

**EPISODE 30**

[INTRODUCTION]

**[00:00:06] ANNOUNCER:** You are listening to 10,000 Swamp Leaders, leadership conversations that explore adapting and thriving in a complex world with Rick Torseth and guests.

[INTERVIEW]

**[00:00:20] RT:** Welcome, everybody. This is Rick Torseth, and this is 10,000 Swamp Leaders. The podcast that holds a space and a container for conversations with people who've chosen to lead in a complex world to make impact in the world in the ways and means in which they come about figuring out how to have that impact.

Today, my guest is Judy Rees. Judy Rees is a co-founder of a consultancy that I'm quite familiar with called Rees McCann in the UK. I know Judy because we are – I don't know what to call us, Judy, inside the context of basis and impact basis. But we're associates. We're partners. We're co-contributors and co-conspirators, I guess, to the work of helping organizations do better.

Judy brings a pretty diverse range of very important resources to the work that we do. One of them is she's probably one of the global leaders in understanding how to have online program conversations, facilitations, at a high level that are quite interesting and diverse and produce better impact.

Judy, we got to save that conversation for another podcast. Because the reason I wanted to talk to you is because you're also a pretty regarded practitioner of a framework, I'm going to let you define what that is in a moment, of a thing called Clean Language, which I had not heard of before. But in my reading of it, I thought, "This is pretty interesting. I want to talk to you about it."

First of all, welcome to the swamp. Glad to have you here.

**[00:01:44] JR:** Thank you.

**[00:01:45] RT:** Before we get into all that kind of stuff, I may have left some stuff out in your intro. But what do you want people to know about who Judy Rees is?

**[00:01:54] JR:** Well, I want everyone to know that Clean Language is not about not swearing and not about just being clear. There's much more to it than that. We'll get to what it is. I also want to say something about my background was in news journalism and in trade unionism when I was a young news journalist. And then later, I became an editor and a manager of journalists. Managing remote teams of journalists before, eventually, discovering this weird stuff called Clean Language, which took me on a whole new career path into what I suppose I'm now doing, which is online facilitation, online training, training design, event design and consultancy. All of that. And they all link up.

**[00:02:39] RT:** They all link up. Well, I just want to toss in here that my father was a 40-year newspaper man and an editor and managed journalist for 25 years, too. That's a whole other conversation we could have probably.

All right. In your own words, let's get people some orientation here. In your own words for most people who may not know what Clean Language is, what is it? How do you describe it? And why do you think it's important?

**[00:03:05] JR:** Clean Language, in this context, is the work of a bloke called David Grove. The late David Grove. And what he came up with was a precision inquiry framework, which was optimized for finding out what people really were thinking and feeling, which helped them to know what they were really thinking and feeling. But also helped the questioner to know what they were really thinking and feeling.

It was devised during the 1980s originally as psychotherapy. But as more and more people have come across it, managers, agile coaches, facilitators, they've realized that it seems to provide a little insight into people that is different from other approaches.

Specifically, I think it's about what gets called theory of mind. Human beings are believed to be the best species on the planet, a theory of mind. That is knowing what other people are thinking and feeling in order to predict their behavior.

But here's the thing, human beings are rubbish at it even though we're best in the planet, we're rubbish at it. And we wildly overestimate our ability to do it. So, we think we know what other people are thinking and feeling. But we nearly always don't. What Clean Language does is change that? It just shifts the dial just a little bit. And that little bit can provide a huge advantage to those who know how to do it.

**[00:04:41] RT:** Okay. There's a lot there that I'm thinking about. Say a little bit, and again, maybe in context, why it is important that I am better at theory of mind just to navigate the world much less work in the world? Why nudging that in that direction is important? What's the value of that?

**[00:05:03] JR:** Well, the biggest value is when you know what someone is thinking and feeling you can predict their behavior.

**[00:05:09] RT:** Say more about that.

**[00:05:11] JR:** For example, there's a golden rule, isn't there? Treat people as you would like to be treated. But actually, as you get to know more deeply what people are thinking and feeling, you discover that they are not the same as you. You can predict what you would do in a set of circumstances. But somebody else does something completely different.

