



**Wake Up Eager Workforce Podcast, Episode 29**  
**A Podcast about Brain Research -- Produced By Suzie Price**

Brain Research – Negative Reactions: What You Need to Know to Lead Yourself & Your Team  
– Transcript

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**Suzie Price:** Hi there! Welcome to episode 29. Our topic today on the Wake Up Eager Workforce Podcast is “Brain Research – Negative Reactions: What You Need to Know to Lead Yourself and Your Team.” This is an interview I did with Dr. Ron Bonnstetter who is the Senior Vice President of research and development at TTI Success Insights, a company that I’ve partnered with since 2004. It’s a fun and energizing interview; it’s very informative. We’re going to talk about the brain research that Dr. Ron Bonnstetter does, what he does, how he does it, why he got into this, how we’re using his research with the assessments, and then some additional insight into what does it mean when we want to avoid something, what happens in our brain, and what does that tell us about ourselves and understanding others. We’re going to talk about words that don’t work and a study he did around political preferences. And we’re going to talk about what separates us and how to overcome that. This is episode number 29, let’s get started.

**Intro:** Welcome to the Wake Up Eager Workforce Podcast, a show designed for leaders, trainers, and consultants who are responsible for employee selection and professional development. Each episode is packed full with insider tips, best practices, expert interviews, and inspiration. Please welcome the host who is helping leaders, trainers, and consultants everywhere, Suzie Price!

**Suzie:** Hi there, my name is Suzie Price. I am a Professional Facilitator, Consultant and Author, and the creator of the Wakeup Eager Workforce Podcast. My company is Priceless Professional Development, and our focus is on building energy, commitment and communication in organizations. I love this work. I’ve been doing it for the past 13 years. I started this work in 2004, actually the end of 2003, but officially launched in 2004. One of the first things I did in 2004 was become a Value Added Associate is what they call us, which is a distributor, with a company called TTI Success Insights. They’re based out of Scottsdale, Arizona, and I became certified in that first year with the DISC assessment, which is the Certified Professional Behavior Analyst, the Certified Professional Motivators Analyst which is the motivators assessment, and the Certified Professional TriMetrix HD Assessment. All three of those assessments are tools that I use often, I’ve talked about here in different podcast episodes, and I’m super excited to have Dr. Ron Bonnstetter here today to talk about his research. He is a part of that company, TTI Success Insights, and so much of what he does rolls out into what you see when you get involved in using the assessments for team building, leadership, science of self, science of others. I’m very excited about having him on the podcast. He is smart, he is fun, he’s a good communicator, he’s passionate about what he’s doing... He’s so passionate that we ended up doing, which was awesome, we ended up doing two episodes. We had a long conversation, so I split this up into episode 29, which is what you’re getting ready to listen to, and then we’ll have the second half of the interview in episode 30.

**Suzie:** To find the show notes for today, because we talk about words that don’t work in this episode and he talks about some brain images, and I will share those in the show notes, so let

me make sure you know where they are for this episode. You can access that, plus I'll put some samples of assessments in case you're curious about them as well as the other podcasts that I've done on the topic of style and motivators because we mention that a bit here in the interview. The show notes can be found at [pricelessprofessional.com/brain](http://pricelessprofessional.com/brain), and then you just do that lower case. That's for episode 29. I'm going to, in a second, read to you Dr. Bonnstetter's bio, and then we'll get right into the interview. But I do want to mention, if you are curious about other episodes in general around this podcast, go to [wakeupeagerworkforce.com](http://wakeupeagerworkforce.com) and you'll see a directory of all the episodes leading up to this one. I've got interesting interviews and topics that are interesting, I have been told they're interesting to leaders and professionals everywhere. Tune into those. If you want to connect via Twitter: @wakeupeager, all one word, Facebook: [facebook.com/wakeupeager](https://facebook.com/wakeupeager), and of course on LinkedIn you can find me at Suzie Price.

**Suzie:** Let me tell you about Dr. Bonnstetter's background. He is, as I mentioned in the opening, the Senior Vice President of Research and Development for Target Training International and a Professor Emeritus of the University of Nebraska. He conducts research and speaks about the brain and human behavior. He's published works for TTI, and has been recognized with the 2012 Edison Award nomination. He's been featured in publications such as *Harvard Business Review*, *Education Weekly*, *Neuro Connections* and *Advances in Body-Mind Medicine*. He's been featured in *Counseling Today* and many other research and news vehicles. His current research is about the development of biology-based communication strategies, peak performance and the brain. He's talking about the development of personal attributes, soft skills and brain-based findings that inform human interactions. We really get into that in the interview, so hold your hat because it's going to be interesting. He talks a little bit about what he measures, prefrontal cortex Gamma asymmetry. He explains that; it actually makes sense when he explains it. He was the first recipient of the National Senior Outstanding Science Educator of the Year Award, and he has been recognized in the National Search for Excellence in Science Education. That's related to some of his "why's," how he got into this aspect of his work, and so you'll find that interesting, and the people that he's met, he's met some pretty famous people in his career and been all over the world. He's helped our company, TTI Success Insights, the company that I'm a Value Added Associate for and distributor of their tools, win a leadership award in 2015. Just an awesome human being with a lot of passion for his work... Without any further setup, let's go into the interview now. Hope you enjoy it.

