

## Podcast Series: Spotlight Episode 1 - with Chantal Fraser - How to Create an IDEAL Life

Ophelia 0:08

Welcome back to another episode of Real Talk with Ophelia. This podcast is brought to you by BPW Canada, Real Talk Solutions and the Canadian Coalition to Empower women. It's all about talking about authentic leadership and how you can do brave things in your everyday life. So stay tuned for some insightful information.

So welcome Chantal. And so happy to have you here with us on the Real talk, podcast, a leadership podcast. And today we are talking about authentic leadership and embracing the power of the pause. So introduce yourself, tell us a little bit about yourself, tell the audience about yourself and how you got to where you are today.

Chantal 1:04

Thank you, Ophelia. It's real honor to be one of the guests on your podcast. I like to start with my story with my family. I grew up in a military family. Both my parents met while they were serving in the Canadian Armed Forces.

And you could say I followed in the family business, because when I was 18, I went off to military college and then pursued a 28 year career in the Canadian Armed Forces. Retiring as Lieutenant-Colonel, my husband jokes that my entire life has been military.

And even though it's been 10 years, since I've become a veteran, I still say we, when I talk about military, it was just 10 years ago, I decided to become a veteran. And I thought I could become an entrepreneur, and I ever since then, I've been exploring how to make my passion, which is to help people reach their full potential, a reality of what I do through my business.

And over the years, I've honed that down to I teach people, tactics and strategies that they can use to find or create their ideal job. And on the flip side, I teach employers how they can create more inclusive, diverse, equitable, accessible learning workplaces.

Ophelia 2:26

Wow. And you still brought in a little bit of your military background, because here's the word tactics, right? Civilian, I rarely use that word. But I love how aligned your background is, as you said, you grew up with in a military fact of a family.

Pardon me. And it's great. So you know, Chantal I really wanted to have you on the show, because my experience with you is that you are true, authentic leader? When you think of authentic leadership, how would you define it within your life experience and your life scope?

Chantal 3:04

First, I have to share that I've been a student of leadership since I was about 13 years old, and I joined the Air Cadets. And I've actually studied it taking a two credit course when I did my master's degree in leadership. And I continue to study and learn about leadership all the time.

So my definition and how I view leadership has become more focused over time as I've been practicing it for over 40 years. And as I've been continuing to learn about it from others. The best way that I can describe being an authentic leader is leaning into what your strengths are.

And sharing your strengths with your team, with the world around you with everybody you've got influence with and then finding others who have strengths and gifts that complement yours and partnering with them. So that together you can go farther.

Ophelia 4:01

So you mentioned about leaning in, what does that look like to you? Like? What does lean in mean? If you can give an example through your experience? What does that look like for you?

Chantal 4:15

One of the things I decided when I became an entrepreneur was that I wanted to have a bigger influence with the world than I could as a senior officer in the military. So I wanted to help more people learn how to thrive.

Chantal 4:29

And like I did that by leaning into my interests of leadership by leaning into wanting to pay it forward to help people thrive by being an active volunteer in my community, within my professional associations, and even though I don't have formal leadership positions within my two professional associations,.

I'm influencing change as an individual, and that makes me happy and feeling like I'm leaning into my gift for communication and leadership. Have to influence change to make those two organizations better for everybody who belong.

Ophelia 5:05

Okay? Sounds really great. And it's really important that we lean in, in that concept is about that sometimes, we like to stand on the peripheral of things and expect other people to do it. And a big part of authentic leadership is, you know, the word of authenticity.

Ophelia 5:24

And, you know, it has become kind of a buzzword, where people just talk about being authentic. I would like to ask you this question. How do you know when you're not being authentic? When you are leaning in to something or when something or what you are dealing with a situation and you are not being authentic? How do you know that?

Chantal 5:53

Well, I have to give two parts to that answer. So the first part is that when I was growing up, I was taught, tell the truth, as much as possible all the time, unless you're going to hurt somebody with it. So that you don't have to remember what you said, because you're always living your truth.

Right?

Ophelia 6:14

Right.

Chantal 6:14

Right. Um, and then on the flip side of that was understanding what my parents really meant when they said I was sharing too much truth. That's another story. So, the second part of that is, there have been times where I haven't been as authentically me and as the authentic leader that I am. And sometimes it's, you know, it feels safer to not show all of who you are. And, and I'd like to share a story about that, please.

