The SAFE Leader

with Mark McBride-Wright

Ep. 011

The Hidden Hazards of Work and the Future of Psychological Safety

WITH DR. I. DAVID DANIELS

LEADER IN OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY

E011_ The Hidden Hazards of Wo...right and Dr. I. David Daniels

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SPEAKERS

Mark McBride-Wright, Dr. I. David Daniels

M **Mark McBride-Wright** 00:01

Welcome to the next episode of the safe leader with myself, Mark McBride Wright, and I'm joined today by Dr I, David Daniels. Dr I, David Daniels is a leader in occupational health and safety, former public safety executive and CEO of ID two solutions LLC, specializing in safety management and psychosocial hazard mitigation, host of the psych health and safety USA podcast, and author of psychosocial hazards are real. Dr Daniels brings expertise and a commitment to psychological safety as a critical issue in the field today. His extensive background includes senior leadership roles within the National Safety Council and the International Association of Fire Chiefs, along with numerous awards, including the NSC distinguished service to safety award. David, delighted to have you here today. How are you? I'm

D **Dr. I. David Daniels** 00:57

good Mark. Thanks. Thanks for the invitation to hang out with you for for a few moments and talk about safety things.

M **Mark McBride-Wright** 01:06

It's absolute pleasure. I think you're the first guest that I'm interviewing whereby we've, we've been connected online, but never actually spoken or met or anything. So this is literally, like the first conversation we're having.

D **Dr. I. David Daniels** 01:19

Absolutely I rather enjoy those. Yeah. Rather enjoy

M Mark McBride-Wright 01:25

so So, yeah, tell, tell us. I so in in these sessions, I love getting to know the people behind the stories and and all usually, our history has shaped who we are, the experiences that we've had as individuals have helped guide decisions that we've made for how we want to earn our keep. So what brought you to what you do today, what you know you've had a diverse career in safety, what sparked that interest all those years ago? Well,

D Dr. I. David Daniels 01:58

I have to have to take a journey back to my days. So out of high school, I ended up doing construction okay with the car, went to carpenter school, bounced around on a couple of construction sites, found myself on a sign crew. That's what they would call it today. Back in the day, it was me with a sign that said stop and slow, trying to control traffic as a 19 year old, okay, okay. And I'm from the Seattle area. Matter of fact, was born and raised in Seattle, and it doesn't get cold up there all that often. But this particular day, it was, and I literally can recall standing on this street. I even remember the name of the street, but anyway, standing there wishing one of the cars would come around the corner, hit me and kill me and get me over with. It was horrible to me. I just didn't really enjoy it, okay, but I kind of had to do it to, you know, to make a living at the time. And so someone I was working with had the idea about going and taking the test to become a firefighter, and I didn't know anything about what a firefighter I'd never met one didn't know actually had met a couple, didn't they? They didn't tell me anything about their job. Okay, so I didn't know anything about the profession, but it sounded okay. So I went to take the test. So the two of us went to take it. I passed it, he failed it, and the rest is history. That led me to a really long career about over three decades in the Fire Rescue Service. Over that period of time, 30 of the people that I work with either got killed at work or died from something they're exposed to. Wow. Okay, and that seemed weird to me. It seemed weird. I go like that doesn't seem right that people should be dying at work. And it kept getting closer to me, but never got me and so it really got me interested in this whole conversation about safety, because it's not something that the Fire Rescue Service, the Seattle Fire Department, didn't talk implicitly about safety. They talked about particular parts of it, and I started digging into it myself, because I just didn't like what was going on in other people. I got my first fire chief's job, moved to the Atlanta area, went back to the Seattle area for a couple more, and then my last fire chief's job, myself turned out to be a real turning point for me, because it was, again, I never got hurt physically in that job. I did get hurt emotionally, though, particularly that last fire chief's job, okay, and that's what really led me on this voyage of discovery around psychological injury. And, you know, moral injury, which is an entire other thing that I also endured so and that's that really kind of sets up, you know, the research that I've done and all of that, it's that lived experience that that didn't feel good, yeah, look good on the outside looking in. In but it didn't feel good a lot of the time, and that, again, it set me up both ways. One, it gave me that negative experience, but also gave me some really positive ones. It changed the trajectory of my life and the trajectory of my family and everybody connected to me. So I if I didn't have any other information, I would have lived it the same way.

M Mark McBride-Wright 05:23

So was that experience that you had related to a loss of life of colleagues on the job, or was it

when you said it started to come closer to you? Or was it, or it could be both, or was it like a sort of culture within the fire profession that was preventing psychological safety. It was

D Dr. I. David Daniels 05:44

both it was both it was and I can't say which was worse. As a matter of fact, on July 12, 1987 I responded to a fire with a colleague who was working from another shift, he actually had the option not to even he could have elected to drive, because he was driving one of the other shifts, and he said, I'll Just sit backwards. So he sat to my left. You okay, there's one of those pauses. I'm

M Mark McBride-Wright 06:43

making a note of your time and yes, what you were saying.

