

# 25 - John Sigmon on Nature for...ng, Intuition, and Leadership

Wed, Nov 12, 2025 7:51PM • 1:23:55

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Nature, intuition, leadership, performance, learning, curiosity, resilience, adaptability, mindfulness, coaching, forest bathing, creativity, clarity, presence., Learning and Performance, reflection, action, subscribe, review, feedback, social media, PJH Learning, performance consulting, research, writing, coaching, webpage, podcast, improvement.

## SPEAKERS

John W. Sigmon, MCC, Patrick Healy

### Patrick Healy 00:00

Patrick, welcome to the Learning and Performance podcast, the show where we explore ideas, strategies and tools for enhancing human learning and performance. I'm your host. Patrick Healy, learning and performance are inextricably connected. If we can't learn, we can't grow, can't grow, we end up hitting plateaus, repeat the same mistakes, stagnate and fail to reach our potential. When we improve our ability to learn, we enhance our ability to perform at a higher level. Today, high performance in more and more domains increasingly depends on rapid learning. Whether you're a student, a researcher, professional athlete, this show discusses research and practices that you can use to learn faster and perform better. Welcome back everyone to the Learning and Performance Podcast. Today, we are braving the wilderness for exploring what nature can teach us about learning, intuition and leadership, nature and performance. They're not two words we usually put together, but you know what, maybe they should be, and that's because both research and a lot of human experience has revealed that our connection to the natural world affects everything from our mood and memory to the amount of clarity, resilience and creativity we can muster in a culture that often prizes hustle over harmony, learning to live, lead and perform in rhythm with nature may be one of the most transformative practices we can adapt, and I couldn't think of a better person to explore this with in today's guest, John sigman. John is a master certified coach, seasoned executive and the author of wild leadership. He's the founder of Sigmund leadership solutions, and brings over 30 years of experience spanning investment banking, healthcare, government and the nonprofit world, including roles as CFO CHRO and CEO today, he also serves as program director at the Conference Board, an adjunct professor and a global voice for mindful, intuitive leadership. John's story is simply remarkable, from facing hardship early in life to becoming a respected C suite leader and one of the most reflective coaches that I know today. His work is about helping leaders reconnect with what's real, intuition, purpose and presence, and for him, nature has been a powerful teacher along that path. I wanted to speak with John in particular for three reasons. First, he's one of the most credentialed and growth minded coaches. I know an MCC, CPCC and a Marshall Goldsmith, stakeholder centered coach who continues to learn and serve others generously. John and I met through ICF NYC. ICF is the international coaching Federation where John, Vanessa, Hager, mommer and I co lead a professional development series for coaches. Every time we work together, I learn something from John and bleed with some inspiration as well. Second, I've personally experienced how being outdoors, whether jogging in the morning through my neighborhood, working or meditating outside, personally, taking a walk after lunch tends to sharpen my focus, restore my energy, and help me come up with some new ideas very often. And I want to unpack that connection with someone who not only experiences that

too, but also teaches leaders how to leverage it. And third, John's coached senior leaders across industries and continents, and he's seen firsthand how reconnection with nature, with our inner intuition and with ourselves can really reignite more authentic performance and leadership. John's coached a lot of people, and I wanted him to share some of those stories with you, and what you can maybe learn in our conversation, John and I hit on a lot of topics related to learning and performance, including how John defines performance as more than achievement, why curiosity, not certainty, should guide every leader. The moment in his childhood garden that first awakened his sense of wonder, how nature became one of John's greatest teachers and a source of calm and clarity for him in times of stress, there's surprising ways being outdoors can improve our creativity, focus and decision making, what nature can teach us about resilience, impermanence and adaptability, how to recognize when you're forcing progress versus flowing with it, why modern Work pulls us away from some of our natural instincts and how to find our way back the art of Developing Intuition, what it is, how to strengthen it and how to test it in daily life, how to use intuition as a compass in an age of information overload, why clarity and courage not control define? Real leadership, presence, and finally, how a few simple, nature based practices can help you reconnect with yourself and perform at your best, whether you're leading a team, running a business, or simply trying to navigate modern life with just a little bit more clarity, I think you'll find something grounding in this episode. So take a deep breath, maybe look out the window or go outside and join me as we step into the conversation with John sigman. All right, I am here of John sigman, John,

**John W. Sigmon, MCC** 05:39

welcome to the show. Hey Patrick, thanks for having me. I'm glad to be here.

**Patrick Healy** 05:44

It's a delight. I've been wanting to have you on for a while now. Thank you so John, I love introduced you in the pre show before, but just from your perspective, who are you?

**John W. Sigmon, MCC** 05:56

That's a great question. I am a father, a husband, grandfather, coach and a facilitator and a leader, and I'm also a bit of a gardener along the way. So that's the things that come to mind immediately when I think about who I

**Patrick Healy** 06:16

am. Yeah, a lot of hats in different realms of life. Yeah, cool, John. I wanted to have you on because I know you think very intentionally about life and work in general. And we met through ICF, and I know you coach a lot of leaders who struggle to be intentional in their lives. And recently, I saw you had done a lot of things around nature about how nature can help us to be more performant, more adaptable, more resilient, more innovative. And I thought, huh, that's a topic I wanted to learn more about. So excited to have you on the show to explore that topic more today, I wanted to just start with three questions I ask all of my listeners. This is the Learning and Performance podcast. So how do you define performance.

**John W. Sigmon, MCC** 07:01

You know? What a great question. So when I think about performance, I have an objective that I'm striving for. And when I think about performance is, what is the level of fulfillment, efficiency and effectiveness that I have in achieving or striving toward that objective, whether it be planting new tomato plants in my garden or facilitating a board retreat, and all of those things have those elements associated with them. So when I think about performance, for me personally, it's about that fulfillment piece, and can I reach my objective? And even if I don't reach my objective, what have I learned? How can I tweak my approach? So that's how I think about performance for me. Yeah, so

**Patrick Healy 07:54**

it sounds like there's some objective, and you're engaging in a process to complete or fulfill that objective. But it's not just done or not done. It's elements of efficiency, effectiveness, but then also, especially film it like, am I enjoying this? Do I want to accomplish this objective? What's my experience like along the way? So it's

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 08:19**

kind of multifaceted, exactly, and it's also, you know about what is the learning journey along the way? Because for me, performance is intricately linked to learning, development, stretching myself into new arenas. So there's a lot I think, that goes into defining or thinking about performance. It's sort of another aspect of it that I often think about is kind of the creative you think about a performance, like a concert or a play. I think about the performance, the practice that it takes to be proficient, and the sharpness that can come from a performance so lots of different angles. I think

**Patrick Healy 09:03**

it's funny, John, you actually read into kind of my next two questions. My next question was, how about learning? How do you think about learning? What's learning to you?