**Suzie:** I'm so excited to have Dr. Ron Bonnstetter here today. Dr. Ron, thank you for being here.

**Dr. Ron Bonnstetter:** You're welcome.

**Suzie:** We're going to start with those personal questions first because I've already shared your background and your bio. I would love to, just so we can get to know you personally... Something we normally wouldn't hear about when we're talking about brain research. Tell us about your favorite guilty pleasure TV show. What is it and why is it your favorite?

**Ron:** Oh, boy. I probably watch different TV than a lot of people, but I would put *Big Bang (Theory)* toward the top in terms of shows that I watch, and one of the reasons for that is tied to my research and to the fact that I've spent 40 years in education. Asperger's, in particular, has always fascinated me. In fact, I still work with two people periodically, over the internet, that

have Asperger's. I find that to be a topic... Sheldon certainly exhibits some minor characteristics associated with Asperger's. Not only is it a pleasure, it also allows me to reflect on the connections between what I do and what I do in play.

**Suzie:** I think I read somewhere that all of those formulas are real formulas, so when you look at them, you probably know that they're real formulas.

**Ron:** They are! In terms of another show that no one actually knows about, I got hooked immediately on *Mr. Robot* for the same reason. *Mr. Robot*, if you really know anything about computer programming, everything is totally accurate and the words are right. It's like I'm hearing a secret code behind the show that nobody else sees, and that's sort of a cool feeling. I think my wife sees that all the time in other shows because I don't know anything about the world, so they make connections I don't get.

**Suzie:** But those two shows you totally get. I hadn't seen *Mr. Robot*; we'll put that on the list. But *Big Bang*... My folks are retired, and they just tell me all the time how funny it is and Sheldon and this and that. Everybody likes it, all ages. Plus I can see where it would tie into your research and the other work you've done, so that's very cool.

**Ron:** It does. You were interested in something that maybe people don't know about me. We had talked about that previously.

**Suzie:** Yes. What would that be?

**Ron:** I've been thinking about that. Well, the first thing that comes to mind is a generality in that people say, "Do you have a hobby?" and I say, "Yes, my hobby is that I collect hobbies." That's a strange statement, but I've actually had over 14 serious hobbies. When I say serious... Something that you really take... Like an OCD person that just goes crazy with this hobby. My most recent I've actually had for over four years now, my wife is very impressed I've stuck with a hobby for four years. I play Native American flute. Four years ago, I did not play the flute. I did not read music, never had I played a musical instrument. I now do concerts two or three times a month. I have an online concert that I do weekly. Native American flute is something I embrace daily; I play it every day. You know, Suzie, it actually ties again into what I do because the flute is very meditative, and it has some frequencies in the pentatonic scale that tie directly to brain frequencies and so again, I'm able to connect some things in some interesting ways. It's not a separate entity in my life, it's a reflective entity.

**Suzie:** I love that. I think I saw you a couple years ago at one of the TTI conferences playing the Native American flute. It was part of a demonstration about learning. Did you play it on the stage one time?

**Ron:** I did. That's the joke around here. I keep figuring out ways to sneak the flute into a presentation, and they keep trying to hide my flute.

**Suzie:** "No, Dr. Ron, we're not using that again!" What's one other unusual hobby, since you said you've collected many over the years... What's one other unusual one just because I think it would be interesting?

**Ron:** I don't know how unusual... Well, car restoration. I was a scientist; I knew nothing about cars. That was a different group of kids when I grew up that played with cars, and yet as a scientist I thought, "This is doable. It's a formula. You simply study it, and you make it happen." Again, I got carried away. Rather than just doing car restoration, I have done complete restorations on three British cars... I have one that I'm finishing right now, a 1951 Riley, a very unusual car... Again, just embracing that completely. I went from not just having a car and making some changes in it, to building a full restoration garage complete with sandblasters and welders and a lift and everything associated with doing it right. I get carried away, a little bit.

**Suzie:** I like it. My husband is that same kind of... Mostly about cars. He's an executive, so it's not something that he would normally do, but he... Same thing. You guys could have a good conversation around that. That's cool.

**Ron:** Let's see what else is... I've embraced this latest topic for this conversation as well. I'm pretty excited to have the opportunity to share with you some of the things that they're doing right now.

**Suzie:** Awesome. Let's get into that. I know you through my association with TTI Success Insights, and you have a brain research facility there, and you measure brain activity. I've seen what I call the "brain hat," or at least one of them, that's what I call it. I think the technical name is VIDE, Validating Incentive Decision-Making with Electroencephalography, maybe?

**Ron:** That's correct. Well done.

**Suzie:** Was I close?

**Ron:** Let's just call that EEG and make life a little easier for both of us.

**Suzie:** There you go. You're measuring brain activity and that information, that research is incorporated in the use of our assessments. Let's talk a little bit about what you're doing, who you're measuring and how this is unique in this field.

**Ron:** Yes, we're coming to it a little bit backdoor, but let's take a look at the concept. First of all, after I introduce this a little bit, I do want to back up and explain why we're doing it. Right now, let's talk about what it is I do.

