



# Just Listen with Dr. Mark Goulston



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**Dr. Mark Goulston**

**James:** James Schramko here. Welcome back to SuperFastBusiness.com. This is Episode 870. Today, we're going to be talking about listening. And for that I've brought along a very special guest, Dr. Mark Goulston. Welcome to the call.

**Dr. Mark:** Great to be here with you, James.

**James:** Now you've got quite the track record. I was reading about it. You're an MD, a business psychiatrist, you're a Marshall Goldsmith MG100 coach, founding member of Newsweek, expert forum and creator and co-founder of Michelangelo Mindset, which I'm sure we'll talk about today. You've been helping founders and entrepreneurs and CEOs, and getting lots of success and fulfillment. And you've also been the author or the co-author of nine books.

And the book that I thought was really interesting, in particular, was Just Listen. It's probably the one that put you on the map, and has been translated into 28 languages. And it's becoming the top book in listening in the world. You also have a podcast, My Wakeup Call is the podcast, it's in the top 1.5 percent of all podcasts. And as a fellow podcaster, my hat would be taken off to you, if I was wearing one, because there's so many podcasts these days.

And our goal today is to extract some really good insights from your massive depth of knowledge that could be helpful for our listener. You've got resources over at [MarkGoulston.com](http://MarkGoulston.com). So that's the website that I'm referencing today, with all your various achievements, and there's a lot of them. I had a look over there. Wow! You've been a busy man.

**Dr. Mark:** Well, when you get to be my age, James, you do a lot of things. I'm blessed to have had a wide-ranging career. In fact, I'll share something. I don't know if people on your listeners or viewers will get the humor of this. But when I speak to millennial groups, I'll say, You won't remember that I've trained FBI and police hostage negotiators. You won't remember that I was a suicide specialist for 25 years, and none of my patients died by suicide. You won't remember that I was an advisor to the OJ Simpson trial. What you'll remember is they filmed the movie Superbad in my home.

**James:** Nice.

## Clubhouse and unqualified advice

**Dr. Mark:** And when I joined this app called Clubhouse, where you show a picture of yourself, I showed the picture of one of the characters in that movie, if any of you remember a fella named Mick Lavin, and McLovin, I had a picture of him on my bed with Seth Rogen and Bill Hader next to him.

**James:** And how is Clubhouse going? It's been almost a year since I ventured into there, in the beginning. Is it still thriving?

**Dr. Mark:** I don't know. I think they added Android, but I think what happened is, I don't think it's thriving as much as it was. And they may have missed the window of opportunity. So I don't know about all, you know, its projected value, but certainly when it came out of the gate, it seemed to fill a real need with people being locked in.

But there's a downside. There's a lot of trolling, there's been some verbal abuse in the rooms, people feel unprotected. There's un-credentialed people giving advice to people who don't know what kind of situation they're in. And then there's copycats, I guess Twitter has something and maybe Facebook that is very much similar to it. So it's unclear to me what the future of Clubhouse would be.

**James:** A few things you said there were really fascinating to me. Firstly, I mean, the last thing you said about the technology giants cloning it, that was definitely going to happen. So I think you're correct. They had a shot to get in there first. But once they start copying, those big giants, they've got the reach.

But the thing that really interests me in what you said was about unqualified people giving advice without the relevant experience or context. And that must be particularly sensitive for you because of your background of someone who's professionally given advice to people who, from what I read in your book, a good chunk of them were in extremely precarious situations; whether they had cancer and they were terminal, whether they were suicidal, even poor performance in the workplace, which I really hope we can talk about today.

It must be strange traveling around, whether it's Clubhouse or in the real world, listening into conversations where you can see such an obvious gap in skills. How does that make you feel or react? Does it weigh you down?

**Dr. Mark:** I look pretty good for someone in his 70s.

**James:** Yeah, well, I only look good for someone who's 50 because Zoom has a softening filter.

**Seeing the angel in the marble**

**Dr. Mark:** But I feel a certain urgency. I'll share something right out of the gate that might be of use to your listeners. And you mentioned something called Michelangelo Mindset. So that's something that I've started recently, in the last six months, you can go to [MichelangeloMindset.com](https://MichelangeloMindset.com). And what it's about is there was a quote from Michelangelo, where he said, I saw the angel in the marble. And I carved until I set it free.

