

Episode Title: *Creating a Kinder World***Subtitle:** Quiet Leadership, Recognition, and the Search for Purpose

Transcripts are lightly edited for clarity, tone, and flow.

Lisette (Main Intro)

Welcome. You're listening to grow with me, a podcast and creative project from Garza Consulting. I'm Lisette Garza, an ICF coach and an organizational development consultant who works with thoughtful leaders, creatives and change makers, especially those standing at a crossroads asking deeper questions about who they are, how they show up in the world, and maybe even rethinking their sense of purpose. Each episode is a short coaching session, an open moment between two people where something meaningful is being worked through in real time. Whether you're listening, learning, or imagining yourself in the guest seat, you are a part of this and I'm glad you're here. Thanks for listening. Let's grow.

Lisette (Intro)

Welcome to grow with me. Today, I'm inviting you into the arc of a coaching conversation with Carlos, who came in with a gentle but powerful intention.

Lisette

So let's begin what would feel meaningful to walk away with by the end of our time together.

Carlos

I think the biggest thing, or the thing or the thing, like, the most meaningful thing that I could get out of our conversation would be a sense of purpose. I think it's a, I mean, it's the biggest, probably one of the biggest questions we can ask ourselves as human beings. But having some sense of purpose into, like, adding some purpose into what I do every day would be lovely.

Lisette (Commentary)

He named what so many of us long for to feel a clearer sense of purpose woven into the everyday, which is what we'll be focusing on today. In this episode, you'll hear other selected moments from our session. After each clip, I'll be reflecting on the coaching process in order to understand my approach a little more deeply, while also highlighting Carlos' story and his work in defining His purpose. My hope is that you, our listener, will not only take in a story, but that you also create the space to reflect on your own journey. Adding some purpose into what you do every day would be lovely.

Lisette

Why is that important?

Carlos

Well, because I feel, I mean, I, I have been working for the last 12 years now, non stop. I mean, holidays here and there, but there's been no major break. And I feel like it's a lot of time. It's a lot of hours being able to do this with a purpose feels like a waste in some sort of way. So yeah, and having the ability to think that what I do matters makes everything much, much more relevant to me.

Lisette

So having the ability to having the ability to feel that everything you do matters, is that, right?

Carlos

Yeah, yeah. To a certain extent, I'm not planning on changing the world, yeah. And

Lisette

And that, actually, my question is related to that, what does mattering mean to you?

Carlos

Yeah, yeah. Well, that's a trick, I think. Well, I've been reflecting about this the last weeks, and I would say that what I'm searching for the most is my own intrinsic motivation, but not just necessarily motivation, but purpose, right? I was, I've been in conversations with some people during these weeks, and I feel like there's a certain aspect. And I know this is a, not a great word to bring, but it is a I feel like I have a, what I call a semi depression, a professionally semi depressive, depressed. What do I mean by that? I mean that I don't necessarily connect with the value that I bring. And so when, when you ask about the word matter, I think the real answer to that is, is that I need it to matter to me. I can see that. Some of the stuff I do matters to other people, and I do get appreciation, and I do get recognition and praise and positive feedback, but I'm not necessarily connecting myself with the value that I might be given to others. Does that make any sense? It makes it to make sense to me. You

Lisette (Commentary)

This was an honest moment. He wasn't saying that others don't see his impact. He was naming something harder, that even when people affirm him, he struggles to feel connected to it. The fact that he could articulate the gap between external recognition and internal resonance showed me that he was willing to look at it a little deeper.

Carlos

Yeah, yeah. I think, I think it all boils down to the fact that I my job is quite corporate, and therefore the people that I am positively influencing are within this corporate world, and so from a much deeper level, even though they might be appreciative of the support that I give and and yada yada, it's still the corporate world, and it's still a world that I don't necessarily believe in. So I don't feel like I'm transforming people's lives. I feel like I'm just helping them navigate and stay afloat in a corporate environment.