D Dr. I. David Daniels 06:47

I know exactly what I was saying. Yeah, yeah,

M Mark McBride-Wright 06:52

okay, go hang on right for my video editor to have these notes, right? Okay,

D Dr. I. David Daniels 06:58

so I'll pick up from there, please. So my colleague, again, as I said, was was sitting really close right there to the left of me, and I didn't even know him all that well, but much of what he did that day was driven by the culture itself. He did what anybody in his position would have done, but at the end of this incident, he was dead. I just cut to the chase, and that day, I really thought very seriously about quitting every time I tell this story, and I think about sitting in that fire station after the incident was over with my now wife, the emotions they I can feel them coming back and and I really thought, seriously, just by this is ridiculous. At that point, I'd been on the job for six years, and that was the fourth person that I was on the same crew with, or worked really closely with, that had died. And I was going like, there's just something wrong with this. But somehow I stuck it out, and I learned over the course of time that the decisions that these folks made were ones that the organization told them to make, because the organization didn't know a whole lot about safety. It knew a lot about fighting fires, but it did know a lot about safety, about physical safety, and it knew even less about psychological safety. That wasn't even a discussion we were having at the same time I from the time I started, I was challenged with the fact that the American Fire Rescue Service, like most fire rescue services around the globe, is a fairly homogeneous occupation. As a matter of fact, the United States is the least diverse, publicly funded thing we do has been and has rare exception to that.

M Mark McBride-Wright 08:49

Wow, dang it. Came up with issue Dr I David's making cam already, and you ask them to close all apps and tabs and refresh you.

D Dr. I. David Daniels 09:23

Yeah, it keeps causing me to kicks me out, and it makes me reload. But Okay, again, I'll pick up where I was again,

M Mark McBride-Wright 09:35

least funded, yeah, so

D Dr. I. David Daniels 09:39

the divorce, the Fire Rescue Service has a lot of challenges relative to diversity, to equity, to inclusion, and a lot of that is based on how it was designed, and even the efforts that it undertakes today tend not to be effective. Because it's still based on how it was built. And this, this learning, this experience, applies to every other institution I've been connected with, as well every system as I believe. W Edwards Deming suggested that every system is perfectly designed to produce whatever it's currently producing. And unless, unless you go back to unless you redesign the system, you're not going to get a different outcome, no matter how many you know, employee fairs and other kinds of things that you do. It wasn't built to be safe and inclusive at all, and so it just wasn't. It was built by folks who, again, at the time, they weren't all bad people. They were trying to do at the time what worked for them, and it just doesn't work very well today. So that experience collided with my concerns around physical safety and taught me a lot of lessons

M Mark McBride-Wright 10:57

that's really, really interesting. I've been doing some work back in the UK with the institution of fire engineering. Was a member for a while, of which, you know, we've we've been doing some like global, we're doing a global survey for them right now, of their 11 and a half 1000 members on on EDI and on culture. And I'm aware that, you know, there's been some fire fire brigades in the UK that have not had very good reviews done. Of them, shall we say, London's

D Dr. I. David Daniels 11:31

had a real, yeah, really interesting. As

M Mark McBride-Wright 11:35

AL Yeah, who did an investigation. I Yeah, so I'm aware of like, the challenges that the fire

brigade face, the fire profession faces. So what are you doing now, then, with through the work that you're doing in psychosocial, psychological safety, physical safety, through your business ID two solutions. Tell us. Tell us about that. Yeah.

D Dr. I. David Daniels 12:17

I started the business as a hobby. It was something to give me an opportunity to, you know, to talk with folks, kind of outside of the public sector connection. So I started my own business as I was retiring from the Fire Rescue Service. And I have to admit, it is still a hobby. It. You know, I don't do it to keep the lights on. I do it because I enjoy it, and but there are occasions when it pays pretty good and but that also helps me in terms of just the way I look at business. I having been in the public sector most of my life, I'm not I've never really been driven by making a lot of money. I was born and raised in a household that didn't have a lot my my mom was 14 years old when I was born. We were on public assistance most of my life, till, matter of fact, till I, till I moved out. And so I was never used to having a lot of stuff anyway. And I don't, I value things, but they they're not, you know, important to it's more important for me to enjoy, you know, situations and enjoy people. As a matter of fact, I heard once that money's only an issue in the absence of value, and so I look for value in things. I mean, I

M Mark McBride-Wright 13:37

think that's one of the best ways to live your life. You know, when you're when you're in your final when you know your end is upon you.

