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Recorded Intro ([00:04](#)):

Welcome to the Guide For Life podcast, exploring topics related to the personal competency skills that empower Arkansas students and teachers to thrive at home, school, on the job, and in the community.

Susan Jobe ([00:20](#)):

Welcome to the Guide For Life podcast. I'm Susan Jobe and I'm very excited to have a very special guest with me today. Coach Sidney Moncrief is an acclaimed Hall of Fame standout, author, entrepreneur and motivational speaker, five time NBA All-Star and two-time Defensive Player of the Year. Coach Moncrief knows the importance of following one's passion as being key to finding success. We're also very proud that he is an alumnus of Hall STEAM Magnet High School, or what is now known as Hall STEAM Magnet, and the University of Arkansas. Welcome Coach.

Coach Moncrief ([00:55](#)):

Thank you. Do you mind if I call you Susan?

Susan Jobe ([00:58](#)):

No, I would love for you to.

Coach Moncrief ([00:59](#)):

All right. I wanted to get that straight.

Susan Jobe ([01:03](#)):

That's great. I'm so thrilled to have you on the podcast and really interested in the resources and the programs that you have to offer. I always like to start the podcast having people share their journey and education, and many times it's a teacher or a school administrator, but I would love for you to share a little bit about your experiences in education. Maybe was there any particular teacher that made a difference for you, or what did you love most about school?

Coach Moncrief ([01:32](#)):

Recess.

Susan Jobe ([01:32](#)):

Of course.

Coach Moncrief ([01:32](#)):

Yeah.

Susan Jobe ([01:35](#)):

Of course.

Coach Moncrief ([01:35](#)):

But I must say when we do workshops for schools, I always ask this one critical question. How many of you all can name all of your elementary school teachers, and a large, huge percentage can do that.

Which means those individuals had a profound impact on the lives of us and also students. And then we can take it one step further and say your junior high school coaches or teachers, your high school teachers and administrators have always been what we call game changers in people's lives.

Coach Moncrief ([02:13](#)):

My journey was really strange back to education because I was not a very good student. I was a very good student early, in elementary school. And then something happens when you get to junior high school, especially with boys, girls also. Your mind is stuck in this mud, and you're trying to figure out who you are and you don't really, at least I didn't really apply myself academically like I should have.

Coach Moncrief ([02:38](#)):

When I got to high school, I was just a terrible student. My senior year I decided that guess what? You can play basketball. You can do your classwork. And I started to excel in the classroom to the extent that when I attended the university of Arkansas, a lot of people felt that my dream was to play in the NBA. My dream was to graduate. That's how important I felt school was at that point in time, I wanted to make sure that I graduated, which I did in four years and one semester.

Coach Moncrief ([03:08](#)):

Fast-forward to playing the NBA, being away from education for a while, having automobile dealerships, being away from education directly for a while. When you have kids, I have four boys, then you start to gravitate back to education because now you're involved and you're trying to figure out if they're getting the education that they should be receiving.

Coach Moncrief ([03:30](#)):

I have two sons that attended Hall High School. I remember they were always in transition. At that time I was doing basketball camps. I was doing basketball camps, training for kids and teams, and I'm like, "There has to be a way to take this model of team building, building your team, the fundamentals of sports and transfer it to leadership in schools." Hall High School, they were struggling. And I went to Hall and said, "I'll tell you what. I have a workshop that I want to conduct for your teachers and your staff. Wouldn't cost you a penny. I'm going to do it for free. Would you like for me to do it?" And they said, "Sure." I did the workshop at Hall and it was so impactful, it was so much fun. And that started my journey into educational professional development. It started with team enhancement and it went from team enhancement to leadership, and then we went to students leadership, career readiness, entrepreneurship. We have all these different branches. Now we have diversity, equity, inclusion, and community-building as part of what we offer for education.

Susan Jobe ([04:36](#)):

That's so awesome. I noticed that on your website, it says, "One team learning experiences." And I was just wondering what inspired you to name your program that?