**Suzie:** Okay, great.

**Ron:** What we're really doing is that we'll bring in participants. We hook them up with what is called a NeuroNet, a 19 electrode Neuro-Net that simply flips over your head. These electrodes are associated with 19 different locations that are scientifically determined. In other words, it's called a 10-20 Montage. There's specific locations on the skull where scientists have agreed that this is where we will collect data. We've aligned those with those 19 locations, and then we're using... There's a variety of software. In our particular case, I'm using a system, Brain Avatar. Brain Avatar allows me to do real-time imaging, so I'm able to see what your brain is doing and how it's reacting based on the electroactivity that's coming out of those 19 sites in real-time. Furthermore, the program turns it into colored images, so I'm getting this image that's moving dynamically in front of me as you are thinking about a concept or a trigger. Then



imagine that I've got a TV screen set up, or computer monitor, in which you are looking at a stimuli, and I'm now going to see your brain reaction and the decision-making pathways associated with that reaction as you watch that trigger. It becomes a very dynamic system and very exciting. A lot of data. I'm getting over a quarter of a million data points per second.

**Suzie:** Wow.

**Ron:** That's lot of data coming out, a lot of exciting data. To carry this one step further... I hope that made a little bit of sense. Let's simplify it. Here's what we really have. I am focusing in on only one wave band, and it's called the Gamma waves. Gamma waves, in our research, are defined by a range of 38 to 42 hertz, in other words, cycles per second. We're looking at waves coming out of your brain that are pretty fast. They're 38 to 42, that's a fast wave compared to Delta waves, they're zero to four hertz per second, that's when you're getting sleep. These are very active waves, and we're looking only at the front of the brain which is your executive function portion of the brain. We want to see how you're processing decision-making, so I'm looking just at decision-making, I'm looking just at Gamma. By only looking at Gamma, it allows me to see really what is referred to in the literature as a precognition. This is such a fast wave that it actually is triggering your thought process in a precognitive manner. I am looking at your decision-making before you've thought about it.

**Suzie:** Okay, that's interesting.

**Ron:** It is because you see the literature in social science has said for many years that people tend to make decisions, and then they spend their time rationalizing and justifying the decision they already made. But they didn't understand the science behind that statement. All they knew is that people tend to make these emotional, knee-jerk reactions about 95% of the time, and then they stick with it. They don't change. They're cemented to that idea. I now understand that I can show you that emotional reaction, that's what it is, it's the emotional reaction. The Gamma is a catalyst for the thought, so I'm looking at the catalyst before the reaction. The catalyst is an emotional connection. Every decision we make has an emotional component to it... This is exciting to see this Gamma wave activity. What really makes this simplified, though, is the fact that this is differentiated in the frontal lobes, right and left. In other words, if I decide I like something, I see a Gamma burst on the left side of the prefrontal cortex. If I have a person who has avoidance to a concept, they do not like it, it will be a burst on the right side of the prefrontal cortex. All of a sudden, we have this ability to literally read your mind.

**Suzie:** That's amazing. Now who are your participants? What kind of people are you reading in this way?

**Ron:** We actually put out calls here in Scottsdale periodically to a local magazine for participants, and we outline in there what the study will be and the fact that they are sort of donating their time as volunteers to help us out. But the studies then are predetermined by what questions we wish to answer. In some cases, because we are a software company that's involved in selection for hire and professional development, we have a set of sciences or assessments that deal with behaviors and motivators and driving forces and soft skills and emotional quotients, stress quotients. In other words, what I'm doing in almost all cases is I'm having an individual take the assessment on paper, and then I'm having them retake the assessment while we collect brain wave activity.

**Suzie:** Okay, so they actually take the real assessment, not the real, but they take it like any of our clients would, or any of my clients would. Then they actually put on the... What did you call it?

**Ron:** NeuroNet.

**Suzie:** NeuroNet. And you're collecting data when you... Are you showing them images from the assessment? Or having them answer the assessment now in their mind?

**Ron:** They're seeing the real words, in that case. They're seeing the word and reacting to that word. For example, they might see the word "daring," and their brain is going to react to the word "daring." They're going to see the word "careful," and their brain is going to react to "careful" with regard to what they think of that, whether that's a reflection of them or not.

**Suzie:** It will either be an avoid response or a like response, or maybe a neutral response?

**Ron:** That's correct. Which really corresponds to how they answered the survey. Did they put it number one, or did they put it number four? Did they like it? Do they dislike it? We do a correlational study. Now this is not something that our software users across the country are going to do. We do this for two reasons: We're doing it for validation, to see if we're really asking the right questions and are we getting evidence that it's coming directly out of the brain and not made up. Number two, it's causing us to be able to refine our assessments in ways we never dreamed possible. For example, when I do a behavioral assessment, and you answer one, two, three, four, one being most likely, four being least likely, that's part of an assessment that we give. What we find is that when I run them, people on the brain, I can fill out their assessment with just the brain activity. 84% of the time I will be correct on what they said was number one; however, what they said was number four, avoidance, what I'm not, is virtually 100% agreement between the brain and the survey. What that tells us is that in a conversation we literally are exposing more of who we are when we talk about what we dislike than what we talk about what we like. A simple example of that would be going out to a brand new restaurant, and you open the menu, and you examine the choices for the evening. I can tell you right now you probably don't think about this, but mentally, one of the processes you employ is you immediately dismiss everything on the menu you won't eat. "Okay, it's got kale. Anything with kale is gone."

