



- Dr. Irena: Hello, here we are with our next speaker, Joan McLeod, who is the CEO of [conflictnavigator.com](http://conflictnavigator.com). She teaches leaders in the home, at work, and around the world a first of its kind, powerful and easy system, designed to address what's missing, if and when they need to, hate to, or find it super hard to deal with difficult people. The best thing? What she teaches is easy to learn and helps anyone who's always or sometimes dealing with complaints, confrontations, disruptions or differences. It works with relationships, political drama and more. Now you might ask yourself, how can that be easy? But with more than 25 years of professional practice, leadership and research, Joan created "5 easy steps for Conflict First Aid". They are as straight forward and universally applicable as what you already know as physical or mental health first aid support. These steps clear up how we always wish we could better step back, settle emotions, and address underlying factors. "Conflict First Aid" stops anyone from making conflicts harder than they already are or need to be.
- Dr. Irena: Thank you so much, Joan, for being here with us and giving us your insight and expert advice on how to avoid or deal with conflict.
- Joan McLeod: It's an absolute pleasure and you know, there's so many of us, our colleagues, our clients and people around us who hate dealing with conflict and in many cases, of course, as someone who's got conflict in my title and in my business name, I've well learned how averse people are to conflict. And so I'm very happy to be here, to share something that works and is really simple.
- Dr. Irena: That sounds wonderful. I wonder how did you come to be a conflict navigator? What does that actually mean?
- Joan McLeod: I started my career in the early eighties actually as one of the first women on Coast Guard platforms. So I literally am a bridge watch keeping navigator by trade. Now of course learning how to avoid hazards and to get into clean, clear passageways was a benefit. Sort of seeing systems and ways of avoiding the problems within them was part of it. But of course, being one of the first women made it incredibly important that I learn and learn fast what works, not only in my day to day life, but when things went wrong. What were the things that could really impact and make change for me without burning bridges and without putting other people on a defensive where they fought the needed change that I needed to make? So it really is a perfect way of describing what we best do when we're dealing with any complexity; a disruption or a difference that we need to make is that we're often navigating those changes. It's not a simple one time thing. So that's what we mean by conflict navigation and conflict navigators. Um, when we teach people how to do it.
- Dr. Irena: Yeah, I couldn't agree more. I'm thinking many of the clients and the audience here now would agree that communication is one of the hardest things to get. And communicating so you don't get into a conflict because you don't have to



fight for yourself or get into a disagreement is one of the toughest things (to learn). And now you're saying that you were the only woman, I'm guessing in a very male dominated field... That must have made it even harder.

Joan McLeod: Yeah. That environment is still extremely difficult for women. There's still only 2%. It's 30 years, 35 years later. And there are still only 2% of the people who work offshore who are women today even.

Dr. Irena: Would you say this is because it's hard for women to do that? Is it because everybody figures that's a male macho type of job? Do you have to be a macho woman for that or do you have, can you be feminine still?

Joan McLeod: There is no question if you take one look, it doesn't take a whole lot of looks at me to recognize that I do not fit that category at all. I'm an extremely feminine kind of a girl. And really I think the biggest challenge for women is not so much the needed connection because you have an incredible connection with the people that you're working with. And these days you can work some tremendously flexible schedules, but there are some really pivotal changes that have yet to be made in the offshore environment and we're working to make those things happen. Um, it's one of the key areas of my own personal interest in making change. So I'm very happy always to mention it and to advocate for changes there because they have to be, um, things as significant as maternity leave as an example. A lot of times you're going to get women who are starting, who are very young. It's not those of us who have been around a little bit. There's a wink there for you (laughs). You know, who have some experience. We are often sending very young women out and of course they want to have families. So practically speaking, if you want to increase diversity out there, there are some changes that you need to make.

Dr. Irena: is that your main field right now? Or do you have your private practice where you help people cope with any kind of conflict? When you say business leaders around the world, what does that mean?

Joan McLeod: Yeah. Um, so two years ago, I took a very commonly taken program, these days called mental health first aid, and working with leaders in institutions in communities of any sort, our schools, or sports teams. There's so many times when we're dealing with people who are undergoing some kind of stressor and it can be one time or chronic concerns. Mental health first aid is becoming a virally taken program for many leaders, in all of the circles that I'm in, operating around the globe. And what I realized was that there was a missing piece. So we now have, you know, sort of standard first aid for our physiological bodies. If I was to ask you how far away from you, right now, is something that would help, that you would be absolutely clear with health and physical first aid, you would know! It would probably be your smartphone because you could look up something that would challenge you, or a Band-Aid or a first aid kit, which we carry in our car. Or virtually every house has one. With mental health first aid: of



course learning what to do when you come across somebody who's in distress is the first things to do.