So it's a way of getting away from a transactional mindset, which can often push people away. He didn't push the statue into the marble, he saw it was there. So something for instance, I've developed a course for an international accelerator that every three months I give to their cohort. And it's called Michelangelo Entrepreneur.

And so, what we talk about, for instance, I'm giving two two-hour presentations in the next couple days, and this particular cohort, they're now looking for money from investors. And so they had friends and family and startup money, but now they have to go out. And so one of the things that's been a favorite of the cohorts is what I tell them, is that inside every investor is someone who wants to give you their money, just like the marble of Michelangelo.

Inside every customer, a client is someone who wants to buy from you. Inside talent you would like to attract, to build your company, is someone who wants to work for you. And inside whatever people you have in your company, are people who want to become raving fans of you. So the key is to find that or see it and scrape away everything that gets in the way of it.

**Is that smile a yes?**

So I'll give you an example, which they find kind of refreshing and comical, this part of the course. And you might get a chuckle out of it, I hope. I said, How many of you, when you're meeting with an investor and you're showing your PowerPoint and they smile, how many of you think the investor is saying yes? Meaning that as soon as your PowerPoint is over, they're going to say, What's our next step? And how do I get you the money? And they say, It's never a yes. And I said, That's because investors don't smile. Because it's about money.

One of the reasons they're smiling, is they've seen three minutes of your PowerPoint, and they've already decided it's a no. And so they're smiling so they're not going to be rude, because you put so much effort into that deck of yours, and they don't care. And they're smiling because they don't want you to catch that what they'd really like to do is say, I've seen enough, I've got to go make a call.

And so several of the people when I've already presented, they say, Oh my God, that happened yesterday. I said, So here is how you use Michaelangelo pitching. And you can modify the script. But if they're smiling after you presented for three minutes, and you know it's not a yes, what you say to them, with this tone of voice and probably with an Australian accent is, Might we pause now? And they're going to say, What? Yeah, could we pause for a moment?

And they're going to be nervous because they're going to think, Uh oh, you caught me not wanting to be rude. And so it disarms them. And what you say to them, this is the script, and if you're in a Zoom call, you could do this or if you're in person, you put your hands up right next to each other and you say, When we began, when I began my presentation, we were like this, you had money to invest, I'm a company that needs your money, and we're now like this. Here's you with money to invest. And here's me, a company that's not going to get any of that money.

And so you've disarmed them. And then this is what you say, because inside people listening to you, even you, James, there is someone listening for something; and what you say to that investor is, I think we're like this, because you were looking for and listening for something that we didn't present to you or didn't present to you yet. Let's scrap the rest of the slides. If you can tell me what you were listening for and looking for, that would make for a great investment for you, let me see if that's something we can cover.

And so they're totally disarmed because you've read their mind. And then you can help, and you can say, Tell me about an investment that worked out really well in your firm that you brought in or someone else, and let's see if we can find out what the parameters were that made it a winner. Tell me also about an investment that worked out poorly, and you don't want to replicate that. So you get them talking.

And then what you can say is, You know, it doesn't fit my company. But I'm in a cohort of 15 companies. I know three that might work out for you. So if you're willing, I'll send you a little bit about those three. I'm not going to tell them that I'm pitching them to you. Take a look at them, and if you're interested, I'll make an introduction.

So you've turned a conversation that was going nowhere into something in which you're dedicated to the investors' success, and those other companies don't even know you're going to make the introduction. So do you follow what I'm saying? That's Michelangelo listening. And I want to try and experiment with you, James, if you're open to it.

**James:** Sure. But I would be interested in getting an answer to that first question, at some point.

**Dr. Mark:** Which was?

**James:** How do you feel when you're circulating out there in society seeing an obvious gap in skills? Like how does that make you react?

**Dr. Mark:** I'll tell you, I never get angry, I get determined.

**James:** Gotcha. So you use it as a force to want to improve. And I think the extrapolation of that is that it's caused you to design this program to enable more people to have the skills. I think that's where we ended up. So let's get back to that experiment.

**An experiment with a podcast host**

**Dr. Mark:** So tell me if you have a certain internal experience when I tell you the following. If you're a host, you're listening to me. You're checking boxes, if you have some ideas of what you want to ask me. You're staying on track. In fact, you brought me back after I took that long tangent, you brought me back to that question. So you're listening to me. And I'm hopefully not going to take that long to answer a question as we proceed.