You think you're given really clear instructions to a colleague to say, "Please do this by this time. And let me know." And they go often do something completely different. If you knew a little bit more about what they were thinking and feeling, particularly in response to your request or your email, whatever it might be, then you would know that you needed to add another line to the instruction to get what you wanted. So, that would be a really quick and easy example.

**[00:06:04] RT:** And this may not be what you're talking about. But I can imagine other people thinking what I'm thinking right now with your description. Is this about empathy?

**[00:06:13] JR:** It depends how you define empathy. Empathy is part of theory of mind. Theory of mind is partly – they're interrelated. But they're not the same thing. Some people think that empathy is about being able to magically sense the emotions that another person is feeling. If that's your meaning of empathy, then it's in that ballpark but without the magic. It feels like magic. Any sufficiently evolved technology is indistinguishable from magic. But it's not. It's about breaking down that magic and saying that actually we can work out how to understand what people are thinking and feeling. It isn't a magical ability that only a few people have got. It's something we can systematize.

**[00:07:02] RT:** Okay. And as my preparation for our conversation and reading the book that you referred me to by Caitlin Walker. And I should say to the listeners, you have two books on Clean Language. Let's not put Caitlin Walker's book in front of yours. And we will put the links to those books in the show notes so that people can run those down.

But what I picked up from reading what I have read so far was that the questions – first of all, it's question-driven, it seems to me. And that the questions are remarkably, I'm going to say, mundane. They're not highly sophisticated, complex questions. Is that a fair crummy description of David Grove's work?

**[00:07:46] JR:** Well, what's brilliant about the questions is just how simple they are. And there's this idea that the quote is to the effect that, "Sorry about the length of this letter. I didn't have time to write a short one."

Creating this beautifully polished and toned minimalist set of questions was a big chunk of David's work. They have ended up short, simple and effective. But that doesn't make them trivial. They are, in my opinion, fascinating questions. Because human beings always put a bit of themselves in the question they ask.

What David was trying to do was minimize the amount of himself that he put in the questions. And that produces these incredibly simple, elegant questions. An example is what kind of X? Where X stands for one of the other person's words. Perfectly ordinary English question. What kind of? You can ask it about anything. But it's brilliant in its simplicity.

What David was aiming to do was minimize the number of presuppositions and judgments and also the number of metaphors included in the questions. And what kind of X has one big assumption in it, which is that there are multiple kinds of whatever thing it is that you're talking about? But other than that, it's pretty clean.

Now, clean is the word that we Clean Language enthusiasts use to mean minimal judgments, minimal assumptions, minimal metaphors. Keeping the questioners' stuff separate from the other person's stuff.

**[00:09:44] RT:** Okay. All right. I'm going to dig into the Clean Language here in a second. But I'm curious about, for you, what was it about this? And when did you discover Clean Language? And what drew you to it? Why was this becoming a thing for you to understand and then start to utilize with people and clients?

**[00:10:02] JR:** Clean Language was originally created, as I say, in psychotherapy. And David created it in order to ask about the metaphors that underpins people's thinking. Metaphor is the native language of the unconscious mind. It's the stuff of thought.

And David, being the 1980s, this was part of the era when metaphor moved out of the shadows and became much more a mainstream area of study starting with people like Lakoff and Johnson. Academics were starting to say metaphor is not just a frill on the top of literature. Metaphor is much deeper than that. We actually think by comparing one kind of thing to another kind of thing. Not by comparing one word to another word, but thing to thing.

I found this really, really interesting. Because as a journalist, I knew that metaphor was incredibly powerful in terms of storytelling. Once you've got a strong metaphor, the story tells itself. I also knew that metaphor was really powerful in management. Because when I was a teenager, my father had been doing a chunk of academic research into the role of metaphor in the management of academic departments. He found a huge pile of documents in the cellar of the college where he worked and decided to go through and take a note of the kinds of metaphors people were using to talk about the stuff they were talking about. And he could see patterns. I don't currently remember what patterns.

And these days, nobody would have to trawl their way through cellars full of documents. It's just corpses of text online. But he was really interested. And he knew that if you talk about a topic using one kind of metaphor, you'll get a very different kind of response if you talk about a different way.

