

Team Reconnect



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Hosts

CrisMarie Campbell and Susan Clarke

Team Reconnect

Susan: Welcome to *The Beauty of Conflict*, a podcast about how to deal with conflict at work, at home and everywhere else in your life. I am Susan.

CrisMarie: And I'm CrisMarie.

Susan: We run a company called Thrive Inc, and we specialize in conflict resolution, stress management coaching and building strong, thriving teams and relationships both in person and virtually.

CrisMarie: On this podcast we'll be sharing tips, tools about how to make your team, your relationship and even you work more effectively. You can find us at thriveinc.com, that's www.t.h.r.i.v.e.i.n.c.com or follow us on LinkedIn at Thrive Inc. We hope you enjoy this episode.

Today we're going to talk about how important it is to reconnect with your business team that you've been working with. I'm CrisMarie Campbell.

Susan: And I'm Susan Clarke. And part of the reason we're really interested in talking about this today is because well, one, we've been doing that and as a result of all the things that are shifting and changing. And we've been working with a lot of leaders and teams and noticing that this is really a critical time for finding a good path for reconnection.

CrisMarie: So what we mean is we've been doing that, you might think, well, you two have been hanging out the whole time and you've been working with your team. But what we've recognized is with the vaccine happening there is places that are starting to open up, maybe throttling back and then opening again. But there seems to be less of the, oh my God, are we going to survive mentality.

Now, you may still be experiencing stress or burnout from working from 6:00am to 10:00pm on Zoom. Or lacking the actual connection you have with your teammates or even working in silos. And those have been how we have survived this pandemic. We've done the best we could. And now it's time to kind of step back, look at where you are as a team, as a business and reconnect for a path forward, that's what we've been doing.

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Susan: Yes. And I guess CrisMarie I do want to say that I think also part of it for me, maybe why I said it the way I did was that we've always been reliant upon partners and people we team with. And because of the current situation that is shifting. And that's where I meant, we've been gathering even more of our strategy going forth, or much more long term than we had been up till now. So even though we've been together over the last year we've been surviving.

CrisMarie: Yeah, which is kind of, even if you've been in a big organization, there is a sense of the survival or how are we going to get through this. And there's been an inability in a lot of ways to plan long term. We could pretend everything was fine and plan long term. But the reality of the business landscape, even in technology has shifted and changed. And how are you going to cope? If your business is really doing well, that's another issue to kind of factor into the equation.

Susan: Right. And I think a lot of the coaching we've been doing, there's been teams, some teams have been decimated, they're coming back completely different than they were before. Some leaders have shifting roles, making decisions about whether they're going to come back or not. There's all sorts of things that have happened even in companies that are thriving.

CrisMarie: Yes. And I mean it's been a big hit to women in technology. We've lost many women in technology during this pandemic because they have chosen to, hey, I've got to prioritize my family. And so I can't do my job and my family.

Susan: And also I mean as companies make a decision for people to go back to work, which some companies are, the biggest pressure is probably on women because of that very thing you're talking about. And so now they are like, "I'm not coming back", even more. And there was already that crisis.

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CrisMarie: So this idea about, we call it team, t.e.a.m. team reconnect is a process that we work with. We take ourselves through. We eat our own dog food. And we also take business teams through. And it doesn't have to be in person, some places we can have this in person. We wound up doing this for ourselves and we also did it with a client virtually. We're going to do it with a client in June in person which is making our big move to go in person.

Susan: Yes. And I think we are even going to be doing one where we'll be remote and they'll be together or something. So we have some variations just much like business is happening right now.

CrisMarie: And the key with the team reconnect is really taking a breath and recognizing that we have survived this chunk. Now, we've all been in the same storm but in different boats. And so we all have different kind of stressors that have happened to us. And it's important when you bring your team together for a team reconnect which is a strategic meeting of sorts, is to actually make some space for people to decompress and talk about how that stress has impacted them uniquely for them.

And it's not like you have to take a lot of time to process that. But for people to show up and lean in to actually make room for that humanity in the beginning of the meeting is important.