But if I focus on what you're listening for, what I'm picking up, James, is that you have over 800 episodes. You have listeners and viewers who trust you, have confidence in you. And you want to honor their trust and confidence by not wasting their time. And so what you're listening for, I think, is guests who can provide information that is relevant to your listeners and viewers, that is clear, concise, and actionable by them because if you can give them information that is relevant, clear, concise, and actionable, then you'll be honoring their trust and confidence in you. And you want to do that, because their trust and confidence in you matters. Is any of that true?

**James:** Well, that would be true.

**Dr. Mark:** So can you feel the internal experience of, I really appreciate my listeners and audience? I know they're all busy. I know they don't want to waste their time. I want to give them something that is truly valuable to them.

**James:** Well, it's always been the premise. And it's funny you mentioned the Michelangelo thing, because I've long been a fan of that statue of David quote. It's also the basis for my own coaching model, is not adding things for my audience. It's taking things away. And I love that quote around perfection, I think it's Saint-Exupéry or something similar. Perfection is when there's nothing left to take away.

And I think we're in a world where people do get busy. I deliberately keep my podcasts to a reasonable length that's consumable, and I also found the right cadence of how many podcasts is a good amount for them to be able to sustain the listenership without feeling overwhelmed, but also not feeling like they're going hungry.



But in this specific example, I read your book last night, in an effort to cherry pick the things that are most relevant for my audience. So I think there's two words that come to mind, relevance and context. And you're in possession of this vast array of information. And my job, as I see it, as the host, is to see if I can extract that on behalf of my audience. I feel like I'm their delegate or their proxy. They're not here. So I have to ask you the things they would be screaming at the speakers, Ask him this, or, Get him to tell you that. And I have a sense of what some of those things are.

But at the same time, because as you mentioned, I've already done quite a lot of podcasts, and I would say that I'm better at listening to my guests than just punching through a template, which is what a lot of podcast hosts do. They're a bit lazy. They'll say, Oh so, Doctor, tell me a bit about your backstory, and they'll make you do all the work. They'll say, What do you think's important that people should know?

I mean, I've done the work, because I want to leverage that. Ideally, my audience would get enough information from this episode that they would be excited to buy your book and go deeper, because books have been the weapon for me. Two weapons, sleep and books, have been my strength in business. And if they could devour the book and implement it, you've got some fantastic actionable things in that book, you just gave a great example of how you teach your class with a word, a script or a framework, my audience, I know, love frameworks.

And there was a couple of other frameworks you gave. One for handling bullies, and one for handling poor performers in a team, which I think would be wonderful if we could share those.

**Dr. Mark:** Uh-hm. So which one do you want to handle first?

### **Here's how you handle a bully**

**James:** I think the bully one. I remember when you were at the trial, and you were being bullied by an opposing lawyer. And they were a fierce, intimidating type. They were trying to rile you up. And it really resonated with me, this story, because firstly, if you ever advertise anything online, or you ever publish anything, even in your book, you'll still have one-star reviews that just incinerate it.

And the stronger your core is, which is why I go back to sleep and other things, not being shifted, you gave two fantastic defenses, one was kind of a, if you're in a compromised position, say an employee, and then the other one was if you're not in a compromised position, which is what a lot of our listeners can really relate to, where you've got like the full armory at your disposal. So they were fantastic techniques.

**Dr. Mark:** So, what James is referring to is I gave an example when I worked in the OJ Simpson trial. And actually, there was one day in the OJ Simpson trial, September 6, 1995, when I was sequestered because there was a character in the trial named detective Mark Fuhrman, who was this Los Angeles police officer, who had said during the trial that he had never used the N word, which is a very ugly word.

And at the end of the trial, it turned out that he had used the word, and there were certain audio tapes that proved it. And so on that day, he took the Fifth Amendment, meaning he wouldn't testify. And the rest of the world who was interested in the trial got to see that. Everybody in the world who was interested saw that except me, because I was sequestered upstairs, because if he didn't take the Fifth Amendment when I was then to be questioned by the defense attorney F. Lee Bailey, he could have found out if detective Fuhrman perjured himself.

So while I was sequestered, I didn't know what was going on. But what happened is in the hours when I was waiting, not knowing what was happening, I learned 80 percent of what I know about difficult people. And by difficult people, I don't mean just the yellers and screamers. I mean the ones who stonewall you, the ones who give you the silent treatment, the ones who play the victim card.