D Dr. I. David Daniels 13:43

This, this actually started this. I don't look at it as a fatalistic type of approach. This is just period. I mean, I don't understand why. You know, 20 year olds invest their time in certain things. It's often because they're not thinking about the value. They're thinking about making a buck, and they become slaves. We all there was a period of time I was a slave to the buck as well. But then I started to realize, you know, I'm working really hard, but most of this money is going to somebody else anyway. So why am I doing this? Why am I putting myself through it, particularly emotionally what I was going through. There's not enough money in the world, the jobs, there are two jobs that I had that made a tremendous amount of money, and I hated both of them by the time they were over. Yeah. So it's just not about the for me, it's not about that. Same with my business. I don't have employees intentionally. I don't Okay. I could do it. I've managed really large, you know, groups of people, big budgets and all that, but, but for my own safety and because I'm a little bit ahead of folks in the US talking about this conversation, so it makes them move nervous. Yeah, things that I say Are they take them as provocative. I don't. They're my lived experience. So, you know, it makes it easier to. Not have to deal with I'm not trying to convince anybody this is a good idea. I'm here to present my research, my lived experience, and if it works for you, that's good. If it doesn't, that's good as well. And through therapy, I'm no longer angry at people who disagree with me.

M Mark McBride-Wright 15:19

That's a wise place to get to that's a good mental

That's a wise place to get to that's a good mental

D Dr. I. David Daniels 15:25

place to get to. It's a lot more, it's a lot safer.

M Mark McBride-Wright 15:29

Absolutely, I think, I think your point there around trying to build a business on something where people aren't ready to take action upon what you're suggesting, it's good that they're at a place where they're at least listening, rather than being an ostrich, the head is in the sand, and they're not even engaging. But that that could bring risks for you trying to build a business, because it could lead to a delay in income or even being contracted to offer any consultancy services at scale that could actually support the overhead that comes with having people Well, again,

D Dr. I. David Daniels 16:05

I have contemplated that, and I don't my livelihood is not subsistent on whether or not I get another contract. It just isn't. And some these are decisions I made 14, almost 15 years ago, I decided that the wife and I, so I decided that I had to convince her that we were going to become debt free,

M Mark McBride-Wright 16:28

financial independence. Yes, love. And so

D Dr. I. David Daniels 16:32

we decided that we so I don't owe anybody anything, nothing that I have is, you know, other than you know, the have to take care of the power company and that type of thing. Yeah, and we have done this for a few years. We live, have lived below our beans for a number of years. So we again, I'm not a millionaire, but I don't owe anybody anything, and the income that comes in is more than enough to take care of everything that we need to do and and it's going to be that way. I've projected this out for the rest. My goal is to live to 110 and it's going to work until then, after that, we'll have to see

M Mark McBride-Wright 17:11

well, I'll, yeah, that is a good long term goal. I love, yes.

D Dr. I. David Daniels 17:17

So anything that comes up in between, then I'm able to say what I believe, and to, you know, to

share the information that I have access to, and not feel like I have to say it in a particular way, because I won't get hired again. If I don't get hired again, that's okay. That's that's a choice that people get to make, and again, ultimately, I find myself dealing with other people's problems, not my own. I mean, it's not my issue. I get it. I It works for me. It may not work for you. I think it will. But I'm not here to twist anybody's arm and make them see that your psychological health and safety is as and I would argue, more important than your physical health and safety, because one affects the other. Yeah,

M Mark McBride-Wright 18:05

so being so you've positioned yourself then to be in a position to be a real agitator, like a real vocal agitator for because, you know, don't like it, don't care, you know, this is what I've got to say, right? And so what, what does that then, what changed? Where do you see the profession as being at now with regard to workplace safety and the work that you do? And what, where would you Where would you like it to be? Where would you like it to go to? And what does that process look like.

D Dr. I. David Daniels 18:41

So I heard once another, you know, another, something that I heard once I think Newt Rockne said it that the, you know, the famous Notre Dame, football coach back in the 30s or 40s, whenever it was he said that none of us is standing still. You're either progressing or regressing. There is no such thing as standing still, because if you stand still, you're actually backing up. Because the world is advancing, things are changing all the time, and the question is, how far do you want to back up, or how much do you want to keep up? That's it. That's it. And so I've tried to position myself to try to stay a little bit ahead of what I see going on in around me, just a little bit not. I used to run too far ahead, and that actually created some challenges for me as well, because I was running off trying to do this new and innovative and creative thing, but I didn't bring enough people along with me, and they were afraid. They're afraid. Yeah, I so I didn't realize at the time that people were afraid. Yeah, and part of the reason was that I had my own challenges. I had my own things that I hadn't really dealt with myself. So a lot of the safety related issues I had in Seattle, I took them along with me to the other places that I went, and I just did right? I was sometimes hyper and Uber focused on safety, but the way that I delivered it came across to people. I was actually a bully a little bit. I don't think I was as bad as some, but I was little because that's the models that I had seen. So until I started to understand some of that about myself, I wasn't really as effective as I could have been when interacting with other people. So to your question about where are we now? I believe that the global experience of exposure to a biological hazard that we called COVID 19 had it didn't really change near as much as people say that it did. So it didn't change everything, but it exposed a lot,