Joan McLeod: But there was a massive missing piece and that was conflict first aid. So conflict first aid works for the kind of people like me who are in new situations and breaking new ground. But we need conflict first aid in every single walk of our lives, our families, any team that we're ever on. And many times we expect that leaders of teams and communities are well equipped with conflict first aid. And the fact of the matter is in our research and when we've done market research about conflict first aid, what we found is that indeed people do *not* have that basic training. So that's really what my thrust of our work these days is, offering complex first aid and we're already around the globe with that. We are in Australia and South Africa and across the nation in providing conflict first aid to leaders from all domains of life.

Dr. Irena: That sounds amazing. And you're making a very fair point here because I am a member of the board of health here in town and definitely nobody would know what to do if there was a conflict or somebody in mental health distress. Yes, physical health. Absolutely. And we have contingency plans and all, but conflict resolution I think is so needed.

Dr. Irena: Now we know that we're here now in the relationship masterclass series and I'm talking maybe smaller relationships, not between communities, but could that even work? You mentioned in families too, right? So you said you share a key thing about how to get to conflict first aid and how to do that, right? Or not to get it wrong. So I really can't wait to hear this. What is that key you want this audience to know?

Joan McLeod: So one of the things that we teach is a five step system for conflict first aid, and what I'd like to share is the first one, the first step of that system, which is powerful enough that um... I can actually very quickly share the rest of the steps at the end of the conversation today, Irena, and people will very likely (if they have other competencies in the conflict area) be able to take it further, but I'll certainly be happy to, um, give people a way of learning more. But the first step is, um... So let me actually just say that the, uh...it's easy to remember because it's the SAFE system. So there's only four letters, but there's actually two S's at the beginning. First step is your step back and your stance, so it's actually two S first steps. So five parts. The first two steps are Step back and STANCE and stance is an acronym. So if you have a pen and paper, um, you could just write STANCE. The um, spelling is S, T, A, N, C, E.

Dr. Irena: yeah. Fantastic. I invite the audience to do that. Just write it down for yourself because that's really going to help you. That's going to be an invaluable toolkit to have, right, because this is not available anywhere else. So please just write it down. Go down the line. S-T-A-N-C-E.



- Joan McLeod: That's exactly right. Okay. So it's a very powerful, um, way of recognizing that anytime you come across someone who is frustrated, distressed or disturbed, has been disrupted because someone else has crossed their path. Now, of course, there's many ways that we can define what a conflict is. Um, and what we find in conflict first aid is that it's any concern, any complaint or any conflict. Because of course, sometimes people will identify, 'I have a conflict' with, you know, my colleague or my spouse, with 'we don't know what's going on with us. We just don't seem to be connecting anymore'. We can't decide what to do about our holiday that's coming up. We're struggling about what to do about a child that we are dealing with or a parent that we're dealing with. Many of our relationships are dealing in "sandwich situations" where you're pulled in a bunch of different directions.
- Joan McLeod: So the um, uh, application of this oftentimes makes so much sense because people don't really need to get into the middle of something to solve it. When we get into the middle of something, we're confronted by all of the stress of it. What we really need to do is slightly shift our stance so that we aren't actually facing the person directly. So right now you and I happen to be on video and we are facing each other. Right? And of course that's what conflict looks like, where we are confronting each other or where my opinion needs to be pushed at you. You need to be sold that you are wrong, and I am right.
- Dr. Irena: Very well said. And so true. Everybody wants to be right.
- Joan McLeod: Right! So you know, there's this face off kind of confrontational approach that we have a tendency to get into as soon as we get stressed by something, we get into that fight flight, freeze kind of mechanism that we share with all animals in the wild kingdom.
- Joan McLeod: But our prefrontal cortex that sets us apart from them is the thing that can just signal to us that something has crossed our path or someone is facing off with us, or we need to face something, or we want to actually be with someone so that we can solve something. And what we need to do is make this simple shift in our stance so that we aren't doing the face off. It's literally sometimes just a psychological shift to think, okay, hang on, hang on here. How do I actually get into my own lane so I can understand this better? And I can see that they are in their own lane and that we are, you know, moving forward together or we can move in different directions depending on how this goes, but we don't have to face off in the same way.
- Joan McLeod: So it's kind of, we can face into the future together. You can be in your own lane regardless of how stuck the other person is, regardless of how defensive they are, and regardless of if they want to move on faster than you want to move on. If you're not ready to, in some cases, once you actually take up this stance method, then you can actually find it much easier to step back. So as soon as there is a concern, a conflict or confrontation or complaint, then you do this



step back and the stance method goes like this: So the first principle of it is this, you think about it as though you are side by side with that person.