And one of the things I learned on that day is that when I got to see F. Lee Bailey, he would do what 80 percent of difficult people do. And what that is, is that difficult people in our life, sometimes they will charm us. Otherwise, why would you let one of them into your life to begin with?



So some of them can be charming, but then they'll do something to frustrate you. Then they'll do something to anger you. Then they'll do something outrageous, which causes you to want to become enraged, till outrageous as you're feeling, enraged is what you become. But most people are uncomfortable being enraged, they feel off balance.

And so when someone pushes you to becoming enraged, if you're not comfortable with it, you will then focus all your energy trying to keep a lid on not wanting to say something mean, cruel, hurtful, and filled with rage. So I knew he was going to do that with me. So he did come up at 7pm. I didn't know that Detective Fuhrman had made the Fifth Amendment.

And he was charming at first. But here is something that I discovered that you'll appreciate, but listeners won't get it, but you will get it, is I learned the power of innuendo. To innuendo is a way of making statements as a way to maneuver someone to being vulnerable. And so I have this ability to look into people's eyes and hold on to their eyes.

So right now, I'm looking into James's eyes, and I'm moving all around, but I'm still holding on to his eyes. And I learned to do that in my work as a suicide prevention specialist. So when I could grab onto their eyes, the message I would give them is, you're going to walk out of this, and you're not going to have to kill yourself. And I'm going to hold on to your hand emotionally until you reach the point in life where you're glad to be alive. And you don't have to believe a word I'm saying.

So it comes from a very good healing clinical place. So when F. Lee Bailey came, and he sits down and I hold on to his eyes just like I'm holding on to James, and here's the innuendo. - Dr. Goulston, we don't know what your role is here in the trial. Now normally, when someone says that, you go, Aha. But instead of going aha and leaning forward, and being more vulnerable, I just blinked my eyes.

So what I'm doing with James now is I'm imagining he's F. Lee Bailey, and F. Lee Bailey said that and instead of going, aha, I just blinked my eyes. And then he said, And we need to find out what your role was with detective Mark Fuhrman. And again, instead of going, aha, I just blinked my eyes. And he did this for several minutes.

And then the prosecutor who was accompanying me, looks at me and says, Mark, you haven't said anything. And I mean, I didn't say aha. I didn't say anything. I just held on to F. Lee Bailey's eyes, because I knew he would charm me, frustrate me, anger me, and then try to insult me. And I said to the prosecutor, He hasn't asked me a question. And then I started looking back into F. Lee Bailey's eyes, he flinched a little bit like, Oh, there may be something more to this person than I thought.

He started asking questions. And as I looked into his eyes, my mindset was, I'm not perfect. But I'm not hiding someone who killed two people. What's your story? So that's what I was thinking the whole time. And then he picks up speed. And then there was a point, just like, that happened in the trial, he raises his voice and he says, So you are here to say that you never medicated, you never coached, you never did anything to affect Detective Mark Fuhrman's testimony.

That resembled how during the trial, he said the same thing about to Detective Fuhrman, So you're here to you never said the N word. And so he's amping up, trying to push me into a corner. And so he finishes that with his knockout punch. And think of this with someone who's venting at you. So he finishes.

All the people in the room are curious, what am I going to say, I am holding on to his eyes the whole time with my eyes. I count to seven. And I go, \*clears throat\* and the whole room leans towards me, Oh, he's going to speak. And it was working so well. I counted to seven again. And then when I finally got to the end, I used innuendo on him. I said, Mr. Bailey, and he goes, Uh huh. I said, Mr. Bailey, my mind wandered the last five or six minutes. And I think what you were talking about was important. Can you run it by me again? And he goes, What?

I said, Yeah, you know, I don't know if I can get my car out of the parking lot, because they locked it up about two hours ago. But it seemed important. Can you run it by me again, what you said? And see, difficult people, when they know if they provoke us into our rage, they don't have to have substance because if they can provoke us enough, we're going to spend time trying to calm ourselves down, because we're uncomfortable.

And so then, he asked Johnnie Cochran, he's one of his partners and said, What did I say? And so then he shared some of those things. And by this time, it was like David and Goliath. I said, Mr. Bailey, it's been a long day. And I think you want me to say something, and I'm not saying it. If you can tell me what it is you'd like me to say and admit to, I'll be happy to say it, because I'm tired. But if it's not the truth, I'm going to have a problem with that.