Susan: Yeah. I mean I notice even as some leaders that we are reconnecting with, that's actually a big part of the process. We have to slow them down to say, "Before we just dive into, now you want to set up your strategy and move forward, let's talk about how you're doing." Because even leaders have been under this, they don't even know the level of stress they've been under because they have just been going 24/7.

CrisMarie: And you think about this in any relationship, what's most important is spending that time upfront to actually connect as humans because the rest of the conversation, and the rest of the creativity, and

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engagement is so different if you actually treat people as human beings when you first start the meeting.

Susan: Yes. And this is really where it's critical to remember, your people have all been in different boats, the thing we said before. We have been in the same storm but very different boats.

CrisMarie: And even that stress, being in that stress or survival mode is always fast paced, fight, flight or freeze, it's go, go, go. And it is a chance to kind of down shift, not pokey slow, but down shift and sink in to connect. The other piece that we focus on in a team reconnect is really our model that we talk about.

We have a podcast on it, check it out, but it's in all our books is really creating a space to, one, introduce this model of check it out, so people know hey, I can actually speak to my boss. I can check out a story with my boss if they're saying something that I'm taking offence to or it isn't working. And this is so important in the environment now of inclusion, the diversity, equity and inclusion really you want diversity on your team.

But you really want people to feel included, like hey, I can speak up. I matter. I don't have to censor myself or hold back because all that is more tension in the system and not effective for healthy conversations or real conversations.

Susan: So we really believe, I think what you're saying CrisMarie is that idea of checking it out, check out your story. Be able to allow different storylines to even exist. And don't just dismiss them because they don't – that what you expect your people to be saying. But to really listen and consider, that's a different perspective. That's a different storyline than I had about what it's going to be like to come back or whatever you're talking about. And check it out and find out, if you really caught it, if you really listened, if you understand.

And then maybe you can talk about, "Well, maybe I see it differently. Here's how."

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CrisMarie: Yeah. So I think that's so powerful because those real conversations and the ability, if you don't have them, the outcome of the team connect will be the leader's point of view or the loudest person's point of view. Versus what we have found when people drop in and connect, are more vulnerable, even sharing about different styles is an easy way to do it. And then we teach this communication model of check it out. People start to develop the capacity for engagement and thinking and new ideas emerge.

Susan: So I'm going to throw out my thought and heart line now because really I think what we need more than ever coming back into this is to have both thought leaders and heart leaders. In other words you really need to be paying attention to how is the connection going? How are people doing? The heartbeats, is this going to be worth people's heartbeats to come back in or are we just making it harder? And then you need to be thoughtful about what you're going to do, so it is.

CrisMarie: I do agree, Susan, because when you can engage the hearts and minds of people you actually capture such a secret ingredient that can drive loyalty. People will engage and run through brick walls when people's hearts as well as their minds are engaged.

Susan: And what we've been talking about is how to make sure you have the heartbeats in that meeting because then you get to the next part of this where we start to ask those big questions. And that's where you want people thinking and they're going to think much better if they've got their heart beating.

CrisMarie: It's true. They're not going to be like, "I can't say that." So what we do is we spend this half day really settling and connecting the team, and catching people up whether this is virtual or in person. And then we step back and help the team look at, hey, wait a minute, where are we going? And we tend to ask these key questions. And one of them is, "Why do we exist as a team? Are we a bunch of individual contributors or do we create something together that's bigger than any one of us?"

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And that core purpose, that why statement is very powerful. And that's where you are, it's an inspirational, it's not like we want to make 10 million dollars. It's not a quantitative thing. It's really oomph.

Susan: Yes, I was thinking, for us we have always had sort of a lot of passion around our change the way corporate America communicates.

CrisMarie: But what we did, when we took – so we had our own team reconnect.

Susan: I was going there.

CrisMarie: Susan, I don't mean to step on your toes. Go ahead.