Coach Moncrief ([04:47](#)):

Since I was an athlete and I always played- I've been very blessed Susan- I've always played on good teams. And I think I knew, or I think I know, what it takes to have a successful team. And that's why I said, "Okay, what can I name my company? How about 'Moncrief One Team'?" To emphasize that when you're

working together as a staff, you must have a one team mentality. You want one goal, one mission, protecting one another and making sure that you keep your eye on achievement and protecting and caring for one another. So that's where Moncrief One Team came from. It's a basketball parallel.

Susan Jobe ([05:24](#)):

I love that because I've heard you mention workforce readiness and academic achievement and professional development and all of these things and with all of the connotations of "team," we have to work together for all of our students in the State of Arkansas. And it doesn't matter if students are local to you. All Arkansas students are our students. And so I just really, I love that. And I think so much of what you're doing lines up with the skills that we want students to have, that we know are imperative that they have to succeed, that are in the Guide for Life. And so I just think it's a beautiful parallel, your program, even with what's in our Guide for Life. So I'm just very excited for our audiences to learn more about your programs and what you have to offer.

Susan Jobe ([06:14](#)):

In my work with educators, especially since COVID, one thing I have heard is that, since students are coming back to the classroom I really noticed that my kids are struggling to struggle. You know what I mean? That productive struggle to grapple with things. It's like that growth mindset is lacking a little bit, the perseverance skills, and also your center is programmed around something that you call G.R.I.T. have you seen that in your work with students? And do you have any advice or maybe insight you could provide?

Coach Moncrief ([06:50](#)):

Yes, we have. Remember we're social creatures and we've taken 18 months and we've taken people, students and teachers, out of their normal environment, which is being around people and socializing with people and getting encouragement from individuals. And we've taken all that away. We really cannot expect for everybody to come back normal. It's just not going to happen. Like you're saying, you're going to have certain issues. And that's where we had the G.R.I.T. acronym even before the pandemic. But G.R.I.T. is, the acronym stands for "Growth", we want to always be getting better everyday. Students want to get better and guess who else? Teachers, they have to get better every day. That's that growth mindset you talked about. And then the R stands for "Resiliency" or "Resilient." Now we fought through this pandemic. How many of us mentally have just quit? We are making excuses and we're given up in our minds. Our actions are trying to show differently, but kids are smart. Students are smart. They can pick up on that. Your co-workers could pick up on that.

Coach Moncrief ([07:57](#)):

So we want people to grow. We want them not to give up, be resilient, overcome the issues, overcome the pandemic, overcome the COVID slide. All the things that we talk about are real issues, right? However, it's nothing you can do about that. All you can do going forward is to grow, be resilient. And we talk about intentionality. Other words, you've got to have a plan. You have to be very intentional about everything that you do in the classroom, within your schools, to make sure that it's meeting your desired outcome. Things don't just happen. They're created by us having plans and being intentional.

Coach Moncrief ([08:31](#)):

And that intentionality is not just group-wise. It could be individual. It could be a certain student or a certain teacher. So the intentionality part is very important. And then the tenacity. And that is just be, "How about that sense of urgency?" Okay. So we have this slide. Students are not coming back as sharp as they should. Well, you can't continue to teach and educate on that same level. You have to have a little bit more pep in your step. You have to have a little bit more tenacity, sense of urgency about getting things done in the classroom and in your school.

Susan Jobe ([09:07](#)):

Can you share with us maybe a story in your work with teachers or students about how your programming helps to support G.R.I.T.?

Coach Moncrief ([09:19](#)):

Yeah. We have so many. We do an Awareness phase, occasionally people will bring us in for multiple sessions, but I've had a number of positive comments. I know what we do works because I just had so many comments. The best story is sometimes I could go to a school and maybe six months later come back to the school and they say, "Oh yeah!" They might not remember my name, but they say, "Yeah, he taught us about self-awareness. This is the guy that taught us about G.R.I.T.." And they remember these concepts that they were taught.

Coach Moncrief ([09:50](#)):

Now awareness is always the beginning. I think a lot of times educators want a quick fix, like, okay, someone comes in and all the light will go off and everybody would be fine and they'll be learning. No, it doesn't work that way. You do need to have people come in to raise the awareness about these issues, and that's what we do. And then if they want us long-term, then they'll see more sustainability. We've had good positive stories from a number of clients. We have a lot of clients. And it's the same with basketball. If you asked me named the greatest player you've ever [crosstalk 00:10:23] in basketball, I would have no idea.