And he looks at me like, what are you, crazy? And then he says to me and the prosecutor, I don't think we have to call Dr. Goulston on the witness stand. And then he goes to leave. And then I said to the prosecutor who was with me, I said, Wait a minute. And then I looked at him. I said, Mr. Bailey, I have a question for you. And he looks at me with this animosity, like what now? And I said, Yesterday in front of the world, you associated me with someone who is now perceived to be one of the most racist cops in America.

So just like in the trial, there was a saying you can't un-ring a bell when someone says the N word. It's such an inflammatory word. Well, yesterday in front of the world, you associated me with this Detective Fuhrman, and you slurred me. And the prosecutor with me, who had worked with Marcia Clark earlier, before he became ill, he said, Mark, Mark, they misspelled your name, don't worry about it.

And so I looked at him and I said, You slurred me yesterday. Do you have any idea how we can unslur a slur? And again, he looks at me, and then he looks at the prosecutor, like what is his problem? And then he leaves the room. And I get up, you know, get my papers together, and he comes back into the room. And he says, I will trade you a retraction in tomorrow's newspaper, if you tell me what you figured out about me.



So I know it's a long story, James, and I am sorry, and you gave me a long leash. But I think it's a good story. But I think it tells us a lot. It tells us that very difficult people get the better of us by provoking us. And especially, I don't know what the labor laws are in Australia, but now you have to be so sensitive. If you say anything that is against Black Lives Matter or against the #metoo against women, you're in big trouble.

**James:** Yeah, well, it's safe to say we're extremely heavily regulated in all those regards. But I really thank you for sharing that story. And it was worth it because I think there's implications for that story because we encounter, as you describe, toxic people in your book. In all walks, we have, and particularly people listening to this episode would have toxic clients who like to bully them, push them around a bit. They may have some toxic employees who are territorial or developing their little black box of proprietary IP that they won't share or not playing friendly with other team members.

And you did give a great technique for helping team members who aren't cohesive work together. I laughed at that story because at one stage in my own career, I got to take over a team of absolute losers, so it made me chuckle. I had that exact same scenario, and I dealt with it in a very similar way. And then, of course, we have the people from the public. Like, these days, it's not hard to wade into a debate on Facebook. We have to be better armed in terms of understanding ourselves.



It all comes back to our core. And then the other factor, which you talk about, and I think it's really important, is this mirror, and even relates back to that statue of David. Within every person, there is that person who wants to be felt. And if you can acknowledge that, you can really defuse the situation.

That might be a perfect sort of direction for us to go for this next part, if you could just talk a little bit about that, because that has implications for someone whether they're suicidal, whether they're an unhappy customer, whether they're a talented team member who's not performing according to the spec that you thought you would get. This technique is so critical, it's probably the foundational theme throughout your book of listening.

### **The chemical reactions of feeling “felt”**

**Dr. Mark:** I think one of the reasons Just Listen did so well is that the through line is, the more you can cause people to feel felt, which is different than merely feeling understood. Feeling understood can be clinical, but there's a distance. But when people feel felt, which people rarely feel, even in their intimate relationships, what happens is actually a neurophysiology that happens, is when people feel felt, there is a surge of a hormone called oxytocin.

Oxytocin is the bonding hormone. It's what enables young mothers to not scream at their screaming infants who won't go to sleep. So oxytocin, when it's high, counteracts something called high cortisol. And cortisol is associated with stress. And the higher the cortisol, the greater the possibility that it will trigger a little trigger in your brain called the amygdala. And the amygdala is in the middle of your emotional brain.

And when the cortisol goes really high, and you're really stressed out, it sends a signal to the amygdala to shunt blood, literally away from your upper thinking brain to your lower reactive brain, survival brain. So the expression deer in the headlights is actually true - when a deer is staring at you, there's no blood going up to their upper brain, they're frozen. And that happens in human beings.

And yes, it's great to meditate. Yes, it's good to do breathing exercises. And I'm a great believer in that. But even more effective or an addition is when you can feel felt in a situation. And something I will share, which may or may not apply to your audience, but I know mental health is on a lot of people's minds, and I am on a mission to lessen suicide around the world.

In fact, in the next couple of weeks, I'll be doing two 90-minute calls globally to all of YPO around the world. We're going to be doing a Zoom call with a friend of mine. He became a friend, he reached out to me after his 14-year-old died by suicide.

And so what happens is, the more you can cause someone to feel felt, the more they will calm down. Let me give you an example. Here's a hack you can use that is magical in your personal relationships, or you can use it at work. Think of someone who vents, or someone who's sullen, or someone who's there threatening to trigger you.