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 09:10**

So for me, it really does spur from Curiosity. In many ways. I recognize how trite that sounds, but just as a context for that. You know, over the course of my career, I've held many different roles in many different organizations, and along the way, I started to question myself about whether or not it was about me, maybe it's I just don't get along with people, or I can't find my way, or I've not found my purpose, or I question myself a lot that the conclusion I came to was it's really about curiosity. That's what spurs my learning. I just get interested in different things, and once I become interested in whatever that thing is, I'm all in I want to understand and know as much about that topic or. That that thing as possible. So the curiosity is really what drives my learning. Yeah,

**Patrick Healy 10:07**

I hear you there. I'm the exact same way. Curiosity is one of my top values, and I'm the same I get obsessed with something I want to learn as much as I can about it. I like jump from thing to thing, and there's a sense of for me, just satisfaction, fulfillment, enjoyment, like just in the process of doing it. Yeah,

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 10:26**

absolutely, you know, and it kind of feels not to belabor the point too much, but when you're in that, it does feel like you're often thought, but I was just kind of jumping from one thing to another thing to another thing. But the reality is, it really was that curiosity that really drove me in those different directions, and my life has been a really fulfilling life and career as a result of exploring things from a curiosity lens.

**Patrick Healy 10:51**

Yeah, in my master's program that I did, we read this paper I remember specifically about conducting research and letting questions be the guide. Don't let topics be the guide, because if you're just studying a topic, you're gonna get burned out, whereas if you let questions be the guide, you're always gonna have that innate sense of curiosity and motivation to push forward to like, find the answer to that

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 11:13**

question. I really like that approach. Can I adopt that? I'll

**Patrick Healy 11:17**

drop it in the show notes. I think the paper was called let the questions be your guide. I could share it. Yeah, I'd love to read that. That'd be great. And John, the last question, how do you see learning relating to performance?

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 11:29**

I'm not sure that you can separate the two. Patrick, that's my opinion. I think one leads to the other. I'm not going to be able to quote, unquote, perform, however I define that, whether you know it's standing on the stage playing a guitar, or whether it's a performance in the workplace, or whether it's performance from my own standards, or what I hold dear, but unless I have that learning mindset, I'm not going to be able to extract the fulfillment from that experience that's going to be helpful for me to propel myself forward. So I often find that when I'm not in a learning mode, or I don't have that learning lens on, I stagnate a bit. I'm going through the motions of the change. I'm gritting my teeth and kind of enduring it, but it's not fulfilling. I'm not embracing it. That's what I want. I want for myself and for my clients. It's not just about gritting your teeth and making it through. It's about how can you embrace all possibilities? So that's where I try to land in that linkage between learning and performance. Yeah, you can perform

**Patrick Healy 12:37**

better, but unless you're open to the learning, it's going to be a tough process of just kind of gritting your teeth, whereas, if you brush it with curiosity, as you said, performance improvement can be fun. And I think

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 12:49**

if I could just add a little twist on to that, I think, you know, I can enter into a circumstance with an open mind and sort of a learning mindset, if you will. But I think the key to me is when the going gets tough, what sustains me? What direction do I go in? You know, when the going gets tough, do I back away? Do I move over to this or do I continue to move forward and stay with what's happening so that I can extract that learning? So that was be a little nuance I would add on there.

**Patrick Healy 13:21**

Yeah, it's true in L and D and teaching. I know they psychology more broadly. I know they talk about having a growth mindset versus a fixed mindset. Carol Dweck and others have done a lot of research around that. And if you have a fixed mindset, you're probably going to shrink with the first signs of challenge, whereas if you have the growth mindset, what can I learn from this? How can I use this to get better? Then the whole experience is just gonna be a lot more enjoyable.

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 13:46**

That is definitely true. And just to be clear, while we're in this little box having this conversation, all of this sounds really pretty simple actually, but it's rarely easy in the moment, at least that's been my experience.

**Patrick Healy 13:59**

Definitely 100% thanks for that, John. I want to move now to talk about you and just a little bit about your background and in relation to the topic of nature and performance. So what drew you to the topic of nature and exploring its relationship with a learning performance,

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 14:14**

etc? That's a really great question. So the history is this, I learned a love of the natural world from my grandparents when I was a small child, and they lived on it seemed like a very large plot of land when I was a small child, but I've gone back to revisit it as an adult postage stamp size, but they had a garden and a grape arbor and all of these plants. So they would frequently take me to the garden and show me the different plants and talk to me about the wildlife. And they owned a piece of property up in the North Carolina mountains, and we would go there and camp, and my grandfather would take me on hikes and point out natural springs and things like that. So I had a childhood that was a. Full of nature and natural experiences. And of course, along the way, that was on the sidelines, right as I grew and went to school and entered into a corporate career, etc. And so, you know, I was at a very stressful point in my career, quite a number of years ago, and I visited my hometown in Charlotte, North Carolina, and decided to take a trip back toward my grandparents house. They don't live there anymore, clearly. And when I went back to visit there and the new owners and took a little tour of the gardens, it just suddenly brought me back. It was a really stressful time for me, and the stress level, I could just feel my body calming down a bit. And that experience, from that moment, took me backwards, in many ways, to this idea that nature has something to teach us about. A couple of things slowing down a bit and finding, perhaps a different perspective, and as I've continued down that journey a bit, one of the things I found personally satisfying about this work is that as a coach and as a facilitator and as a leader, I extrovert a lot use that As a verb, and what holds us, what holds me, what holds space for me to recover. And I find that spending time in nature, or even looking at a picture of nature, helps ground me just a bit. And the final thing I'll mention here is with all of the clients that I work with, I find that when they get stuck and I ask them, Where do you get your best ideas? Guess what? No one ever says, well, sitting here at my desk chatting with you, it's usually I'm out taking a walk in the park, or I'm outdoors, or maybe in the shower or something like that. Something that gets us out of our heads, away from the thinking, and I won't bore your listeners or you with all the science behind all that, but there is a lot of science behind things like nature therapy, forest bathing, its effect on blood pressure, cognition, etc. So there's a lot of practical benefits there, in addition to maybe what you would consider to be the spiritual benefits of a nature based practice. So it

**Patrick Healy 17:26**

sounds like for you, John, it was a combination of just growing up in nature with your grandparents and then hitting a point in your career where you were too focused on the driving, you know, working in boxes, and needed to take some time and go back to almost like reconnect with your earlier roots in some way. Since then, nature has played a pretty integral role in helping you balance more.

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 17:52**

That's precisely correct. So I took a step backwards in order to leap forward.

**Patrick Healy 17:57**

You wrote a book called Wild leadership, and it's about your journey. I haven't read the whole thing, but I've read some of it, and your story is just really inspirational, and especially the role of kind of nature throughout how then you then applied it to leadership. Could you tell us just a bit about just your journey?

