Long Life Learning **Podcast - Yale School of Management Executive Education**
Season 2, Episode 1—Jeff Sonnenfeld
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Kavitha Bindra (00:06)

Hi, I'm Kavitha Bindra from the Yale School of Management. This is *Long Life Learning*, a podcast where we sit down with thought leaders and innovators to discuss living with inspiration and vitality. This season, we're having conversations about leveraging dynamic leadership for global impact, inspired by the voices that come out of the Yale Global Executive Leadership Program, also known as YGELP.

For our inaugural episode this season, I'm so excited to be joined by YGELP, founder and longtime Yale School of Management professor Jeff Sonnenfeld. Jeff is recognized as a national leader in discourse on corporate governance and leadership in the modern workplace. He is the author of eight books and more than 100 scholarly articles on management and CEO strategy, and currently serves as a senior associate dean for leadership studies and Leicester Crown professor in management practice here at Yale SOM.

Chances are you've seen Jeff's writing and interviews on any of dozens of major media outlets. He's frequently invited to contribute to such publications as *Business Week*, *Forbes*, The *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, *The Economist*, and many, many others.

By the time this episode airs, Jeff will be serving as faculty director to the eighth cohort of YGEP, which is convening here at Evans Hall for their first module of instruction this April and May. I'm very excited for Jeff to share with all of you his experience leading the program and his views on what it takes to excel and global executive leadership in today's world. Jeff, welcome to *Long Life Learning*.

Jeff Sonnenfeld (01:44)

Thank you so much, Kavitha. It's an honor to join you in any adventure on or off campus. You certainly are a pioneer yourself in educational space and as much as we hated ever losing you after you got all of your pile of degrees here and escaped, we're so lucky to lure you back years ago and you have now led just about every department around Yale except being the president herself. So then who knows? Maybe some future year. But thank you, Kavitha, it's great to join you.

Kavitha Bindra (02:08)

Oh, thank you so much, Jeff. I wanted to give the top of this episode a pretty thorough introduction so that our listeners can appreciate how influential you've been in shaping executive education at SOM and of course the incredible scope of your public facing work. Can you walk us through briefly how you tell the story of yourself? What is your personal and professional journey to where you are today?

Jeff Sonnenfeld (02:32)

Well, thank you. That was a hydra-headed question. I could take the more modest one where you open by talking about a philosophy of educating adults in business schools, but you also gave me the teaser to talk about myself a little, so I'll try to combine them until you look really bored and look away.

I think when you take a look at professional schools, a law school, a medical school, divinity school, some of the classic professions, much of their time is spent not just putting algorithms on blackboards or the theory of their fields, but actually taking a look at how we bring value to society, to the active practice of the professionals in those fields. Of course, half the time of a medical school student is as an intern in

the hospital. And in law schools, while they have some terrific philosophers and political scientists and economists, it's heavily case-based learning.

But in business schools it's more complicated because you have so many different disciplines, separate *lingua franca*, if you will, of engineers that are very important and applied engineering and economics of macro and micro are dramatically different fields themselves. When you start to take a look at psychology, it's broken between organizational psychology on a macro level and marketing, which sometimes goes a lot more micro.

Then you layer in anthropology, you start to get in the world of accounting, which has been a very applied field… Bringing all that together in a business school is hard. Something which I'm really thrilled at Yale and some other schools do this well, but not as many as I wish around the world, is that there is a mutual respect for legitimacy of each other's fields here.

That wasn't always the case in any business school. There were issues over the supremacy of one another's fields and calibrating excellence for tenure or what should be in a curriculum. We have no trace of that now. In fact, every group is urged to bring in more into the curriculum rather than less. And I never hear any dispute over the serious contribution of anybody's field as being a worthy field for management. So that's something really great here that I like and that's part of my philosophy then for management education is to not just do another economics department. We already have a great economics department or another psych department, but to build on those foundations of people's dissertations and doctoral training and life experience, educational and research experience to bring it to the world of practice. And I think the Yale School of Management does that especially well, but it's a constant balancing act.