Classically, if you talk about business in terms of war, you'll get one kind of result. If you talk about in terms of family, you'll get a different kind of result. And if you talk about in terms of gardening or agriculture, you'll get a third kind of result. And different people will be attracted to the kind of thing that you're saying and being enthusiastic about it.

**[00:12:24] RT:** All right. Then, that's a very visual illustration of different story outputs based on different metaphors here. In David Grove's work, is he – I'm not clear here. Is he trying to eliminate the metaphors or expose them for what meaning they're conveying in the conversation? Or maybe it's both. I don't know.

**[00:12:44] JR:** It's both. Because the metaphor belongs to the person who's answering the questions. And in order to ask questions to elicit metaphors really well, you want to minimize the metaphors coming from the questioner.

**[00:13:00] RT:** Say that again. Say that one more time please.

**[00:13:02] JR:** Minimize the metaphors in the questions in order to maximize the space for the metaphor in the person who's answering the questions.

**[00:13:11] RT:** Okay. All right. So, you know what I think? We can talk about this Clean Language thing, or we could actually do it. And so, I'm going to suggest – And I may regret this. I doubt I will. But I may regret this. That you, if you're willing to, let's do some version of Clean Language, you and me.

**[00:13:31] JR:** Yeah, let's do a really quick demonstration.

**[00:13:34] RT:** Okay. Good.

**[00:13:35] JR:** Just as a way of getting started here. Rick, when you are working at your best as a podcast host. So, we're talking about your podcast host role here. When you're doing that at your best, you are like what?

**[00:13:52] RT:** When I'm doing podcasting at my best, I am like a smooth river flowing downhill.

**[00:14:02] JR:** What kind of smooth river?

**[00:14:05] RT:** Non-rapids. A decent pace to move but not urgent and not almost sedentary. It's got a decent rhythm to it. Rhythm would be the word I'd use.

**[00:14:15] JR:** Is there anything else about that rhythm?

**[00:14:18] RT:** Well, the Rhythm changes like a river probably would change by twists and turns in the contour of the flow of the river.

**[00:14:28] JR:** And a smooth river flowing downhill. Is there anything else about downhill?

**[00:14:34] RT:** It's easy. Flow. It's easy. Yeah.

**[00:14:38] JR:** And is there anything else about flows?

**[00:14:40] RT:** Kind of stuck in the metaphor now. I think that there are eddies. Metaphoric eddies. By that, I mean, sometimes it spins a little bit and then there's some need to navigate that purposefully out back into the flow.

**[00:14:57] JR:** And what needs to happen to navigate that?

**[00:15:00] RT:** In the context of podcasting, what needs to happen – usually the spin is because I'm not paying attention to what you're saying. I'm thinking about the next thing I want to say. And so, I've lost contact with the flow, with the rhythm. And so, I need to get present again. And usually, that then is enough to move on. Move in a direction that's useful.

**[00:15:24] JR:** And when contact with the flow, what kind of contact is that contact?

**[00:15:30] RT:** That contact is – Generally speaking, I have a run sheet of questions. And when this happens, I've been paying attention to the next question on the list and not you. And so, what I need to do is stop, breathe, listen. And invariably, that frees it up. I mean, it feels like I'm really stopping longer than I'd like. Listening longer than listeners are probably interested in me listening before I'm done. That's not how it is. But it feels that way.

**[00:16:01] JR:** And when it's like that, and a smooth river flowing downhill, is that an okay place to end this demonstration?

**[00:16:09] RT:** Yeah. Absolutely.

**[00:16:11] JR:** Thank you. Thank you for being willing to try that. Because it's a bit challenging to answer questions like that on your own podcast.

**[00:16:18] RT:** Okay. Some reflection on my end, since I've never done this before. One is I was surprised how quickly metaphors, visual metaphors, popped up as a basis to answer the question. I've written down metaphor here. I know that grow was using metaphors. You talked about it. But I wasn't thinking I was going to use metaphors and answer your question. They just emerged. Maybe you induced me with the conversation. That was interesting. It felt progressive and useful to keep moving from where we were. So, I wasn't hung up in a particular place when we were analyzing that thing. It just sort of unfolded to an interesting place.

**[00:16:59] JR:** Now, one of the things about that question, when you're working at your best, you're like what? Is that you can ask that about everybody you work with. And I typically do that with a team. You get 10 people working together, and each of them has a different answer to the question, "When you're working at your best, you're like what?"