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 18:13**

I'd be happy to so I grew up in North Carolina. I won't bore you with a lot more of my childhood, but I have a fairly troubled childhood, which is why I spent most of my time with my grandparents, my maternal grandparents, and so they provided me a solid foundation for becoming the person that I am today. But unfortunately, my grandfather died suddenly when he was in his early 60s, when I was about 13 or 14, and my grandmother decided she was going to move away from Charlotte, North Carolina, where I grew up, and she moved to the property up in the mountains and lived in a tent, believe it or

not, for quite a number of years after my grandfather passed and before she moved away. So just a little bit about my childhood, and I never really had a lot of guidance about my direction, or about where I would go, or where I would land or go to college, or what kind of job I would get. And so as a consequence, it was sort of an explorer in many ways. And back to the curiosity piece. You know, when I became curious about something, I pursued it. So an example, from a career perspective, is, at some point along the way, my father made a little bit of money in the stock market from some stock he had, and he used it to purchase some land. Whole other story. But because of that, I got interested in finance, and so I pursued a job in investment banking as a result of that curiosity about finance, and I became a stock broker, basically, and worked for an investment banking firm for a number of years. And in that space, I felt like this is the greatest work I've ever done. I was so thrilled. I was on Wall Street and making all these deals, etc, etc, and then the market crashed. Things went sideways. I had to learn. Adapt and I transitioned to a new career field, which was in behavioral health, believe it or not, so a friend of mine asked me about a role that I had no experience for, as the Director of Admissions and medical records for a substance abuse treatment facility. Had no clue about how to do that in any way, shape or form, but they believed in me, and that belief that someone else had in me is what helped spur me into you know, I found a lot of success in that role. I went back to graduate school and got a master's in public health because I felt like health care would be a great career move for me, but it didn't work out that way. I transitioned to a large health care role in Washington, DC, and when that role expired, and I was pretty successful in that, they didn't really know what to do with my position, so they put me in human resources, and I parlayed that into a career as a Chief Human Resources Officer. So along the way, I guess the learning for me is I didn't have a lot of direction. I relied a lot on what I experienced as a child from the natural world to help me make some decisions about the path forward. So I would take walks through the woods, try to clear my mind, give me a different direction, and I would pursue that direction. So along the way, I've served in 2c suite roles. One is the chief financial officer in the investment banking space, healthcare space, and then later as a Chief Human Resources Officer in the global not for profit space. So I've had a wide variety of career experiences along the way, and those are some of the things that have helped me get to where I am today in terms of being a good coach and a great facilitator and leader.

**Patrick Healy 21:46**

Yeah, I'm noticing a few through lines tied to nature here. Number one is, it sounds like your career strategy, so to speak, it was much more opportunistic than deliberate. Some people played out their careers from day one. Others just go from opportunity to opportunity based on curiosity or interests? You were more of the latter,

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 22:05**

that's correct. And I've always had a lot of admiration for people. I have a number of friends along the way and colleagues who've been with the same company for 2030, years. I just sort of look at amazement at that and think, Oh my gosh. A lot of admiration for the stamina that that would take. But for me, I can't ever imagine myself being somewhere for that period of time. Me neither, and that's not right or wrong, it's just different, yeah,

**Patrick Healy 22:34**

different strokes for different folks, as they say. The second thing I wanted to mention was in your answer, you mentioned kind of adapting along the way, and also being in nature and that helping you, you had a good model with nature, right? Like nature is the number one adaptive system in a way, I think you mentioned your book, and nature always finds a way, yeah.

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 22:55**

And that's the theme for me, really, in many ways. And when I think about nature and what it has taught me, right, adaptability is just kind of a key piece of that nature doesn't scream and cry and lament, it just adapts and changes and goes with the flow, and that is not who I am Naturally. My natural go to is strive, get it done, checklists, data, facts. That's my natural tendency. So going in this direction is, in some ways, is exploratory for me, but it's a great learning opportunity because it's just so different from my natural inclination.

**Patrick Healy 23:39**

Yeah, I'm the same way. You know, if I do x, then y will happen. Very logical, linear. The path is supposed to be straight, very logical. I also benefit from being in nature. And nature reminds me that, well, actually, a lot of parts of life are kind of cyclical. You know, it's not going from A to B, it's more life kind of comes in pastures or seasons as well. So there are times of doing, and then there are times of being, and I've been trying to incorporate more of the being recently

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 24:09**

that's really, really nice. Just on the adaptability topic, I'm looking out my window now, you know, and I notice all of the natural world that I'm experiencing right now is in the process of adapting to a new climate, a new environment. Just sort of witness these things. It's a simple reminder to me, much like what you just mentioned, sorry about the law of impermanence. I have ash trees on my property, and ash trees are in danger because of parasites, and they're being decimated, right? So sort of the law of impermanence. Nothing lasts forever, even the good times won't be here forever. So just getting comfortable with that transition, being able to adapt to whatever the changing circumstances. Answers are and being like water going with the flow in some ways, and again, that's antithetical to my way of thinking in many ways, right, but it's more a way of being right. And I think the marriage of those two things is really what creates a compelling leadership, at least from my

**Patrick Healy 25:18**

perspective. Yeah, I agree. You need your thinking, but you also need your being. Because, news alert, we're also biological our nature, right? Like we're part of nature, believe it or not,

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 25:29**

imagine that. I think that's something that we maybe have lost a little sight of along

**Patrick Healy 25:35**

the way. Yeah. Well, John, why do you think so many professionals get disconnected from nature.

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 25:41**

If I could sum it up in one word, I think it's inertia. I have a career objective. I want to get ahead, and when I get ahead, it will give me something that will allow me to do something else, right? So that's sort of the formula. I have to do this, then I can obtain that, and it means I will be able to do this. And I think oftentimes if we can reverse that formula just a bit and start focusing on Who do I need to be, or what type of leader do I need to be, then what do I need to develop, or what do I need to get in order to be that type of leader? And then what would that mean for my organization, for me, my family, my environment, etc. And I think people get kind of disconnected from the natural world. I mean, we come into an office building. None of us work in a yurt or in a teepee or a tent out in the forest. Generally speaking, we come into an office and we feel there's this artificial disconnection. And I think the subtle point that I want to make is that certainly from a physical standpoint, nature is out there, but the reality is, it's not just out there, it's also in here, because all of the experiences we've had and all of the tendencies and traits that we've inherited at a cellular level kind of draws back to a natural experience. That's why, in many instances, an experience in nature is almost a universal experience. So regardless

of the culture that you're in or who you are, where you come from, if you talk to people about what they experience when they are exposed to nature, you hear some very similar themes. So I think nature is not just out there, it's also in here, and accessing what's in here, inside is the key

**Patrick Healy 27:37**

that's pretty deep. I know you in your coaching roles and other roles. Talk a lot about the power of looking within and relying on intuition. Can you talk just more about intuition and its role in your kind of leadership style?

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 27:51**

John, you know, this is something I've been studying and working on and thinking about pretty deeply for the last year or two about intuition, and here are a couple of at least preliminary conclusions that I've drawn from all of this, and that is, intuition is a skill and a capability that we all have, and we can develop it, fine tune it, and accentuate it and amplify it in many ways. From a very practical perspective, I often challenge people to do something pretty simple, and that is, the next time you have a feeling about something or a hunch or a gut instinct, make a note of it in your journal, or just mentally make a note of it, and then start testing out your intuitive capabilities. Was I correct? Was I incorrect? Was I partially correct? How close did I get? And I do think that again, this sounds a little Woo, woo, right, a little fuzzy, but the practical application here is as a leader, what are you sensing? What are you sensing is needed in this moment, and how would you start to move in that direction? So nature teaches us that right nature is instinctive. I watch migrating birds come through my property all the time. There's an instinct that drives them in that direction. There's something that they sense in the environment or the field that moves them in one direction or another. So from an instinct or an intuition standpoint, I think that that's really critical. And the other thing I would just mention about that is that think about the world that we live in, and it's a world not casting any aspersions one way or another, but let's just be real. There's a lot of misinformation and disinformation. And how many times have you heard something in the last five years or so, and you've had to pause think, okay, is that actually true? Where did that come from? What's. A source. I remember a time when no one ever did that, and these times, being able to rely on your intuition to move you in a direction is going to be a critical skill. I think that will differentiate leaders going forward, right? Because in this era that we're in where it's difficult to believe what you read and see and hear, your intuition is what you have to fall

**Patrick Healy 30:26**

back on. Yeah, I love that. I think there's a lot of myths about intuition. It could be prejudiced or too soft or impractical, and I think sometimes that's true, but intuition, at least to me, I've always thought about it as the result of, kind of your accumulated experience, right? Like nature is, as you said, very, very instinctive. Animals are very instinctive. Plants just kind of know what to do, sensation, not too much thinking goes into it. And we also have accumulated experience too. I know there's been research with chess players and other high performers, dancers, different athletes, they have really honed intuition of what to do next, because they've just performed so much. Right? In some ways, intuition is just kind of like pattern recognition, even though you can't explain why you have the certain sense.