Dr. Irena: So the first S is side by side.

Joan McLeod: Side by side. Have you ever noticed how profoundly deep a conversation can be when you're sitting beside even a stranger on a bus?

Dr. Irena: Oh absolutely. And it's not a confrontational energy if you're side by side.

Joan McLeod: I think that's exactly right. So you can imagine that you can take that stance approach or step back. And not even have to sort of move back from someone but just move side by side with them in a way that suddenly that dynamic already starts to set you apart a little bit. The same thing happens of course with our spouses or children in our relationships. When we go on a drive with them, sometimes you can table it and say, you know, I've been spending some time thinking and you can literally toss it back over your shoulder. When you're side by side with someone you can say, "you know what's happened in the past". (motions throwing something behind her)

Dr. Irena: Oh that is beautiful. What a great splendid idea because especially as women we actually can multitask, drive and talk at the same time and then process. Don't let your husband do that!

Joan McLeod: (Laughs) That's right. So you can say: something happened yesterday and I, you know, or we've been struggling with something over the last number of years and I don't know where you are with it today, but I wonder if we can have a chat about it. It's that side by side shift that becomes a beautiful part of what conflict first aid is eased by.

Dr. Irena: ...because side by side is not confrontational anymore. Did I get that right?

Joan McLeod: That's exactly right.

Dr. Irena: Fantastic. So what is the next one? T.

Joan McLeod: So the T stands for tentative, essentially. I've modeled that already by saying, "there's been some things that have been happening and I wonder if..."

Dr. Irena: okay. So you're not forcing somebody to confront you or you know, talk about something.

Joan McLeod: That's exactly right. Yes. Oftentimes the conflict first aid method takes only a few minutes. So you know, this isn't necessarily an hours-long conversation. Oftentimes it's just cracking open a conversation and it's profoundly beautiful because once something gets cracked open, it's like you've taken the first step



of a very long journey to come, but you don't worry about that in the moment. It's a matter of getting comfortable where you are and then the relationship trust starts to build; so that tentativeness without pushing something on or trying to pull them towards you, now that you're not in that confrontational stance, I'm already...you can start to use this tentative approach to just see what small next step can be taken. So that's the T= tentative.

Dr. Irena: Fantastic. I wrote this down. Let's see A, I can't wait.

Joan McLeod: They're all that powerful! I love that you're loving this. The third, um, principle is acknowledging. So rather than assessing. So there's a distinction of course between assessment, you know, that sense that you've judged something is bad is a very different thing than suggesting: to me it seems like it has *possibly* been a bad thing. So you can hear; I'm in combining there the tentative approach to it and the idea that you want to be cautious about how to acknowledge and not assess it as things have been and therefore I...That's a very different thing than we've been taught with "I" language; acknowledging and saying, you know, here's where I'm at, you know, for me it's been quite...bad. And again, you know, the shrug of the shoulders can be a very powerful thing as an invitation for somebody else to actually help you take another next step of understanding or clarifying. So acknowledging where you are, acknowledging where the situation is, but working not to assess it, is the principle.

Dr. Irena: Oh, that is new. That is really novel. I've never heard of it, you know, being worded that way. But it makes so much sense. And you mentioning the shrugging of the shoulders, which kind of invites a question, acknowledgement of the situation, what do you think about it type of thing, right?

Joan McLeod: Yes, exactly right, which, which segues very beautifully into the next principle, which is the N of stance. It stands for: now and always green – green, and that takes a little explanation, Irena.

Dr. Irena: Oh yes, please. Now and always green – green.