When I was a relatively new Lieutenant Colonel, I was in my second last job in the military, I had the opportunity to occasionally brief the other senior officers at eight wing Trenton telling them about what was going on in human resources and what things that they might have to do in their organizations to support what we were doing to support them. And in order to do that, I would walk across the tarmac and go to the to the operation center, and I'd stand there and I'd be very, you know, to the point, boom, boom, boom, here's what you need to know.

And it was effective. I got my message across, I was walking back across the tarmac one day with one of my colleagues who regularly briefed this group, and she said, Chantal, I have a question that I feel I have to ask you.

And I said, What's that and she said. Often when you present to a room of men, senior officers, all of them were men, except for the two of us.

Why are you so almost robotic in sharing your information, and so much to the point? She said, I've seen you with your peers, and I've seen you with your team, you're engaging your dynamic, you're enthusiastic.

Why are you two different people? So I was blessed to have a friend who called me out on not being my authentic self as a leader.

Ophelia 8:10

Wow. And I think that goes back to, you know, I have looked, and I think, the more we know about authenticity, and the more we know about ourselves, because authentic leadership starts with understanding who we are as an individual in the world outside of leading, like, what are our values?

What are our beliefs, like you were talking about how within your family it was about tell the truth, right, and then you learned, okay, there are times when you're telling a little bit too much Chantal. And I think that

it's so important that sometimes we and especially as women, there's a recent study that I just read, like a day or so ago, which talked about that, more and more women are getting into leadership roles, yay for women. However, more and more of their teams are not trusting them as leaders.

Right? There's this the sense that people are not trusting and feel that women can lead. And I think that sometimes, and this is just, you know, according to the world of Ophelia. And it goes back to your story, that sometimes we're told that to be a leader we need to behave this way like how you were in a man's world. So you got to be that way. And great for your friend for calling it out.

So when you were called out, did you change how you did your next presentation? What did that look like?

Chantal 9:44

It had an impact on all my presentations moving forward.

Ophelia 9:48

Yay!

Chantal 9:49

And within the military to the point where and I have to back up a little bit. Part of that protective coloration that I put on to give those very rare Logic type talks was probably a result of my previous boss in my previous job having been a, you know, a world class bully. And it was not safe to be my full authentic self in front of him.

So I was always, you know, just to the point, take everything he says at face value, don't respond to the insinuations he might be making as he's making comments about human resources, people not being leaders and things like that.

And so I was just very to the point and pragmatic with him, and it worked, we got along, he even told me, he'd be happy to work with me again.

As I thought inside, I hope I never have to work with you again. And over the next few years, in my last job in the military, I had the opportunity to brief at much higher levels than I was when my friend when she called me out.

And to the point where I became known as being the one who is willing to name the elephant in the room, and to share that elephant with everybody, no matter what their rank.

And one of the ultimate stories then is being in a room with that senior officer who used to be my boss, who was now a general officer, very senior within the logistics branch.

And I was talking about our training and what we were doing with our training and stuff, and I was really passionate about what I would say.

And his nickname for me, what I learned later was Lilith, you know, the character on the show Fraser and cheers, right.

That's how he saw me. So I was in this room, it was one of the last briefings I gave when I was in the military. And I wanted to make my point.

And I took my hand and I slammed it down on the table, they all jumped in their seats.

And I made my point. And I thought, Now, I'm going to tell you what I think.

Ophelia 11:55  
Yay. Good for you.

And it's so important to and you know, especially for women.

And I want to just take a step back, because I want to preface this statement.

We know and can do better when we know we can feel safe to do better.

So if you're listening to this podcast, and you're thinking, Oh, I really need to speak up, ask yourself a couple of questions first, is it psychologically, mentally, physically or even financially safe for you to do this?

And if the answer's no, that's okay. Right? Because you have to consider potential ramifications but if it is safe, and you can see how to do better, please do.

So I'm so glad that you spoke up at that moment, I wanted to.

So you shared a little bit about what it's like, when you're not being authentic as a leader.

But How does that make you feel within?

When we're faced with situations where our values are in conflict? Like our beliefs and values? How do you move away from that situation? You know, how do you find that "pause" to make that decision? How did that work for you?

Chantal 13:18  
There are all kinds of examples how that worked with me. But I have one in particular that I'd like to share.

Ophelia 13:25  
Okay.

Chantal 13:27  
When I was young, and I had decided I was going to start my career in the military. I was going to, you know, do everything that was expected of

me. I was going to join the military, I was going to be an officer, I was eventually going to marry somebody and have kids. That was my plan, right?

