or in my masters. This is not how I learned to be a financial planner in my first two jobs. There are always elements of that, like, you know, recognition that these people are humans, not just robots. Yes. That sort of vague nod to the humanity in all of us. But Elizabeth helped to open my eyes to know there can be a really profound and strongly defined practice that honors the humanity and other people in how communication has to... you know, can support that. And so, just working with Elizabeth, I think I've gotten better at communication. One of things it really appealed to me about the Kinder EVOKE® process is that literally it was a process.

Maddy Roche: [00:22:38] Mmm.

Meg Bartelt: [00:22:38] I will just admit that I liked the idea of -

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Maddy Roche: [00:22:42] Hahaha.

Meg Bartelt: [00:22:42] - "I'm not going to have to figure this out on my own. There is a five step process and I just go through it, and by the end of it, I have done well by my clients." That just appealed to me. And yes, it has turned out that way. There is this process, but then there is just this almost different world view that it helps reinforce about your relationship with your clients and how you communicate with your clients that has, to me, been more influential than the actual five step process that you just "ch-ch-ch" through.

Maddy Roche: [00:23:12] Great. Well, let's get down to business and talk about how it's, how it's helped us in kind of this unexpected world. I imagine when all of you were in Hawaii, drinking your Mai Tais, last thing we thought we would have is a global pandemic on our hands and how that would actually play into the execution of all the tools you just took. Leighann, talk to us a bit about how you're using it today, and we'll just let the conversation flow from there.

Leighann Miko: [00:23:35] I think one of the biggest lessons I learned going through Kinder and the biggest impact it's had since then was that I don't need to come up with the answers for my clients; it's not my job.

Maddy Roche: [00:23:47] Mmm.

Leighann Miko: [00:23:47] Right? I'm not trying to come up with any answers or solutions to anything. What I am there for is to help them come

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up with their own solutions, their own answers, and so that's what's been really impactful as we go through this and I'm working with clients and, you know, they're calling me panic and fear. It's... You know, I can't tell them exactly what to do because it's their life. Right? And so having this process to this methodology, how to phrase questions and-and just listen? I mean, even like the dramatic pause - just pausing - letting them sit in their... their own, you know, frame their own question, they ask about, "oh! Okay. That's the answer." So they come up with it. All I've done is set the stage and the platform for them to do it. That's probably what's been the most helpful, given everything going on. Just listening. Being there. Letting them air all their grievances, the fear, the panic. You know, there hasn't been too much of it, which is nice, but when there is, it's just, you know, being-being there, listening, and letting them know, "someone is listening to you and I care for you and I want you to get through this" and having that kind of understanding of what that impact is on the other side of it is really important. It's like putting yourself in their shoes and understanding, "Okay, this is what they're getting out of it. On the other side. They don't really want me to tell them what to do. They just need someone to listen."

Maddy Roche: [00:24:59] Brian, how are you using some of your tools?

Brian Thompson: [00:25:00] In much of the same way: the listening and the holding space has been super important, as Leighann was pointing out. I also think being able to show appreciation for the clients, for the work that they're doing, the steps that they've already taken, being sure that you're reinforcing the steps that they've taken already, to either whether it's contacting you or the work that they've done with you, I'm making sure to acknowledge that and help them, which I think helps motivate them to do more things. And also, sort of Leighann saying, not really needing to come up with an answer being the guide. We've heard Scott Frank say he's the

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guide and the client are the heroes. And so it's not about us and our abilities to solve their problems or provide the answers to them; it's about us giving them helpful ways to either come up with the solutions themselves or guide them in a direction that would be most beneficial for them with them in the end, taking the steps to make sure that that happens. So listening, holding space, not making it about me. Also showing appreciation for the clients and making sure to ask permission for where we go in the conversation and ask permission for "what's next" rather than dictating where we go.

Maddy Roche: [00:26:07] Tell me a little bit more about that: asking permission.

Brian Thompson: [00:26:08] Making sure that you are - when you're listening, you're actually listening and saying to a client, "where would you like to go?" and letting them lead the conversation and then saying if they say a direction and say and then you want to switch directions saying, "is it alright if we go this way?"

Maddy Roche: [00:26:22] Mmm!

Brian Thompson: [00:26:22] And if it is, listen for an answer and then switching directions. If it's not, going where they'd like to go, because again, it's not about me; it's about them and where they want to go.