Lisette

So you sort of said at a deeper level, almost as if, like at the end of the day, I work for a corporation, you talked about not necessarily transforming people's lives, but just helping them navigate and stay afloat. And when you say people or they, who exactly are you referring to?

Carlos

I would say mostly, I mean for, for the vast majority of of these people are people that are so I'm in a in a middle management position, and I have been both a manager to direct reports, but also a manager

within an organization. So I help people that are that are less senior, navigate the complexities of the of the business.

Lisette

Yes, and so is that in a mentorship capacity?

Carlos

Yeah, yeah. You could call it. So yes, for the most part, it's, it's mostly mentoring other people, and that's where I get a bit of a of a kick out of what I do. Right? The rest of it is mostly presentations, reports, talking to upper management and things like that.

Lisette

So you work in a corporate environment, and you, you've said that you don't, you don't believe you're transforming people's lives. You're just helping them navigate and stay afloat. And the people you're referring to are these people that are are are less senior. And then we, we sort of specified that you may be serving a mentorship role to them. Is that right? Just want to make sure. And then you said that this, this mentoring process, is what really gives you a kick, which I imagine you're meaning like it kind of gives you energy,

Carlos

yes, and in the sense of being able to see the value now that we were talking about before, some of the value that I might be bringing is through these is through the conversations with these people.

Lisette

I like that. And so when we were talking earlier about how you connect to the value you bring to your work, how you connect and don't connect? In the case of mentorship, would you say that you connect more to that, that value that exists there?

Carlos

Yes, yes. I mean, it's the thing I connect to the most in the in the environment that I that I am in right now. I don't have a huge connection with the product, the company. Mission is not a mission that I generally believe in. And to be very frank, I just think that mostly it all comes down to money. And I am growing, or have grown bored of the concept of money as the thing to pursue. I would like to think that there's, I believe that there's more to our experience and to us being here than just trying to make as much money as we can every year.

Lisette

So you believe, believing that there's more to your experience. What could that be?

Carlos

Well, I guess it's bettering. I mean, it sounds very big, but you know, bettering our society, bettering improving who we are, improving in. In the the lives of people, and therefore improving our understanding of ourselves and understanding of the society, and being able to contribute to a healthier society. I would love to

Lisette

And do you why do you laugh when you say that?

Carlos

Oh, because I think I'm daydreaming a bit. I mean, especially the current circumstances don't make it very clear that we're heading towards an improvement of of society. But rather the opposite. Feels like the world's much more polarized and all these kind of things.

Lisette

Yeah, so you you think it's, uh, when you say daydream, do you think does that mean it's impossible?

Carlos

Well, I think it's possible, but I don't think, I definitely think it's possible. I just don't think that current. We don't have the right people, and we don't have the right approach right now in general, and also that translates into every other layer of our of our society.

Lisette (Commentary)

He voiced a longing to contribute to a better world and then immediately dismissed it. But what matters here is that the vision had surfaced at all,

Lisette

So bettering our society, improving the lives of people, improving oneself and understanding others and being able to contribute to a healthier society. How does that sound? Hearing it back. It

Carlos

sounds like daydreaming. It sounds like you're aiming too high. That's what I would say to the person saying that. I'd be like, Why don't you just learn how to appreciate the good things that you definitely have right now, and basically just sort of lower your expectations on life. But I have tried this, I keep trying this, and it doesn't seem to work. I just keep it's just a patch after a patch after a patch, sometimes I think, oh, maybe I should, you know, change jobs. And I'm like, well, that's yet another patch. Maybe I should move somewhere else and start a new job in a different company in a different part of the world. And it's like, yeah, but because the novelty effect will last for a bit, and I'll be motivated until I'm not anymore.

Lisette (Commentary)

So here he goes from macro to micro and wondering what his response should be. He's trying different things to appreciate what he has, but none seem to be working. We continue talking about his current work in progress and bettering others in his own community, including the workplace.

