

Mike Domitrz: Welcome to The Respect podcast. I'm your host Mike Domitrz from mikespeaks.com, where we help organizations of all sizes, educations and institutions, and the US Military create a culture of respect, and respect is exactly what we discuss in this show. So let's get started.

Mike Domitrz: Yes, welcome to this week's episode where we are going to hear from Dave Gerber, conflict management expert, healer, progressive thinker. His education is extensive. His leadership coaching and training experience is proven at the highest levels and he is also a certified black belt instructor and a certified Reiki Master. So we're going to welcome Dave Gerber. Thanks Dave for joining us.

Dave Gerber: Thanks for having me. It's great to be here, I'm excited to be on your show.

Mike Domitrz: Oh, we're happy to you. I just have to ask right off the bat, black belt instructor. What martial art form?

Dave Gerber: Krav Maga.

Mike Domitrz: And what is Krav Maga?

Dave Gerber: So Krav Maga is sort of the, "Israeli martial art". Most movies you see, action movies now, they use it because it's the easiest and fastest to learn. It does take a while to master, I'm still on my pursuit of that, but essentially it's the best of several different martial arts combined along with bear hug defenses, choke defenses, and then weapons of all different kinds. So it's a self defense system, which is hyper aggressive to defend yourself and go home alive.

Mike Domitrz: Well, and I love this as our opening, I didn't plan on it this way because your work is in conflict and dealing with conflict management, which obviously martial arts has a lot to do with. A lot of people don't understand that I did do martial arts in the past, my kids did it, and it is about conflict management. It is not about fighting, it's not about hurting someone else. It's about being the most efficient effective way to get out of a bad situation, at least in the forms that I've learned. Is that true in with what you teach also?

Dave Gerber: Absolutely. If we have to use physical violence, then everything else is already broken down. Starting from making good decisions about where you go? When you go? With whom you go? All those types of things. So your point is well taken for sure. My goal was to do the deep dive into the subject of conflict. So I've been studying sociology and conflict for the last 25 years, might of had my business for about 15, and I decided that I wanted to sort of look at how my hobby could be brought into the subject of conflict. Then my other hobby sort of turned ... Which is Reiki, which is the healing side. So it's kind of those triangle approach towards life and towards my work.

Mike Domitrz: And Reiki is so unique, and I know about it but a lot of people may not. Can you explain what Reiki is?

Dave Gerber: Yeah, it's Japanese energy healing, and the best way to think about it is that it's like meditation with purpose for someone else. It's not like a massage, I don't touch the person. So you have to believe in energy. If you believe in energy then you believe that some people have the ability to be a conduit for healing. So that's what I do and it's a part of my philosophy on leadership, which is that if it's lonely at the top, we have to learn how to self heal. That's just sort of the third piece of this which is the ability to self heal and also in this case, to be able to help heal others.

Mike Domitrz: I love that, and I love that it's for both, right? It's for myself and for others, which is powerful. Let's dive right into this because what you do with companies, you do deal with the connection of conflict, conflict management. What do you feel is the connection between conflict and respect? That you also has been talk about sources of conflict, what is that were the connections? And how does that play into the ... How respect plays a role in all of it?

Dave Gerber: What we found is, is that respect is directly linked to trust. A lot of times we see both of those words kind of as cliché or overused, but fundamentally a high trust workplace is going to be more successful in all different ways. So if you look at some of the components of how trust breaks down, respect is one of them. Without it, and the way you speak to one another, you're not going to have respect. It's going to be impossible and then you're not going to be able to trust, and those are deep issues. Once they get down the path for some time, they get ingrained and they're very difficult to solve. So that's what I would say about the connection between respect and trust, which obviously is our components of conflict.

Mike Domitrz: What is common ways Dave, that companies or individuals, some examples of where people don't realize their language is breaking that respect and it's not based on respect and that's breaking the trust?

Dave Gerber: All conflicts sort of breaks down into five different categories according to a guy name Christopher Moore. And when anybody can understand whether it's a personal conflict or a business conflict, can sort of take two steps back and identify what the real source of conflict is, they can then better come to a conclusion. So respect and trust would be a part of one of those five. We'll get to that in a second. So the first is data. Some people have conflicts over data or information like, "I have it." Or, "You didn't give it to me." Or, "It was wrong or we disagree on it." Which actually if it's not solved at a data level, it moves down and gets more difficult to solve.

Dave Gerber: We have lots, the second is interest and expectations. That's where a lot of conflicts lies. It's not really about the third one, relationships. Often times it's about data or interest that don't get addressed and then they turn into relationship conflicts. But trust, respect, those would fall into the relationship side as well, as they might fall into the expectation side. So I have an expectation that you're going to show me respect that looks like X, and your definition looks like Y. So that's one place. The fourth one is structural, that's

often very frustrating for people because conflicts that are structural are often out of their control, they're process related. They didn't make the rules. You and I didn't agree or disagree or create, I should say, where we're getting our health insurance from. So how can we have a conflict about it?

Dave Gerber: And the fifth one is values. So that's where the conflict lies. Often times with people, particularly as we see in society right now, we have a lot of value. These conflicts, which are very difficult to solve.

Mike Domitrz: So can we take just one of those. Let's say what would be an example in a workplace setting where these structural leads to a breakdown?