Maddy Roche: [00:26:31] And was that something you hadn't employed prior to this training?

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Brian Thompson: [00:26:34] Nope. Yep. It wasn't even something that I thought about - that is another thing that's been so powerful - just asking for permission and then waiting to hear the answer. I think there are sometimes that I've done it before like, "alright, so... Is it alright to go here? Let's go!" and realizing that that's not really asking permission, that's just another way of dictating the direction without doing it the right way. So yeah, it's one of one of the many, many techniques that I feel like I've employed that have been small tweaks, but then very, very powerful.

Maddy Roche: [00:27:00] Wonderful. Ian, I'll ask you permission: would you be willing to share an experience with your client that you've had recently where you employed some of these tools?

Ian Bloom: [00:27:09] Yes, sure. I-I had a client - actually this week, so recently - reach out to me because she is having difficulty with saving. So, the-the couple is having difficulty with saving and she feels a lot of pain around that. She comes from a household where her background is that everybody is very financially responsible and nobody carries debt; yet, here she is finding herself in a position where they have debt and that stresses her out and puts her in a place of pain. So, yeah, I think the first thing that happened in that conversation was she called me in this state of emotional distress. Right? She needed to share this with somebody, and I'm her financial planner and it's a financial topics on the person she decided to share it with. So we start. I listen, nod and start listening to her about this. And then I said, "well, it sounds like where you're... where you feel the most pain is around the site idea of X." She comes back to me with-with, "Yeah, that is where I feel pain. Wow." And she felt very heard 'cause she hadn't been able to have this conversation before with anybody. And then I said, "well, is it alright if we talk about where you would like your financial

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situation to be instead and how awesome that would be?" And she's like, "yeah! Yeah, actually they'd be great. What would it look like if we didn't have this debt?"

Maddy Roche: [00:28:26] Wow.

Ian Bloom: [00:28:26] So yeah. It-it sounds really complicated or really simple, depending on which way you look at it, and it's neither.

Maddy Roche: [00:28:33] Haha.

Ian Bloom: [00:28:33] It's just about having a structure around how you listen to people and-and processing that emotion at face value. We're like kind of trained as financial planners to be these people who come into meetings with like a, with like a structure - kind of like an architect, right? We're building the financial foundation and-and we have to be able to put our clients in this place where they're achieving success and yadda, yadda, yadda. And what's actually true is that the clients will set up that foundation on their own if you just allow them to say the things that they want and kind of get out of the way of it, right? Like facilitate them so that they're able to say, "yeah, I would like to be out of debt." "Oh, really? That's awesome. Yeah. I think they'd be really good for you, too. How do you envision yourself getting out of debt?" And they'll come up with solutions right there, so...

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Maddy Roche: [00:29:16] Awesome. Meg, you said that you loved the formula of it. I'm interested in what that formula is and how you've employed it at your firm and the effectiveness of it.

Meg Bartelt: [00:29:26] Sure. Yeah. I mean, the formula I'm talking about is the, you know, "EVOKE® process", which stands for Exploration, Vision, Obstacles, Knowledge and Execution. And I will say that when I first started doing it, I employed it extremely poorly and was really stressed out by my amateur attempts because we all like to be experts on day one. And, you know, as happens, I've gotten better at it as I've practiced it with more clients. And also, as it turns out, even if you do this poorly, it is still more than, at least, I was doing before, and it's more than most financial advisors are doing, so I like - most of us, of course - I set my bar stupidly high and then failed to achieve that, but it was always forward progress. So, just very quickly, Exploration is when you are asking a client or even a prospect, as I know some planners do this in these sort of free consultation with a prospective client: "What-what would your ideal life look like?" And that's kind of it. I mean, there are all these sort of the guttural sounds and nods and other mild prompting questions you can ask, but you're really just trying to get this inch deep, mile wide exploration from the client of "if they could have very ideal life, what are all the things that would fall into it?" You know, let your mind run free, but don't-don't harness or, you know, don't-don't hamper your creativity. The Vision meeting is when you start narrowing it down and there are... So this is where George Kinder's classic three questions come in, which is just one example of actually many exercises that we use. It's just happens to be by far the most well-known one. The Vision exercise is when you start prioritizing all those things that were in that "mile wide, inch deep." Now you start going "inch wide and mile deep" and this is where you come up with the torch. You light your client's torch or in, you know, in my case, most of the time, I madly try to light this damp collection of wood that never actually catches fire. Sometimes I have succeeded and that's been lovely! And then the