Susan Jobe ([10:25](#)):

That's not a fair question, first of all.

Coach Moncrief ([10:28](#)):

I mean, because I live so much in the now-

Susan Jobe ([10:31](#)):

Yeah.

Coach Moncrief ([10:32](#)):

That's a mindfulness concept. I live so much in the now. What are you doing right now to impact people? And I love to have the positive comments from people in the past, but I'm about what's happening at this point in time.

Susan Jobe ([10:43](#)):

Yeah, and it sounds to me like your program and these experiences can really start the beginnings of what would be a culture shift within a school. Kind of, "This is how we're going to do business from now on, and these are the mindsets that we're going to focus on."

Coach Moncrief ([10:58](#)):

Susan, you are so real with that. And I was meeting with a school leader this morning, my partner, and I, my wife Takisha, and we made that clear. The success of any initiative is determined by that leader's fidelity and how much they believe in what they've paid for, in essence. So we come back [crosstalk 00:11:19] now we're doing a followup session on community building and we have a leader that says, "Oh, we can't do it because we have this. Oh, we can't do it." And we know everybody's plate's full, but if you're really committed to building your team and change is shifting that workplace climate, you have to make room for these things because they're very important.

Susan Jobe ([11:38](#)):

Yeah. And we do tend to find time for the things that are most important to us.

Coach Moncrief ([11:43](#)):

We do. And my biggest disappointment with some schools is, our primary job responsibility is to prepare young people to be productive citizens, which includes enrichment. And with the testing and everything that happens in education, we're so focused on these test scores that we forget the soft skills. We forget the workplace readiness. We forget some of these things that are very- we forget enrichment. I've had schools that don't do any enrichment with their students. And I'm like, "How could that student be a productive citizen if they don't have enrichment outside of academics?"

Susan Jobe ([12:26](#)):

Yeah. And we talk here at the department about professional learning communities and the four big questions. What is it we want students to learn? How are we going to know that they learned it? What are we going to do if they haven't? And what are we going to do if they have, is that fourth question. And that's the enrichment or the extension of learning questions. And I think that is our biggest challenge. So I'm so glad that you brought that up because it's just as important as those supports that we bring in when a student is a struggling learner, is those enrichments. And so I love that.

Susan Jobe ([13:00](#)):

Let's talk about soft skills. Tell us why you think soft skills are so important and maybe how we can support the development of those in our students.

Coach Moncrief ([13:12](#)):

It's a very good question. We do most everything on the five components of emotional intelligence, which is empathy, second word is motivation, discipline, self-management, and social skills, which, as you know, include a whole array of things from communication to flexibility, to teamwork, to work ethic. We can go on and on with that part. So we do most everything on that.

Coach Moncrief ([13:38](#)):

Here's the reality. Eighty-five percent of terminations, this was a survey done by 6,000 corporations, and they stated that 85% of all terminations are soft-skill related, which is pretty amazing because we spent so much time on the hard skills-

Susan Jobe ([13:57](#)):

Right.

Coach Moncrief ([13:58](#)):

And not enough time on the soft skills. I'm not saying hard skills are not important. I didn't say that. They're essential. We know that. However, as far as getting along with people, even outside of the workplace, being a good citizen, those soft skills are critical. If you want to be a very good person, the ability to communicate, to build relationships, to be flexible, to have work ethic, to have inteG.R.I.T.y. All these different things, they're important. If we're like, "How does that perfect model citizen look?" Well, one thing we know that they do have, and that's very good soft skills, and they're not so soft. There are skills that you really need to be-

Susan Jobe ([14:34](#)):

They are. They're imperative. They're fundamental. We have a model that we call the Arkansas Vision for Teaching and Learning. And the outside of that model talks about our goals, like what we want our students to be able to do when they leave us. And that is that they are actively literate, critical thinkers who are community-engaged, but at the foundation of that model is the Guide for Life, which is our soft skill standards. We can prepare our kids academically all day long, all day long, but if they can't get to work on time and they can't solve conflict in productive ways, and they can't get along with others, we're missing something. We're failing. We're not helping them to reach that full potential. So I am fully on board with everything you're saying.