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 31:18**

I agree with that. And I also think that spending time in nature, one of the benefits of that, at least from my experience, is that does have the impact of clearing away a little thinking. And in that clearing away of thinking, I have more access to my intuitive or my instinctive capabilities. So again, not to get too far afield here, but when you think about we all inherit traits from our ancestors, and our ancestors probably had a much more keen sense of intuition and instinct than we do, because we're surrounded by all this modernity and niceties etc. So the logic follows, at least for me, that if I inherit eye color and hair color and etc from my ancestors, I probably inherit whatever some of their instinctive and intuitive

capabilities are, or were they may just be covered up because I don't need to think about my instinct too much. I just go from here to there to the other place, but it's a hard skill. It's not one of those soft skills, right? Like people like to talk about, it's a meaningful, valuable skill to have, and think about your gut instinct and how that has helped you throughout your life, really, that's what we're talking about, that capability. Yeah,

**Patrick Healy 32:41**

I like the practice before of the journal you mentioned John to kind of hone your intuition. Can you give an example of a time when you did that, or maybe a client did that and really benefited from

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 32:52**

it? I'll tell you about a time that I did it, but just FYI, I have a couple of clients who are actually engaged in this process right now, and the feedback that I'm getting is a little amazement in some ways, because it's a surprisingly simple and deceptive practice. So oftentimes, what will happen with me is I'll get, let's say you're my client, and I have an intuition about what might be helpful in a given moment. So my intuition may be something like, If I coach Patrick just using short, brief questions and eliminate a little bit of the wind up to the question, I might be more effective. He may resonate with that more. So I'll make a little note right today. My intention with Patrick is x, and the reason why is y. So I'll have that interaction, and then at the end of the day, I'll just pause for a moment and just reflect back. Maybe I was close, but it didn't seem to work quite so well. So my instinct maybe was a little bit off. That entire exercise takes about 240 seconds. I mean, not that long, right? I have an instinct, have a gut feeling about my spouse is upset about something, so maybe I make a little mental note, Hey, honey, are you something upsetting you or worrying you right now? Yes, as a matter of fact, there's something is upsetting. May you forgot to do the laundry. Great. So I use exactly that technique for myself, and I keep sort of a running list of where I am and what I might need to adjust and fine tune

**Patrick Healy 34:28**

with my instinct. Yeah, it sounds like you use this process of almost experimentation with you. You have a gut feeling or something you think could be helpful. You form a hypothesis. You know, if I do this, then it'll be beneficial, and then you try it out and get some feedback. It sounds like it's a process of calibrating your intuition over time.

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 34:48**

It actually is, and I'm glad that you've framed it up that way, because it is, in many ways, part of my go to which is the scientific method. I have a sense. Of something, and it creates an urge or a desire to maybe move in a certain direction. So I exercise full permission in doing that, and then I'm fully responsible for whatever the intended or unintended impact of that decision is. But that's all instinct and intuition, right? I sense something is needed. I sense that my team needs me to go to bat for them because they have fewer resources than they did last quarter. Nobody's told me that. I just get the sense that that's true. So I go to my team. I'm thinking about going to our CEO and asking for more head count. What do the rest of you think about that? Of course, they probably would all say yes, but it's that sort of way. And I think doing that and exercising that capability builds confidence. It helps you be more assured of your responses, and it helps clear out a lot of the

**Patrick Healy 35:52**

clutter. Yeah, I love that you discuss a number of principles in your book that kind of emerge from nature. What do you think's the biggest one that leaders tend to overlook, but that's been in your experience,

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 36:06**

transformational. You know? I think, for me, what they often overlook is the value of building greater resilience by playing it safe. Several examples in the book about how nature is resilient. And I think we all sort of recognize that, you know, storms come through, trees are still standing. The example I give in the book is of the Arctic Fox and how they are resilient and adapt to the environment. But I think that that idea of being resilient and placing yourself purposefully and intentionally in difficult and challenging positions that will allow you to learn and grow, and even if you don't learn and grow, to develop more resilience for the times ahead. I think that that's a capability that a lot of leaders shy away from in many instances, and have a difficult time again. I know this sounds a little soft, but staying with the uncomfortableness of something new, right? So whenever we're trying to break through to another level, it can be really, really uncomfortable and uneasy, which is where your ability to adapt, follow your instinct a little bit can help build that resilience that you need to make it through. But when the times get tough, that's not the time to think, well, maybe I need to shift directions. Maybe, maybe it's a time to stick with it. So I think having the wisdom and maybe even the emotional intelligence to recognize a little bit about when do I need to move in a different direction be more adaptable, or when do I need to stay and develop more resilience? And I would suggest that making that decision may really rely back on your intuition. What does your gut tell you is going to be helpful in this moment? So that's a little bit of the formula, or the way that I experience that resilience, and what I think a lot of leaders miss in their development,

**Patrick Healy 38:20**

and kind of leading intuitively when to be adaptable, when to be resilient. You have a hunch about your team, you ask for more resources. You mentioned before. You think leading intuitively is a competitive advantage in today's world. Why is that? John, I just want to be clear.

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 38:34**

In my opinion, it's a competitive advantage because there's not a lot of clarity with information that is available for us. If you think about the leaders who you've worked with, who perhaps you admire the most, or even from afar, a lot of times they are operating on you don't go to your board of directors and say, I have a gut instinct that if we start this new product line, it'll create additional revenue for us, but there's something initially that you are experiencing or sensing in your environment that might need to shift. And let's face reality, people aren't going to come forth a lot of times and say, this is a problem. That's a problem, particularly if you're in the C suite or at a higher level, your ability to surround yourself with people who are going to tell you what you need to hear is probably not as much as it is at the lower levels in the organization. So part of my hypothesis is, the higher up you go, or the greater the responsibility that you have, the less likely it is for people to say, You know what, Patrick, you're getting ready to step into a big pile of poop, and if you don't change your direction, there are going to be problems. People are more likely to say, that seems like a good way to go. But what does your gut tell you? What does your instinct tell you? So that's the difference. Education, I think facts and figures great, but what if they're not coming from a credible source? What if you don't have the time to dive deep and unwind every nuance with the data or the information you've received, and you have to go with your gut or your instinct? Wouldn't you want that to be finely tuned so that you can trust

**Patrick Healy 40:23**

it? Yeah, that makes a lot of sense to me. John sounds like intuitions is the reliable thing when there's either too much information or maybe the information is distorted in some way, I can definitely resonate with going to hire in the organization, and then the information either being filtered out or being distorted in some way. I forget if I mentioned this on a previous podcast, but I remember I used to work at Harvard Business School, and the former CEO of Kellogg's came and he was telling this story about someone asked him, you know, what's it like being in the C suite after such a long career at Kellogg's? And he described it as well, you know, when I was at the bottom of the organization, you know, the

information I get, it kind of be like corn flakes. There'd be a lot of it. I would need to make sense of it. But, you know, as I went up in the organization, I detected that it was almost as if the information somewhat added just a little bit of sugar. So by the time I became CEO. People were just giving me Frosted Flakes. No more corn flakes. It was the information was too sweet. It was overly rosy. People didn't want to tell him bad news, so he needed to rely a lot more on his intuition, based on what his gut was telling him, and also seek out some more corn flakes from the people below.