Joan McLeod: The thing is, if someone, you know, if you trigger something by what you say, even though you're tentative, even though the stance has shifted and now you're not in that defensiveness, push, pull dynamic; the green—green means that it's a goal for both people in your lane. Now that you're side by side, you can sort of perceive that there's a lane, something else might cross your path, and now it's not a green—green anymore. Something stops the conversation or stops the idea that maybe you need to acknowledge again and say, Whoa, Whoa, Whoa, did I just say something to you? And it's not okay. It just makes you more aware of the idea that sometimes you need to back up and it's again something to check into that it's still a goal for you as a principal and also goes for anyone else who's part of the conversation.



- Joan McLeod: Conflict first aid works not only for a one on one relationship, but even when there are others involved in a group so to speak. Um, the green, green, green, green, green, there was more than just the two of you, but the N stands for "now and always green—green". So you have that sense that it needs to be okay for you too, that you're not there just taking care of the other person. So often we, as helper bees and teachers and um, people who are interested in learning, tend to be the ones in life who often sacrifice our own comfort for others. So this now and always green—green is a very good reminder to you not to always be caretaking either; in that it's okay for you to say, "well hang on, hang on, there's something there for me. And I wonder if we can just hang, you know, just stop for just a sec so I can acknowledge it".
- Dr. Irena: So did I, if I understood you correctly, the green-green kind of refers to you being in your lane and have the green light instead of a stop light or you not putting a stop light on somebody else's lane. So both can go forward if they want to or need to?
- Joan McLeod: Yes.
- Dr. Irena: Are allowed to?
- Joan McLeod: Yes.
- Dr. Irena: Okay, perfect.
- Joan McLeod: Yes. Yeah, it's um, one of the lovely things about how we're teaching that conflict first aid is that we use all of the learning principles. There's a visual element. Um, you know, there's this step by step kind of thing if you'll learn by rote experience of it as well. So the green—green and the stop and go as a stop light would work is exactly how it's intended. Yes.
- Dr. Irena: I'm glad I got it.
- Joan McLeod: You did.
- Dr. Irena: So let's continue to the C; what is that?
- Joan McLeod: Hmm. So this C is Careful accountability in your lane. Careful Accountability in your lane. So what this acknowledges is that there are accountabilities in any relationship, the foundations for a marriage as example. The kind of previous experiences that you've had with a great friend. And if there's been a breakdown, you know, that you've given each other's space. Well, maybe the accountability now is to give some space. So, you know, even though you have this wonderful methodology and this lovely set of principles that should say that there is a go forward there, the accountability that you have is to be conscious, being able to work with what are the rules surrounding you. There may be





family rules. Um, there may be the idea that you shouldn't speak about people without people. Um, there are many lovely, different sorts of commitments and promises that we make in relationships. Sometimes of course they're informal and sometimes of course they are formal. So, you know, it's one of the principles of this approach. And to stepping back that, you know, everybody is as accountable as anyone else. As a principle of this stance that you don't end up being able to breach that earlier commitment as you go forward.

- Dr. Irena: So does it kind of mean that you are responsible for your own crap? Pardon my French.
- Joan McLeod: That's it! (Laughs)
- Dr. Irena: And somebody else is accountable for theirs and expects that to happen too. So no blame game.
- Joan McLeod: No, exactly right. You actually describe it very well. Maybe I'll use that; so: "careful for your own crap", I like that very much.
- Dr. Irena: I actually worded it a little worse, a little harsher even in my stuff. It starts with s and ends with a t...
- Joan McLeod: (laughs) There we go.
- Dr. Irena: Okay. So we're now at the E of the stance.
- Joan McLeod: Well, the last are the principles and I hope you're hearing here, of course, that these principles are something just to keep trying on. It's a practice; conflict first aid is a practice. We've been giving conflict first aid all the time. We just aren't skilled. We run into berating all the time. We just aren't skilled, so this is the first, yeah, this is just the first step and you know, these are the principles to doing it well. It's like the principles of the *mindset* for doing a conflict first aid.
- Joan McLeod: So, um, the last principle it is the E and it is "End as appropriately as possible".
- Dr. Irena: That is ending the conflict as appropriately as possible? Ending a discussion?
- Joan McLeod: Yes. Ending the opportunity to be in a conflict first aid situation; end that as appropriately as possible. So you sorta hit it that it certainly is the first step to addressing a conflict overall. But what ends up happening is once you've learned conflict first aid is that you're always dealing with the situation and the dynamic wherever a chance. Because remember, this is a conflict navigation process. So wherever the situation lands, is where it starts and where it ends the next time you actually end up having a discussion in the relationship. So if it starts with side by side and you end up having a lovely conversation where you're tentative





and acknowledging it's always green, green, the accountabilities are cared for, and what you want to do is enjoy or end it in a way that is as appropriate as possible.