And something else which I think is just amazing here is that we have an embrace of the wider Yale. I've been at universities though where they've considered the management schools, the intellectual backwater and discouraged a lot of cross-pollination of intellectual thought. That part has never been an issue at Yale, even before we deserved perhaps to be treated as well as we did by our arts and sciences and engineering and life sciences colleagues and legal colleagues, we were always treated as first class citizens as equal peers and partners. And now I think we deserve that seat at the table. We have the unexpected challenge of so much cross-pollination that we have faculty from all different parts of the university teaching in our executive programs, in our degree programs with such enthusiasm that we're not always sure exactly who should be voting at a curriculum or a tenured promotion meeting or something like that because there's such an encouragement.

So there's just a lot of collaboration around the larger Yale and we have so many programs that are either number one or two if you believe these other rankings in their fields that it's great to have them as enthusiastic colleagues. And I'm amazed that, Kavitha, that you and your top lieutenants, when they invite the most renowned people that I think sometimes producers and editors in the media have trouble getting ahold of, that they never say no to you folks unless they're teaching. There's such an eagerness to join these programs because they're coming to people that are very carefully selected that have experience and enthusiasm for learning. Not that teaching 18 to 22 year olds isn't gratifying because they'll ask the undiscussable questions and they're great, but when you come to people with a foundation of some life experience, you can catapult so much further.

So every part of the university is eager to be a part of things here. And when I got here, there were no executive programs. This was back at the turn of the century in 2000. The good thing was that we could create as you have built on carefully crafted programs that fill distinctive niches. We're doing things that play to Yale's strengths that also address critical opportunities in the marketplace. And this YGELP program, It's just one of, many of you have 70 programs in your portfolio and they're so compelling.

I think that that's what's exciting. And other schools, they sometimes have gotten so addicted to the revenue flow of paying bills for other things that they could degrade some of the quality, what's being done. And so far as we've come not under those pressures or what we're coming out with is something which is top quality for the students and something which is a great experience for our faculty. And in those rare occasions where there's something which is on a frontier that's breaking, whether or not it's at another university or somewhere in the world of practice, that there's no territoriality or sense of professional threat to bring in people who really know what they're talking about on some exploding new topic and folding it in to work with our established academic scholars.

Kavitha Bindra (07:50)

Yeah, thank you Jeff. I've seen a real evolution in Yale SOM since I've been a student and have now been on staff for the last over a decade now. But one thing that's been really striking to me is how SOM is becoming more central to Yale's overall mission. And as you said, revenue matters to us, but what matters more is that we're contributing to the intellectual tapestry that is Yale. And I think I read somewhere recently that Yale SOM is the most cross registered school at Yale, and that includes for undergraduates and students at some of the other graduate and professional schools. And to see a business school really serve that central function, I think really underpins a point that you're making. That's something that's pretty unique about Yale and Yale SOM, and I think something really distinctive about what you helped to build here. So thank you for pointing that out.

Jeff Sonnenfeld (08:47)

No, thanks. My degrees, as you mentioned, are all from Harvard undergraduate and MBA and doctorate, and I was on the faculty for 10 years, so it was about 20 years there, and I had a wonderful experience there and I think they're doing quite well despite some governmental pressures in the headlines these days that will hopefully be untangled. Well, I think they've found their way as a university. Of course, they have nothing to be ashamed of. They've had some other cultural political issues. But on the education front for management, there was a deep divide in the Charles River that they still struggle with. Not as much as before, but I used to teach at the Kennedy School of Government and the Education School for free as many of our faculty teach around without worrying about compensation and things across parts of Yale. And every year I was reprimanded by the then Dean who was a good friend, just saying, there are no kudos for that, Jeff.

If you want more teaching here at Soldiers Field, the barony of the Harvard Business School, then we'll give it to you. But don't waste time on those evil nonprofits or government or other places that are incompetent or not efficient and not the model of management we want to model. And similarly, it was hard getting faculty from those other schools to teach at the business school there. Again, they've improved a bit, but we've never had that issue and it's better now than ever. So I agree with you. There's a very strong collaborative spirit here in cross-pollination, intellectually and educationally.

Kavitha Bindra (09:58)

Great. So Jeff, one of the reasons I'm particularly excited to have you join us for this first episode is that in many ways you are uniquely well-situated to help us transition into this new season, the second season of the podcast, because it represents a transition into examining a new stage of learning. Your research and teaching is dedicated to the evergreen question: How do leaders learn?