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 41:38**

How wonderful that he used a metaphor of cereal being the CEO of Calhoun.

**Patrick Healy 41:45**

But speaking of metaphors, John, I know you use metaphors in your coaching. Can you say more about metaphors

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 41:51**

from a metaphorical perspective? I think it helps people shift their perspective just a bit to think about things in a new and a different way. So for example, when you think about a cactus, how does a cactus display resilience? Or, you know, using another nature example, an olive tree, right? An olive tree lives in a very arid climate. It thrives in Rocky, poor topsoil, and it does that because it has very, very deep tap roots. So I think about the metaphor, you know, what does it mean to me as a leader, to go below the surface? You're telling me, for example, you're telling me, as one of my team members, that you're upset about something. Well, I could just take that at face value, or I could go deeper. What is it that's upsetting you? What can we do about it? So going deep is a metaphor that I kind of derive from the olive tree, many other examples in nature. So using metaphors, I think, oftentimes, helps people shift their perspectives just a bit thinking about things from a metaphorical standpoint, because it's there's something psychological, I think that happens not to get too far afield here, when people kind of step out of their own experience and think about it from this different angle. You know, how would a dolphin experience? Intuition, for example, totally different from how I might but I have a little bit of a hypothesis about that. So that's really the power I think, of metaphors, is it helps people shift their perspective by allowing them to step outside of their own experience and consider a different point of view. Yeah,

**Patrick Healy 43:40**

John, can you give an example of a story or a leader that you worked with, either when you were working yourself, or as a coach, where they reconnected with with nature in some way and saw an impact?

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 43:53**

There are a lot of examples I could give there. There's one that's fairly recent, if you can bear with me for just a moment. So I was completed this engagement. I was coaching a client who was a tech entrepreneur working for a fast paced startup right in lower Manhattan, actually. And so he was swirling a bit right? And as a coach, right, I was kind of swirling a little bit trying to, you know, help him get to a different place. From a leadership perspective, there was a lot of change going on. The organization was being purchased, which is what they had hoped would happen when they started this organization up. And is a great company. So my sense was that we were stagnant in this coaching relationship, and weren't really making a lot of progress. So in my next kind of in person coaching session with this individual, there was a nice little park right next door to the office building in the Hudson area there in New York City. So I just offered to let's go to the park, maybe. We just sit a little picnic table and have our coaching session. There nothing radical at that point. So we get to the park right, and we're still kind of swirling around a little bit, and then suddenly a leaf falls from the tree right onto our picnic table. And then the metaphor came up. What do you think the message is of this leaf? What do you think this leaf

is trying to tell us? Now, I'll be completely candid. That is an awkward question for me to articulate. It's different from my normal approach, but the effectiveness is sort of out there, right? I mean, it totally landed with this particular client. I probably sat there for another six or seven minutes while he talked to me about what the message was he was receiving, not in some lofty sort of way, but he started sharing with me some of the challenges he was having with his team, things sort of dropped out of the blue into his lap. He had difficult time managing the resources. So there's a whole other trajectory that that leaf and just being outdoors took that conversation in. And I recall very distinctly we were having this meeting, and all the track was going around, but after a few moments, it felt like we were just in a little bubble ourselves, surrounded by nature. And I think that's the impact that a shift, right? And the shift for me is being in nature or experiencing nature, can bring to a coaching conversation, a facilitation, just a chat with your friend, really? So, yeah, I love that. So it sounds like being in nature helped both of you kind of renew the relationship a little bit. And the specific question you asked him around the leaf was helpful in kind of just changing his perspective, whereas he was kind of in this box, it's hard to know what would have happened if that leaf hadn't fallen. But we went outside for the only reason, and again, back to that intuition I felt like in the moment, if we could just get out of this high tech office space, which is really very inviting, by the way, bean bag chairs and nice drinks, etc, and just go outside for a nice little walk. It might clean up or clear up some mental chatter that he was experiencing. And it actually did just that, whether the leaf had fallen or not, it cleared up a little bit, and the conversation was a little more free flowing

**Patrick Healy** 47:42

the specific question you asked him being very powerful in that, what are some questions that you use in coaching, or that you use yourself to maybe enhance your learning or open up a new avenue to performance? And any go to ones that kind of come to mind a couple, what is your intention?

**John W. Sigmon, MCC** 48:03

What is the impact that you want to have? My experience is that when I asked that last question about the impact, that that has a lot of resonance with people, right? Because I think a lot of times like I'll use this as an example, I was on a call right before this podcast, right? And I was a tad bit late, I didn't pause to think, what is the impact that I want to have in this conversation with you. So I think from a leadership perspective, if we can ask that question as coaches and as leaders, if we can just stop to consider that gives a lot of power, I think, right? Because the secret is, and I work with a lot of people who their primary thing is they want to work on their presence, or executive presence, or something like that. And I tell everybody this. The little secret there is, you control your presence. What is the impact that you want to have? Do you want to have the impact of making people sit up and pay attention? Because I guarantee you, you can do that. Do you want to have the impact of having people collaborate a bit more or be more curious, because I guarantee you that as a leader, you can do that. You do it all the time, right? So just accessing that capability, I think, is really, really important.

**Patrick Healy** 49:35

Yeah, leaders are always making an impact. Sometimes it's not the one they

**John W. Sigmon, MCC** 49:39

want, right? So intended or unintended, absolutely right? Yeah, so

**Patrick Healy** 49:44

taking some time to pause and think, what, how do I want to show up here? What's the impact I want to

**John W. Sigmon, MCC** 49:48

have? Precisely, and that, again, I'm oversimplifying it a bit, but to me, that's presence if I want. To have the impact of showing you my very direct style.

**Patrick Healy 50:06**

I can do that right presence. Yeah, I love it. Jenna, I have a couple more questions about kind of nature and intuition, then we can move to some more personalized questions about you. But oh boy, yeah, you've mentioned a few practices. What other practices can people begin to experiment with to start reconnecting with nature or more of their natural selves?