Carlos

You I think, I think from a deeper level, I used to have the realization not that long ago, that I was working the career my parents maybe wanted me to work for many, many years, and now I've sort of succeeded at it, and my parents are not around anymore. So now it comes down to, what do I want to

do? How do I want to approach my own career? And that's such a difficult question, because up until here, you were given a path, right? So you know what? What do you want to study? Okay, what kind of jobs can you get in that field? Okay, keep growing grind, you know, you know, sort of climb the ladder. But then these more existential questions started coming to me, and then it's like, well, is that, is this really it is the next step, a promotion, and then the next step, another promotion, and then another promotion. And there isn't much feeding the soul right now.

Lisette

So when you talk about, you know, the things that maybe give you more energy, the things where the things that maybe make you feel more connected. You talked earlier about improving society, improving lives, if you were to think about you know that idea, so improving lives, improving society, let's just leave it at that. If you were to think about yourself and what you currently do at work, even outside of work, think about a scale from one zero to 10, and it's measuring um. How much you're improving society in the lives of others, zero meaning you're not doing anything, and 10, meaning you're there, you're, you're, you're bringing a lot of improvement to society and others. Where on the scale would you see yourself

Carlos

just interesting question, I think I would I was oscillating as you were, as you were, as you were asking the question. But if I in this moment of time, and as I mentioned with this, you know, I labeled it a semi depressed professional life. I'm rather I'm a bit of a pessimist right now, so I would probably put it on a three, and I know that my partner, my friends, would probably disagree with that. But if we're talking society wise, I don't, I don't think I am giving it as much as I could, and I make myself accountable for that. I think I'm not. I think I can give much more, but I have sort of developed this feeling of me, this sort of nihilism that makes me think, well, you know what's what's the point?

Lisette

Well, you make me think about something. Maybe I shouldn't improve, improving society and the lives of people together. Would your score change if we just focus on the lives of others?

Carlos

Yeah, yeah, the lives of the people that are around me. Yeah, well, then, then, for sure, it would change. I think the score there would be probably, I would probably put it around the seven, but I still think, I think everybody goes so fast, and everybody goes so is so absent. I don't know if this absent minded is the right word, because I think their minds are on it. I think they're absent hearted. If that makes sense, people are putting all their minds and into into navigating lives, but I feel like they're leaving their hearts behind. And I think I could help more from that angle than what I currently do. I think a lot of you know, everyone's sort of just thinking, what's the best possibility right now? How can I I'm in this situation and and I think we have forgotten myself very much included, think about what I what we want rather than what we should. So I don't think I do enough of bringing that reflection into the room.

Lisette

What is the reflection again?

Carlos

Well, say, for example, I'll use an actual example. My brother. He has been pursuing a job for a long time, and he actually got it now. And instead of being happy about the fact that he had the job, he's like, Well, but you know, the previous company owes me certain holiday days, and they're not, they're not willing to give him to me. And the new company, which was something that, again, he was pursuing for over 10 years, and they don't want me like they're, they're, they're saying this, and they're saying that, and it's all, like, very complicated and, and I kind of want to go and say, Look, you know, you got the job. You got to think you wanted this so badly. And whenever I bring it, his response is like, yeah, yeah, I know. But it's not, you know, and it's not what I it's not working as I thought it would. And so I think it's a level of unhappiness that just basically doesn't help anybody. And I wish I could help him, to use the example from that angle to help him realize that now he can just relax. You know, he made it.

Lisette

Why is it important to you to help him?

Carlos

I don't know. I guess. Why is it important to me to help him. On one hand, I kind of want to say it isn't, because I don't think I'm doing it, but on the other hand, I think about it therefore it is, and I think it's important for me because, because I want to see him shine, right? I feel like he is not enjoying life as much as he could. I wanted to say I was going to say he is not the best version of himself, but I would rather say that I don't think he enjoying life as much as he could. I. I think you could just sit for a while and be like, okay, oh, this, this is fantastic. Then, you know, then his life would be, would be nicer if he was able to do that. Why

Lisette

is it important to you? If he did do that, what would change for you?