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Obstacles meeting is when you have the client tell you, "well, what stands between where you are now and that vision of this amazing future" that's not 30 years down right down the road. Maybe it's three months or a year, really no further out than two years. Let the client figure out what they need to do. I kind of... It strikes me as being almost sort of a SMART goals meeting ; it's very specific about what they need to buy when, who's going to help hold them accountable, and then, at the end of it: "Alright. How do you feel now that you've enumerated all these specific actionable things you're going to do? How do you feel?" And it's normally, "I feel awesome because now this vision of this ideal life feels achievable." Right? "I've got this plan that I came up with, not the financial planner." The Knowledge meeting is what we all think of as traditional financial planning: that's where the numbers and the spreadsheets and crunching and the written plan, blahblahblah. And, Execution speaks for itself. So it's that initial Exploration-Vision-Obstacles that was really the new, the brand new, overwhelmingly new aspect that we've all had to learn.

Maddy Roche: [00:32:30] Mmm! And Meg, we'll stay with you for just another question: why is it important today for you to be able to use these tactics?

Meg Bartelt: [00:32:38] I'm going to answer a slightly different question, which is: Earlier in this call, I mentioned that while that EVOKE® technique is great because I can just practice what they teach you and I - you know, you practice and with enough time, you become good at it - but that the more important things I learned from the meeting, from the training, rather - the five day training - were about just sort of the essence of our communication styles with clients: the pause, the empathy, expressing empathy, expressing appreciation for whatever they've done, hurdles they've overcome. I just had a really hard client situation just earlier this

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week having nothing to do with COVID-19, but something really bad had happened in a client's life and it wasn't a couple. And I had never experienced a specific situation before, as a financial planner. And it... And it's big, it's deep and big and bad. And so my mind, like I'll admit, my mind immediately went to like, "oh my God, what do I say? What do I say? I don't know what to do." And the only thing that my brain could latch onto was "empathy first and then show appreciation." So we didn't actually get to any sort of like, "Alright, well, here are some practical things we're going to do to start recovering from this big, bad thing that has happened!" The conversation was more around, "I can see that it's really painful" -

Maddy Roche: [00:33:57] Mmm.

Meg Bartelt: [00:33:57] - "to have to tell me about that. I just want to say I truly appreciate your willingness to share something so painful with me" because the client was clearly embarrassed, ashamed, and I don't want that person to feel that way in relationship to me. That person needed to know that despite the big bad stuff that had happened in that person's life, they had just done a really good thing for me and I appreciated it. And, you know, again, I'm sort of still a novice at this, but I at least feel as if that kept the lines of communication open; that client does not have to feel ashamed with me. They can feel ashamed in terms of what they did in relationship to the spouse, but that this line of communication is never going to be shutting down or me imposing discomfort, and I don't know what I would have done had I not had that Kinder training just beat into us. "Empathy first. Empathy first. Appreciation."

Maddy Roche: [00:34:54] Mmm!

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Meg Bartelt: [00:34:54] It was my... It was really my lifeline in that conversation.

Brian Thompson: [00:34:56] Yeah!

Maddy Roche: [00:34:57] Beautiful. Brian?

Brian Thompson: [00:34:58] I love that story, Meg, and I think it just shows how important it is always. Like, it's definitely, to your question, is "why is it important now?" It's important now because this is a very, very trying time for everyone. But it's... It's always been important, right? We should we should always be doing this. We should always be that place where our clients can come and share whatever they need to share. And the fact, I heard Meg say that "it was, it was powerful for me", but I also imagined that it's very, very powerful for that client, knowing that they can come back and express who they are and what they need and Meg will be that person to hold the space for them, no matter what it is. And I've had the same experience with-with clients of mine, one who is struggling with an illness of his dad and left the conversation because he was crying. And, you know, we have these-these pre-conceived notions that men don't cry or men shouldn't cry in front of the people or maybe you don't cry in front of your financial advisor... Being able to let him come back, acknowledge what happened, and say "that's okay here. You can do- you can cry here. You can have a hard time here and we will hold space for that and we will figure it out together." I think that's a powerful place for anybody to be: it's powerful for clients, it's powerful for friends, it's powerful for family. Like we should always be doing this in our lives and in our businesses. And to me, this is just a time where it's uniquely valuable for our clients because it's a time that's needed.