And by getting the group to ask those questions about each other, they get to find out what it really is like to be that person working at their best. And you get a huge range of answers. So, you'll get one person who thinks that when they're working at their best they're like a Formula



One racing driver. And somebody else is like a butterfly flitting plant flower to flower. And somebody else's like an express train. And somebody else is like a tortoise. Or whatever it is. They'll all be different.

And the first stage is for everybody to hear everybody's answer. What we often then do is get people to draw their answers. And then everybody can see them on the wall. And then of course the next development from that is what needs to happen for you to be like that? You find out what are the factors that need to be in place for these team members to work at their best?

And that can be absolutely a fascinating discovery that, of course, you discover that some people need a high energy buzzing environment and somebody else needs absolute silence.

**[00:18:19] RT:** Okay. Right now, somebody listening who's got a group of people that they're responsible for in some way shape or form to get work done, to jointly collaborate to do something of impact. So far, they're going, "Well, I could ask those questions. Those aren't too hard." Which is probably part of what he was aspiring to when he created the work. It's usable by people rather quickly.

Just talk a little bit about your experience in doing what you just did with me with that group of people who share a common reason for being in the room together, that joint work. And share your thoughts, your experience, lessons learned about if somebody were to walk out of here and read your book or your website, but decide, "What the heck I'm going to go for this? I got a meeting tomorrow." How could you advise them about how to navigate that little journey that they might unfold with their group?

**[00:19:11] JR:** I would say just be a little bit cautious about diving in with both boots. Because as you noticed, Rick, when you ask these questions, you can actually go really very deep very quickly. And that may or may not be comfortable for different people.

When I'm doing this with a group or a team, I usually – well, I always put in place certain guidelines and safety barriers. For example, I would limit the time that people are allowed to ask each other these questions to typically sort of under five minutes first time round.

**[00:19:51] RT:** The whole group? Or one question?

**[00:19:53] JR:** One person. If I put them in pairs – I often do this as a sort of speed clean event where people get in pairs and two minutes of questions one way, two minutes of questions the other way, and then swap to a new partner, two minutes, two minutes. Swap. Two minutes, two minutes. Swap. Two minutes, two minutes. Swap. And you can quite quickly get a really interesting sense of the whole group. But it's quite high energy. If I have the opportunity, I'll do that outdoors. The most recent time I did that, we did that at sunset in a beautiful garden with a group of people from the European Parliament. It was absolutely awesome.

But if you're going to do it with everybody sitting together, Caitlyn makes the rule that each person only receives two questions in a row. And then you move around to someone else. Two questions. And then move around again. You can go back to people, but no more than two questions on the chart.

**[00:20:52] RT:** Two questions. Yeah.

**[00:20:54] JR:** What this does is help to build a network of awareness of people's metaphors rather than just going deep, deep, deep, deep, deep, deep, deep, deep, deep. For the going deep thing, there are actually quite sophisticated ways of choosing which question to ask.

Now, I will typically – when I'm coaching somebody using this Clean Language methodology, I will use Clean Language questions for an hour. And I could keep going indefinitely. But there are reasons that I choose which question to ask and which thing to ask about. And those are done with care to a framework called – Penny Tompkins and James Lawley's framework for change. Tells me which question to ask.

**[00:21:36] RT:** Okay. Okay.

**[00:21:37] JR:** In terms of doing this as a coach, I would not use only Clean Language questions in a chunky coaching session until I have some awareness of the frameworks to use.

**[00:21:48] RT:** Okay. Good counsel. All right. And people who listen to this podcast on some kind of regular basis are pretty familiar with my influence and orientation around what leading is and what is not. Primarily, A, it's a choice and an activity. It's not a role or a position. And two, it's usually called upon when you need to mobilize people to take coordinated action around something that matters. And they're diffused. They're either not coordinated at all or you're building a movement in which to go forward, etc.

Therefore, part of why I'm interested in the Clean Language or anything that helps facilitate an effective healthy mobilization and coordination of people in actions to have impact. Based on what you know about Clean Language, and perhaps based on what I just said about this distinction of leading and the work that's involved with it, what do you think? Is this guide application? Where could it be used? How might it be used in this context?