M Mark McBride-Wright 21:01

yes, yeah, a lot of the vulnerability, absolutely

D Dr. I. David Daniels 21:05

D Dr. I. David Daniels 21:05

it. A lot of these issues were already there, but it forced us to pay attention to them. And and workplace mental health is one of those. And again, as you focus on mental health, you can't help but also focus on physical health, so it is one of the last thing. Dare I say, benefits of the pandemic is that more people are focused on how things feel emotionally and then how they feel physically. A lot of folks quit jobs, left employers, started to work remotely, that type of thing, and as you separate yourself or create space between you and a physical hazard, you're less likely to be injured by it. But the same with psychosocial hazards, the more distance or the less vulnerable that I have to the hazard, the less it's going to affect me. I believe that we are at the the precipice of a of a very interesting change relative to safety, because we can engineer most of the physical hazards out of the environment. Yes, we really can't, and we're getting better at that. Eventually, I don't see human beings going into buildings on fire at all. I don't, I don't. Will

M Mark McBride-Wright 22:19

be pending in the robe, absolutely,

D Dr. I. David Daniels 22:21

yeah, once, once the technology becomes inexpensive enough to be able to not cost so much, that's what we human beings won't take the kind of risk that we're taking right now, because we right now, we have to. We will not have to, but we will always, well, not always, for the foreseeable future. I do believe that we will have psychosocial hazard exposure, though I see the physical hazard environment getting better, but the psychosocial hazards, particularly because of the definition in my research, I don't know that we'll ever totally overcome that we might. I just don't quite see it yet. I

M Mark McBride-Wright 22:59

really like your point about and I hadn't thought this before. In my book, are you in the safe leader? I use the Bradley curve developed by DuPont that shows workplace cult lost time, instant rates as a function of safety culture. And we're sort of at a point where safe you know, where hazards have where continuous reduction in LTI, ours has plateaued. And so what I'm postulating is maybe being more inclusive will help lead to, like, a further reduction, but, but, but when I look backwards of how things were, I you know, it was acceptable in the past that children could go to work, and then it just becomes unacceptable. Becomes unacceptable. Can't speak today becomes unacceptable because of what we understand as risk or what we accept as being risks being willing to take. I hadn't really thought about as we go forward from the point in time we're at now, and as technology is developing, actually what we do now will be looked back upon, upon as, why on earth would you send a human into rebuilding Yes, and so do you think that's the way we'll invite 2100 we'll be looking back at 2024, and thinking, do you remember back in the 20s? Yes, yes, yes. People used to actually go in with water hoses. And, you know, spray, right?

D Dr. I. David Daniels 24:19

You actually used to do that? Yes, yes, yes. So again, I can't help inserting, at this moment my definition of a psychosocial hazard. It is a psychosocial factor that's perceived or experienced by the person exposed as a threat that causes them to behave differently, and all of those are important. My perception and experience is different, and it doesn't matter what I look like, it matters how I take in the data at the time and how I process it in my brain, which we could both be in the in identical surroundings and simply be perceiving. Or experiencing that data differently, and it doesn't make either of us better, worse, good, bad. None of that we we try to. We often, as a society, as a species, want to put these labels that it's better or worse or comparison or it is what it is. Yeah, it just is absolutely and

M Mark McBride-Wright 25:20

and especially when thick judgments have to be made in fractions of a second, that then can take a different yes trajectory of outcome for in that moment, yes.

D Dr. I. David Daniels 25:31

So again, my perception and experience of this thing as a threat causes my amygdala to fire up. And once it fires up, my prefrontal cortex kind of goes, takes a vacation, and I can't make I can't have some of those other conversations until the amygdala calms down. But that's going on in me, and I believe that as we pay more attention to that, we will have fewer physical injuries. We will we will also, though, start to have fewer experiences of psychosocial harm, because we'll just be more wrecking we'll just recognize it quicker. So for example, in the workplace, I have had people make jokes that to me were threatening and they weren't even about me. I when I got into the Fire Rescue Service, there was a really hostile environment towards women. They would talk about, there were pornographic magazines in the bathrooms and all that type of thing. And I found it offensive. And I'm not, I don't even identify as a woman, but it was offensive to me, because I go like, that. Seems weird that they would talk about, you know, people who could, who could be my sister or or my cousin or my mom or I didn't like that, so I didn't engage, and I would kind of push back. And so then they would turn on me. Well, you know, who are you? You're just a little girly man, or whatever. I go like, yeah. So, so again, that was their norm. It wasn't mine. It just wasn't mine. That was a psychosocial hazard to me. It felt threatening to me, because I also thought that if you talk about women, that you're probably talking about black people and gay people and disabled people, and you might be doing when I'm not in the room, but that's that's what's going on in my head while you're making a joke,

M Mark McBride-Wright 27:17

and it prevents you being able to build trust. That's exactly right, and build trust with people who you hope will rescue you that part when you're in a burning building. Well, I can