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Meg Bartelt: [00:36:22] And I will say one... Brian and Leighann and I have had a lot of discussions about this concept of "empathy first", and it just has so many benefits. And, you know, the obvious one is how your client, or how the person on the other end of the conversation, feels, right? If you feel heard, like that-that is just so important, right? It makes you feel so, so much better inside. Showing empathy first and sort of forcing your - you know, if it isn't a matter of forcing your brand, sometimes for me it is - like it's a very conscious decision. "Empathy first." It actually helps me be happier, right? Because it forces me to ascribe the best of intentions, the best of motivations, the best of everything to the other person, right? It is the opposite of assuming... Empathy is the opposite of assuming the worst of the other person. And it's so much more pleasant to be in relationship, to be in partnership with someone who you assume is doing the best they can as opposed to, oh, that person's trying to, you know, weasel something out of me or get out of some obligation or... that person is just mean-spirited or anything like that. So, showing empathy first has a profound impact on my own happiness when showing it to other people.

Leighann Miko: [00:37:37] "Empathy first" right now is so impactful because you know... We always say clients can be super irrational, make poor decisions, super emotional with their money. I think right now is the time where people are inclined to do that. Right? So if a client emails you or calls you and has this harebrained idea to go all cash or to make some sort of decision like your-your technical brain is "no, you're insane!" Right? You step back and say, "no, empathy first. I know why they're thinking this. I know why they're saying this. I'm going to calm down, bring it together, and then I'm going to react appropriately. I understand exactly why you think this and why you want to do this. Let's walk through it" and have that conversation and help them understand where they might be going in the wrong direction, but help... let them kind of come to that conclusion.

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Ian Bloom: [00:38:23] I think speaking from a place of trying to understand other people's emotions also allows you to tie things that matter to their actions in a way that I can't without life planning, or wasn't able to before I became a good life planner. So, you know, you can talk about like the Simon Sinek book, "Start With Why" or whatever, but ultimately, all we're doing is making sure that whatever our clients are doing aligns with the life they want to be living: not the life we want them to live; not what's technically correct; but the life that they have told us in their words, they want to be living. And that's more powerful than anything else that we can tell them, right? "The data points this way." "Well, great, but does the data apply to me?" is the-is the answer to that. And so if you can say, "look, you've told me that you want this in the future and this thing is the most important thing in the world to you. Shouldn't all of our actions just be focused on getting this future for you?" Yeah. So then when the client call also they want to go all cash and that doesn't line up with this, you just go, "oh, I understand you feel a lot of fear. I can feel that. That's really palpable. Like it's a scary time. We lost 30% in the market or whatever. But just keep in mind that this is this year and in the future. You told me you want this. This is more powerful than this moment in time, isn't it?"

Maddy Roche: [00:39:45] Right. As I listen to you all talk, I can't help but feel like there's-there's this component of therapy in there, that we're really getting to this like personal side and I want to be sure that we-we draw-draw the appropriate lines, and Brian, how do you do that? Do you feel like you need to- You want to be able to make yourself available and and vulnerable yourself with your clients. But at what point do you become a therapist?

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Brian Thompson: [00:40:07] We hear that a lot: that people either... "You sound like a therapist" or your... "This is ther- feels like a therapy session." But, as I like to point out, therapy is, deals a lot with the past and why you're doing the things that you're doing, where we are dealing with the present and where you want to go. There are definitely overlapping components because obviously we want to be there to hold space. I think that's where I've learned the most from my own therapist, how to really sit with what's being said and make sure that it's not about me, it's about you and the conversation. But I'm giving "advice" (I used air quotes). But it's about, it's about being able to hold space, which I think is the overlap, but we are doing very different things. And I also think it's just sort of a unique part about a profession is that we are the only profession that we have to deal with the emotional aspect of money, but also the technical aspect of money, and so we have to weave back and forth. Right now, a lot of my clients are dealing with the small business loans, so I have to know a lot about the loans and navigate their awareness and anxiety and stress around having to keep their business running while the economy is shutting down. But also knowing how they actually do that, how they get the help they need. And I just think that's one of the great and unique things about our profession, is that we get to do both. We get to be technical-minded and we also get to be emotionally-minded. And I can't think of anything other any other profession that gets to do that.