Joan McLeod: Now that's not necessarily always enjoyable, but if it's appropriate, then it can be something that can be enjoyed. In some cases you need to say, "listen, I think we need some time. You know, let's take an hour and let's come back to it". It means making sure that whatever the, wherever the discussion goes that you have an end point to it, so it doesn't carry on forever. You don't carry the burden of it forever. You just sort of clean it up and you sorta put a bow on it at the end of it, like a gift to each other to say, okay, well this was helpful. Um, and maybe what we do next is...so in the remaining steps of conflict first aid, there are a follow-up steps to this step back and take on this appropriate stance. So you can hear that as we've described STANCE that the step back and staying out of the middle is already almost entirely covered.

Dr. Irena: Right. And this is so important. Yet it sounds simple and it makes a lot of sense, but it's probably far from easy. Cause I know I made this mistake too, you know, say not putting an end to something because I felt that conflict wasn't resolved and I pestered my husband into the wee hours of the morning while he wanted to sleep or fell asleep and I held it against him and stuff. Thankfully that's all behind us. But what would you say, what is the easiest way? What is the hardest thing about trying this as a First Aid practice or conflict resolution?

Joan McLeod: Well, let me just maybe quickly go over the remaining steps. So we've covered the step, the stance, which is really the magic to stepping back. So, if you can picture this, even if you can't see me doing this, you know, that idea that you're side by side (shows open palms next to each other), really allows you to sort of stay out of the middle anyway, because rather than imposing and pushing on or pulling somebody into your lane, what you can do is kind of respect and not even kind of... It is far easier to respect that there are options in the middle. There may be complimentary things. I can do this in my lane and you can do this in your lane. So it can be, oh, okay, well if you can sleep, um, I might just stew for another hour, but at least we're both clear on what the next step is for each of us. And as long as that's good, we're good. Um, that sort of sense that you can sort of respect what's gonna help each other. Um, in a way that you step back and you stay out of the middle of each other's business or let's say when you are working with the whole of the family. Um, you know, not being the one who's gonna fix it, carry the burden for everybody else.

Joan McLeod: So the SAFE acronym then is, um, take on your stance, step back, the A stands for Ask and invite. So even though we've sort of covered this even already in "STANCE", that idea that you are acknowledging that you are ensuring that you're in the green and there's a green light for them as well.



- Joan McLeod: The next step actually, the safe place to go that again keeps you out of the middle, is that after you've stepped back, that you are always checking in and asking. So it can be ensuring that you are absolutely clear that you're solving the same problem. "I would like to talk about what happened yesterday. Are you okay to spend some time talking about it"? That invitation is everything, Irena.
- Dr. Irena: What if somebody says no, what do you do then?
- Joan McLeod: So then... That's where you step back and um, kind of give your head a shake and if there was ideally someone else who could give you conflict first aid...that would be lovely because you now have a new blip. So let me actually introduce you to that term.
- Dr. Irena: Okay.
- Joan McLeod: This is one of the most powerful concepts in conflict first aid.
- Joan McLeod: So if the first blip was what happened yesterday, you have a second blip now if that person doesn't want to speak to you.
- Dr. Irena: Yes, exactly.
- Joan McLeod: So you have a conflict because of the first blip, but now there's a second blip as well. And you could have a third blip because now there's a consequence to that. It could be that you've had 16 different attempts at trying to fix it and each one of those is a blip. And now somebody is tired of trying, which makes the tiredness another blip.
- Dr. Irena: So what exactly do you mean by blip? Or is this another acronym?
- Joan McLeod: It is not another acronym. What it's simply saying, is that in a situation where you've had a conflict, an incident, a disruption, an irritation, a chronic problem, that it could be that it's a one shot, very, very simple thing.
- Joan McLeod: For example; somebody has breached what has been the family rule that mugs, like a drinking coffee mug, always goes on the right hand side of the sink. Well, yesterday they've put the coffee mug *into* the sink and you come across it and now you're thinking, oh, that makes me crazy. So you go to them and you say, I have a conflict with you. I would very much appreciate it if next time you would remember the rule to put the coffee mug on the right hand side of the sink. So that's a simple blip. Yes. You understand?
- Dr. Irena: Yes. So I'm guessing the blips are like, yeah, we'll think about smooth sailing between two people or a group or whatever and then something comes up. That's a bump. Could that be another word maybe for the blip?