Coach Moncrief ([15:23](#)):

The employers within the state, they're speaking, they're saying, "We need people, with not only good hard skills but that understand the soft skills. But here's the reality. When we understand, when people started to dive into the concept of artificial intelligence, we start really peeling all these levels of things that will be impacted, that have been impacted, by technology, it even makes soft skills even more important, because now there will be less jobs available for people. And at some point-

Coach Moncrief ([15:55](#)):

I know we have COVID and people say they can't hire people, but what has happened is the shift has been, "Okay. People are not working for us. How can we get by? How can we use technology to get by?" And what we're seeing is companies are saying, "Oh, we can use technology for this. We can eliminate a person here." We see this going on every day in every industry. So at some point the numbers say probably what 20 million to 50 million jobs will disappear within the next 20 to 30 years because of artificial intelligence. So you're human. The fact that you're more human is going to be what we call a game changer if you want to look to be productive within the workplace.

Susan Jobe ([16:42](#)):

Absolutely. You've mentioned several soft skills. Is there one, and maybe it is communication, you just brought that up. Is that the one you would say maybe should take priority because communication looks different everywhere, at home, at school, on the job. And you've mentioned how you feel technology has kind of impacted our ability to communicate well. So is that the most important?

Coach Moncrief ([17:12](#)):

I think because communication covers so much and communication is the one that gets you to understand and build relationships with a person that you don't know. If you're trying to get a job, you don't know that person necessarily. If you don't have that good appearance and good communication skills, you're not going to get that job. You're not going to get that promotion. You're not going to get that other job that you're looking for somewhere else. You're not going to build that relationship at home with your kids and with your spouse or your significant other. Communication weaves through everything that we do in our life, and it's based on relationships. You can't have a great relationship if you can't communicate. So I would say communication. And we tell them we have workshops, we say that a study at UCLA stated that communication, if you had to do a 100% pie, only 7% of communication is what you say.

Susan Jobe ([18:09](#)):

Yeah, I'm a former speech teacher or oral communication teacher. And one of the things that I would teach my students is this thing called the Communication Imperative. It says you're never not communicating.

Coach Moncrief ([18:21](#)):

Absolutely.

Susan Jobe ([18:21](#)):

And so that's where you bring in all of these things, like what you mentioned, professional appearance and body language and expressions, and all of those non-verbal things that tie into what you're communicating. And so it's not just about words, that's for sure.

Coach Moncrief ([18:40](#)):

And it's about body language. It's about inflection, what you say, but here's what we try to teach our students and teach our adults also. If you're not likable, you're not going to probably be productive in your life. To be likable, you have to project a certain persona about yourself. You have to communicate something about yourself verbally and non-verbally, and that's how important communication is and just our overall success.

Susan Jobe ([19:07](#)):

Yeah. And I think empathy comes into play there too, because to be likable, you have to also care about others and be able to see things from other people's perspectives. And I know that you also offer some programming around diversity and equity and inclusion. Would you like to share a little bit about that?

Coach Moncrief ([19:27](#)):

Yes. Empathy is a new love. Love was a word that people used for years as being so so very important. Empathy is to me the new love word, because the way our society has transitioned has changed. The demographics have changed. And we talk about diverse and inclusion. This is a tribal type of concept that started hundreds of hundreds of years ago, where people in tribes or different ethnicities are trying to protect what's theirs. So you have all this stuff going on, but at the core of diverse equity inclusion for our company are two words, two concepts - empathy, and relationship building. Because without empathy, you really don't have a sense for what someone else is experiencing. And I can get into my empathy workshop, but I'm not going to do that. What we tell people there are multiple types of empathy, because a lot of times, if people have emotional empathy, they just feel like they don't feel, "I'm not crying when this movie is showing", then I don't have any empathy.

Coach Moncrief ([20:32](#)):

We know that's not true, and we all have the capacity to build empathy. We emphasize that a lot, there's no magic bullet to that. The magic bullet is to make people aware of what it means, the impact of it and the different types of empathy. And then they can take it from there. But we can't make you have empathy for someone. That's something we can't do, but we can make you aware of what that looks like.

Susan Jobe ([20:54](#)):

Right. And you know, when I'm providing training around Guide for Life, I always tell people I feel like empathy is one of the most critical skills, but it's also the hardest skill to transfer because it's about your heart.