**Suzie:** I'm not eating it.

**Ron:** "I'm not eating kale." All right? Presume you had this terrible, difficult task of deciding. That's a different pathway. Our assessments are really taking advantage of the fact that when you say "no" to something, we have to weight that pretty strongly because that's a pretty strong indication of reality for you. Does that make sense?

**Suzie:** It does, and I think what it's led to in the assessments is, and there are people listening to this who have taken the assessments, there's one part of the assessment that's in the DISC that talks about absence of a behavior that used to not be there now. It's our lowest, and there's a whole couple of pages talking about it. This is your lowest style, you're now highlighting it. The way it's playing out in the world, or in this work, to make sure people understand what they want to avoid just as much as what they prefer, it sounds like.

**Ron:** Absolutely. I'm afraid the assessment industry as a whole has only looked at our strengths and has ignored when we say "no," what that really means. Probably the biggest example of our brain research at work is our rethinking of our 6 motivators now into our 12 driving forces, because when you tell us 12 times you're not something, on the old report we said, "Well, you're just not that." No, no. You just told me 12 times that this is offensive, this is bad, this is something you do not like.

**Suzie:** That's actually a motivator because I'm motivated to avoid it.

**Ron:** That's correct, and that makes it so exciting. These insights, they excite me. I'm a high Theoretical, so I just get excited about learning. Then of course everybody in the building wants to know, "What do you do with the information?" They seem to have a different filter.

**Suzie:** You have some Utilitarian in there somewhere, I think.

**Ron:** Oh, yeah.

**Suzie:** Yes, you do. It's interesting that you're able to validate... Does it happen most of the time? You say with the DISC, you're 84% correct when they've completed the assessment, written or online, and then when they're doing the brain visuals you're pretty correct? Do you find that almost all the time that there's an absolute correlation?

**Ron:** Well, we do, but keep in mind that this is, first of all, a social science. It's not physics. We have complications, we're working with humans that you don't run into in the physical world. One of those complications is that each of us, let's take behavior as an example, DISC, you're not dogmatically one or another, you're on a continuum for all four. The fact that we are not in total agreement is also a factor that each individual is unique and comes with a unique location on those four dynamics to start with. So what we did in this particular setting is we took people that were 90% or above. You had to have a 90 or above to qualify to be a D or to be a C. We were trying to look at a sort of dogmatic approach to this, rather than people that were middle of the road graphics.

**Suzie:** Right, had a bunch of things above the line just barely or something. That makes sense.

**Ron:** When I mentioned that, the reason I paused is that another study we did that is related to behaviors was the concept of words that don't work. Oh, did that open some interesting things because we took, again, groups of people that were DISC 90 or above and had nothing that they were ten or below, so that they would be middle range on the other factors. We wanted to see how they would react to a set of words that my brother, Bill, created back in 1984 that he said when you're working, for example, in a conversation or sales, that you literally could turn off a conversation by using the wrong word. We wanted to check these words out, and we found some absolutely fascinating outcomes from all of that. In your show notes, I may throw a slide in. Keep in mind, if you want to see a slide that actually shows thermometers with this, I'll send that to you.

**Suzie:** That'd be great.

**Ron:** When you think about words that don't work... It's interesting because the most forgiving people you work with are high I's; they don't have real triggers. They're pretty happy, and they're forgiving. Followed by S's and then D's, but there's one group that is a full standard deviation different from the other three, and that is our lovely C's. People that are really, really high on the C behavioral, the compliance component, are the least forgiving.

**Suzie:** Okay.

**Ron:** Let me give you an example of what that means. I was 40 years in education, and in that time frame, I referred to myself as an educational reformer. I traveled the world. I worked in 15 different countries. I tried to work with teachers to get them to try new things. Now, let's imagine that I have a group in front of me... By the way, every culture has its own behavioral styles that dominates that culture, and education is dominated by S's and C's. That's not good or bad, it's just part of the culture. There's some steadiness there, and they are very compliant, and they follow directions. There are all kinds of implications for that. Recognize now, that I'm going to go into a whole room of these lovely S, C's and I'm going to start a presentation on educational reform. Imagine I start it this way: "I have this awesome new curriculum that is a brand new curriculum. No one else in the nation has used it yet. This is an experiment that you are going to be the first to do, and it's going to be an opportunity to do something that no one else has ever done."

**Suzie:** Those are all words that don't work for high S and C.

**Ron:** They don't work, and the audience is going, "I don't do new. I don't do trials. I'm not your guinea pig." If this is what's going through their mind, I have lost the audience before I ever started. We need to realize not only our own behaviors, but we need to realize how it's interplaying with others. We have got to modify and adapt if we're serious about communicating. I'll tell you, another part of our research that is just exciting, we just finished a study on politics. We took off-scale Republicans and off-scale Democrats and ran some studies on them to see if there were words that would trigger problems.