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 50:29**

That's a great question. So a few things that I do. I'm fortunate enough to where I live, near a lot of nature. Have a forest right outside my window here, I can just leave this room and go out for a nice little stroll in the forest. So there's a practice at Shinran Yoku, which is a Japanese term for forest bathing. I I'm a big proponent of that. I won't bore you or your readers with all that, but taking a walk through the woods or through the forest, I think, has an immediate impact of calming things down just a little bit, and the blood pressure goes down, etc, etc, even if I can't do that, maybe just a stroll through the park. There's some evidence to support the fact that even looking at an image of nature has an impact on ourselves, kind of our physiological selves, a practice that I use oftentimes to help people access more of a visionary way of thinking about things, is, let's assume we're in an office just like we are right now. And I'll ask you know, do you have a window in your office? Right? Most people do, so just turn to your window, take a deep breath, you know, center yourself a little bit, and what do you see? What do you notice? And have them continue to expand that awareness a little bit. And before you know it, there's a little bit more visionary capability coming out from that person. Well, I can see the trees. I can see the birds in front of me. I see my driveway. What are the messages that you're picking up from that? And again, it feels a little soft around the edges, but I've used this technique with EVPs, CEOs, people from all stripes, and it rarely, if ever, fails. It's not always successful, but those are some of the practices that that I engage with for myself and with my clients, that that oftentimes make a

**Patrick Healy 52:32**

big difference, forest, bathing, just getting in nature, taking walks, getting out of your own head, pausing just kind of looking around, maybe outside, and just being present Absolutely.

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 52:46**

And in the book, I outline a very brief practice, and some people think about it as meditation. I don't necessarily think that that's true, but it's a simple practice of wherever you are, whatever you're doing, just stop for 30 seconds

**Patrick Healy 53:01**

or so. What do you notice? Well, I notice

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 53:05**

my lights for my office plants are not on, and makes me wonder, right? What are you wondering? Well, I'm wondering, did I turn it on, or did the pack, would we have a power surge? And what does it remind me of? Well, it reminds me of a time when we did have a power outage, and a few of my house plants that I really like died because they didn't get enough light, so I just made up all of that. But what do you notice? What are you wondering about, and what does it remind you of,

**Patrick Healy 53:37**

and that little practice

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 53:39**

can be really helpful from an innovative standpoint, and it's a practice that a lot of innovators actually use trying to connect disparate things to one another. How do these fluorescent lights? What do they remind me of? Well, they remind me of a time when I was working in an office building, etc, etc. So just another little, brief practice that people can pick up on and try.

**Patrick Healy 54:03**

I really like that. Oftentimes I'm and I know a lot of people in just the hospital also get into linear thinking mode, right? Just a to b process goal. And it sounds like those questions, what do you notice? What do you wonder? And what does it remind you of kind of shifts you into more of the connect the dots mode, and I can see how that'd be useful for creativity and innovation.

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 54:27**

I use that technique quite a bit when I and I don't coach or work with that many creatives, but when I do, I often use that technique, and just to give credit for it, it actually comes from a nature journaling practice, right? So sitting it out in nature. What do you notice? Well, I noticed that pine tree. Well, it makes me wonder. Well, it looks a little unhealthy, you know. So it's that kind of way, and it has actual, really nice business applications. I think we've

**Patrick Healy 54:59**

covered a. Lot about nature, intuition, etc. If someone's listening and let's say they feel disconnected from themselves or maybe a bit burned out, what would you say to them about nature as maybe a pathway back?

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 55:13**

What a good question. Patrick, thank you for that. I guess. What I would share is this, nature, however you think about it, is a, generally speaking, a free resource. It's all around you. It's part of who you are. And just by getting out, if you can, if you're capable of getting out into nature, that, to me, is the ideal sort of medicine. If I can't get out, looking out of a window, experiencing an image, maybe looking at a house plant, for example, right, something like that, it can make a difference. So my advice would be to find some practice that means something for you that's easy, right, simple to implement. Maybe it's just you have a house plant and you touch it every time you come into an office or something like that. But find some little practice, because nature has enough space to

**Patrick Healy 56:23**

hold whatever you're experiencing.

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 56:27**

My mother died a couple years ago, be three years ago in September, and although we weren't really that close, I miss her quite a bit, and being in nature helps me get in touch with that feeling, that connectedness that I had with my mom. So I you know, anytime that I can get out in nature, it has an impact on me and my life and the people that I serve.

**Patrick Healy 56:53**

Yeah, so if you're feeling burned out, get into nature somehow, even if just just for a moment, absolutely,

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 57:01**

when I think about my mom, I have a chair that's just sitting out under a tree. Sometimes I'll just go sit under that tree. And, you know, just has the impact of calming things down just a little bit, and again,

sort of having the again. I know it sounds a little strange or out there, but it has the space to hold whatever's happening. Right? We think about as coaches, we hold space for our clients so that they can express themselves, so that they can learn, so that they can move forward. And who holds space for us? Nature, nature, it's always there. It's always available, and it's part of who we are. It's

**Patrick Healy 57:48**

in here, not just out there. Awesome. Well, John, great discussion on nature. I want to move now to just talk with you about some of your experiences learning and performing Absolutely. Can you tell me about a time that where you, John, performed at your absolute best? What was the situation and the goal? What were you trying to do and what was the result?

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 58:12**

I don't have any problem finding an example here. I worked for a relatively large organization. I was brought in specifically for succession planning. This is an exercise that actually worked out quite well. I was in this role, and I was promoted to be the Chief Human Resources Officer for this organization, and it was a bit of a bumpy road getting there, but I remember when I got the news of that appointment, how the energy and the excitement and I couldn't wait to get on the phone and call my wife and let her know. And what made that the next nine months or so, really magical from a professional experience, is I really did feel like I was in the flow. We had just hired a new CEO, so part of my role was to onboard her and help her build out a new leadership team, which unfortunately meant that some people on the existing leadership team had to be off boarded. She wanted an entire organizational restructure, which included a voluntary retirement for some staff who were eligible for that, and a reconfiguration of how the organization was structured. In addition to that, she wanted, and I wanted a new HR department. So we were in the process of hiring, reconfiguring, redesigning all of that work, and I was at the table for all of those discussions with the new CEO, helped her hire some of her executive leadership team. Of course, I was building my team at the time, and the fulfillment that I got from that work, the meaningful work that I was doing in that moment, really filled me up. And. Was really operating at my very best. That was probably up until that point, the highlight of my career. I never imagined, first of all, that I'll ever be in HR. I never wanted to be in HR. I ended up there almost by happenstance, but nonetheless, I was able to, and I kind of achieved this, my second C suite role, which kind of, from a boastful, egotistical standpoint, I was pretty proud of, actually, kind of felt like, hey, that's really something. So it was just a moment in my career where everything really seemed to work, and it was a lot of work and a lot of hours, but it never felt that way. So I just, I remember all of those experiences very, very fondly. That was really one of the pinnacles of my career,

**Patrick Healy 1:00:50**

going back to impact, you were making an impact, and that felt good.

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 1:00:54**

Yeah, yeah, thank you for that. Absolutely, it was a huge impact. And don't get me wrong, I didn't do it all on my own, but it was just being part of that, and being part of the leadership of that effort was really very fulfilling.