Meg Bartelt: [00:41:28] Yeah, and to to further talk about, so the distinction with therapy, I'm going to hearken back to an example that Ian actually gave and about talking with a client who had debt, and who wanted to get out of debt, and what he was illustrating right there is what sort of the Registered Life Planner® terminology is called a "turnaround", which I'm not that great at yet. Ian and Brian seem to be the masters of turnarounds and there's even a little hand gesture that goes with it. But the idea is empathy allows you to understand how the person is feeling right now and sometimes and especially nowadays, that's going to be a negative place.

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That's going to be a place that people don't really want to be. And so one of the tools we learn in this training is, and that distinguishes it or makes us not therapists, is not understand like "why are you in this position?" You know, "what trauma is in your past that leads you to be in this position right now?" but "where would you rather be instead? How would you rather feel? What would you rather your life look like?" And then helping them... We're really guiding them to themselves figure out how to get to that instead place. Again, us not proposing, "Oh, well, you could get there by doing this, that, and the other thing." "Well, what do what do you think you need to do to get to this different place? How will you do that? When will you do that? Who can help hold you accountable? When will you tell that person? How do you feel now that we've identified all those things?" So it's always about looking forward, moving from the current reality, which may or may not be great, to the future, great life, ideal life.

Maddy Roche: [00:43:06] I love that; the concept of turnaround is going to stick with me. Ian, thoughts?

Ian Bloom: [00:43:11] I would also say that the interesting reason that we immediately jumped to life planning being so close to therapy is because people aren't listened to like we listen to our clients often. They're listened to on this level by their therapists, so I'm not saying that other professions should adopt this, like amazing, empathetic, "we're gonna spend 30 minutes trying to feel our client's feelings and then deal with the problem" thing, because not all professions can do that, but just because we're displaying empathy doesn't mean we're therapists; it means we're good listeners who want to help our clients be the best version of themselves.

Brian Thompson: [00:43:47] I love that answer -.

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Maddy Roche: [00:43:49] Perfect.

Brian Thompson: [00:43:49] - And stealing that answer!

Maddy Roche: [00:43:49] Really good answer! I'm interested in - I just admire all four of you so much, and so many XYPN members, because you are so willing to say and invest back into yourselves that there is room for improvement, there's things you want to learn where we're- I think we kind of have the shared mentality that we're where ever long, lifelong learners. What other trainings have you guys invested in that-that would give something similar in terms of the content? Does it compare and contrast to anything? Anyone have thoughts about that?

Brian Thompson: [00:44:20] I've done a lot of stuff, like... I think I may mentioned this before: I took the Life Planning class with Elizabeth at Golden Gate University.

Maddy Roche: [00:44:27] Okay!

Brian Thompson: [00:44:27] And that was a semester long course into an overview of life planning and what it is and the different routes that you could go. I've also done a couple of listening classes - I think I may have called them Klontz brothers, but it's actually father and son - the Quantas and done some work there. I just sort of dived into the Money Quotient stuff there. There's a process there as well. But I feel like so far what's resonated with me the most - and they're all just building on one another.

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Right? It's not that one is better than the other. To me, it's a building process. And the Kinder process has been the pinnacle for me as far as bringing it all together and how I can tweak and adjust to make sure that it's the most effective it's possible.

Ian Bloom: [00:45:07] I jokingly tell people that my training actually started my sophomore year of high school in my AP Psychology class, but you know, not non hilariously. I did get a psychology degree. I actually changed into this profession, thanks to Steve's mentorship. And so I think that ultimately any training that enables you to study the behavior of others better and then understand yourself better is one that is helpful in life planning. So whether that's, you know, George Kinder's training specifically or Money Quotient - which is another one within the financial planning profession. These trainings are all focused primarily on understanding other people and what structures you can use to help other people change their behavior. That's ultimately what it is.

Maddy Roche: [00:45:52] Yeah.

Meg Bartelt: [00:45:52] And I have done far less, I think, official formal training than, say, Brian has. But I got my first formal taste of it about a decade ago when I went to the Masters in Financial Planning Program at Golden Gate University. And one of the courses I took was taught by Rick Kahler, who wrote a book about behavioral finance, I think with Klontz Sr. and Jr. And, the biggest concept for me to come out of that class with this idea of money scripts are sort of instinctive beliefs about money and how they were useful at one time, but then our lives changed, our circumstances changed, but our beliefs about money did not change and how they can really be damaging-damaging or hold us back. And that was

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very interesting and my... I have often thought about my own limiting money scripts, but then my EVOKE® training, the two-day training with the Kinder Institute are my only other formal training. But, I really do credit my work with Elizabeth Jetton, sort of, you know, meeting monthly for over three years now with really enriching my understanding of what this client-relationship can look like and our responsibilities, sort of moral obligations to our clients and how we can manifest that and how we communicate with clients.