D Dr. I. David Daniels 27:30

tell you the first fire I went to would have been in December, December 3. Well, no, no. Anyway, December of 1981 I went to my first fire. It was on 39th and Albion place in Seattle, Washington, and I was standing on the back of a fire truck. The building was on fire. The two

Washington, and I was standing on the back of a fire truck. The building was on fire. The two people were on the fire truck, left me on the back of the truck and just left, and left me standing there. And it was not because I was black or because I was young, that's just what they did at the time. They ran off and did, I don't know what they did. I wandered around by myself in this building on fire for, you know, 2015, 20 minutes, and came back out. Nobody even spoke of it. But to me, I'm going like, that's just strange. Are these people, you know? So I'm thinking all this stuff, but we never talked about it. So I'm having a processes all on my own and on now, the two people that work with are actually were nice guys to me. They were fairly nice to me. There was a few things that they would do going along with the system, but they didn't, they didn't really pick on me or anything like that. But it still felt kind of weird, you know. So, yeah. So again, these experiences inform how you trust or don't trust, not only people, but the system. To me, I looked at the system because it wasn't just one person, it was the system caused me to feel in a particular way. And again, it wasn't directed toward me, but it was never designed for me.

M Mark McBride-Wright 28:57

So with the system being the way it is now. I always meet people who I always see activists. And I believe you need both forms of activism in the world. You need the activism that is out there, the agitators doing that, but you also need the activism by stealth, which is the people in the corporates, in the public sector bodies that are doing the work, doing the negotiations, changing the system from from within. And very often, sometimes we want, maybe it's the running too far ahead. You know, we get impatient and we want to change the system. But what people often forget is you have to work with what you've got now and make incremental changes. And so changing the system from within. So what hope do you have for how things are now? What? What? What's happening to help shift to that future reality of a more inclusive, more psychologically and psycho socially safe environment for the industries that you touch with that you touch. Well,

D Dr. I. David Daniels 30:00

first of all, again, I believe that people are changing. Particularly, I got to live. A lot of credit to younger millennials and Gen Zers, who have watched the experience of Baby Boomers and Gen Xers, and they've watched what happened to them. They've also had their own experience of, you know, 911 and the economic downturn and all of this, so they just have a different expectation about how the system itself should look. And one of the reasons that some of us have been agitators inside a system is our own trauma and pain that we've not processed. Yes, and so we tend to we overreact, because we're so hyper vigilant and hyper sensitive, because we've taken on a lot, and again, haven't dealt with it, haven't dealt with it. And I find that as folks are able to, first of all not get the trauma load on the front end anyway, or deal with their trauma, then there it's easier for us to work together. Even the folks who mistreated, talked about, downplayed, disrespected me, had their own traumas. Yeah, they had their own issues. A lot of the times, that's why they were doing it's not that they were bad people. They were hurt people and hurt people, hurt people. Yeah, they just especially

M Mark McBride-Wright 31:25

within masculinity, within men, within men. Yes, I bring it back to, you know, you know, the war

generation, where we didn't talk about things, and obviously the social context of the 30s, 40s and 50s. And then you've got, I know people who are, if people, you know, if we assume that people have kids that are a normal, what is normal age? Like my mom had me when she was 16 as well. So I totally get having a close, close in age relationship with your with your mother. You know, there's those few, I guess for me, there's a there's a sick do my math, my maths, a four year overlap, where I can say, Oh, I'm in my 30s, my mom's in my 40s, or I'm in my 40s.

D Dr. I. David Daniels 32:07

Yes, yes, you

M Mark McBride-Wright 32:09

know. So if you think about those, so, those stereotype, generational stereotypes, I guess, of what, of how men were raised, and what, what we were grew up with, what is acceptable and is not acceptable. I do see that reflected even in the close age range I've got between me and my father in the context of LGBTQI rights and evolution. You know, so much has happened in the last 10 to 15 years with acceptance that when I grew up in the 90s in the United Kingdom, we still had this overhang of an incredibly homophobic, homophobic and negative policy from the Conservative government, and also the AIDS epidemic and AIDS crisis and how that stalled progress and shaped opinions, you know. But, but then, you know, fast forward through me becoming a father in the last decade, the 2010s I see it totally differently, you know, for the for my my sons growing up with same sex parents. But there's also other same sex couples that have children, and I'm, I'm, like, wary of, oh my gosh, are there going to be any people there where he sees a family that's like him, but just the society that he's been raised in is so much so different to what I was raised in, but it means that me as a father forgetting the fact that I am also gay, but me as a father is so tuned into that difference compared to, you know, how My dad was, and his dad was, and so it's, it's, I think there's a lot within masculinity, within men, of of the history that doesn't excuse like not doing the work now to make the change, but it can explain why there Is that unprocessed trauma that you're referring to, yes,

D Dr. I. David Daniels 34:02

yes, yes, yes. And again, to to recognize that the vast majority of human beings do what they believe to be in their interests at the time with the information that they have yes at the time. And we're, we're going to have conflicts and and I, there's a part of me that really wishes we spent more time discussing conflict resolution than diagramming sentences and balancing equations. I've never had to balance an equation in the workforce. I've had conflict with people, and sometimes I didn't know how to manage it. I just didn't really I'm feeling a particular way, you feel a particular way, and instead of dealing with it, we clash. And what we've been, the examples we've seen, is that we get our conflicts resolved through the exercise of power and violence. I have more power than you, so I. Emotionally beat you down, or physically beat you down or exclude you, because I am trying to get my need met as opposed to trying to get our needs met.