**[00:22:47] JR:** Yeah, there are a bunch of places that it might be relevant. One of the places is when the leader is acting as coach to encourage people to be mobilized to be part of. What you can do with the Clean Language questions is to understand what's important to that unique and special individual.

I'm currently quoting regularly from a book by a book called Scott Gould about engagement. Why people engage? Why do they participate in things? And he points out that people take the initial step to participate in something because of what's in it for them. They stay and they continue to engage and they join others because of the relationships that they build.

Now, if you don't know what people want, you don't know what's in it for them. It's quite difficult to enroll your first people. These Clean Language questions can be really helpful. For example, if you want to sell stuff to people and you want to find out what they actually want, you could use Clean Language questions to find out what it is they're looking for.

We always use Clean Language questions when we are pitching university commerce for work. Our first questions are to find out, "Well, what is it this potential client is actually looking for?" Let's get some detail. Get lots of information about what's important to them about the thing they're after. Then we can consider can we actually fulfill what they want?

It's that find out what they want is the first and most important chunk of what Clean Language can do. Same time – So, let's think about our potential client again. We're listening for the metaphors that they're using in their description of the thing. And we will use those same metaphors in that same language when we respond and when we write our proposal.

**[00:24:43] RT:** This is useful. Certainly, first of all, it's useful for me. But I want to suggest to listeners it's useful for them. In that, oftentimes, in this work of fostering the movement, you have factions of people who have different needs, wants and desires, if you will, or concerns about loss in the change that's coming.

And a common mistake there for somebody trying to mobilize is not even have that distinction. And so, they're trying to appeal to the whole group with one set of responses to that kind of criteria. Just understanding what the factions are as a mapping process is useful.

I'm now thinking that once you have that sort of loosely identified, the Clean Language questions that are asked to one faction could produce some really rich detail that's completely different than the other ones. And I'm thinking – in particular, why I'm thinking this, is I have always thought that the questioning and diagnostic process regarding a particular factions is kind of crude or some simplistic. Or, again, general perhaps is another way to say it.

And so, you're already provoking the idea that there's a way to be able to identify those unique elements of small groups of people inside a larger system that you now have as a leader trying to mobilize more capacity to address in very specific ways that had you not use the questions is what I'm suspecting is available here.

**[00:26:07] JR:** And so, one of my Clean Language enthusiast colleagues, a guy called Martin Snodden, has used these Clean Language questions extensively in peace building, including in Northern Ireland where he's from, but also in South Africa, in Israel and Palestine. A bunch of places where there's been major conflict.

And as I understand his approach, he gets the people to ask each other – I mean, he's doing lots of other things as well as Clean Language. But amongst the things, the participants in these groups, these sort of focus sessions, which come from all different factions, use the questions

and listening to the answers to the questions to increasingly perceive each other as real three-dimensional human beings rather than othering them.

**[00:26:51] RT:** Right .Yep.

**[00:26:53] JR:** That's something that is a beautiful effect of seeing these questions used amongst a bunch of people, is that they just start to see people, rather than being as sort of two-dimensional cardboard cut-outs, "Oh, this person actually is interesting. And also, that person is different to me. And that's okay."

Because one of the things that happens as you ask these Clean Language questions is you discover that no two people ever have exactly the same answer to the question.

**[00:27:28] RT:** I'm just chuckling, because Teresa I just had a conversation this morning. We didn't have the same answer as about six questions.

**[00:27:38] JR:** We play activity – we do activities like get a bunch of people together. Ask everybody to think of a flower. And you go, "What's your flower?" "Daffodil." "What's your flower?" "Daisy." "What's your flower?" "Rose." "What's your flower?" "Rose." "What kind of rose is your rose? What kind of rose is your rose?" And within a question, they're always different.

**[00:28:00] RT:** All right. I'm going to slightly shifted a little bit to a leading context. But before we do that, some questions, as a practitioner of getting groups together, and doing work, and evolving your own practice over time through new tools and ideas, what have you learned about how to help people?