Coach Moncrief ([21:08](#)):

It's about your heart. And then on some level is about your intellectual capability, because some people don't have a heart, but they intellectualize why this is important to understand the plight of this individual, this group of people.

Susan Jobe ([21:24](#)):

Right.

Coach Moncrief ([21:25](#)):

So they can reach it. But empathy is the new buzzword, for leadership, right? For career advancement, nothing will happen moving forward without a candidate or individual having a good sense of what empathy looks like.

Susan Jobe ([21:43](#)):

Right. And you mentioned intention earlier and being intentional about the development of these skills. A lot of times, and I say this all the time, so I don't want it to become cliché, but we talk about soft skill development and sometimes teachers will look and they'll just be like, "I can't do one more thing." They're very overwhelmed. And, rightfully so, but I've been talking a little bit about mine shifts. I really would hope that educators would be intentional about viewing this sort of skillset development as the plate from which- it's not one more thing on your plate, it's the plate from which you serve everything else in your content area.

Susan Jobe ([22:27](#)):

And we can support these skills through our content. And I just think it's so important. Speaking of educators, how do we make sure that our teachers have strong command of these skills? I think about my own daughter is a kindergarten teacher, and this is her third year teaching. And that's a very important role because you're kind of setting the tone for those kids, their school experience. But what if she did not have a strong command of the soft skills herself? How do we develop these in our teachers?

Coach Moncrief ([23:04](#)):

I think it's imperative. It comes from leadership. Starts with you all, first of all, then starts with the superintendents and then the campus leaders, and so much pressure on educators with these scores. I understand that totally. But if we don't get control of what I call the five components of emotional intelligence, which includes empathy, like you said, and includes self-awareness. You can take empathy and self-awareness, if you could just make teachers and educators understand those two concepts better, then you automatically improve your workplace climate, which means you improve the teachers interactions with the students because they have more empathy. And then they understand the teachers themselves better, and the self-awareness piece and they understand their strengths, their weaknesses and things they need to work on.

Coach Moncrief ([23:56](#)):

And then couple that with some of the other social skills, I think it's really central. Sometimes we just overlook that with teachers. We think because teachers are bright, we think, "Well, they finished school. They should know that." No, they shouldn't. They should not know that. And if they're not taught it, it's up to us, not just our company but other companies, to make sure they know the value of how these components of emotional intelligence. EQs more valuable nowadays than IQ.

Susan Jobe ([24:25](#)):

Yeah, I agree. I agree. Let's talk about maybe some practical strategies for soft skill development in our students, and maybe even how parents can help at home with the skill development. Any advice?

Coach Moncrief ([24:43](#)):

We do meet and greet like most people a lot, the power of being able to- it's high five, because you can't shake people's hands anymore, but the power to greet people correctly and not just look them in the eyes, but we talked a lot about smiling. A smile is very powerful and there's a lot of benefits of smiling. So we start a lot with our workshops with teaching them why it's important to smile. Why it's important to be nice. I'm saying that to say we have to reinforce those every day in the classroom and in our schools, and then at home so the parents can start emphasizing, smiling more and being nicer.

Coach Moncrief ([25:20](#)):

And then we talk about communication, that the steps to communicate effectively, we say to communicate with inteG.R.I.T.y. I think the more we talk about those things, kids are very smart nowadays, they're going to get it. And when they know it's a priority, even if they don't catch it right now, it's going to permeate their spirit. And then maybe five years, ten years from now, they're going to say, "Oh yeah, I remember us talking about that. And I can see where it can benefit me now," and they'll

start to do it. So definitely practice. More practice in the schools and more practice within the households.

Susan Jobe ([25:53](#)):

Yeah. And it just sounds kind of like practice makes perfect, and another cliché about what's caught sometimes more than what's taught. And so it's really important that as leaders, as educators, as parents, that we're leading by example, we're setting a proper example for our kids to follow and emulate.

Coach Moncrief ([26:16](#)):

My kids, they were smart enough. They could have probably done better in school, but they did okay. But one thing they made an A in, that was social skills. And now they're 30, they're 30, 30, 30, 26, I have four sons, and they're all 30 to 26 years old. And when they communicate with people, people know and they say, "Oh, wow, you all really understand what it means to communicate the correct way." And that was taught in the home, that was reinforced in the home. We can't put all this on the staff and teachers. They were expected to speak to people a certain way, they're expected to smile and have a good personality. And we can certainly do a lot better in that area.