**Suzie:** You came up with some, I'm guessing.

**Ron:** We did, but here's what's fascinating, remember I said that 95% of the time we really justify your answer and rationalize your answer and not really think about your answer? That is part of our survival as humans. We have learned to have fight, flight or freeze responses when we are threatened. If you think back at the words I used with those teachers, I'm sorry, that's a threat. I'm telling them that they are going to do something that they don't want to do. The same thing happens daily in our conversations with our children, with colleagues, and certainly in politics. All it takes is for you to use a trigger word, and it shuts down your prefrontal cortex. It shuts down thinking. You activate cortisol, you activate adrenaline, and you activate the amygdala which is designed to have an emotional response with no thinking.

**Suzie:** Oh, it's so interesting. You hear words that don't work, and you listen to the DISC. If you personally experience yourself adapting to someone else, and you see how more effective it is, then you're a true believer. You get it and you try it and you use it. But now on top of that, you're backing all of that up, our experience of the difference it makes, with there's real science behind



the fact of how the brain works, that these things get triggered in the brain. That's just so powerful.

**Ron:** It really is, and in fact... I'd mentioned early on in the interview that I wouldn't mind talking a little bit about how all of this came to be and where I got to this point and how I got to this point, and I think your comment has triggered that.

**Suzie:** Let's go there.

**Ron:** In 1984, Bill started this business and David made it electronic, so they moved it to a brand new world of being able to do things remotely and make reports that weren't just a paper and pencil output. I'm actually, at that point, at the University of Nebraska as a professor of science education, and Bill and I talked regularly. I'm working with people; I'm trying to communicate with people. So I decide to start using his assessments, and you know what? I really found that they worked. Here's what I found out. I found out that I was working with young people that had no clue who they were! They spent four years at a University learning, and nowhere did anyone help them understand self. Nowhere.

**Suzie:** Every day. You see that every day, everywhere. Not just college campuses, but I know it's prevalent there.

**Ron:** It is. It's like, "We have an answer folks!" But the world isn't listening. We keep shouting. But eventually we'll get them. I'm not going to give up. I had no doubt that that I was doing what I felt was unique and making a difference, and it got some notoriety. All of a sudden, I'm invited to Washington, D.C., to receive an award from Carl Sagan for the outstanding teacher preparation program in the nation.

**Suzie:** What were you doing? You were giving... Were you doing the DISC assessments? Motivators? Do you recall?

**Ron:** I started only with DISC and then moved to DISC and motivators, by the way, reluctantly. I was convinced that DISC answered all questions, and then once I, finally, Bill convinced me to go to motivators, then I... Wow. That opened all kinds of doors.

**Suzie:** You're like, "Okay, wait a minute. This really answers a lot of questions."

**Ron:** I don't know why I was reluctant, but I think a number of us... "I've been using DISC for years and it works." No, there's more to the story, folks. Grow, grow.

**Suzie:** DISC is easier in regards to... People get it right away. Motivators, it kind of needs to sink in with people, I think.

**Ron:** Yes, behaviors are identifiable. They are observable. Motivators are that hidden filter that lies behind your behaviors, underneath your behaviors. I'll tell you, without the assessments, it does not get exposed. That's why it's so crucial to actually work with Driving Forces.

**Suzie:** It's way more powerful than DISC, I think.

**Ron:** It is. So I go to Washington, and Carl Sagan is backstage. He's a busy man, and he doesn't know me from squat. He's just been invited over here to do something. He says to me, "Before we go out there, at least tell me why I'm giving you this award." He's a rather direct man. I had not thought about my elevator pitch, but that was the first time that I used the statement, "Well, I help my students by providing the science of self." The "science of self" has actually been trademarked now here at TTISI because that's really what we are trying to do. When we work with individuals, we are trying desperately to get them to understand the "science of self."

**Ron:** Now what happened was I came back to the University receiving this national award, and at one point, finally, somebody said, "Maybe you better tell us what you do because you seem to get more notoriety than the rest of us." I give a presentation to the faculty. This is actually what happened: Three quarters of the way through my presentation to the faculty, an administrator stands up with both his fists on the table, leaning toward me, and he says, "We do not use tarot cards for decision-making!" Sort of the end of the talk, by the way. I left that room angry because I knew these things worked. I had used them. I know they work, I know they give voice to things that otherwise we couldn't talk about and put on the table and develop. I knew it worked, and so I made a decision. I was already thinking neurology, but I refocused my research that day on how can I prove scientifically that these assessments are real? Now do you understand where this comes from and what I'm trying to do? It's not like I'm trying to prove the hypothesis. I'm a scientist; I'll accept whatever data I get. But the fact is, we have gotten data to prove that when you take these things seriously and when you allow yourself to answer them from your heart, they give an accurate portrayal of a reality that we now can actually lay on the table and work with.

**Suzie:** That is awesome. Out of contrast comes our mission, oftentimes.

**Ron:** Yes.

**Suzie:** Clarified it for you. That's amazing. I love what you said, "Gives voice to the things we can't easily..." I don't know if this is an exact quote, but the assessments "give voice to things we don't easily talk about."