**[00:28:18] JR:** Don't help unless they ask for it. But everybody wants different kind of help in different kinds of circumstances. I remember when I was very first exposed to Clean Language, and this is no reflection on the people involved, but I went to Clean Language training where most of the people were psychotherapists or advanced coaches. I was just a journalist who'd been dragged along to see if I could work out how to promote this thing. And I found it really oppressive that people were trying to fix me. Now, I don't know whether they really were. But that was how it felt to me. And it was not nice at all. Really, really uncomfortable. Giving people

space to be themselves is, in my opinion, more important than trying to reach into their head and try and fix them.

**[00:29:06] RT:** Yep, I agree.

**[00:29:07] JR:** And as a Clean Language coaching methodology, a number of Clean Language coaching methodologies. But an easy one to look up is called the five-minute coach. And that starts by asking what would you like to happen? It's not required that everybody wants to be fixed.

**[00:29:24] RT:** That's, when we're done, make sure I get some information that we can put in the show notes, okay?

**[00:29:28] JR:** Yeah.

**[00:29:29] RT:** You've been doing this for a little while now. What surprised you about yourself when you're doing this work?

**[00:29:37] JR:** What's increasingly surprising me is how delighted people are by something which is so simple. For me, because I've done it as a journalist for a long time, I knew that asking people relatively simple questions and getting them talking about their stories was something that they would love to do once you got past the initial bit of discomfort.

But then, nowadays, now I teach this more particularly with groups and teams. It's really quite interesting to me to see just how little people generally listen to each other and how rarely they actually ask each other any questions.

**[00:30:15] RT:** It's interesting you'd say this, because I think that in the context that I've shaped this podcast, which is – and the reason it's called 10,000 Swamp Leaders, is, one, my own personal aspiration to influence ten thousand people to choose to lead in the period of time I have left. And two, inside what I'm calling swamp issue, which are really messy and tractable hard problems that are immune to quick fix answers. And to the point you just mentioned, what

I've witnessed is how lame we are at diagnosing the nature of the problem before we're pulled to do something.

And part of my sense of it is we were raised to know answers to problems. Schools teach us that. University teaches that. We get advances oftentimes in our organizations by knowing answers to problems. But then you come, "Boom!" up against these more attractable things, and they have immunity to this quick fix answer.

In that context of looking at what ails the world right now, and Lord knows, pick the ailment, what's your perspective on how some of those things could be aided by people in the system using something like Clean Language?

**[00:31:29] JR:** Well, I think Clean Language comes into its own where we're working with complex system level problems. And that's true whether the complex system level problem exists within a person. At a psychotherapeutic situation where they're up against a bind of some kind, or double bind. But also, where you've got organizations and communities that have got complex system level problems.

There aren't actually that many approaches that can enable a whole group of people to step up one level and start to look at the situation they are in at a meta level. But Clean Language does. Because when we're working with a complex situation, systemic situation, we can use the Clean Language questions to create a metaphoric map of the challenging situation. And also, a metaphoric map of where we would like to be.

**[00:32:28] RT:** Hang out here a second. Make a note here, folks, if you're listening to Judy's ideas here. Because I'll forget them if I don't. Somebody will say, "Well, Rick, listen to your podcast." What does a metaphoric map look like? We're audio here. So, nobody can see us. So, give people a visual sense of what a metaphoric map might look like with a group of people.

**[00:32:54] JR:** It depends. There are all sorts of ways you can do it. You could build one out of Lego if you wanted to. That's been done using a combination of Lego series play and Clean Language. You could create one with little bits of things being drawn on Post-it notes and stuck on a wall. You could get a bunch of lining paper and get people to draw on different bits of it with

different colored pens. You could get individual A4 sheets. And each person has made a drawing or a picture and stuck it on a wall. Or it could be a mind map. They can look very, very different. But the function is similar. The function is, for example, the metaphor might be, "It's like we keep on – as a community, we keep on going around in circles. We say we want this thing. But actually, we just keep going back and back and back and back and nothing happens." You could draw that as a circle and you could put the steps on the circle. And then you could put, "We say we want whatever it is." And then you could draw that whatever it is somewhere. And then you can figure out what are the steps that we would need? But if it's so simple, why are we not doing it? That would also be a thing you could use the questions for. What's between us and what we say we want? And you can map that out. The Clean Language questions can be a tool within that kind of systemic framework.