- Joan McLeod: Exactly. Right. But the reason why it's magic to start to recognize that many conflicts aren't simple, is that you have the blip of the Mug, and then the blip that there's been a pattern of breaching things, a blip that they haven't heard that you actually asked them 16 times before, a blip of each one of the 16 times.
- Joan McLeod: So now you're up to 19 different blips.
- Dr. Irena: Oh Wow. Yes, I can see that this is like a domino effect.
- Joan McLeod: It's really powerful because now of course you're not dealing with a single blip. You're dealing with a pattern of blips and when you can table them for someone, or invite them to the table, invite them and ask; that this is the second part of the conflict first aid method. If you learn to invite them to now, um, speak to address, resolve, better understand this pattern, you're really dealing with now a very different set of possible options for resolution rather than just fixing the mug in the sink agreement. You may be starting to recognize that there's an underlying factor that you didn't realize was a problem. And that might be, well, it could be anything from soup to noodles.
- Dr. Irena: Yeah, I can totally see that because I believe there's always an underlying factor if there are blips or conflicts or anything. There's always something underlying that and until you get to the core issue basically of your first blip, the first one that started all the others, then it will come up again.
- Joan McLeod: Well, and the powerful thing about conflict navigation is often recognizing that you don't need to go back to the first one. In many cases when you can start to lay out that there's a number of blips and then step back, you realize that it's the 17th blip that is the one that's actually pointing to the ideal resolution. So, um, this is really the third step of conflict first aid. You're doing great, Irena, you're just segueing to the next piece!
- Dr. Irena: Alright!
- Joan McLeod: The third step for conflict first aid, and this is where this profound difference is for people who are offering "you need to stay out of the middle" of something of what might be, like you say, something that's come up, but there's these core or very deep issues that you didn't intend to raise.
- Joan McLeod: You know, you didn't need to necessarily fix all of that because a mug has been put in the wrong place as an example.
- Joan McLeod: So the third step of it is "find interest", find way point interests. What's happened along the way that is really an indicator to something that's going to solve it in a satisfactory way for everyone? It's kind of pointing to the idea of win-win resolution, but it happens so fast where win-win resolution has often in the past meant that you have spent all kinds of time to get down to the very



deepest core of the problem. Conflict First Aid happens very, very quickly. It's a matter of really hearing people well because your stance is different and you don't have any of the stuff about defense or confrontation. People can map things out by asking and inviting. You can say, "listen, there's been so many things happening. Where are you with it now"? And they'll say, "you know, I'm tired of that. I think I'm just so tired. I can't even vent anymore". And then suddenly you're solving the right thing in the moment.

Dr. Irena: Is that what you meant by find interests? A common interest? Is that like the intersection of interests?

Joan McLeod: Well, sometimes, but you're actually speaking as a little bit of an advanced conflict navigator then. Almost to the point of... If you start getting into the complexity of one person's interests versus another person's interests, you know, that's kind of this umbrella trying to be impartial or getting into the middle of something. Whereas if you're actually hearing somebody so profoundly without having any confrontation where you're side by side and your stance feels so good, because you can step back from it from yourself or others, you start to actually hear with a very different set of ears.

Joan McLeod: You actually step completely away from your whole limbic system, your stress system, your fight, flight, freeze system, and your cognitive brain goes into, um, it's best state for figuring out really where things are, such that you can make a best choice about what is most important. And what is most important is usually where people's interests are in the moment. So if I've been dealing with the mug problem 19 times and it's been happening for the last 10 days, where am I really at this moment now that it's happened again? Do I really want to go and make sure that they've heard me? Because then I've become essentially the regulatory system. I'm policing where they put the mugs. Is that what I really want? (shakes head)

Dr. Irena: So you're trying to find your own interest?

Joan McLeod: Your own interests by hearing yourself.

Joan McLeod: Or if you have that stance beautifully, like I say, you hear what's going on in their lane because of course you're being tentative, you have a very different level of curiosity. You're inviting and acknowledging and you start to map out all of these different kinds of things with such curiosity really, that all of a sudden the options start popping up too. The real options that you have an interest in. So it might be if you hear yourself saying, I'm just tired of having to ask you about it, they might actually hear that in a very different way.