**Ron:** Yes.

**Suzie:** They do.

**Ron:** Absolutely. Let's see. We've bounced around a little bit. May I back up and maybe fill in a couple of holes?

**Suzie:** Absolutely. That'd be great.

**Ron:** We had talked about triggers and the fact that we use the wrong words... I think this is important because of the election right now to just take this one step further and talk about the fact that when you're having conversations, and I'll tell you it almost happens daily because you'll run into somebody that feels the need to express their position on an issue, and we're not all in agreement by the way, so we're polarized in ways that I don't know if I've experienced since the Vietnam War.

**Suzie:** Right.

**Ron:** I would really like the audience to think for a moment and just reflect on what's going on mentally. As soon as... I'm going to describe it this way: I'm going to describe two different kinds of conversations.

**Suzie:** Okay.

**Ron:** One conversation is a *me-you* conversation, the other conversation is a *we*. As soon as we have a *me-you* conversation, you may think that's a debate and that's good, but the debate quickly moves to the level of argument. As soon as that debate mechanism moves to an emotional load, thinking shuts down, walls go up, and you become solidified in your thinking. In fact, you no longer are listening at all, you are simply responding to the way you see the world. You have eliminated conversation, you have eliminated trust, and you have eliminated the opportunity to have any influence whatsoever on the other individual. What is required is to consciously keep that conversation at the *we* level. Work from commonalities, work from an open agenda where we are looking at the dimensions and the possibilities. As soon as you break away from the *we*, you're lost. You're done.

**Suzie:** Yes.

**Ron:** I think that's crucial, and if we really adhere to that we can move light years on our conversations with people. But it is so hard because we each have our own agendas and our own filters and our own beliefs. I'll tell you, I'm using the thinking of politics right now, but it's true in every conversation. I came down here from 40 years in education where my job was to think. My job was not to apply, it was to create. I would come in to my brother, and I would show him some new data on the brain scans. I would be so excited about my findings, and he would say, "What are you going to do with it? What good is it? How can you sell it?" It took me months to figure out that the two of us were not communicating because we each had... We were having a mental bias as to what we heard and what was important. For him, knowledge was not important unless you could use it. For me, using it dirtied the concept. It took pure, beautiful learning and dirtied it by applying it. It turned science into technology. Technology is nothing but the application of a beautiful concept. I love to work with beautiful concepts. I don't dirty my hands by putting it into production.

**Suzie:** Isn't that interesting. Thinking about the motivators, if you think about how... That was a work relationship, so you've got a Utilitarian sales manager and then you've got someone who's research and technology for the new product. It's the same thing. What helps you all have a *we* conversation, you understanding his perspective, him understanding your perspective, and then it becomes more of a *we* conversation. You're thinking about trigger words that you might not use and his style. You're thinking, "Okay, what does he value?" which is the motivators. Then you start having more of a *we* conversation from that, right?

**Ron:** You've got it. Some people may think, "Well, that sounds like a lot of work." At the beginning, it may be. But the more you do it, the easier it becomes and the more natural it becomes and, I'm sorry, the more effective you become. It's essential, if we really want to move and be productive, we have got to be able to mentally move our mind to the other dimension.

Wow, that's a beautiful connection. I said I play Native American flute. I just was taping a new song last night, and I truly believe that the names of songs should tie to what you hear and should cause you to reflect in an interesting way. The latest song that I was recording is called, "The Dance of the Mirror Neuron." Mirror neurons is our ability to experience and feel something that someone else is experiencing and feeling.

**Suzie:** Okay, ability to experience and feel. That is a great tie-in to what we're talking about.

**Ron:** It is. In the case of my song, I'm playing a dual-chambered flute where literally the two of them are listening to each other and it's a reflection. You play four or five measures that have a particular tempo and a particular rhythm, and then it's replicated in some fashion by the other flute. It's back and forth with the Yin and Yang of communicating in time together and moving together, rather than being two completely discourse conversations. Mirror neurons are important, it's just that we probably don't use them as much as we should, and some of us are better at using them than others. By the way, my wife has pointed that out to me throughout our married life.

**Suzie:** That she's got that figured out more?

**Ron:** Yes, that's right. I used to dread coming home from parties. There'd be this 35-minute drive home where there's a debrief that takes place.

**Suzie:** So mirrored... Do you spell it m-e-a-r neuron?

**Ron:** No, it's spelled just like a mirror on the wall.

**Suzie:** Mirror.

**Ron:** Yes, mirror.

**Suzie:** That might be my southern pronunciation of it. Mirror neurons.

**Ron:** No, it's mine. It's my problem. It's like being in Texas and talking about the roots /ruts/ of a plant instead of roots /ruts/.

**Suzie:** Yes, that's true. Okay, mirror neuron. That makes so much sense. To me, when you talk about people saying it might be work... What I find is if people will take their own results and do everything they can to understand them and apply them for themselves, then the next step after that is, "Okay, so now I understand my own. Let me read and understand others." Then the next step after that is, "Okay, I'm going to work towards adapting." It is a process, and I'm sure there are things that we're building in our brain as we start moving towards others and exhibiting more, to me, it's like a bit of compassion and understanding of others. That's when it starts to feel we because if I can just understand where you're coming from, the whole vibe to our conversation is different.