Susan: Well, the reason why I'm saying that is often even if you're a small business or a larger corporation, you may have had a guiding light for a long time. We have had a very clear guiding light for us. And we realized with all that's gone on it's time to kind of look at that and we're not changing it hugely. But in our refresh and reconnect we realize, hey, we've come to something that we think actually fits better.

CrisMarie: And it's really, I think it's more of us in it and it's why Susan and I and Thrive Inc exist is we want to help people have real conversations and work together to create powerful results.

Susan: I mean it was fun to look at that and realize, and make a shift, and talk about it. And when you do this with your team you kind of get everyone's, what they think why we exist. And then you can play, is it still the same thing or not?

CrisMarie: And this idea of people having real conversations. That includes the concept of hey, each person showing up fully, an environment of inclusion and being honest and frank. And it's safe to actually speak up, and then working together to create powerful results. I mean we really are about the team and making sure. We coach individuals and always it's

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about how are you going to show up on your team and drive that forward. So really it's inspiring for us.

Susan: And we know a lot of times maybe this isn't going to change for you. But we always like to go back to, when we're working with a team, are we on the same page?

CrisMarie: And now, if you're a leader of a team you might have an idea of why you exist as a team, why the team you lead exists. But also think about the team you're a member of. And it's really interesting to get different points of view on this. So be thinking why does my team exist, the team I'm a member of and the team that I lead? The next question you want to ask is what do we do? And that's just a non-sexy statement of just the verbs of what you do. We speak, we coach, we consult, we train, we facilitate, we run workshops.

Susan: We're remote and online because before, we did all those things before but now realize there's a lot more virtual to it. So things may shift even in your what statement based on the world now.

CrisMarie: Yeah. And we'll probably wind up wordsmithing that a little bit down. But you're getting our raw footage from our offsite this week, or onsite. And then the next question. So thinking about what you do and that's just basic, like if we had a video camera on your team, what is it your team's doing?

The next question you want to consider is who do we work with? Who do we serve is probably even a better way of framing that. And one of the things that we realize, we serve individuals. But in organizations, when we're working with a midsize company, we work with that leadership team, that CEO, that leadership, all those senior leaders. And when we're working in a corporation we usually serve the senior managers, like a CBP, an SBP, a GM.

Susan: So it's important sometimes to evaluate who you are. We had quite the discussion around this because we realized we have worked with

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corporate leaders at the highest level. That's not our sweet spot. Our sweetest spot in those really large global companies is probably CVP, or a team, or even an organization within an organization.

CrisMarie: Well, we worked yeah we worked with a CIO in a very large company and all his direct reports. We worked with the Chief Vice President in a very large technology company, so yeah.

Susan: And then we realized also that we really like working with the midsized companies is our sweet spot, as well as we're working more with HR than we ever have before. I think because now HR's often at that leadership table, which thankfully they need to be. We probably have a podcast on that somewhere.

CrisMarie: Well, and the partnering with HR to actually build the skills of inclusion on the leadership level, helping leaders be more engaged and both smart and healthy. So kind of what you were saying Susan, with the thought and the heart, or the mind and the heart. It's kind of the smart and the healthy. And the healthy is really those inner personal dynamics, the emotional intelligence. So that's why we tie in and support HR because if their people are doing it, they are so stressed and have so much more to do.

Susan: Right, and yes. So the next piece we talk about is what's going to make us succeed? And we call these strategic anchors. What are the things that you – you don't want a lot of them, three things that are going to support you in how you make decisions and guide you in this phase.

CrisMarie: They're kind of the upper level, yeah; every decision should be aligned with at least one of these strategic anchors. And often they're at odds with each other, they can be. We realized because of our strategic anchors, because of this thought, heart leadership is really this sense of creative expression. We're always creating new content, learning new things and passing it onto you. We do it through our podcast, we do it through our books and we do it through our speaking.

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Susan: And then the next one for us is pretty much everything about us is relationship based. Like I was saying earlier, when I was thinking of our team I was thinking of even our broader team, the part and people we partner with around marketing, PR, putting things out, various things. And most of our work has frankly come through referrals. Now we're trying to figure other things out too but that's a big part of who we are. And we think relationships matter.