Carlos

Yeah, well, I think it would be a lovelier person to be around, yeah. So that's how I would probably benefit from it. I would have a more caring brother and a brother that is less worried about doing the right thing. So to say.

Lisette

So besides him being more pleasant to be around, how would it make you feel to have helped them get to that point?

Carlos

Well, it would have made me feel fulfilled. Yeah, don't know if, yeah, it would have made me feel fulfilled.

Lisette

So going back to the scale, you said you were at a seven, and I imagine that the way that you talk about your brother, you probably have this, I'm assuming you know, the same level of care and concern

for other people around you. Would that be a safe assumption? Yes. And would that include the people in your in your office, like the the less senior folks?

Carlos

No, I wouldn't. I think because of the company culture that I have, that the company has, I don't see them. There's not a level of there's not a level of connection. We're more peers and professionals than we are people, I would say. So therefore the connection levels are are less. But

Lisette

when you say improving the lives of others, then you have a specific, specific group in mind, then, well,

Carlos

it's mostly, I mean, it's mostly the people I interact with, right? It can be all the way down from playing a match, like a tennis match, and and talking to my to my opponent, and and having a conversation about competition and healthier versions of it, that is a that is a purpose that is an example, and it can go all the way down to the level of my family or or, yeah, my loved, my loved ones. So to say,

Lisette (Commentary)

for the scale question on improving society and others, he initially gave himself a three, but when we separated society from the lives of those around him, his score jumped to a seven. That shift opened up something tender. He began talking about his brother and how much he wished he could help him feel joy, rest and contentment. After finally achieving something he had wanted for a long time, what stood out to me wasn't just his care for others, it was the way he reflected on his desire to bring heart back into conversations that too often feel transactional, and yet he also recognized that in certain spaces like his workplace, that level of connection feels harder to access.

Lisette

So, so it's more about to me, it sounds like, tell me if this is correct and and how you interact with people, so, not necessarily being in a in a formal role, but it you, it's you just want to bring this, this, um, positivity to others in your interactions. Is that, am I close to maybe what? No,

Carlos

yes, yes, no. It is correct. And then when it comes back, like going back to the to the work setup, I have been told that I am a very compassionate and kind leader, and that I bring a type of leadership that, and I quote others, that, you know, the world needs more of. But then when navigating the internal politics and internal ways of working. I don't feel like I have don't feel like that's my mission. I don't feel like that's something that I can hold on to and maintain as I'm navigating different meetings and conversations with people whenever I get promoted, there are, there's certain people that are very happy that I did, and they're, you know, sort of rooting for me, but I don't feel like I have it in me to be the ambassador of a different style of management. I.

Lisette (Commentary)

This moment surfaced the tension between who he is, how he leads, and the environment he's in. He was seen by others, affirmed, told that his leadership and the care and kindness he brought mattered.

The deeper wish here was that the care and kindness he offers might ripple outward, that his way of leading could help shape a culture where those values are truly merit in you. Earlier in our conversation, you said that want to walk away from this with a sense of purpose. If I remember correctly, I'm checking my notes or adding some purpose. Think you said that, or interesting intrinsic motivation. Tell me when you think about this goal that you have and just reflecting on our conversation so far, what has been helpful? Do you feel like you're you're you have a thread maybe that you could start thinking about when you think about purpose.