**Ron:** It really is. I love the fact that you laid that out into about a three phase process. By the way, you can't necessarily invert those. I think understanding self is the crucial first step. Now what happens many times is that once someone understands self, they get into this little self-

talk that says, “That’s just who I am.” I’m sorry, this is an explanation of your behavior, not an excuse.

**Suzie:** Yes, exactly. “I’m just a D.” Well, yes, you’re a D, talking to myself because I have that, that needs to manage herself. So manage that self!

**Ron:** That’s correct. That’s the self-talk that’s really hard for people. To move through that step and say, “Okay, that is who I am, but that may not be appropriate in some settings, and I’m going to have to learn how to modify that and adapt.” That’s a very hard step to do.

**Ron:** Let’s talk for a moment about how this relates to the Driving Forces. You said you have a number of people that have some familiarity with our assessments. What’s really been fascinating is that newbies, people who are new to our assessments, are embracing Driving Forces as if it was just a natural explanation of reality. Those that grew up on Motivators are having more difficulty seeing the other end of the spectrum. I find that interesting and fascinating, but what hit home for me is that Bill and I were on stage in a conference doing a presentation together, and this was before Driving Forces existed, we had just looked at the data that showed that aversion was a very strong influence. I’m standing behind Bill, and he says, “Imagine a day in your life in the motivator that you’re not.” I’m standing back there going, “Okay, I’m high Theoretical. What’s my low? Okay, my low is a 12 which means that all 12 times I put Traditional in the last phase. Traditional actually is stronger than my Theoretical, not being Traditional is stronger. I’m thinking, “A day in my life where I would live out traditions. I would do the same thing, I’d endure the same places, I would eat the same food...”

**Suzie:** Be in charge of the S and P.

**Ron:** All of a sudden, I’m literally going into an anxiety attack standing backstage, thinking about what my life would be like if I was dictated to live in what I’m not. That really drove home for me that we have got to go back to the office to work on this. This is powerful.

**Suzie:** Yes, and for those who are listening, there’s 6 motivators in the Motivator assessment, and I’ve got a couple of podcasts that I’ll refer to in the intro that talk about the Motivators. What Dr. Ron is discussing is now we have an opportunity to move, for those companies that want to, can move to the Driving Forces which is just now incorporating Dr. Ron’s research around what we want to avoid into the Motivators results and it’s now called Driving Forces. You not only look at the top two motivators, you’re also looking at what’s your lowest, which now make up your primary drivers. You get a more robust picture of what drives someone, what drives you, and it’s very effective. What I have been doing, Dr. Ron, with people who aren’t ready to change, is I have started talking about what the lowest is and what it means and incorporating that. It’s segwaying into the new tool. You’re exactly right. What you don’t like is as... Your research shows that your brain lights up 100% correct according to how they completed the assessment, if I’m recalling what you said earlier, 100% and more strongly on the things we want to avoid.

**Ron:** That’s correct. You’ve actually hit on another component of the research that I didn’t talk about. We’re actually getting qualitative and quantitative, so I get numbers and I get pictures. What’s interesting is you’ve just highlighted the other thing that comes out of it. I’m getting an asymmetry, I get right side and left side. That’s an asymmetry, and that’s pretty straightforward.



I also get intensity. Not only am I getting directionality, I'm getting intensity. Avoidance not only has directionality, it has an added intensity.

**Suzie:** Okay.

**Ron:** That may be deeper than we need to go, but it is interesting.

**Suzie:** What you're seeing, though, in the research, it sounds like, is when somebody ranks something 12 times, and it's their number 6 motivator on the motivators... What the brain would light up is a certain part of the brain that shows when you're trying to avoid something and then it would be brighter, even more intense than on the things they say, "Well, yes, I pick that. My top one." Is that correct?

**Ron:** That's right. That's exactly what happens.

**Suzie:** It's more intense. That's interesting. You and I are very similar; my number one is almost Extreme Theoretical and then number two is Utilitarian. My number six is almost indifferent in Traditional/Regulatory, the avoidance of structure and process and I-have-to-do-things-the-same-way, right?

**Ron:** Yes. I can think of no other topic on Earth that's more interesting than talking about ourselves and understanding self.

**Suzie:** It is interesting because then once you understand that, then you can start... You know who I love more than anything in my life? Not more than anything, that's a dramatic statement. But high Traditional/Regulatory. I don't want to do that, but now because I understand that that's not my forte, that other people who bring that to the table help me be more successful, help me see things from a different viewpoint. Everybody has the same thing: Whatever their lowest is, is the thing you don't want to necessarily do, but the people around you who are good at that love to do it.

**Ron:** We're trying to come up with new approaches to team wheels and to creating teams and describing teams. What's interesting is that... There are two parts to this. A Comparison Report compares you and I. We can look at that, and we can determine how we're similar and how we're different. Then that leads to a conversation about how to interact. It becomes far more complex when you look at a group of people on a team because not only do we want to understand each person, but frankly, we have to have diversity for the team to be effective.