M Mark McBride-Wright 35:12

Yeah, that's a really good point. That's a really Yeah, a really good point.

D Dr. I. David Daniels 35:19

And I take this view into safety, and again, I'll share this one as well. Safety doesn't work well when you try to do it to people, this is, I said we're gonna do this to you, it also doesn't work well when you're doing it for other people, either it disempowers them to go, Well, yeah, you don't really know. I'm gonna do it for you. It works a lot better when we do it

M Mark McBride-Wright 35:40

with people, with one another, yeah, and community, we both have a role no

D Dr. I. David Daniels 35:44

matter you could be the CEO and I'm the the front line, or vice versa. It doesn't matter what place we have in the organization. Safety works well for all of us, but we have to participate in it. We do. I can't expect you to know what causes me to feel safe, I need to share that with you. Yeah, there's some things that are probably pretty obvious. You know, there's a, you know, a vat of chemicals over there that'll burn people, and it'll probably burn me too. But again, a psychosocial hazard isn't that way. I have to, you know, I have to share, sometimes with people how that made me feel. And sometimes, you know, yeah, it's going to cause you to feel that way. And now here's we deal with it, or let's change that. Yeah, sometimes you can't. Not all hazards can be eliminated from every environment, particularly psychosocial ones. You You will not have a zero harm, zero hazard type environments. It's not possible because it's the job. It is the that's what it is, I mean. And so how do we help people be more resilient, because they're going to be exposed. So what

M Mark McBride-Wright 36:56

work do you do with you know the work that you do take on. Do you do you work with leaders to help them try and lead, to create cultures that are the parrot, the the what you're describing, like, what? How are you making that change happen?

D Dr. I. David Daniels 37:11

I can do this with any body, any size, any group. I can work with an individual. I've done that. I've worked with individuals who are having difficulties on their jobs and and try to help them sort through, first of all, what's going on with you. I am not a therapist, yeah, but I often refer people to therapy because that's the issue. Until you address that unresolved trauma that's never going to get any better the environment, it won't seem any better to you because you've got your own internal struggles? Yes, I can also. I've worked with groups. As a matter of fact, I have a contract with a with a labor union and help them, you know, address, I help them get their collective bargaining agreement. I wrote the dike, the document I can work with middle managers, supervisors, managers, leaders, who people, leaders, whatever they call

themselves, on how they can be better, more effective. You know, leaders, particularly looking at the psychosocial hazard environment. And I work with, you know, upper level executives. So again, this is a very utilitarian type discussion, because everyone has a part in it. And I try to meet people where they are,

M Mark McBride-Wright 38:26

and where do you see? Where do you see? I'm interested to get your take on where you see Dei, diversity and inclusion sort of intersecting with safety. What's your perception on that I see,

D Dr. I. David Daniels 38:39

the only way dei will be effective is when you address the psychosocial hazards in the environment for everyone period. Otherwise it will never work. Never, never, never. You can have all the recruitment fairs and fruit bowls and EAP programming and diversity boards and that you want, the system itself is producing what it was designed to produce. It has psychosocial hazard barriers all over the place. Yeah, all over and if you don't fix those, we spend a lot of time trying to fix people. The people aren't the problem the environment. It's not the seed. It's where the seed is planted. Every seed will grow up to be whatever it was designed to be. I was designed to be who I am today, a person of African descent that has a lived experience in the safety environment and can share with other people, strangely enough, as much as I talk now, I was told in the second grade that I would be in speech therapy for the remainder of my life, so I was designed to be who I am. Not everyone has seen it over the course of time. I get it because they were looking at me through their lens. Yeah. Yeah, they were putting their view of me. It doesn't mean it was actually me. I had to find out who I really was, yeah. And I met myself at about 26 right? As my brain started to fully form, I got introduced to me, and I rather enjoy a relation, the relationship with me, brilliant, I do.

M Mark McBride-Wright 40:17

And do you think that? And is that the work then that you do with with leaders or with people, where you say that unprocessed trauma, and then maybe they need to be referred to therapy if needed. Do you think there's a lot of people that just haven't done that, and they have not holding them back from being the fully effective leader that they can have? Yes, yeah. So we've actually got industry and public services being run by a whole bunch of people that, yeah, aren't, aren't being fully unlocked.