Brian Thompson: [00:47:09] What Meg said reminded me of books that I've read; it's not just classes that I've taken, but also there... I think Carl Richards' stuff is also very, very good on this. Listening to clients and engaging in deep relationships. Simon Sinek, "Start With Why" has been a great book for me. "Drive" by Daniel Pink. There is one about... "Switch" by the-

Meg Bartelt: [00:47:28] "Switch." Yes.

Maddy Roche: [00:47:30] Yeah.

Brian Thompson: [00:47:30] Is it Daniel Heath? What is the...?

Meg Bartelt: [00:47:32] Chip and Daniel Heath - They're brothers.

Brian Thompson: [00:47:34] Yes!

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Meg Bartelt: [00:47:35] They are the brothers.

Brian Thompson: [00:47:36] They are the brothers. I sometimes get confused!

Maddy Roche: [00:47:40] Hahaha!

Brian Thompson: [00:47:40] Yeah. There are plenty of books out there if you don't want to dive into like the two-day or the five-day or, you know, university. There are books that talk about this type of thing that you can learn from right away that I think are very helpful and, to me, it's-it's all about leading up to your knowledge and in growing your knowledge rather than having to go down one path or another.

Maddy Roche: [00:48:01] Yeah, great. Thanks for that. Leighann, I'm interested in how this is helping you shape conversations with potential clients, and if you felt a-a change - and maybe you have or haven't had conversations since COVID has hit. But, if you were to, how would this change the actual execution of the first conversation? Would you switch anything you've been doing?

Leighann Miko: [00:48:20] You know, at this point, I haven't had too many conversations with prospective clients since the pandemic started. I did, you know, employ some of the techniques, you know, a little bit earlier in the year, but I-I imagine, you know, the conversations now that tend to be a little bit more negative leading, because there's a lot of fear.

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Maddy Roche: [00:48:38] Mmm.

Leighann Miko: [00:48:38] Right? That maybe didn't exist three or four months ago around this state of, "what's going on?" and people's potential to achieve the things they wanted to. Right? There's this idea that, you know, people have this vision of what they were going to accomplish and their goals. And now they're thinking, "oh, crap" like, "given what's going on right now, there's-there's less of a chance of actually gonna be able to do this, no matter what action I take." So, you know, my biggest thing, I'd say, prior to the training, was that I had it in my head that, you know, it was important for me to create this bond with the client, to connect with them, to relate to them, to show them that I'm like, "oh, yeah. I thought that too" or "I, you know, same thing happened to me." It's completely irrelevant, you know? So what that does is, that if I interject, "Okay. Yeah. No, I really thought that too" or "that happened to me": what I'm doing is I'm putting myself in there and it takes the focus square off the clients. And, you know, if they're kind of in a thought zone, now they're distracted. Now they might go down a different path. So the idea is, you know, to keep those comments to myself and again, really focus on the client, because this is about them. This is their show. It has absolutely nothing to do with me and I've just learned to stop interjecting, even if I think it's going to be a fun conversation, that it's, you know, we can have those conversations over a beer, over happy hour in a couple of weeks when it's not about business. Right? And so for me, it's just shutting my mouth and letting the client drive the car. Or the prospect.

Meg Bartelt: [00:50:00] Yeah, and I want to build on that because I think that is a really strong blow to advisor ego -

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Maddy Roche: [00:50:10] Mmm!

Meg Bartelt: [00:50:10] - in terms of how we create bonds with our clients, right? We need a bond. We need a strong bond with our client. And I experienced the exact same thing that Leighann did, that-that the EVOKE® training really threw, you know, threw into doubt, which was, you know, I get a prospective client on the call and "oh, they went to my same college" or at least they went to college in Boston or we liked the same activities or the same food or some similarity, and I would attempt - as you do and just like normal conversation - to establish relationship over that shared thing, that commonality. So what I've learned, and it's been-it's been painful, right, because I know how to do that, I know how to bond over like, "oh, yeah, I love yoga. What style do you do? How long you've been doing it?" That's easy, but it's superficial, as it turns out. And, as Leighann says, it's not entirely about the client; it is about -

Maddy Roche: [00:51:08] Interesting.