**Patrick Healy 1:01:07**

What about the flip side? John, can you tell me about a time when you just completely failed, however you define failure, what happened? But also, what did you learn from it? Well, there,

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 1:01:19**

there's so many examples, it's hard to pick just one. A flaming failure that I had, which I'll look back on with a little bit of amusement, is I was in a circumstance where I was hired as a temporary person

many, many years ago to run accounts payable for a medical practice. I won't bore with all the details, but there I was in a temporary assignment. This medical practices manager decided to leave for a variety of different reasons after I'd been there a couple months, and then they asked me if I wanted the job because I'd done such a great job with accounts payable. So just kind of pause there for a second. Just because I did a great job as accounts payable doesn't mean I'd be a great people leader, but nonetheless, here we are. So now I'm in my first people leader role, and I have a little, small little staff, and I'm kind of full of myself a little bit, so I do some research, and I think, well, you know, I need to find out how to do performance evaluations, because I've heard somewhere along the line that's an important part of being a manager is giving people effective performance feedback. So I made my little notes and then went on. So we came upon the time to do performance evaluations. They'd never been done in this organization before. And I was very excited about us bringing something new, and I was on top of my game. So one of my key performance our accounts receivable person, which is a key component of the organization bringing the money in. So I'm having performance evaluation with her, and I give her the sandwich, right? You're doing this really well. This you need a little improvement on and you're doing this well also. So I made mention to her about something that she needed to correct, and her demeanor, or something of that nature. I can't remember what it specifically was. And she asked me specifically, well, when did that happen? And I told her, Well, I noticed this about three months ago. Her question back to me was, Why are you just now telling me this? I failed as a leader. I didn't take into account any of her point of view. I didn't understand anything at all about giving effective feedback. I wasn't specific. I held on to things to bring them out at another moment. So lots and lots of points of failure along the way, and that's just a small example that was, let's say that's about 35 years ago. So you can imagine, I've had many, many similar sorts of experiences along the way, where I've really failed as a leader. And I think, generally speaking, I fail as a leader when I am not clear, when I bring clarity, that has an impact, and generally speaking, it falls within my intended impact. So when I avoid conflict, I dance around things, etc, I fail as a leader, and I do that often, but I reflect on it and try to move forward and do better. So the learning for me comes from when I realize I'm not as impactful as I wanted to be, or could have been. Using again. This an example where I didn't consider my impact prior to this conversation, I'm probably not as effective as I could be, and

**Patrick Healy 1:04:35**

that's the learning for me, and nature helps with clarity, right? I find that for me, some of the clearest moments I have are when I'm away from the computer information reduction, just being in nature with my thoughts helps me to be a lot more clear. And when I'm clear independently, I tend to show up clearer with people in my professional life too.

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 1:04:59**

I would totally. Totally agree with that, regardless of what is going on up here in my brain, all the swirl that's happening, or the anxiety I may be experiencing or or the trepidation, if I take a deep breath and I walk out that door just to the outdoors, it has the impact of settling that sometimes it's not dramatic, but the nuance, the subtlety along the way. You know, just to be clear, very few lightning bolts ever hit me when I'm in nature. But it's the cumulative effect of that exposure that I think makes the

**Patrick Healy 1:05:35**

biggest difference. John, why do you do what you do? What motivates you to learning and your performance. I love that question.

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 1:05:44**

What motivates me more than anything else is that I care deeply about leadership. I often think about leadership development programs that are out there. The design is to create great leaders. That's what really resonates with me. People want to follow inspirational leaders who have integrity, and that's what

I want to drive you know, so with these leadership development programs, I think what happens is we're not really developing leadership. We're developing a leader. And that's fine. That's great. But my interest is in the collective what is the collective energy that can come from leaders who are at the same time, diverse and like minded, right? So I think it's the marriage of those two things that really, really interests me. How to drive performance in those areas. How can we take a group of leaders who are vastly different from their points of view, culture, ways of thinking, etc, yet at the same time, there's a collective energy around what it means to be a leader, what it means to take full responsibility for acting on my intuition, full permission, full responsibility for the impact. So that's what really drives me, and my sense is and what I sense in the environment right now is that a lot of younger leaders, I won't put an age group on, but a lot of younger leaders are looking for different avenues or different vehicles to explore leadership outside of the traditional competency models or capability models or frameworks, etc, not that those are bad or not effective, but what else is available. And I think you know this free resource, for the most part, free, this available to us, provides a lot of inspiration and a whole host of other benefits for us as leaders. Yeah, it sounds like developing leaders in a new way, leveraging nature and intuition really gets you out of bed in the morning. It most definitely does. In addition to thinking about, how can we as a collection of leaders, make a change, right? How can we move forward collectively, even though we have different points of view? John,

**Patrick Healy 1:08:28**

what's the number one piece of advice you give to someone to either work or live a good life? Wow,

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 1:08:36**

you know, I don't know if I've ever been asked that question before.

**Patrick Healy 1:08:40**

Let's just say, live a good life. Let's not tie work into it.

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 1:08:44**

This is where I stand on that, and that is being clear about your values and what's important to you, and honoring those so when I think about myself and what has helped me have what I consider to be a good life. I'm really happy and content with this phase of my life, and I'm clear what I believe in, at least for now, and I'm clear where I stand, right? There's not a lot of ambiguity for me, and that really helps me navigate through things that are maybe feel a little icky, right, or maybe where I feel a little uncertain in some ways, right? This helps me find my center, I guess is a way to think about it, so it's sort of a values based way of approaching things, and just being clear about what's important to me overall, but also what's important to me in this moment, and that's what helps move me forward, helps kind of ground me in many ways.

**Patrick Healy 1:09:48**

Yeah, I have to say, as a fellow coach, the number one most effective and impactful exercise I do with people is around values clarification. It's surprising. To me is how many people have never really thought about it before, what is important to me in my work, but also my life. And it can be sobering when we realize, Wow, I value these things, but my time's going into these other things here. How am I going to fix this exactly?

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 1:10:18**

And you know, I think the other aspect of that is, here's what I suggest for my clients, is when you're feeling out of sorts, there's something amiss. You've had an interaction with somebody, you've left it feeling kind of icky, or something is happening. It's likely some value there. Something has happened to violate a value that you hold dear, or something that you think is important, or maybe somebody

trampled on it or not honored that value for you. So I think just putting a label to it or putting a word to it can be really, really important in a powerful way to move forward. Ah, that value is one of clarity. So that's why I'm so upset, because I'm not clear on my direction. I hear all this noise, but I don't know what direction to move in. So that's why I'm a little irritated or sideways. So I really honor that approach or that point of view. I think that you're absolutely right. A lot of us have never really considered,

**Patrick Healy 1:11:21**

hey, what's important to me? John, do you have five more minutes for a couple of rapid fire questions? I have whatever you need. Patrick, okay, yeah, these are just short, little top of your head questions. So if you didn't do what you do now, John, what would you be doing and why I would

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 1:11:40**

be a nomadic backpacker camper. And the reason why I would do that is, number one, obviously, I love the outdoors. I also love adventure and exploring new things. So I would be one of those nomadic people who kind of wander the globe, living out of a tent and backpacking everywhere I

**Patrick Healy 1:11:59**

go. Yeah, very fitting for the topic of this episode. Yeah, if you had to get a tattoo of a short phrase or maybe a quote to remind yourself of something,

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 1:12:10**

what would that be? Nothing's urgent. I operate with a strong sense of urgency, and it takes a lot of purposefulness for me to temper that a

**Patrick Healy 1:12:22**

bit. Yeah, I hear you there. I can be the same way. Yeah. And actually, when I reconnect with nature, it reminds me that you used the word impermanence before. And, yeah, everything in nature is impermanent. And whatever I'm worried about now, this too

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 1:12:38**

shall pass so precisely. And what's the rush? Yeah, what's

**Patrick Healy 1:12:43**

the rush? Exactly? On the flip side, John, if you could take out some real estate on a billboard, maybe on the side of the highway, to communicate a message to the entire world. What would you put on that billboard?