Last season, we focused on investigating that question in the context of individuals who are approaching the third act of their professional careers. And this season we're pivoting to focus more on learners at

the most senior levels of leadership, including C-suite executives. So my question is, what does learning look like for leaders at the senior level?

Jeff Sonnenfeld (10:46)

I love that question. Do we have three hours to–?

Kavitha Bindra (10:48)

Sure. Apparently we do now.

Jeff Sonnenfeld (10:51)

It's such a great question that people with life experience and people who grow into more senior roles do learn a little bit differently. For one thing, coming back to a program at midlife, you've lived a life that had career ambitions and dreams developed as children, whether or not it was through parents, aunts, uncles, TV figures, people in the community, coaches, a significant mentor in somebody's life that had a pivotal role or just in their own protean self-creation of what they cared about and their values. And the ambitions then get fortified as we drift between institutions, between primary school and a secondary school and higher education and early employers.

And then there's the interim period. There's a guy named Robert Kegan who wrote a book called *The Divided Self* that talks about how we go through life being embraced and released and embraced and released. Embraced by an institution. And then the release period is where you get self-defined and you're moving between them all. That's all well and good until you get to a really senior levels. You get heavily defined by your position. You want to know who you are by your business card, by your identity, your name gets often hyphenated with either the institution or the profession you're in so that you could actually atrophy in some ways in high office because that embrace and release dynamic is not there anymore that Robert Kegan talked about. That sense of self can become stagnant if something doesn't shake it up. And organizationally, if you achieve some great prominence or a power or distinction, despite your efforts to be accessible, you can become a little forbidding that messengers with bad tidings, most carriers are afraid to bring you bad news that you could learn from or you're just so busy you don't have time to sit down for reflection.

Just between us, Kavitha, some of us, not you, but some of the folks in the faculty like me that you hire. We put our feet up on the desk and the sun goes up and the sun goes down and we think big thoughts. And yet our customers, our clients, our executive students are used to a world of action that has much more demonstrable metrics to show what they have produced for that day. That doesn't give them a lot of time for reflection. So you don't get the feedback, you don't have the time for reflection. And then there also people figure, oh, who am I of dust and ashes to come to the almighty then and challenge you or bring you disconcerting information.

And even if it isn't feedback from other people, that's the issue or time for reflection is we ourselves can sometimes get trapped by the success syndrome, thinking whatever we've been doing for the last several years or decades is the path for the future. Sometimes you just need different skill sets, different timeframes, different types of relationship and networks. And what's really great about these kinds of programs is they become a milestone event in somebody's life where you take a break of being on that conveyor belt of sorts and you get that time for reflection and you get constructive feedback from peers that the people in the classroom you come back to are not gunning for your job.

A lot of CEOs have told me, including some friends of ours, that they really don't have confidants, that they can make themselves vulnerable in front of that their boards of directors have become a bit more adversarial these days, so they don't want to show vulnerability or it looks like you're confused. There

still is a sense of the hoof beats behind them that somebody wants your job. And also if you selectively confide in this one or that one, are you inadvertently conferring an ointment of some sort that you not intend and also you put them in an awkward position relative to peers if you're overly candid with one or another. And of course industry peers that are your competitors. So where do you go?

So a program like this, you can make yourself vulnerable, get feedback, and it is quite moving that way, and it's the time for reflection, but also things you just never knew you could learn about. That if you really want to be on a frontier of quantum computing. Amazing. The top leaders of Microsoft IBM and Google admit right now it's at Yale. And similarly, life science frontiers, whether or not it's in virology or Alzheimer's or all kinds of critical health challenges in the world, we are on a frontier of that here. Or if it has to do with the discussions about happiness and life satisfaction and things that we have, the world's experts here are a huge array of course on economics of trade. We don't need to get into right now, but we've got the expertise here. So that's something that you also don't have time to really probe the experts on global terrorism or international alliances is that you get a sense to ask the undiscussable question here that you can't on the job.

Kavitha Bindra (15:22)

Yeah, it strikes me that people in these positions are often lonely. That's one observation I made–

Jeff Sonnenfeld (15:28)

That's exactly right.

Kavitha Bindra (15:29)

–watching some of these learners. And of course like you said, we have the world's experts here and they can learn from them, but really what they're taking away from the program is this group of people that become lifelong confidants and coaches and sort of a kitchen cabinet of sorts.