D Dr. I. David Daniels 40:43

But again, think about it, we have, there's a matter of fact, there's a lot of research out there to suggest that we have built institutions that are better run by psychopaths, because that's how it was built. It was built based on power, based on aggression, based on, you know, Robert Taylor is the father said to be the father of scientific management. He's the one who told us everybody was a number had to be measured, had to be That's what he told us, right? What,

what we should have listened to as well, was Mary Parker Fauci, who was a contemporary of Robert Taylor's, but she was, she's a girl. Nobody's gonna listen to her back in the late 1800s early 1900s she doesn't have anything to say, of course, so

M Mark McBride-Wright 41:26

many examples of that through exactly

D Dr. I. David Daniels 41:28

so we missed out on the conversation about yes, they we do need to manage systems, but these are human beings, and we need to create environments so human beings can work together to create great things and have great relationships with each other within the context of a system. Yeah, so, so again, we built these systems, you know, based on the mill. Even the military. Do you have screaming and yelling at people doesn't necessarily get them to do what you need them to do. There are some circumstances, and when I was in the fire service, there were sometimes I had to raise my voice. It's because of the ambient noise, not because I'm yelling at someone, but there's a fire burn, there's engine. I had to speak louder in order to be heard. But that has become a practice where people yell and scream and do all these things, and then we've even written books about the aggressive, and then we look at the animal kingdom, and we fashion a lot of our leadership based on what animals do. Instinctively. We should be smarter than that. Yeah, we have a more developed brain. We should be able to reason with one another, use our words and not curse at each other, yeah, yeah,

M Mark McBride-Wright 42:38

that's really good, and it's really good. So I've got a section here on the Quick Fire question round. Ask you some questions, quick answer style. So what's the best piece of advice you've ever received?

D Dr. I. David Daniels 42:56

If I'm going to be in relationship with people, I have to be with them. I have to have to have the relationship the way they are.

M Mark McBride-Wright 43:04

What's your proudest professional achievement?

D Dr. I. David Daniels 43:10

Wow, it's a tie. I It's a tie. It's a tie between being awarded the Distinguished Service to safety award and being inducted into the Hall of Legends, legacies and leaders in the Fire Rescue Service. Those both of those things and they both happen within about a year and a half of one

another. So those two things are some of my proudest professional accomplishments and rewards. Congratulations.

M Mark McBride-Wright 43:42
What's the one skill you think every safety professional should have,

D Dr. I. David Daniels 43:51
the ability to have compassion for other people,

M Mark McBride-Wright 43:55
tea or coffee?

D Dr. I. David Daniels 43:57
Tea. What's your go

M Mark McBride-Wright 43:59
to? Productivity? Hack,

D Dr. I. David Daniels 44:05
oh boy. Productivity hack, I'm a tech nerd. If there's a tech solution to it, I'm going to that.

M Mark McBride-Wright 44:15
We've had that one. I love it. If you could have dinner with any safety or public health expert, past or present? Who would it be?

D Dr. I. David Daniels 44:25
Oh, what's this? There's a couple, but there's, hmm, I can't think of his last name. It's, what's Garret? What's Garrett last it would be the inventor of the of the of the traffic light. I remember his name. It's it boy. I just have to think of his last name. I can see his face. Can't think of his last name at the time. Yes.

M Mark McBride-Wright 44:57

What's your favorite way to unwind after a lot? Long day,

D Dr. I. David Daniels 45:06

passing out in my really comfortable office chair.

M Mark McBride-Wright 45:10

What's the most exciting project you've worked on in your career?

D Dr. I. David Daniels 45:18

Oh boy. Exciting. I really enjoyed working on the bullying, harassment and violence prevention task force for the International Association of Fire Chiefs. I enjoyed the hell out of that. I really did.

M Mark McBride-Wright 45:33

What one piece of advice would you give your younger self?

D Dr. I. David Daniels 45:42

Meet yourself early.

M Mark McBride-Wright 45:46

What's one book or resource you'd recommend to someone interested in safety and health

D Dr. I. David Daniels 45:52

the Speed of Trust?

M Mark McBride-Wright 45:56

Fantastic. Wow. That's the end of the Quick Fire question round. You're still thinking of that traffic like engineer, aren't you?

D Dr. I. David Daniels 46:05

Yes, yeah, yeah, his birthday. Matter of fact, his birthday is in March. Oh boy, that's just

terrible. I can't recall his his name. I will. I will think of it though.