So what's happening is they're triggering high cortisol in you. You're feeling the opposite of high oxytocin, you're feeling pushed to your limit. So there's something in one of my subsequent books called Talking to Crazy, which is, how do you deal with the irrational and impossible people in your life? And I wrote that book, because there's a chapter in Just Listen to James remembers, called steer clear of toxic people.

## **How to handle someone else's agitation**

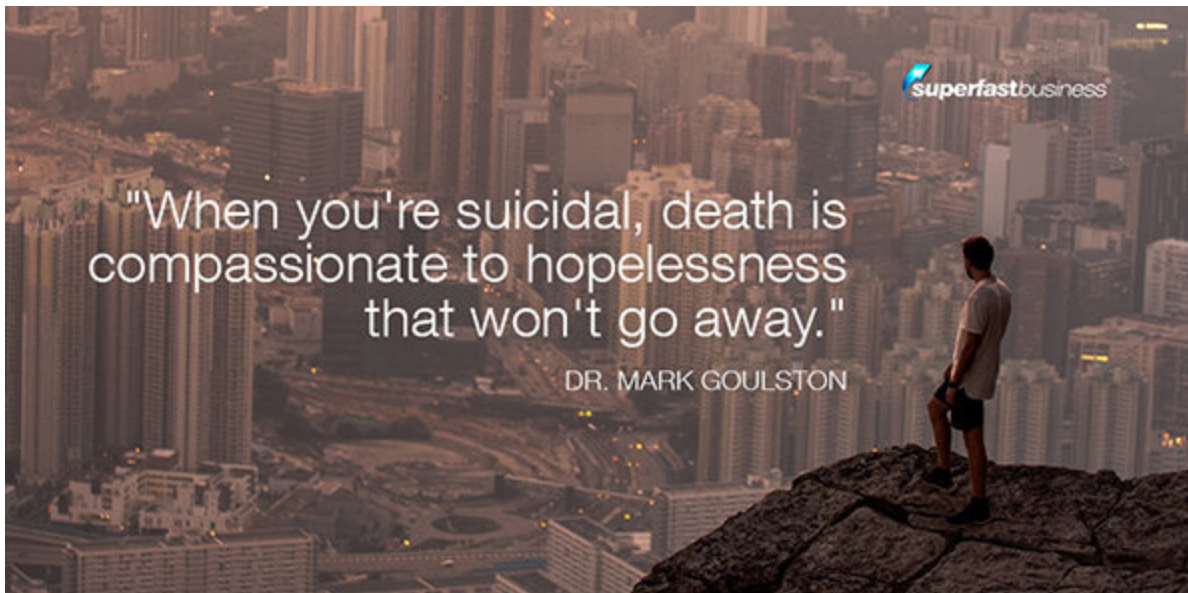


And I got a lot of interest in that, I even got interest from James today. And there's that chapter in Just Listen called How to Go from OF to OK, which is a way to talk yourself down when you're feeling agitated. But you can use this FUD CRUD exercise, which is in the book Talking to Crazy. And so imagine that you have a spouse, someone, they're venting. And your tendency when you get agitated is tell them to, Calm down, get a hold of yourself, you're being emotional, but that often agitates them more.

So instead of that, you try the FUD CRUD technique. And what you do after the event, which is their effort to provoke you to be off balance, so they can then maneuver the situation in whatever direction, you look them straight in the eye, you wait two seconds, and you say calmly, You sound frustrated. Or if they're sullen, you say, You seem frustrated, and I think you're holding back. They're going to go, What?

And they're going to go what, because they weren't able to provoke you. And you say, You seem frustrated, and I think you're holding back (and here's the FUD) because I think you're also upset and disappointed. So can you fill me in on what you're frustrated, upset and disappointed, because I'm sure you have all the reasons to feel that way? See if we can make this thing go away.

And you do it in that order because if you say to someone, You seem upset, you seem angry, they're going to get angrier. But most people are comfortable talking about being frustrated, as most people are frustrated every day. And what you want to do, and there's something in one of my more recent books called Why Cope When You Can Heal?, where I introduced the phrase, which eventually I'll do a TEDx Talk on, called surgical empathy.