CrisMarie: We have people that have worked with us and then they move on to other companies, and they call us back. We have people that I have worked with in business consulting and they bring us in for their, you know, they do something else and they bring us into the client. So it really matters. We really like the relationships. And the people that we are, like you're saying Susan, gathering on our extended team get us and have those relationship sense, and it really matters.

So these strategic anchors really define your decision-making. So it will help us choose, do we actually want to work with this service provider or do we want to work even with this company?

Susan: Yeah. And that's really important, is this person looking for a short term fix or a long term relationship? Those are things we consider in this for us that help us make the right decision.

CrisMarie: And our third strategic anchor is really team results inside our own company and what we provide for other people. It's really where we believe really leveraging a team is what's going to get the most value. So Susan and I team to work for companies. We help other people do teamwork. We create a team with our service providers.

Susan: And we really have found that where our skills work the best is with companies, organization and teams where there is a desire to have a collective result, not just...

CrisMarie: Yeah, a superstar.

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Susan: Not a superstar, a single shine, single and shining.

CrisMarie: Yeah. And this team results also fits this new area that I've been moving into with the diversity, equity and inclusion, being inclusive and building those skills where everybody's crossing the finish line together. Because we think you can accomplish so much more together than any one person can alone.

Susan: But we don't want to leave out the word 'results' because we didn't put team player, we put team results because we actually do believe that collective results are critical. We don't want to just have a grand time or support a company and just, "Okay, you guys have a great time at work." No, we actually really want you to be getting the result you want. So I think that's just important to mention because it's different then.

CrisMarie: And when we're working at the leadership level, that alignment and cohesion, their team results actually are about the entire organization. So we really work to help cascade that down through the organization. So the larger team of the organization is getting business results. So think about your strategic anchors, what are the three guideposts that really define your decision-making on your team, whether you're leading a company or in a team within a company?

So we've talked about why do we exist, your core purpose, what you do, just kind of the basic verbs, who you serve, and now those what we just covered are the strategic anchors or what will make you successful. And that shifts over time based on the business environment. And boy, have we had a change in our business environment.

Susan: So the next thing that we often talk about is core values, or team norms, things that are going to help you really look at how do we want to operate together? How do we want to treat each other? What are the things we value and share, because that's critical.

CrisMarie: Yeah, this is really about behaviors because we think behaviors are a precursor to results. And so you really want alignment. You know that

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feeling, and we recognize it, when you bring somebody, or you start with a company and you just fit? I was talking to somebody who was a colleague of mine at Point B which is a project management firm, I highly recommend. And then he went on to work at another company and he's finally wound up at a third company.

But he said, "Oh my gosh, I spent three and a half years killing myself thinking I would somehow fit in this environment. And it's just so brutal." And he's so glad, he did tons of interviews, he feels very, very confident that this new environment is just, it feels so different. And that sense of feeling so different is really alignment of core values. So notice that because you really want to bring in people that are aligned with your core values.

You want to partner with people that have your core values. And you want to promote people that live these core values, everybody, you want to have these values.

Susan: And let's be clear, lots of companies have a long list of values. There is a specific, we think there should only be two to three that you know are the core of your DNA. And don't mess with it. Don't say, "We want to have integrity, respect and inclusion", when you know that that's not actually what you have because that would mean it's not your core value yet. You want it but you don't have it. And we have a whole podcast on that.

CrisMarie: We do because we think core values are really things that you actually demonstrate now.

Susan: Well, I'll say, we had a core value of play. I think we even talked about this on a podcast earlier. And we realized, yes, that's actually very helpful for us when we do it, but we are not the best at making that happen.

CrisMarie: That's an aspirational value, so you can have aspirational ones that you want to be. But what we're talking about core, it's the best of who you already are and your star players demonstrate this. So we took our

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team members, our extended team members that we're working with. And we looked at hey, what really makes it sing for us, that we really like working with these people and they also resonate with us? And we came up with our three core values. Do you want to say them Susan, or the first one?