Dr. Irena: Oh, of course they would because they're not yelled at. They're not being attacked



Joan McLeod: And policed. Exactly. You're not going into the middle of their lane and saying they're a bad person for putting a mug in the wrong place.

Dr. Irena: So we have one more. The E, right?

Joan McLeod: Yes. So the E is Easy Next Step.

Dr. Irena: Ooh, I love that one.

Joan McLeod: So of course you can eat an elephant one bite at a time. You can climb a mountain one step at a time. You can journey a thousand miles. If the next step isn't easy, then people aren't going to stick with it. You just have to sort of break it down to a point where somebody's going to say; the easiest thing for me to do is..."do you want me to go and move the mug right now"? And you'd say, "Oh my God, that would be fantastic. I would love it". And all of a sudden you've reconnected with that person. That person is actually connected with the thing that's most important for you in the moment; you might say, "Oh, you know what? No, that's ridiculous, but I'm just, I'm so thankful that you heard me this time. I'm going to, I've already moved the mug and we're good. Just please don't do it again next time." Then the next thing you know, they're actually adhering to what the rule is!

Dr. Irena: Because it's in their best interests too, and it's easy.

Joan McLeod: It's way easier than being in conflict or confronted or feeling like you've been regulated. Yeah.

Dr. Irena: Oh, that's it. That sounds awesome. Can you maybe share a recent story where somebody was helped that way, that you know, how these blips were taken care of, or the resolution of a conflict with this conflict first aid method?

Joan McLeod: Yes. Um, I work with leaders and sometimes they are leaders of families. It's not unusual at all, even when you're working with leaders and organizations that it jumps the fence into families and situations because of course they're not as effective at work if they're distracted by something at home.

Dr. Irena: Oh, of course. Yes, yes. Very much so.

Joan McLeod: One of the best examples is: I was speaking with one of my clients and, uh, they were saying that they were really struggling with someone and that that person was "a piece of work". And they were ready to go on...They were ready to go on, they were saying: "you know, I've been dealing with this for, something, something, something and, Oh, you know what, there's such a piece of work". Yeah. And they were ready to go on with the story. And when I said to them, oh, hang on, hang on; what? Do you want to talk about that for just a moment, because I could just hear how exhausted they were.



- Joan McLeod: It was just such a conflict for them. But it was wrapped up in a very nice tidy package when they say "they're a piece of work". So all we did was spend just a couple minutes. I said, would you like to speak about that? And she said, you know what? Absolutely.
- Joan McLeod: And she just spent maybe 30 seconds, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And then it came out absolutely as petty: Peep, peep, peep, peep, and vent, vent, vent, vent. And then she said, but you know what, I don't think I've ever told her that, and you know what, I really should. And I said, would that be easy for you? And she said, you know what, I have a conversation coming up with her and it'd be easy peasy.
- Dr. Irena: So was she trained in that with that conflict navigation?
- Joan McLeod: in this particular case? Yes. She's well trained and so she knows, um, our own assertiveness, the, "my path system for assertiveness". So for her, having that kind of difficult conversation is very easy for her. Yes, absolutely.
- Dr. Irena: So that sounds to me like a lot of people could profit or benefit from knowing how to resolve conflicts or is there anybody you think this is not working for?
- Joan McLeod: I actually have found that... We've had 17-year olds. We've had social workers, we've had people come in who are coming from very toxic family situations and leaders, CEOs. And we haven't found a single person who hasn't thought that this was a profound tool in their toolkit. Something that they could apply all over the place and that they needed to practice because it was shifting something that was fundamentally anchoring them and not helping them to be making progress. That sounds really something that the world would need.
- Joan McLeod: It's um, it's been extremely rewarding to have done the research, have done the pilot groups. We now actually are delivering the skills training, um, both here locally and we're doing a train the trainer soon. We're piloting a train the trainers soon. Um, and we're delivering it online. So at this point anyone who's interested in it is welcome to follow me and get in touch with us. And as these trainings become more available, we'll be happy to share.
- Dr. Irena: So are you saying you have a course, basically in conflict navigation, for people who want to learn how to solve their own conflicts, and you also have a course, or is that upcoming for people who want to train others, say, HR people or whoever would want to apply that into their business?
- Joan McLeod: So, what we're actually offering these days is the program for "conflict first aid". So first aid is an online program. It's a five unit program where we teach through videos and lessons, worksheets, um, and the opportunities where we send them off to practice in their home, in their own lives, with people who are right around them. So they take it in little chunks, and they take on learning how this



STANCE works, and they come back and report and it's about building a practice so that you understand what the skills are, you recognize what the tools are as I've described some of them today, and then you actually work with them. So we're just, uh, at the end of this summer, delivering our first "conflict first aid training program" to teach other trainers. So it's been a very, very small close to home project so far, teaching conflict first aid, but you're really one of the first ones where we're announcing that this thing exists at all.