## How “feeling” can prevent suicide

And surgical empathy was the approach that I used with suicidal patients, because if you haven't been suicidal, there's something you don't know and I hope you don't get to know. But when you're suicidal, death is compassionate to hopelessness that won't go away. And so you keep it in your back pocket. If worse comes to worse, I can always end it all. So your pain feels understood by death.

So surgical empathy means you want to go in there and help them feel that you feel that pain, the way death feels that pain. And when they feel felt by you, they may let go of being attached to death and attached to feeling felt by you. Can I share an anecdote that might give you the chills? I think it was in Just Listen.

**James:** Go for it.

**Dr. Mark:** So the early part of my career, I was a suicide prevention specializing psychiatrist, and I've been blessed. I've had eight mentors, they've all passed away. But one of my early mentors was probably one of the top three pioneers in suicide prevention. And he co-founded the Suicide Prevention centers in Washington and Los Angeles. And he founded something called the American Association of Suicidology.

And I was at UCLA when he was there. And he would do consultations to people who were still suicidal, but they needed to be discharged. So you can't keep someone there forever. And if they're not acutely suicidal, but still suicidal, you discharge them but you need a doctor to be willing to see them.

So there was one patient that he referred to me named Nancy. And she'd made three attempts before I saw her. She'd been in the hospital every year for two to three months. And I didn't think I was helping her at all. I was seeing her a couple of times a week, and she never made eye contact. She wasn't catatonic but I just didn't think I was helping her.

And then there was a Monday, and I had been up about 30 hours during the weekend before because I was moonlighting, meaning I was working at a state psychiatric hospital covering for other psychiatrists. So I was sleep-deprived. And I sat in the room with Nancy, and there she was not looking at me, our usual situation in our sessions.

And as I was looking at her, all the color in the room turned to black and white. And then I got these cold chills. So I thought I was having a stroke or a seizure. And I am an MD psychiatrist. I'm not a psychologist. So I did a neurological exam on myself, I'm tapping my elbows, I'm looking at my fingers to see if I have double vision.

And I had this thought, I'm not having a stroke or a seizure, I'm all here. And then I had this crazy idea that I was looking out at the world and feeling what she felt - black and white, and cold and chills. And because I was sleep-deprived, I blurted something out that normally I wouldn't say. I said, Nancy, I didn't know it was so bad. And I can't help you kill yourself. But if you do, I will still think well of you. I will miss you. And maybe I'll understand why you had to, to get out of the pain.

And I thought to myself, I just messed up. I just gave her permission. And that was the first time she looked at me. And she looked at me just like I'm looking at you, James, and I thought she was going to say thank you for understanding, I'm long overdue. And I said, what are you thinking? And she looked right at me, held onto my eyes and said, Thank you for understanding. If you can really understand why I might have to kill myself to get out of all the pain, maybe I won't need to. And then she smiled.

And then while she was looking at my eyes, I decided to look on her eyes. And this is where I learned to hold on to people's eyes like I did with F. Lee Bailey. And I said, Nancy, I have an idea. I'm not going to throw treatments at you that you've tried before. Unless you say, can we try another treatment? Because you've been tried on everything. Would that be okay?

And we're holding each other's eyes. And she looked at me and she said, Uh huh. And then I leaned in deeper, James, and I said, What I'm going to do instead is I'm going to find you wherever you are. And I'm going to keep you company there as long as it takes, because you've been there alone too long. Would that be alright? And her eyes started to tear up a little bit. And then she began to get better. But that's an example of, how do you cause someone to feel felt?

**James:** Wow. This is powerful. It reminds me of the natives who meet each other in the horizon and look into each other's eyes, and they say, I see you. And then the other one says, I see you. And then they walk off. I think people are so self-absorbed, they're not really thinking about other people that much.

**Dr. Mark:** Yeah, totally. Sometimes, when I give presentations, I tell this tale. I'm not sure if it's even true. I said 25 years ago, a native from a primitive country came to Manhattan. When someone asked them, What do you think of Manhattan? the native said they don't see the sky because of the skyscrapers. And then in the last three years, the native came back. And the same person asked the native, what do you think of Manhattan now? And the native said, They don't see each other, because they're looking at their mobile phones.

**James:** I think this is really important. We've got so much to learn from these experiences. And a lot of the things you're describing came from a time before devices. I feel lucky. I'm of a generation where I got to experience the world pre-device and pre-internet. And then I brought across those skills. I think that's where we have some knowledge and experience that can be useful for others.