Jeff Sonnenfeld (15:45)

That's so important and good for you for forcing me to make that confession because I've been playing among the resources is not only your amazing professional team that handles the logistics of learning so comfortably and conveniently that it's also the faculty that I have been celebrating both across disciplines in schools and of course within the School of Management. But the secret there that you've let out is that this also becomes a milestone event because of the other people there. We know from years of social network research, but also maybe just good sense, that many times in life's transitions, crises, adversity and things, it's secondary relationships that are the most valuable. There's a Stanford sociologist named Mark Granovetter who's done a lot of research on this, which is called *the Strength of Weak Ties*. And his research has shown that it is executive programs or alumni groups or things where they're not your immediate family.

Intimate family members are great if you have an emotional crisis or something. They provide support, but they don't sit where you sit to clearly understand some of the ambitions and risks that you're trading off and opportunities. But when you're in a room full of peers that aren't gunning for your job, they're not family members, you don't have any conflicts in other life roles with them, that becomes such a tight bond that sometimes we're almost envious of faculty to see the lives that they take on after these programs. It's so intense. We have a reunion coming up in executive education. The attendance in these things is unbelievable. And these are people that are coming from China and Morocco and from Brazil and Argentina and the Middle East and Western Europe and even in Connecticut to come by because

they don't want to miss their, and we think it's for us. They don't want to their peers. And in some of these programs that I've had the privilege of working with you, we actually do monthly updates in between sessions, but it's just such a thirst to learn from each other and to share with each other that they form truly emotional bonds, that these are some of the most valuable ways of finding the mutual support and growth.

Kavitha Bindra (17:46)

So staying with how leaders learn for a minute, you talked about creating space for internal reflection, but also creating the opportunities for external inquiry. How do effective leaders decide where to focus their energies, especially in the external inquiry piece of it? Like you've said, there are so many different topics and areas that have a bearing on how an organization runs or a strategy of leaders should create. So how do you decide what's actually important and where I should spend my time when time is such a limited resource?

Jeff Sonnenfeld (18:22)

I'm so glad that I hit send on something yesterday before you asked that question. When you see it come out in print, you'll think I stole the idea from you, but it was on how leaders learn in terms of what learning programs you select to go to, and it was for *Chief Executive Magazine* that'll be coming out in their next issue. I pointed out that when we began our Chief Executive Leadership Institute, which is the first school for incumbent CEOs and this YGELP program, which is distinctive from other experienced senior leadership programs in a number of dimensions, is it fills an important void, but there are a lot of alternatives out there. So how do you choose?

And when we began the Chief Executive Leadership Institute, there were no other CEO forums. I had written a book on CEO succession, it was taking a look at leaders in late career and things. And with that, I realized there's an opportunity to take a look at CEOs who people who can atrophy in high office for the reasons we talked about. That old Greek adage about how the fish rots from the head and the implications for all the rest of us if people at the top aren't current and lively.

So we started this, and there are now over a thousand programs a year including the World Economic Forum that didn't exist, programs from *Forbes*, *Fortune*, *Business Week*, New York Times, Bill Gates does something for Microsoft. In fact, all the ones I just mentioned and a few others, *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, I helped them all launch.

So then how do you choose? You want to take a look at who's doing the instruction is one thing, and we've talked about that, but also who's in the room with you. And I used to misunderstand that in the beginning as a vanity issue, that they wanted to be on a list where the stature was comparable to where they thought they belonged to be positioned. But that's not necessarily the case. You don't want people that are just in your same industry. And I heard this early on from the CEOs of retail, the founder of Crate and Barrel, and the Home Depot, and Macy's, and things like that.

They were telling us that they don't need to be in a room of fellow retailers. They all know each other from trade groups and things. They'd like to have some variety. And pathetically, I tried an event that was just professional services for years, for example. They were so industry specific and the founder of McKinsey I introduced to the founder of the Boston Consulting Group. One is a nonagenarian, one was an octogenarian. They had studiously avoid each other their whole careers. And they, among other leaders of professional services, as you once were, Deloitte and KPMG and the late Great Anderson and others, they wouldn't admit that they have problems. The problems are all with the client. And I saw, they need to be in a mix because they don't want to show vulnerability with these direct competitors.