Susan Jobe ([27:02](#)):

Yeah. So let's talk a little bit about workforce development. We know that not all students will pursue a traditional four-year degree and that's okay. That's not the pathway for everyone, but we have a lot of exciting things happening in the state of Arkansas to assist students and just citizens of Arkansas in pursuing careers through things such as Arkansas Ready for Life. Do you also offer programming that supports these efforts for workforce development?

Coach Moncrief ([27:36](#)):

We do. And I think the strongest thing we can do for our young people, and for adults, is to teach them the concepts of entrepreneurship. Because even if you work for the Department of Education for the State of Arkansas or a certain school, you're still an entrepreneur. You still are the person that has control over your destiny. But the entrepreneurship concepts are so important because they're really leadership concepts. And you can teach it in such a fond way. So most of our workplace readiness is done with the format of entrepreneurship. You get to teach them about financial literacy. At the same time you get to teach them about leadership. You get to teach them about marketing. You get to teach them about branding themselves. All those things are wrapped into entrepreneurship. And we know that there will be less jobs in the future, and a lot of individuals will have to, at the very basic form, be an entrepreneur.

Susan Jobe ([28:38](#)):

Right.

Coach Moncrief ([28:39](#)):

That's how we teach workplace readiness.

Susan Jobe ([28:41](#)):

I love that. And I love the conversations or the instruction on branding because, I think I'm right about this, that maybe that causes our students to think about maybe their social media footprints and what they're putting out there.

Coach Moncrief ([28:58](#)):

Yes. We talk a lot about that. The social media footprint branding, and we tell everyone, "You have a brand, whether you like it or not. You have created this brand, but you can still turn it to what you would like for it to be. And then social media is a big part of your brand and make sure that you protect that because that's going to stay with you for a long time." It gives us great teachable moments that you wouldn't normally have. And it's not so academic to where they feel like, "Oh, we're just in school, we're in a class and they're just giving us information." No, we're creating opportunities for you to get the information in a fun environment. And that's why I love entrepreneurship with our workplace readiness.

Susan Jobe ([29:40](#)):

I think anything that motivates our students to tap into their creativity is always good. And maybe that's the Fine Arts teacher in me. I don't know. But it's so important to cultivate that creativity and take and make time for students to express themselves in different ways, and so I really love that.

Coach Moncrief ([30:00](#)):

And also, they get to learn about work early. I like that too, because it's different when you create your own company, as opposed to working for someone else. And so when they create their own companies, they have to create their mobile phone policies. They have to create their attendance policies. They have to create their conflict resolution policies. They have to create all the policies, if we have a class long enough, within their company. It's amazing how they come back with all these difficult rules when they don't want to put up the little device, but when they have their own company, "Oh yes. You want to put up your mobile device. If you don't the first time you're out of here." I said, "Well, why did the person you worked for have to tell you five times to do this?" It changes our perspective of how they view every thing.

Susan Jobe ([30:51](#)):

And also maybe helps them understand some of the why's behind the policies in their own schools or classrooms, and so that's great. I love it. Is there anything else that we have not covered that you would like to share with us?

Coach Moncrief ([31:05](#)):

Susan, you've been pretty thorough. I believe in less is more. Yeah. So I want to leave with the fact that emotional intelligence. Get on top of that. Get on top with that. And then of course, there's social skills. Like we were saying, the soft skills. Get on top of that. Can you imagine how much more manageable a classroom would be, a school would be, if we just started having more students and staff understand the value of emotional intelligence. And not only the value, but start to apply it daily.

Susan Jobe ([31:41](#)):

Right.

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Coach Moncrief ([31:41](#)):

I think that's huge.

Susan Jobe ([31:43](#)):

I love it. Well, Coach, thank you so much for spending time with us today. I know our listeners are going to really enjoy this. We are going to link your website and your resources in our show notes for our listeners to access those. And we appreciate your time so much. Thank you.

Coach Moncrief ([32:00](#)):

Thank you very much Susan. Great job.