Meg Bartelt: [00:51:08] - you validating that aspect of the client's life, because that's the one you personally understand and experience yourself.

Brian Thompson: [00:51:16] Yup!

Maddy Roche: [00:51:17] Totally.

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Meg Bartelt: [00:51:18] So, you don't want to cherry pick aspects of the client's experience, the client's life, the client's conversation, and effectively tell them, "oh, that one's important. All that other crap you just mentioned, because I didn't pointed out, doesn't really matter. But this thing that I'm pointing out because I experience it too, that's the important thing." So there's a real danger there that if we start trying to bond over a shared knowledge, experience, desires, whatever, we are implicitly telling the client, that's the most important thing in your life and all those other things aren't important... And we don't even know that we're doing it. Right? So it's sort of like, got this teaching through the training. I just sort of reflected on everything I've said to clients before and had this gigantic "oh crap" moment -

Maddy Roche: [00:52:07] Hahaha, yeah!

Meg Bartelt: [00:52:07] - of, "oh my God, I have misserved every client I've had up until this point."

Ian Bloom: [00:52:11] Well, and for what it's worth, Meg immediately goes to how she's failed, which she doesn't; she's perfect. But it's a natural human tendency. And what we can do slightly better is just listen. Because if you're giving them the guttural signals, you're nodding and, you know, like just being there with them and holding eye contact and being nice, they actually know you're listening to them. And then you can just repeat one or two things back that are very emotional. "Mmm, yeah, wow, I can see how you feel that way. I could see how that experience shaped you." And that's it.

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Maddy Roche: [00:52:45] I want to use this in daily life.

Brian Thompson: [00:52:48] Yes!

Maddy Roche: [00:52:48] It sounds so effective!

Meg Bartelt: [00:52:48] You should!

Brian Thompson: [00:52:48] You should use this in daily life!

Maddy Roche: [00:52:53] Tell me more, Brian.

Brian Thompson: [00:52:55] It's just so important in every relationship to, as Leighann was pointing out, we come from a society where we're not listened to. Right? There are very few spaces where we're-we're actually listened to, and that's why we're compared to therapists. But this is important for all relationships. And even with I, Ian, Meg, and Leighann have bonded over this experience and I find us doing, holding space for each other very well, which is sort of fun for me. And getting the pleasure out of having that type of deeper relationship has been life changing overall, but also life changing in my business because I now feel like I'm more connected to my clients than I ever have been before. Just by listening and not making it about me taking that pause before I say anything and thinking about what they just said. Making sure that I'm not interjecting myself into that conversation. Just holding space for them, what they said and what's important to them. It's been amazing.

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Maddy Roche: [00:53:45] Leighann? Thoughts about how you've used it outside of just clients?

Leighann Miko: [00:53:50] Yeah, it's been incredibly impactful in my relationships in communication with my partner, friends, family. As Brian, Meg, and I were driving home or back to the habitable side of Hawaii to get to the airport, driving down the winding roads, I kind of stopped and I said to both of them, "you know, I really just want to thank you for letting me use you." You know, joking, but, you know, to me, the two of them have been incredibly powerful because just watching them, you know, their responses to things, how they react, their-their word choices, their you know, their mannerisms: that alone has been incredibly powerful for me and kind of taking cues from them. It's like, "Okay, I see how that works. That was really effective. I know how that impacted me. I'm gonna steal that. I want to use that now moving forward." So being able to have those kinds of relationships and then kind of, to some extent, you know, incorporate those into the way I communicate with people, then again, like that kind of ripple effect. Hopefully, the next person will pick up on some of that and maybe use that in their communication with their friends, family, loved ones, clients, whoever.

Maddy Roche: [00:54:50] I love this theme: that there's- that it's really the investment in yourself first that allows you to show up better to your clients. That you've got to get over the fact that you won't know everything right out of the gate and that there's room for improvement and there's opportunities for, you know, more education to come, more language to come, more framework to come. I find that, as I work through my own therapy, just learning words to use, new language, and as Meg and everyone was describing the actual... The tools, once you have them, life really does

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change and it kind of just begins to skyrocket your ability to connect with people. Meg, have you used these tools in your daily life?