Because when I grew up, girls got married and had babies. Now, it was also very much encouraged by my family that we were financially independent and had our own careers.

So to me, it was all there together. There was no question that I couldn't have it all. I just assumed I could.

Ophelia 14:01  
Right.

Chantal 14:01  
so I did

Right.

I loved I have to be totally frank with you. I loved 98 to 99% of my entire military career, I had a blast. That being said. When I did eventually find somebody I wanted to get married to and have children with, I kept pursuing my goals that I had as a young woman before I met him.

It came to a turning point when I realized I was no longer living my dream that my dreams had changed when I had a car accident.

I flipped the car and totaled it on a rainy day. As the car was flipping over, all I could think to myself was who is going to raise my kids?.

Ophelia 14:48  
Wow.

Chantal 14:51  
And in thinking that, you know, and I love my husband, he's a great guy, you know, he does his dad job.

It's all good. But you know if was about who was going to help them.

Ophelia 15:01  
Right.

Chantal 15:02  
And I thought the military's offered me some wonderful things, I've had a great career. But it's more important for me to be present in their lives than it is for me to stay in the military and continue to get promoted.

Ophelia (15:18)  
Right.

Chantal 15:20

So, so like, I decided to become an entrepreneur. But that's, another story.

Ophelia 15:26

You know, I want to pause and honor that story.

Because it's, it's going to resonate, it has resonated with you, I can feel your emotion.

And people will feel this, because so many women are faced with these decisions today. And how I am interpreting it. The spiritual side of me, sees that flipping of the car in a way as it is happening, and you're worried.

And you know, when we go through traumatic moments, it seems so slow as the trauma is happening, because we have slowed down. A sort of pause. Right, and in these moments in life the best things that we can do is learning how to unplug.

And sadly, sometimes it takes traumatic events or rare diseases or something like that to slow us down.

It is interesting that you found that our goals and visions and dreams can change over time. And I as you were telling that story, it touched my heart.

Although, I haven't been in the military, but it was that same thing. You can, you know, go to school, get an education, these are my goals.

And when my mom died, my business was flourishing. And I was faced with this idea that now I have to raise a 12 year old sister.

And it was in direct conflict with my goals. But then something somebody says clicks, thank God for these good friends.

Right, Chantal?

Chantal 16:54

Yes.

Ophelia 16:56

They asked me that same questions you raised about my values and goals. So I want to applaud you in the sense you embrace that "power of the pause", and you readjusted your alignment, you were still Chantal and you found a new pathway for you.

As we're coming down to the last few minutes, I wanted to ask you to share some insights from your experience.

And, imagine there's a woman listening out there in our listening audience that's going through her day and in her heart is thinking I'm not living my authentic life?

How would you offer her some tips and tools on how to be more authentic in her workplace and maybe her community? How would you do that? And maybe you can talk a little bit using your ideal program lens?

How would you help her give her some tips?

Chantal 17:52

First, I have to literally answer the first question that you asked, and then I can put the ideal lens on it just the way my brain works.

Opheila (18:00)

No problem.

Yeah, so my first advice to her, to you and those who are listening, is to take the time to reflect on what you want to move to what your authentic life would be, to consider what your gifts are, and where you can serve people with those gifts and still earn a living wage and get the support that you need.

Right. So. So you don't have to just say, Okay, I'm not living my authentic life, I'm throwing everything out. And I'm just starting a new, it's okay to stay within the situation where you are until it's safe to leave either financially, emotionally, for whatever reason.

You don't have to do it all at once you can take your time, what I knew walking away from that car was that I was getting ready to leave the military. The accident happened in October, I left the military the next August, I didn't just put in my 30 days notice and say that I'm done.

I planned what I wanted to do next.

Ophelia 19:05

Right.

Chantal 19:06

So now to put that in the ideal perspective and what I think of when I think of an ideal workplace.

I like to help employers understand how to make more inclusive, diverse, equitable, accessible learning workplaces. Because when we recognize everybody's gifts, when we give everybody the support they need so they can lean into their gifts, to seek out and work with others with complementary gifts who can support them by leaning into their own gifts. When we all work together like that we all benefit.

And while we're all earning at least a living wage, because that's important, too. Then everybody, thrives. You can get so much more done when everybody on your team is leaning into each other's gifts, this means that everyone is included and feels good that is being inclusive.