**Suzie:** Right.

**Ron:** You have to have built-in potential conflict for a really good team. The problem then becomes management and appreciation for each other because you have to have diversity. If everybody has great ideas, and nobody is there to do the work, that is not a good team. It's fascinating that we have to have this Yin and Yang. We have to have diversity, but we have to appreciate diversity because, by definition, diversity is potential conflict.

**Suzie:** Yes, and that's where I see the beauty of Motivators and Driving Forces is you start to understand really what does somebody care about.

**Ron:** The only way to really get that, by the way, assessments certainly help, but there's another thing we haven't mentioned that is part of this Yin and Yang, and I probably have been guilty of not doing that in the last few minutes, like hour, but that's listening. About 80% of an effective conversation should be listening. We are all guilty of even asking the question with the intent of answering it ourselves. We have got to break that habit. We have to listen more, and we have to ask real questions and then shut up. For example, "What did you do this weekend?" Do you know what that really means? "I don't care what you did this weekend, but I'm dying to tell you what I did." We do that all the time. We initiate questions that are not questions. They are simply leads into our own dialogue.

**Suzie:** Yes. I like the "ask real questions," the way you said that, too, because that's a piece of it. Don't just ask questions, ask real questions.

**Ron:** Let's define "real questions." A real question cannot be answered with a "yes" or "no." A real question is something that you do not know the answer. If you already know the answer, it's not a real question. If it can be answered with a yes or no, it's not a real question. If you adhere to those two rules, you've just opened up a world of interesting dialogue.

**Suzie:** Yes.

**Ron:** To take my years of education and apply it in a new world has been fun because what I just talked to you about is something that we've had to work with as educators for eons. I'm finding it fascinating that both worlds could learn from each other. We've got to do more synergism in the world; we've got to cross over. We've spent the last hundred years separating all of our professionalism into little boxes: I'm a biologist. I'm a psychologist. I'm a business manager. And now we start to realize that the only way to understand problems is through synergy. It's when you tie things together. Yes, it's more difficult, but it's also more exciting, folks.

**Suzie:** Yes, and the truth also is the asking real questions and the listening, I think that with the science of self, the more we're aware of ourselves, I know for me personally and I see it in other people, it's easier to listen to other people when you understand yourself better and you have confidence in what you know. Then you can enjoy others and not feel like you have to insert so much. I think that's a big piece of it. Then what you said about the groups, the University and business and psychologists all getting together, I also think science of self helps with that because there's so many similarities and there's so many differences. It's like getting a team to communicate. Once you understand where different people are coming from, then you can start to see the similarities and appreciate the differences. Not to overstate the value of knowing Motivators and Driving Forces, but there's huge value in that and in diversity and appreciating diversity at all levels.

**Ron:** There's two things that come to mind that are things to be overcome to accomplish what you just said. The first is that each of us, as we develop our area of expertise, for some reason that requires that we create our own jargon. Even though we may be talking about the same thing, we have our own vocabulary that separates us. Education talks about dispositions, the government talks about 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, we talk about soft skills or personal attributes. We have language barriers that get in the way of communication. That's a major hurdle.



**Suzie:** Yes. What's the other one? You said there are two.

**Ron:** As soon as I said that, I said to myself, "You never indicate how many there are of something because by the time you get to it, you forget it."

**Suzie:** Jargon is a big one. Jargon could cover two.

**Ron:** It could. No, the other area though that is really a problem is that we have isolation. We become experts and we create silos. The separation is more than just jargon. It's a physical and a mental and a philosophical separation that each of us feel like we have the answers, and therefore we don't necessarily listen to others. Listening then becomes another key word in this process that we really need to embrace the concept.

**Suzie:** All right. That is the end of episode 29. Show notes are at [pricelessprofessional.com/brain](http://pricelessprofessional.com/brain), all lower case. I like closing on that last statement where Dr. Ron is talking about listening. I love what he said: "You have to have diversity and appreciation of that diversity in order for diversity to work, and 80% of appreciation and having an effective conversation is about listening." I love how he so bluntly puts it: "Ask real questions and shut up." Ask real questions, that's a solid point. And then shut up is the other solid point. Great advice around listening, that's something we've covered here often. It's something I know I'm always working on, and I know many of my clients and friends are also working on that. Just want to remind you that in the show notes you'll see links to many of the things we've talked about, some of the images, sample reports. Go to the show notes to find that, [pricelessprofessional.com/brain](http://pricelessprofessional.com/brain). Episode 30 will also be put up. That's going to be the second half of this interview. The way you'll find those show notes is go to [pricelessprofessional.com/brain2](http://pricelessprofessional.com/brain2). Don't forget, if you want to use the iPhone app for the [pricelessprofessional.com](http://pricelessprofessional.com) podcast, it's actually Wakeup Eager Workforce Podcast through my company, you can go to [wakeupeagerworkforce.com](http://wakeupeagerworkforce.com) and there's a link there for you to download the app. It's free. All right, we'll see you on the next episode. Thanks for tuning in! All the best.

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