Joan McLeod: It's been adopted as I said around the global already very quickly, because it's just connecting so well.

Dr. Irena: That's fantastic. How can people find out more? Is there something you can do for the audience right now? Where can they find you if they want to become, you know, knowledgeable in conflict navigation for themselves, their group, their family? And maybe even for coaches who want to then learn about it and become a trainer of others.

Joan McLeod: Yes, absolutely. So, um, the easiest thing for them to do is to find me at [conflictnavigator.com/jam](http://conflictnavigator.com/jam). JAM is actually my initials. So that's how they find me. It's certainly easy to find me on social media and all they need to do is to either Google my name and conflict or conflict navigator, and I'm very easy to find.

Joan McLeod: So they're welcome to just send any questions. I will share; you asked earlier about advanced conflict navigator training. Advanced conflict navigator training is something that we've put on the back burner for now. That conflict navigator training is another set of powerful tools that include, um, as you described, um, the kinds of things that add in beautifully to coaches, leaders and people who actually know a tremendous amount to otherwise help them in conflict resolution or management of issues. And conflict navigation is really one of the kinds of domains of interest where you learn conflict analysis. This ability to sort of see problems with all of their complexity in a very, very easy way. In the same way that we teach conflict first aid to make it a very ease-filled process for people. Even those who hate conflict, conflict navigation is to help other people to do the same thing.

Dr. Irena: Even people who hate conflict, because they're avoiding it, and they're still going to be in relationships where conflict arises, that's just human nature...They could at least profit from what you have now for them to learn; how to take that step back and then take a stance to get over those blips, right?

Joan McLeod: And, I want to enjoy this with you. Sometimes those people are the ones who are best at it!

Dr. Irena: Ooh.





- Joan McLeod: They are already people who know how to step back.
- Dr. Irena: Oh, very true. That's a great nugget. I mean, seriously. Great Nugget! So if somebody is conflict averse, they already know how not to get into the middle because...
- Joan McLeod: yes, they're the natural flies on the walls. They're the ones who are the watchers. They just don't know how to best help others to help make these tiny next steps. If you think you have to eat the whole elephant right away... Well, nobody can do that. It doesn't matter whether they're very comfortable, whether they're extremely skilled or not. Um, it really is so often really being able to be comfortable taking those small next steps. And of course those who already naturally step back and see those small next steps, (have it) almost the easiest.
- Dr. Irena: That is fantastic. So I'm so happy you were able to share that with us. And like you mentioned, this goes into any relationship, whether it's between spouses, between, parents and children or coworkers, larger groups in a company. Conflict will be there. You have a tool to help people overcome that in a good way and a not aggressive way and something that makes both people feel good. Both have their green lights in their lane and they learn how to juggle that. Right?
- Joan McLeod: That's exactly right. And here's the thing, even those who are trained in coaching, in conflict resolution, in mediation, nonviolent communication, meditation; all of those people have very heavy toolkits in some cases. And even they don't know how to do conflict first aid.
- Dr. Irena: Oh Wow. That is true. It's not something that's taught, but that should... Is it not the one that should be taught, early on in the schools, right?
- Joan McLeod: Loved hearing that. Absolutely. Yes.
- Dr. Irena: I would love to have all of these kinds of educational tools for people, you know, and at the end we would have a happy planet. For now you can go to [conflictnavigator.com/Jam](http://conflictnavigator.com/Jam) like in something yummy to eat, made out of berries or whatever.
- Joan McLeod: (Laughs). That's the one...
- Dr. Irena: or your initials... So Joan McLeod, it has been an absolute pleasure to have you here and share with the audience what they can do to make any kind of conflict so much easier to navigate. Go to [conflictnavigator.com/jam](http://conflictnavigator.com/jam) and you'll find everything you need to go forward with this. So I thank you so much to be here with us today!



Joan McLeod: It's an absolute pleasure Irena.

New Speaker: Thank you, Joan, loved it! So, ciao!