Carlos

Yeah, I mean, this, this thing that I just mentioned, for example, but it's so like, I'm trying to there's this book called Drive, which maybe you're familiar with about motivation. I think it's from someone called Daniel Pink. And Daniel Pink talks about motivation 3.0 which is a modern drivers of motivation, and refers to intrinsic motivation, and talks about three components, autonomy, mastery and purpose. So in that regard, I know that I have the level of autonomy. I feel like I have achieved the mastery of my current position, I would say so. But I don't have a purpose, like the level of purpose is just not even there, and so I can't keep myself motivated, because I don't have a purpose. So from that perspective and the thread that you were talking about, if I was able to see the purpose, and what I just mentioned about being able to provide a kind leadership, for example, that would be something to hold on to that makes me go to work every day and think, okay, you know, I have a I have a mission, and I'm going to do whatever I can to make sure that I can bring more kindness into certain rooms. And, yeah, that's a thread to answer your question. Well,

Lisette

I'm a little confused. You said that your colleagues, folks at work, they already say you're a compassionate and kind leader, right? So it sounds like you are already kind right at work, your kind leader,

Carlos

yes, but I wouldn't say that I'm changing the organizations. Oh, I see to become that,

Lisette

to impact, to change the culture there, correct?

Carlos

I mean I am responsible for the culture in our department, and I do provide workshops and different things, but I wouldn't say that I am driving it. I wouldn't say that there's a major, major change in culture towards a kinder style of communication or interaction between us.

Lisette

Okay, so you said, you know, user said, maybe you know, my mission is to bring a kinder leadership to my org. And then, you know, it sounds like you're known for being kind. But then you said, you feel as if that there isn't, please correct me, there isn't a change in culture. You're not driving it. So my question to you is, do you want to drive it? Yeah,

Carlos

yes. I mean a very clear yes, I would like to, but under my current circumstances, at the end of the day, I mean, the majority of the orgs that I know, and the majority of the orgs that I've been part of, are very much dictated by the upper management, so top down and so as much as. Because I have the ability to do things. I don't have the feeling going back to the to the to Daniel Pink's point, I don't have the autonomy. I have the autonomy to manage my work, but I don't have the autonomy to dictate what my work looks like. I cannot like so, for example, in my in my current role, I am responsible for the department's culture. So theoretically, if I'm responsible for the department's culture, and I want to have a kinder culture, I should be able to implement it. However, the reality of that is that there's a lot of aspects of it that are actually not under my control. I can propose and I can do stuff, but then you meet all these beliefs of, oh, okay, yeah, that's a great idea. But, you know, let's take things slowly, or let me run it by the next layer of management, and after many years, just start losing the drive, if

Lisette

we were to think about that scale now in this context, as a in your role of like being in charge of culture from zero to 10, how much do you feel that you are driving Culture of kindness?

Carlos

I would say it's a three, four. I would never, I wouldn't dare put it above the five. And it's funny, because I have been told that I am like, oh, like, you know you're, you're the soul of the of the department. We're so appreciative of what you do. But I think I'm too close to the top to connect with that message.

Lisette

Close to the top. What does that mean?

Carlos

Well, close to the thing I was referring to before that. It's all just about making money, right? So I have become very cynical, because I believe that culture, that the purpose of our culture, or of any companies, departments, culture, at least in corporate is to ensure people provide the most value back, and that people are performing as much as they can. That doesn't resonate very much with kindness. Don't think kindness is take a day off here and there when you really need it. I think kindness is take as much time as you want, because we trust that you will take just that the time that you want and that you will come back. So it's difficult for me because I believe that very often what we consider culture is just, how can we purchase how can we make sure that everyone's doing as much as we need them to do? I

Lisette (Commentary)

even when others describe him as a kind, compassionate leader, someone who brings what the world needs more of he struggles to hold on to that truth within the realities of his workplace, and it leads him to wonder if he could really be the ambassador of a different style of management in a place that doesn't share it. I stayed with his words and gave them space to land in coaching, the most powerful thing we can offer is presence.

Lisette

So you sort of want it to be a place where people feel trusted, and that it's not just about taking a few days here and there, but then having free range and deciding and not worrying about having to come back before they're ready. I'm imagining. Do you think that is what? That's how you're defining what a culture of kindness would be, is just having this trust in the people, in that they're doing Yes, right by the self and right by the org.