So a little bit of variety in there where you have comparable issues. A company that has a pharmaceutical company operating around the world with intellectual property issues might really want to learn from a large tech company in different space that is wrestling with similar issues, but they don't define the problems the same way. So you want to take a look at the mixture of who's in the room with you, the skillset of the faculty and the topics they're going to address.

And then also what's the format of the learning? Are we just going to be in rows and columns sitting passively watching somebody with their back to the group writing algorithms on a blackboard because they're teaching in a format the way they might have perhaps improperly taught undergraduates? So it's certainly not for adults who want to learn by applying their knowledge. Adult learners are different than people who don't have a lot of background and might be more comfortable in a somewhat more passive learning environment. Adult learners want to be a lot more active in the information, probe it and challenge it from their life experience so that where they've been is not considered irrelevant or cheating or a distraction or diminished as old war stories and not in fact embraced as part of the richness that they bring to the classroom.

Kavitha Bindra (21:52)

So you've referenced several distinctive features of YGELP and what you see the ideal executive leadership program embodying, and I'd love to hear a little bit about whether that vision has been realized in YGELP. What sorts of leaders are you hoping to attract into that program and what are some things that our team and working with you on this program should think about as we continue to evolve the program?

Jeff Sonnenfeld (22:20)

I hear from just about every individual in every one of those cohorts, and they still keep in touch with each other and happily stay in touch with us and we'll be seeing them very soon. The programs at this very senior level, which is basically they're a CEO of a major unit of a global enterprise, or a lot of times they're running a very large mid-sized company that they are the CEO or they could be some really vital entrepreneur and truly a CEO that's a startup or they're people that are on a management committee or rising towards a management committee. That was the targeted group when these programs were created.

The very first one was at University of Pittsburgh, and Harvard quickly adapted it to their own approach. Those programs were literally called, this was not in a disparaging term, but they were called the “retread” programs. They were for returning veterans from the Second World War who often had extraordinary careers in finance or other areas, but had been exposed to operational management as officers in the military and decided this is a lot more fun than being a lawyer or an investment banker or whatever they were doing. But they needed some of the basic blocking and tackling of those fields.

So what those programs did, and Columbia and MIT and others soon joined, were 15-, 18-week long programs that eventually got consolidated to 12 weeks, 10 weeks—and now they're a little bit shorter than that—of contiguous time to get a crunch MBA. But that was in the late 1940s and early 1950s, when a lot of the material that would've been in an MBA program was new to mid- and senior-level executives.

It's not now. As we said, there are other providers. There's very good educational media out there, online in conferences and in-house company programs, and much of those basics or many people have at that time there were, I don't know, just several thousand MBAs being trained a year. Now, a lot of people have advanced degrees in the field, let alone company programs and other things. We don't

necessarily need that basic blocking and tackling taught quickly in an ungraded way. That's not executive learning anymore.

What is needed and had to migrate from where those programs were was curriculum that is dealing with a lot more disruption and change and invention in each one of those disciplines, fields, industries and sectors, and also how those sectors collide with each other and in a larger societal context to see what's the impact of regulation and cultures and thing. That wasn't part of those original curricula back in the 1940s and fifties.

But also that time away, the kind of person who could be away for one of those long contiguous programs. That's different. It used to be that *The Wall Street Journal* had a column every spring called "Who's news." You would see people in that program were then either going to be in the corner office or just about. It's not true of those older programs, older, longer programs. The people who could be away for eight, nine weeks at a stretch are perhaps seen as a little bit more dispensable. So they were worried about that long period of time away. And also there were impacts on their families that being away needlessly in a long stretch and other parts of their lives.

So what's great about this program broken up in three waves is that you don't have that long period of time away where you look like you're indispensable and you have continuity on the job and you also have currency in your family life or friendships or intimate relationships. Everything doesn't go on halt. If you have two weeks, two weeks and a week, that's great. But there's something else which is a challenge. They call it the transfer of knowledge, the educational transfer. A lot of times you sit through a class discussion, you think, oh, I hear what she said, and he said, that sounds pretty good, and I see what the instructor is putting up on the board and you're taking notes, you watch some videos, you go through case and some reading.