Susan: Well, the first one is collaborative. So it's all about we said, the relationships, teams. We want open hearted and we want – I'm not sure what that is but...

CrisMarie: Warm.

Susan: Warm.

CrisMarie: She does know what open hearted was, she's referring to what's written on my piece of paper.

Susan: She was throwing a piece of paper at me, but we got it. I got it out there.

CrisMarie: So we really value that collaborative approach where we're kind of working together and we feel like we're on the same team. It's that team energy. The next one is we really haven't quite landed on this. We came up with the word 'smart'. But that sounded a little too smart.

Susan: Too heady.

CrisMarie: We thought of insightful or unique perspective. And there's even this sense of additive, when we work with ourselves or other people they bring something that is insightful to us or additive to the conversation. And it really expands our thinking.

Susan: Now, I want you to know, we actually did sort of commit to insightful, but that's the thing. I can see as we're doing this podcast that it hasn't really been bought into yet. So that's an important thing for you as a team to think about because we actually really believe that you need to

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come up with these and then live them a bit because sometimes there is going to be tweaks. You realize, no, that's not quite right.

And the last one is dynamic. For us that really means each of us has this energy we bring that could be inspiring but it could be intense, but it's definitely – so the word we came to was dynamic.

CrisMarie: So collaborative, insightful and dynamic are our current working and progress values. We're going to test them and we might be tweaking them because you're getting this fresh off the press because we just had our own team reconnect. And so we're going to test drive them and we suggest you when you take your team through this and you come up with your core values, or if they're team norms that you test drive them, just like Susan was saying.

Susan: Now, we've now done this like we said with some remote teams, we are doing it in person soon. We're doing a version of this with a team online. And we can do this with you.

CrisMarie: Well, and just when we were working with the virtual team they had new team members, their business environment had changed and so it was really important, one, for us to do some styles, so people got to know each other and then drop into those conversations, and their strategy.

Susan: Well, also I think the piece they came in with, that was their team had pretty much been decimated, there have been some really key things that have happened. And initially that wasn't going to be – I don't think that was the plan of the leader to go there.

CrisMarie: To talk about it, yeah.

Susan: But it really came forward, so we dealt with that. And then there was this sense of okay, now we can move on.

CrisMarie: So these are some pieces and we can – these are questions that you want to ask your team, we can help you through them. But really

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take some time, plan some time with your team, whether you're with us, or somebody else, or just yourselves, to really step back and look at the business, connect as humans and refresh where are you right now and where do you want to go. And these are just some questions that we go through. We also talk about how do you want to meet and who does what and different pieces.

But it's a very valuable process right now in this kind of, what feels like an inflexion point in our business cycle as a globe with the pandemic.

Susan: So again, just to remind you, you need to look at yourself first in terms of your reentry process. If you want help with that, please reach out, we do coaching, we work with leaders to support them in that process. And then you also need to consider how am I going to really help and support my team reconnecting? So even if you're a member of a team and you're not the leader, but this sounds like something you need, reach out to us, we're glad to have a conversation.

CrisMarie: I forgot to add, one of the other questions though is what's most important right now, which is that took us a couple of days to actually work through which is really what's our focus for the next quarter. So you start at this big picture and then you go all the way down for what's most important in this next quarter, and that's you really want to engage the hearts and minds of your teams in that, not just, again, not just a quantitative goal. But an inspiring goal that they can see, yes, we've done this, at the end.

Susan: Okay. Well, hopefully this has been helpful and we'll hear from you or we'll see you or something in the future.

CrisMarie: Take care. Hope you have a great week.

Susan: Thank you for listening to *The Beauty of Conflict* podcast. We know conflict, stress and uncertainty can be hard to navigate.

CrisMarie: We want to support you becoming more resilient, able to speak up and have healthy relationships and business teams that thrive. Connect

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to us on LinkedIn at Thrive Inc. Learn how we can work with you, your team, or your company at thriveinc.com. That's www.t.h.r.i.v.e.i.n.c.com.

Susan: We hope you have a peaceful, productive and beautiful day.

CrisMarie: Take care.