Carlos

Yes, trust is the is the word, and I'm not saying it's a culture where everybody's automatically trusted. I had a manager once that I really liked working with who said trust is going to be my default unless I'm proven wrong. And I like that approach. So to me, it's the adult, adult type of relationship in which you know you're an adult, you're an employee. You've made it here because you have the right intelligence, the right skills, off you go, off, you go. Let us know how we can support you. This is our mission. This is our goal. And. To go figure that's my that's always been my my approach and my style. But the truth is, in the in the complexity of the corporate world, there's a lot of people that don't see things that way, and they want to control what's going on, how it's going on, and I think that's a killer of trust. Control is a is a killer of trust

Lisette

following this thread that we started talking about, where, how are you feeling now about our initial goal of defining your purpose, and the conversation where it's taking us?

Carlos

Well, I think, I think it was, it was clarifying to a certain extent, because realizing, like, if I'm able to zoom out, realizing the paths that I take throughout these questions, makes me think about what's important to me and what isn't I could have taken a million others. I could have talked about efficiency. I could have talked about, I don't know, the latter, having more power, being more but, but I went towards culture and kindness. And so I think I need to try to create. I think the next step for me, after this conversation is to try and create more spaces where that's present as a starting point.

Lisette

And it's just to kind of get you thinking in that direction when we go back to the scale the most recent one about, you know, how much are you bringing kindness or creating that culture of kindness in your workplace? You said you were at a three or four, if we were just to think about what would take you to a five, what would need to happen and get there?

Carlos

I think it would. I think I would have to have a closer relationship with with people, basically, to, to keep it simple, I think right now I have these conversations, this mentoring conversations, and off they go. And there isn't much of a constant relationship. Therefore, the disconnect keeps happening, right? It's a conversation, see you again in a month, but then what happened in that month? That's a long time now, with with remote working and all the other things, it is much more complicated to keep connected. I think if I could see the results of these conversations in the day to day, or maybe in the week to week, I would be able to take it up to a five at least, because I would see the influence.

Lisette

And how would you ensure that that happens more you know this connecting more in between your meetings.

Carlos

I think, coinciding in the office with these people more often, so making sure that there is a we're pressing in the same space, and then, if not, the the like having having online calls more regularly, even if it's just a quick catch up. Maybe it doesn't even need to be a call, but at least a quick message asking if everything's fine or how the week went. I think that would help right now, it's just a conversation, wait a month, conversation, I feel like that doesn't help me feel connected as much, right?

Lisette

And what would what would indicate to you that you have built a closer relationship? Yeah, I think

Carlos

it's hard to measure like it's always in the world I come from, it's very How do you measure success? What KPIs, what metrics are you going to be looking into this? Is this is people, right? And that's why I love this field so much, because it cannot be measured like you can't measure the spark on someone's eyes. So I would probably say that it's just quality feedback, you know, hearing from them, and and, and I have to do an exercise, which I continue to struggle with, which is the exercise of taking it in. So when when someone says that's like the last week, I heard this from someone that said, You have no idea how much this conversation has helped me, I need to be able to take that in instead of being dismissive of it.

Lisette (Outro)

While the conversation continued a bit beyond this point, I've chosen to end it here, because this is where something shifted, not in answers, but in. Awareness and that felt like a meaningful place to leave space looking back, what I keep returning to is how much of this session is circled around connection, connection of purpose to others and to self. Carlos came in searching for purpose, but what emerged was a possibility that purpose was already present in the way he mentors others, in how he leads with care, in his desire to create spaces where people feel seen and whole. At one point, he even said, if I was able to see the purpose in providing a kinder leadership, that would be something to hold on to.

And a special thanks to Carlos for showing up so openly and honestly for this conversation. And to our listeners, thanks for listening. Today's conversation was just one coaching session with someone I'd only just met. In a longer coaching engagement. We'd meet over several sessions to go deeper.

If you are interested in working with me as a coach or consultant, you can learn more at Garza Consulting. And if you want to keep growing with me, join my Substack at growwithlisette.substack.com

Thank you for growing with me. Talk soon.