It all makes sense when you're there, then back on the job, suddenly you try it on for size and it doesn't fit. What's great about this program is interspersed like this is people try things on that. We talked about whether or not it was new approaches to quantum computing or social media or the cloud or something to do in AI that seemed to work there and then it didn't work when they went back home is you get to see what's changed. What did we get wrong? How did people try to approach it differently? Was it issue of execution? Was it issue of design? That's incredibly valuable. But this program also has something which has amazing attendance. It's a voluntary monthly catch-up call.

It gets pretty close to a hundred percent attendance. And here nobody's graded. They don't have to be on, but there's such a thirst to catch up on who's done what. So we break up the contiguous disruption in somebody's life, a chance to try things out, experiment and get feedback along the way, and then come back. A lot of times we revise the curriculum based on the experience of the first third in real time or after they're back in the job, people ask for something new and different or something that's so popular they want to follow with that same professor to go deeper.

Kavitha Bindra (26:52)

So Jeff, in addition to creating this really amazing program here at SOM and the impact that you're having in executive leadership generally, one way you personally continue to have an incredible impact here at Yale and on the international stage is by embracing the importance of outreach and recognition. In any given week, you might be interviewed about economic forecasts, international diplomacy, cutting edge research on new leadership methods... How do you choose when and where your voice will have the most impact and be meaningfully received by the greatest number of people? And I could cite any number of areas and issues where you've elevated voices and provided a moral imperative for the conversation to occur.

Jeff Sonnenfeld (27:40)

Well, thank you. I'm really honored by that. That speaks to a mission I don't ever get to talk about. Where I see a lot of orthodoxy, a lot of conventional thought, a lot of groupthink that forms on a field. I become suspicious as to what voices were stomped out, who wasn't heard. Is there another point of view on that and what if we're wrong? Groupthink is a term that was coined here at Yale back in the sixties and seventies, and it has to do with a sense of righteous confidence that a group or a profession or a management team thinks that this is the only way to do things and that if you challenge it, your dissent is considered a disorder or disloyalty. I like to take a look at dissenting voices that have a different point of view on a topic to see what did we miss here and to be prepared: What if we're wrong? What are the contingencies? And a lot of enterprises, institutions, government agencies, companies go off a cliff because they didn't consider that. They forged a almost coercive determination to stick to a certain approach. So I do like to challenge it.

And there are so many things here where we found economists everywhere in the world, including sadly here, believed when Putin said that he was going to pivot and cut off all gas to Western Europe and retaliation for its support for Ukraine after they were invaded as a peaceful sovereign nation viciously by its neighbor Russia. He was going to pivot and send all of his gas to India and China and all these economists were saying, yeah, that's true. Gas is fungible, he can do that. But it was our team who just said, well, wait a second. Let's take a look at this.

He has old fashioned gas, natural gas that's vapor. It can only be transported through pipelines. In fact, Russia has none. He can't. And three years later he still can't get gas in there. And while he tried to threaten Europe, Europe then lost confidence in him and developed a new technology, actually helped commercialize an old technology that people think is new and that's LNG, liquified natural gas. Germany pivoted an incredible time and in eight months they were building large terminals and conversion plants to convert LNG back to regular gas to send through all of Europe, the Iberian Peninsula.

You're asking kind of what's the leadership angle on this because I'm not an energy economist, I'm not a geologist. What we learned from this is that if you challenge the mindset that leaders can get stuck in their strategic visions, what's a different point of view? And there were others who were raising these issues that we listened to and explored and realized that's the case. And there are so many ways where you can discover that there's another point of view. The societal context of leadership is so important.

My first book back in Harvard was called *Corporate Views of the Public Interest.* Back then, that was discouraged too. Not just teaching across fields, but they said, oh, that's Sunday school stuff. And it wasn't. I was taking a look at social impact. It wasn't scolding, it was just understanding your impact on communities, on governments, on different constituencies. Every business school embraces that now and understands social impact matters.

Around the same time that I was doing my doctoral research, which became a book on that. Yale was School of Management being founded. It was here that was understood, embraced, and that larger context is important. And I think that it's important that we speak again to practice when society asks us.

Many of my colleagues, and this is not Yale or School of Management, just in management in general, define our field so narrowly that we start to learn more and more about less and less. We have narrow areas of expertise and we're afraid to take a larger picture view of things or try to put these pieces together that practicing managers can't look at things in a highly fragmented, disciplinary-specific point of view. How do you put them together and take a look at the larger context? So that's what I try to do. There are a lot of fields where I don't have expertise and beg colleagues to come in. It was far more their field than mine. I just think it's really important that the universities not stay isolated in an ivory tower, but engage in society, especially the professional schools. So thanks for asking that.