Meg Bartelt: [00:55:29] Ohhh. Yes, I have tried to. It is- it is harder in my daily life. I'm thinking about relationship with my husband and my two kids. You know, I don't want to try to, you know, oh pine "why", but it is just harder to show "empathy first" with them. I just go -

Maddy Roche: [00:55:44] Oh yeah!

Meg Bartelt: [00:55:44] - I just go straight to irritated, but I'm at least aware of what I should be doing as I'm actively not doing it.

Maddy Roche: [00:55:50] Conscious, conscious of it.

Meg Bartelt: [00:55:53] I think with my friends, it's been easier to and I think I've gotten really much more just enjoyable conversations from people because I don't happen to be like, you know, from the peanut gallery, like, "oh, hey, interesting. And go this way and go that way." Just letting them just sort of dribble on and then whatever direction they end up heading to ends up being more interesting than if I had sort of funneled them into sort of my preexisting conception of where the conversation should be going.

Maddy Roche: [00:56:19] I love that. I really am going to take that as a takeaway from this conversation that there is, there... By your just small little questions, and trying to create the bridge between you and the client is

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actually kind of derailing and changing their story a bit. Brian, I think you had a thought.

Brian Thompson: [00:56:34] Oh, yeah, that was... That's an important takeaway. I love that. And the conversation also just makes me think of the process, the EVOKE® process itself. We all got life plans at the training.

Maddy Roche: [00:56:44] Wow!

Brian Thompson: [00:56:44] So that's how it affects my personal life, too, because I made decisions and changed my life in very significant ways by actually getting life plans. So it applies to your personal life and your business life. It applies to everything. And it's very powerful to actually go through the process yourself and realize there are things that I could be doing right now that could help me live the life that I want and doing it.

Meg Bartelt: [00:57:05] I think all four of us here on the call have been affected, you know, at least in small ways and sometimes in pretty large, profound ways by having gone through the life planning practice during the training ourselves, by having life planned, just, you know, looking at our faces on the screen here. I know some major stuff that has happened to a bunch of us and I got a wingback chair with an ottoman out of it, so I'm pleased.

Maddy Roche: [00:57:33] Ian, your thoughts on this?

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Ian Bloom: [00:57:35] I'll actually echo what Brian was saying and what Meg was saying and say that the best life planners are people who have been life planned themselves. It's really hard to know when you've hit the right emotional chord with working with a client until you've had somebody hit that cord working with you. So that I think is probably the biggest unique value that you get out of the experience, the five-day training, is that you know what it's like to be truly listened to. You know what it's like to be taken through life planning process and have your, the future you want shown to you, and then you're like, "oh, man, I have to actually do this for like everybody now." Like this is all, this is all I want my client relationships to be; not because this process is, you know, the best thing ever, but because I know what this feeling is. And I want all my clients to feel this good about their futures.

Maddy Roche: [00:58:26] Beautiful. Well, I, I absolutely hate ending this conversation. And I know that we could talk for a lot longer, but I think that's a really beautiful note, Ian, to end on. I so appreciate all four of you and your willingness to share your growth, personally and professionally, with our listeners. I think now more than ever, hearing stories from advisors like you about what you're doing to change the practice and to serve your clients better is so important. You've all shown up so compassionately and so lovingly to your clients. I thank you for that, for helping be advocates for this beautiful industry of ours and really connect to everyone - friends, family, each other and your clients - during this shared global experience. I hope all of you have a beautiful and wonderful rest of your day. Thank you all so much.

Brian Thompson: [00:59:08] Thanks, Maddy.

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Meg Bartelt: [00:59:08] Thank you, Maddy.

Leighann Miko: [00:59:08] Thanks, Maddy.

[00:59:11] -- swish --

Maddy Roche: [00:59:11] Avocado toast. Selfies. A mountain of student loan debt. Gen Y is anything but traditional, and with over seventy five million people, it's a population you don't wanna ignore. Learn more about how to serve this unique population in our guide called "Attract and Profitably Serve Millennial Clients in your RIA." Discover three key ways to tap into the millennial market and six things that they want from their financial advisor. Visit xyplanningnetwork.com/millennials for your free copy.

Maddy Roche: [00:59:42] Be sure to join our VIP community at xyplanningnetwork.com/VIP to hang out with other #XYPNRadio listeners, ask questions for future mailbag episodes with Alan and Kitces, and finally, to find a community of like minded financial advisors. Thank you so much for joining me today. Have a safe and wonderful one. We'll see you next time.

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