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 1:12:55**

Connect with nature, to connect with yourself.

**Patrick Healy 1:12:57**

All right, enough said. No need for elaboration on that one. I think we covered it. What's something you're currently worried about?

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 1:13:04**

As silly as this may sound, I'm really worried about our species, worried about humankind. I worry about how we treat one another, and what our future is on this planet. That does worry me.

**Patrick Healy 1:13:19**

What's something you're currently excited about? I have a

**John W. Sigmon, MCC** 1:13:23

lot of different irons in the fire, and so my work continues to fill me up and excite me. It can be a bit of a grind sometimes, I'm not going to lie about that, but my work continues to provide a lot of fulfillment for me and a lot of energy, and, you know, my desire is to keep going at this pace for as long as I can. So I'm really happy about that, and I'm happy that I'm at this stage in my life where I'm healthy and I still feel good, I feel energized, and I feel like I have a lot to offer. And just excited about

**Patrick Healy** 1:13:57

it. Very cool. I'm actually going to steal a question from you, John and ask you, what's something you're wondering about?

**John W. Sigmon, MCC** 1:14:06

I'm working with a partner to put together a mentor coaching program, and I'm wondering how successful we're going to be with this. I'm confident we're going to be successful, and I'm excitedly wondering what's the upside to this activity. So yeah, that's what comes to mind. Cool. Well, I was gonna

**Patrick Healy** 1:14:27

ask you, what's your next project? And it sounds like that's part of the portfolio.

**John W. Sigmon, MCC** 1:14:32

I'm working with my partner, Vanessa, on what we think is an exciting mentor coaching program rooted in the core competencies of ICF and highly experiential activity, which, by the way, experiential activities are not my favorite in the world. From a wiring perspective, I'm not wired that way, but I will tell you this, whenever I am engaged in experiential activity, I learn. Learn so much about myself and the people around me that that learning is what propels me to move in that direction, even if it's

**Patrick Healy** 1:15:08

uncomfortable. Yeah, shout out to Vanessa Hager bomber, John and I work with her on an ICF program, and she's fantastic. We'll throw her name in the show notes if people want to learn more.

**John W. Sigmon, MCC** 1:15:19

Yeah, fantastic. She is a fabulous partner. I love working with

**Patrick Healy** 1:15:23

Vanessa and you. Oh, thank you, John, yeah, my last question, I call this the plugs out. Can you just plug yourself? Where can people find you or go to learn more if they enjoy what we spoke about today.

**John W. Sigmon, MCC** 1:15:36

Thank you for that. I think the simplest and easiest way for people to connect with me is via LinkedIn. I do have a web page. It sort of sits out there as a placeholder, quite frankly, because a lot of people want you to have a web page, but if you want to get a good flavor for who I am as a leader and as a coach and have access to videos and other things that I've put out there, LinkedIn is a great place to do that, if you want to get on the other side of it and have a little bit more of a nature based experience, YouTube is the place to go. And I have a YouTube channel at Wild leadership where you can experience me in nature, outside of this environment, where we talk about leadership lessons coming from nature. Very cool.

**Patrick Healy** 1:16:21

That's John sigman, s, l, G, M, o, n, that's correct. Well, John sigman, thanks for sharing your time with me today.

**John W. Sigmon, MCC 1:16:31**

Well, Patrick, listen. Thank you so much for having me. I really appreciate being on your show, and thanks for your really wonderful questions. I really had a

**Patrick Healy 1:16:38**

great time. Me too. Thanks so much, John, you bet. Wow. What a fun conversation with John. John, John, John. I love that guy. I really enjoyed this one because John is just he's one of those weird people who doesn't just talk about reflection and presence. You know, mindfulness, getting in touch with your inner leader. He actually lives it. There's just a humility and calm to John that feels a lot like nature itself, very grounded, very open and quietly, very wise. Owl is my favorite animal, and John sometimes reminds me of that wise old owl, and I can say personally, the way he integrates a lot of that wisdom into his coaching is just something to behold. John shared a lot of insights in that combo, but here are three nuggets of wisdom that really stood out to me and some challenges for you to potentially apply. Some of these. First, the tight connection between the outer world in our inner state. As John and I talked about, the more disconnected we become from the natural world, the more we risk becoming disconnected from ourselves, from our energy, from our focus and from some of our best ideas and creativity. John reminded me that simply stepping outside, pausing to notice a tree or even touching this, this house plan that I have here, that you can't see, can shift how we feel and think so. Here's a small challenge for you. Sometime this week, take a moment to step out into nature, even for 30 seconds. Look, listen and just notice if anything changes in you observe how you feel afterwards. Second the striking parallels between the laws of nature and the rhythms of human life, there's a beauty to nature and a wisdom. Nature doesn't rush or resist. It adapts, cycles and renews. Nature. Reminds me that growth isn't linear, it's seasonal. There's a time for doing and a time for being. And as humans, we so often forget that we're part of nature, and by trying to go against some of our natural rhythms, we struggle. So another challenge for you could be ask yourself, what season Am I in right now? Am I pushing through something that actually needs patience or rest, and what it would look like to follow the rhythms of life instead of fighting them? Last but not least, intuition isn't fuzzy. It's trainable. I love how John described intuition as something you can build over time. We discuss how it's like informed pattern recognition built slowly but surely, something you can strengthen through attention, reflection and feedback. I really love that idea because it takes intuition, something that seems mystical, and makes it practical. So I encourage you to engage in the practice that John suggested. The next time you get a hunch or a gut feeling about something, write it down, test it out, make the decision, take the action and see what happens. Most importantly, you. Evaluate what happened and see if you can learn anything from it over time, I think you'll notice patterns in how your instincts speak and how often they're actually right. Wow, that was a fun conversation. Lots of nuggets, but I'll leave you with those. If you'd like to learn more about John, you could find him@johnsigman.com or on LinkedIn, and as he mentioned, he has a YouTube channel called at Wild leadership, where he shares short reflections on leadership lessons from nature. I'd also encourage you to check out his book wild leadership. That's it for this one. I'm your host. Pat Healy, and thanks for tuning in to the Learning and Performance podcast. Until next time, take a breath. Step outside and enjoy some nature. I'll see you later. Okay, learners, over to you. What's one thing that you took away from this episode? Take a moment to make a mental note of one big idea, strategy or tool that you think could really enhance your learning and performance. Think about how you might apply it in your life in the next few days, then give it a try and see what difference it makes. Last but not least, feel free to share your experience on the webpage for this episode. Remember, improvement equals reflection plus action. What are you going to do now after listening to this episode, if you enjoyed this episode, I've got three requests for you. First, if you'd like to receive future episodes, make sure to hit the subscribe button on your favorite podcast app so you'll never miss an episode. Subscribing also helps the podcast reach a wider audience and helps me

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