**The most important thing you can get out of this episode**

What would be your sort of impact desire for someone listening to this all the way through to this point? As we wrap up, obviously, I'm going to recommend we go and get the book. I read the book last night. I really enjoyed it. It's got lots of useful frameworks. As someone who's written a book too, I appreciate what goes into it. And there's that.

And of course, we'll go over to your website [MarkGoulston.com](http://MarkGoulston.com), and look at your other resources. But what would you think is the most important message that if you can be beamed out to the thousands of people who will listen to this, what would you like them to know?

**Dr. Mark:** So here's two questions I want you to ask someone who cares about you, believes in you, and wants the best for you. And it's the two-question hook I use to get people to maybe think more about becoming a better listener. So the first question you ask them is, what would be the positive effect on my success, respect that people have for me, in our relationship, if I became a better listener, small, medium, large?

And in all likelihood, they're going to say, Medium. But here's the hooker. You say, Look at me, and you look in their eyes. And you say, What has already been the negative effect? When I have been at my absolute worst, talk over, interrupt, roll my eyes, what has already been the negative effect when I've been at my absolute worst as a listener, in terms of my success, people's respect, in our relationship, small, medium, large?

That person is going to say large. And here's an opportunity. Say to them, Tell me about the last time I did that. And you enable them to get it off their chest. You don't defend yourself. You don't say, Well, you did such and such. You say, Look at me. You're inviting them into an incredibly intimate and tender space, where you're inviting them to share a time when they felt disregarded, hurt, talked over, angry, and still resentful towards you.

So that's why you say, Look at me, and they'll tell you whatever it was, and they may want to look away because we don't have intimacy like this anymore in the world. And you say, Look at me, and you look in their eyes, and you say, you deserve better. I'm going to fix this. And I'm sorry.

**James:** Love it. I can see a repeating pattern here. Your MO is, establish a gap with real clarity, and then seek a solution to work on this newly discovered refined gap. Would that be sort of the two-step formula that seems to apply across a lot of the things you're talking about?

**Dr. Mark:** Yeah, absolutely. Can I slip in an exercise that I think you and your listeners might like? I co-authored two books during the pandemic, *Why Cope When You Can Heal?*, and *Trauma to Triumph*. And I did it mainly to launch my co-author, Dr. Diana Hendel, because to me, she is Angela Merkel and Jacinda Ardern in one, and I'm trying to launch her on the world, she is just wonderful.

And in one of the books, we talk about the HUVA exercise. So we'll end with this, because if you practice this just once a day for a week, it will change everything. And what HUVA stands for is, think of a conversation each day in which you want to be present, meaning show up in the best possible way as a great connector and listener.

So you pick that conversation, and afterwards, you grade yourself from their point of view. According to HUVA, you ask yourself, on a scale of one to 10, how much did they feel heard out by me? Or did I interrupt them? Did I change the subject? Did I seem bored? On a scale of one to 10, U, how much do they feel understood by me? Did I ask them to clarify? Did I ask them to say more about something?

On a scale of one to 10, how much do they feel valued by me? Did I emphasize it or remark on it, just as James has done? James has understood and valued it, and he's built upon it. He synthesized it for both my benefit and our listeners' benefit. And then the final A is, how much do they feel that you added value to what they had to say? And James has done a great job, because he's added value by saying, you know, this is not only applicable to one situation. We could apply this everywhere in our life and make it better. So you got a 10, 10, 10, 10 there, James.

**James:** Well, thank you. I'm humbled by that. Today's conversation, obviously, is the one conversation I really wanted to be present for, firstly, out of respect for how good an opportunity it is to speak to someone with your depth of experience. Secondly, because you've obviously got ninja skills and special voodoo and magical eyes, so I have to be very, very on my guard.

But also, because you've delivered this incredible toolkit that I know is going to change lives. Some of the examples in your book that I love, were where people have come back to you, many, many years later and said, This is what changed it for me. And that must be tremendously rewarding for you. I brought you on the show to see if we can pass that baton along. So thank you so much.

This is everything I hoped it would be today. I hope it was for you too, Doctor. And we'll put this up on episode 870 at SuperFastBusiness.com. I highly recommend, especially, Just Listen. That's a great starting point. But I'm sure that all the other materials are going to be fantastic. Dr. Mark Goulston, thank you so much.

**Dr. Mark:** Well, thank you. You've been a consummate host interviewer and a very good listener. Thank you.

**James:** Thank you.



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