They're part of the team that everybody feels like they belong. And diverse means. You know, there's diversity according to the employment Equity Act of Canada. But there's also diversity in people having



different ways of thinking, people's brains work differently from other people's. We all have different abilities and different areas where we're not great. And so that's, all a part of what diversity is to as well, right.

Equitable means that everybody, and this is something I was taught from the time I was, as young as I can remember, was - everybody has equal value, the person who washes your floors is as important as the big boss in any organization.

Right?

Ophelia 20:41  
Right. Correct.

Chantal 20:42  
And then accessibility has to be because some of us think differently, because some of us have disabilities. You know, some workplaces just aren't accessible the way they're set up now. And when we become accessible, then it means that everybody can share their gifts.

And because learning is a lifelong passion, and we can always learn how to do things better than learning has to be part of it.

Ophelia 21:08  
Well, thank you for that.

So here comes a fun, some fun questions as we come down to a close.

And audiences you're listening. Right now I want to thank you for listening. And thank you for staying with us all the way through to this point, but don't go away.

Chantal is going to tell us a little bit more about herself.

Chantal, you know, my audience likes to know a little bit more about the people that they're talking with, a little bit more sassy information, little bit more insights, because, you know, in my podcast I always tell them I'm a sassy, Trinidadian.

So nothing too intimate. You know, this is not an R rated podcast.

So we're just going to ask you today, what's your favorite color? And what does that say about you?

Chantal 22:04  
Purple happens to be my favorite color.

And I'm laughing with you because we're both wearing purple as we do this podcast.

Ophelia 22:11  
Yes, ma'am. A little bit of the interview will definitely have ghosts.

Chantal 22:18

Yes.

And when I was a kid growing up, blue, dark blues were my favorite colors. Because the purples that were around when I was a kid were all pastels and light.

And I found them a bit too frilly, to be honest. And when I became an adult, and I was looking for my first dress, that wasn't a military dress, I was out shopping with one of my good friends, Amy.

And she said, Why don't you try this on? And I said, Well, it's got purple. And she said, You'd look great and purple. And since then purple has been one of my favorite colors.

Ophelia 22:53

Right?

You know, purple has a touch of blue in it, because it's red and blue makes purple. So there you go. That's simply amazing.

So, as we come down to the last question, I want to ask you, do you have a mantra or quote that you know, gets you through some inspirational times or when times are not so inspiring?

What's your fallback or go to phrase that you utilize?

Chantal 23:21

It's one that my mother taught me.

And it's ask for what you want.

Ophelia 23:26

Okay.

Chantal 23:27

and there's a story about behind that, but I won't get into that there right now.

But the thing is, if you ask for what you want, worst case scenario, somebody says no.

Best case scenario, you get what you want.

The caveat being make sure you're asking for what you want, and not for what other people want for you.

Ophelia 23:47

I need you to repeat that again. That's like gold. So ask for what you want.

Chantal 23:55

Yes, ask for what you want. Making sure that you're asking for what you want, and not for what other people want for you.

Ophelia 24:04

Oh, Chantal that, you know, this podcast. chat today has been amazing.

But that jewel, that you said there is key to being and living your authentic leadership life.

So how do people connect with you? What's the best way for them to reach out to you?

Chantal 24:26

The best way that's going to be effective unless LinkedIn goes down is to find me on LinkedIn and connect, you'll find that it says Chantal prefers to be followed.

That's because I'm in creator mode, please follow and then send me a connection request.

You can also visit my website if you'd like.

My LinkedIn profile is Chantal Fraser and you'll see how to spell that in the podcast description.

And my website is [empoweredpath.ca](http://empoweredpath.ca).

So if you know you been empowered to do what you want to join me on the [empoweredpath.ca](http://empoweredpath.ca) is my website.

Ophelia 25:15

Well thank you so much for sharing your information and for continuing to inspire those around you to be an authentic leader.

And we will share Chantal's contact information in the comments below in our podcasts.

And audience, thank you for listening.

And always remember you are an authentic leader.

No matter what you do, you're leading authentically whether you are a politician or you are that beautiful cashier at your local grocery store.

We're all leaders and I inspire you to do brave things, that does not mean you're jumping off a cliff but it's seeing a need and trying to fill it.

So once again, this podcast is brought to you by Real Talk solutions. BPW Canada and the Canadian Coalition to Empower Women.

I hope your day is going really great.

And if it's not, I hope it gets better.

Talk to you soon.

Transcribed by <https://otter.ai>