**[00:34:20] RT:** Nice. What have you learned from your leadership failures?

**[00:34:25] JR:** That trying to sell people anything doesn't work. Creating the opportunity for them to buy is what does work.

**[00:34:32] RT:** How did you learn that?

**[00:34:35] JR:** Many, many, many happy Friday nights trying to sell a particular socialist newspaper on the streets of Sheffield through one particularly horrible winter.

**[00:34:46] RT:** Hold it. How old were you?

**[00:34:49] JR:** 18? 17?

**[00:34:50] RT:** 18. 17. You're getting massive doses of rejection on Friday nights in the cold?

**[00:34:55] JR:** Yeah.

**[00:34:56] RT:** And so, just stay with this for a second. This is great. Because it's a young age to learn this very important lesson. As you well know, most people don't learn it. Well, a lot of



people never learn it. And it takes a long time. How did you process that rejection and turn it into this insight?

**[00:35:10] JR:** Oh, that took a long time. To understand what to do instead took a long time. But selling the paper wasn't working was pretty bleeding obvious. But working out that actually what one needs to do is create the conditions in which people want to buy. That's still very much an ongoing area of study for me.

**[00:35:28] RT:** Okay. All right. All right. A couple questions left. You and I were talking before we hit record here a little bit about the show. And I told you that one of my target audiences, and I really have no idea how effective I'm hitting that, are younger people who were on this journey of leading and or behind us. To some degree, hold it lightly, we're elders in the tribe passing on lore and information to the younger generations.

If that's a plausible scenario, what advice do you have for people behind you about Clean Language or anything else you've learned in life that would help them lead themselves and maybe mobilize other people to have impact?

**[00:36:08] JR:** Well, I think one thing that I wish I'd known when I was a young manager was I wish I'd understood the difference between complicated and complex. I'm sure you've got a podcast about that. The model I tend to refer to is Dave Snowden's Cynefin model, which helps me to distinguish between those two things and what to do in those two situations.

Because, typically, junior managers are managing in either the obvious or the complicated domain. It's only once you find yourself thrown into the complex domain you need to lead in a different way. It's not sufficient to pretend that it's all obvious when it's not.

The Clean Language questions are a particularly valuable tool when you find yourself in that complex domain. When you find that things are not predictable. cause and effect are not obvious. And you've got people who are complex beings in themselves and seem not to behave in predictable ways. For me, having that sense of, "Right, we're not in Kansas anymore. This is a different domain." And then reach for tools that operate well in that domain.

**[00:37:22] RT:** In that domain. Yeah. I agree with you completely. Okay, last question for you. Clean Language might not help you with this. So, I'm going to just tell you. It might not help you. When you look ahead, what's the future for you?

**[00:37:36] JR:** I'm hoping that my house innovation will complete sometime within the next year. No. I don't know what the future holds for me beyond the next few months. It's nice to be a bit older and able to have lots of choices about what could happen next.

I'm optimistic that the kinds of work that I currently do, which involve supporting groups and teams to work better together often online will continue. But who knows? Something different might happen. One of my Clean Language colleagues says, "Well, something will happen."

**[00:38:13] RT:** Got to be. There's got to be.

**[00:38:15] JR:** Jennifer de Gandt, who is the elder states woman of the Clean Language Community, "Well, something will happen."

**[00:38:22] RT:** All right. For those listening, in the show notes, I will place a link to Judy's website, Rees McCann, which we should say the McCann is your husband, Steve McCann.

**[00:38:32] JR:** Yes.

**[00:38:33] RT:** The links to your books – let's try and grab a link for this five-minute coach model that you mentioned. And I know that, Judy, you offered the bearing courses both in terms of Clean Language and also in terms of online facilitation. You have some stuff coming up in the immediate future. Let's grab those links. We'll put those there and they can contact you directly with regard to any of the stuff that you got your hands in. And you can pick it up from there with Judy.

Ms. Rees, thank you tremendously for joining me in 10,000 Swamp Leaders. It's been fun.

**[00:39:04] JR:** Thank you for having me.

**[00:39:05] RT:** You're welcome.

[OUTRO]

**[00:39:09] ANNOUNCER:** Thank you for listening to 10,000 Swamp Leaders with Rick Torseth. Please take this moment and hit subscribe to follow more leadership swamp conversations.

[END]