M Mark McBride-Wright 46:15

Yeah, I'm just gonna see if I can bring it up for you to help. Garrett Morgan. Garrett

D Dr. I. David Daniels 46:20

Morgan, yes, yes. That's him. Yes. There we go. And there's, there's another interesting connection. We were both inducted into the Hall of legacy leaders and legends at the same time. Wow,

M Mark McBride-Wright 46:34

yeah, wow. I

D Dr. I. David Daniels 46:36

didn't, I didn't know a lot about him until he actually was also is a prolific inventor. And He also invented the, the the respirator, basically, wow, yes, wow. And he was African American. I mean, that's interesting,

M Mark McBride-Wright 46:55

yeah, then, oh, well, might need to a piece on that. Actually, I'm in New York City now, and so I've been trying. I'm doing this other project called engineering NYC, and I'm sort of going around landmarks, and I'm learning a bit about the history of them, but then filming some videos to I've learned all about the Brooklyn Bridge and its history. And so I'll need to look up Garrett Morgan. There's looking in the city here, there

D Dr. I. David Daniels 47:22

probably is he, you know, one of the examples that, one of the stories I heard about him, is he developed this air, this basically respirator, and because he was black, people wouldn't use it, so he had to sell it through white people. He has examples of taking it to places and showing how well it would work. But because he was black, they rejected it, and

M Mark McBride-Wright 47:45

lives could have been saved sooner if he hadn't had to have that delay. And yes, finding an alternative distribution model, and could actually just get the funding or get the route to market, yes, that white people had access to faster.

D Dr. I. David Daniels 48:00

Yes, yes, and I relate to him that way, because I am absolutely convinced that if I were not a black person, I would likely be a multi millionaire. Right now. I'm convinced of it because I've been in a lot of rooms and at a lot of tables with folks that had not anywhere close to my background, expertise, education, what have you. And the difference, the only difference was, I'm black and they're not. And again, in United States, it is something, and it's something I talk about a little bit in my book. Is it is part of living in the country that I live in. And it's, it is my journey. It is, and I could want it to be different All I Want It isn't. And so the question is, how do I live in that environment? My you know, I came up with the same story that a lot of black people get, is I have to be twice or three times as good, and in many areas I am because I have to be Now, I also though have learned to not throw that in people's faces because it is intimidating to people. Yeah, I share when people ask me about my background, I tell them, I don't volunteer it, though, because I know it causes people to feel a particular way when they've been told their entire lives that they're probably a little better than me because they how they were raised in the school that they went to.

M Mark McBride-Wright 49:22

Yeah, it's the classic. Comes back to a point you said earlier about the system and trying to change the system, but we respond to the changes that we need to make to the system based on emotion and based on, like, a personal then a personal criticism. And I think that's, that's the whole, I personally feel that that's one of the biggest thing that's unlocking progress is the misunderstanding between positive action and positive discrimination and equity, and understanding what true. Wright is

D Dr. I. David Daniels 50:01

positive as determined by who. Who is it that says that that was right or wrong, or good or bad? Who said that and and I do believe I'm a bit of an ethical relativist. That it's ethical says who? It just depends. I We, there are a lot of laws that are in place in the United States that were made because the people who made them thought they were the ones that worked for them. Slavery used to be legal. It used to be women couldn't vote at a particular time, there were, you know, oh, women couldn't get a checking account without a man. Kids could work, you know, in factories, because at the time, they thought that was the thing to do. So they decided that it was right or wrong. Is it right or wrong? It depends, yeah, it depends. Context matters.

M Mark McBride-Wright 50:57

It does. Yeah, context matters. And I'm sure to your point about, are you want to be part of the progress or be backing up with the with the regress that guess that the momentum, the analogy I had in my head when you said that, was the kind of pendulum swing of progress and swing forward, swing back. So I find your, your work really, really interesting for any of our listeners out there. How can they get in touch? Where can they find out more about your your work?

D Dr. I. David Daniels 51:28

Well, I'm I consider myself to be a pearly, fairly prolific user of LinkedIn. That's become my the platform of choice. I do have a website ID, two solutions where folks can get more information about the variety of services that I am able to facilitate those those two are probably the best they can. Also, check me out, you know, again, shameless plug on the psych health and safety USA podcast. Fabulous. It. There's a new episode every week, okay? It's actually sponsored by a company in Australia, okay? And by it is my cause celeb these days to convince people in the United States that psychological health and safety and physical health and safety are the same thing. Absolutely you cannot do one effectively without doing the other. You will not do one effectively without doing the other.

M Mark McBride-Wright 52:27

Well. We will put all those links in the show notes, and I've really enjoyed our conversation. You and I need to keep in touch, because there's so much alignment between what we do. But for the purposes of closing this out, thank you so much. Have you got any final words of wisdom or points you'd like to share with the listeners?

D Dr. I. David Daniels 52:48

Well, Mark, I do want to thank you for the manner in which this conversation is proceeded. I I get these. You know, you only get one opportunity to make a first impression, and my first impression of you as a human being is that you're a kind and caring human being. That's what comes across when you speak. That's what comes across in the questions, that you're a kind and caring human being who happens to be interested in safety and leadership and all the other stuff, yeah, but that's very important, and I thank you for the honor of your time and the opportunity to get to to meet you. And I anticipate that our roads will cross again at some point in the future.

M Mark McBride-Wright 53:35

Oh, they're definitely I'm going to follow up. Don't worry. Thank you so much for the kind words to David, thank you. Applause.