Kavitha Bindra (31:42)

Jeff. I have so many questions I want to ask you, and I don't think we'll have time today, so I'm going to invite you to come back later in this season–

Jeff Sonnenfeld (31:50)

Oh, happily!

Kavitha Bindra (31:51)

–if that's okay with you. But I do want to end as we do all of our interviews with a question about asking what books, videos, and other resources should listeners check out if they want to find out more about what you're thinking about. So are there any particular authors or podcasts or anything like that that you've been listening to that have been inspirational to you that you'd recommend to folks?

Jeff Sonnenfeld (32:14)

Well, we have a colleague, several colleagues here, Tim Snyder, who of course as an expert on how countries lose their way and slip from democracy towards autocracy. So I would recommend Tim Snyder's work on tyranny, and his wife, Marci Shore is a great historian. Her work is quite good. Jason Stanley is a fantastic, just want to sell Yale people, but he happens to be a great political philosopher also on authoritarianism. In Life Sciences is worked by Albert Koe and Harlan Krumholz, and we have a colleague, Howie Foreman, that with Harlan, they do a podcast. It is not even remotely parochial to Yale's point of view or Yale Scholars, but it is the most cutting edge, I believe. It's free the most cutting edge issues in life sciences, which is really terrific, and I recommend those as resources.

In terms of myself, I write a column each week for *Fortune,* a column each week for and *TIME*, and believe it or not, this is history every other week for *Newsweek*. I don't know how they let me get away with it. CNBC and CNN and MSNBC I'm on pretty frequently so they can get my point of view there. I'm working on a new book on courage that I won't bother you with at this point right now. But for the people that are contemplating executive succession, I have a book out, it's called *The Hero's Farewell,* which was that Oxford University book and a book on overcoming adversity, which is called *Firing Back*. Those are a couple of resources that come to mind.

There's a book on mentoring, which is brand new called *Who Believed In You?* It's done by Dina Powell and David McCormick. In the interest of full disclosure, David McCormick is a newly elected Republican senator from Pennsylvania who had been the CEO of a large private equity firm, but there's no functional or partisan perspective in this book. It's across all fields in arts and entertainment and technology and politics that has no political slant to it. Dina was a member of the management committee at Goldman Sachs, and she's still in the world of finance now. She's just joined the boards of a couple of great firms. ExxonMobil is one, and she just in the midst of a maelstrom at Meta has just joined that board this week. She was a deputy national security advisor in the White House, but despite them having some political anchoring, believe me, there's nothing political in this book. We did a lot of the research on this and understanding different types of mentors and different moments in people's lives to help support them on that book, but it's the stories they tell heavily drawn on the experience of either immigrant or first generations that as extremely powerful as people who, for any of the people of this podcast who happen to be Americans, is looking at Americans by choice. They're very compelling stories. The founder of Chobani or Ethan Allen or Simpson. Some really just really great stories that I would encourage people that are looking at life transitions to take a look at who believed in you. I think it's Harper Collins and it just being released this week.

Kavitha Bindra (35:13)

Well, speaking of mentorship and mentoring, you've been such a mentor and champion of mine for so many years, and I'm so grateful to have had the chance to talk with you today and look forward to further conversation. I want to hear about courage, so we'll talk about that maybe in the next episode.

Jeff Sonnenfeld (35:30)

Fantastic.

Kavitha Bindra (35:31)

But you really have been such a mentor and guide to so many learners here at SOM and beyond, so thank you for that. Thank you for sharing all of your insight today. I know so many people will be excited to hear this episode and to hear what you have to say. So really appreciate you sharing it with us.

Jeff Sonnenfeld (35:50)

Oh, thanks. Kavitha H. L. Mencken once complained about universities like this a century ago saying, we tend to teach living languages as if they're dead, dead languages, as if they're alive. We don't do that here. So we teach lively topics as they are to lively people.

Kavitha Bindra (36:04)

Great. Well thank you so much, Jeff.

Jeff Sonnenfeld (36:06)

Thank you.