Dave Gerber: Roles and responsibilities would be the first thing that would come to mind with me about where conflicts might lie. If I simplify it really, it might be like, "Well that's our work." And another team says, "Well, no that's our work." And they get into conflict and they're personally about the work. But if you pull out the manual or the org chart and you see where/what the workflow is and who's suppose to do it, then the conflict should technically kind of go away. Now I never like to use the word should when it comes to conflict situations, but that's an example there.

Dave Gerber: Another example, let's say a data conflict might be every Friday before you have to leave work, you have to get a signature from someone. And every time you go to their office at that time they're never there. So you constantly build up this frustration which one day comes out into a personal argument, and what looks like a relationship conflict is really actually a data conflict. It was like if you sign the information, we're done. You could even argue was an interest expectation like I have an expectation you'd sign it at 4:00 pm on a Friday and your expectation was to sign it at 3:00 pm. But the big thing about this is when you understand that there are five, and only five. It helps to bring language to the discussion which then helps us to get to solutions because we can talk about it. Because even if you and I disagree on the source, we can have the language to talk about it. So I talk about that is conflict fluency.

Mike Domitrz: And you said it was Christopher Moore?

Dave Gerber: Yeah, Christopher Moore.

Mike Domitrz: All right, awesome. So what would be an example? Because some of the ones you gave, you said people mistakenly think they're relationship but they're actually data or interest or structural or values. So what are the relationship examples?

Dave Gerber: It's a good question because depending on where you sit, it often will depend on how you interpret it, right? So I might interpret something you say as a relationship jab and you might actually be delivering an expectation that's maybe in a little louder voice than normal. That can be the confusion but it's

important to remember how often data and interest based conflicts, the first two sources, how they manifest into a relationship conflict. Most relationship conflicts don't just like ... It's like you don't see somebody like, "I don't like you." It's not really that way. Something happened or had to be a set of events. I might have an expectation that you get to work at 8:15 and you show up at 8:05 and I'm bothered, and now this starts to spin into something relationship oriented. So I do find as part of my answer to your question that relationships often become this dumping ground for either unaddressed conflicts that are easier to solve, or because you just don't know how to solve it. So it must be interpersonal.

Mike Domitrz: So that becomes the question, what would be a relationship one? If so many of them are mistakenly thought of as relationship, what would be an actual relationship conflict?

Dave Gerber: Maybe a relationship conflict could be something that manifested over the course of trying to solve other types of conflicts, and then it became like, "Well, I just can't deal with this person." Like, "I've done this and we've had this discussion and we've tried to fix that, and we addressed our expectations and it seems like I've done everything." And this person is still negative or this person is still always disagreeing with everything I say. I think that's what the relationship conflicts, they happen after you tried often times. Now clearly if you go by the 80/20 rule, 10% of the people you might have at your house, 10% you don't want to see ever and 80% fall in between. So I think it's really about how we manage this stuff.

Mike Domitrz: Awesome. So what are the best recognizers? It sounds like you might've just given us some insight to the main one, which is when I'm having conflict look at the five and go ... Assume it's not three. Assume it's not relationships, what all the other four could it be? Because those are allowing me to either separate myself from it, and okay it's the tattle, or the expectation. But relationship, it makes it personal, right? Where the other four you can separate, would that be true?

Dave Gerber: You can. I see what you're saying. Yes. First, the critical thing is to try and isolate and determine what the primary source is because it gets less and less effective as a tool if you say, "Oh, well it's a little of that. It's a little of that." So you're on the right track with trying to identify as one. I would say the other issue is with respective values. So values is where stuff gets real personal, right? Structural definitely not. Data's not. Expectations become. But values are usually pre-ingrained ... People ... You know, I can ask you to change your values and you're going to look at me and say, "You can ask me, but I'm not going to change them." The best thing to do where it comes to talking about values in the work place, in particular or wherever, is to talk about behaviors.

Dave Gerber: Because values usually are the gas tank for behaviors, and behaviors are the things that you can talk about when it comes in conflict. There's no point in really spinning, grinding your wheels on trying to come to an agreement on

values. But behavior is for what's acceptable in this context in this culture and this workplace and this family. Those types of things we can talk about.

Mike Domitrz: So you bring up a great point that values are really ingrained. When you say that means it becomes crucial when you bring somebody aboard your team, that values aligned because you aren't changing those.

Dave Gerber: Yeah, I think it's really crucial. I think that the first thing that team has to do is really get clear about what their values really are and not just the ones that are on the poster, but the ones that get reinforced through behaviors when times are good and when times are bad. So to be able to get clear on that, and then yes to be able ... I mean, the analogy I use is like if you're going to be a landlord, it's a lot easier to find a good renter before you bring a renter in and try to get rid of them. It doesn't work. Plus the cost are 150-400% of someones salary to replace them. So I think having a framework for how to build high performance teams and using clear collaborative set of values as a part of the foundation of that, I think that's critical, yeah.

Mike Domitrz: And how does respect play into all of this?

Dave Gerber: Well, I think that one of the things that we see in the workplace, one of the things we see in society right now is sort of the breakdown of what I would call sort of civility. Everyone has to not assume that some level of moral outrage allows us to behave in a certain way that is not becoming of a realistic approach at a chance of getting to a solution. So I think respect is also really important when it comes down to one ... and these are some things that society has to do right now, particularly in American culture. One, we have to sit down. I think we've lost our right to talk about content, and we need to be talking about process. And we need to be talking about how are we going to have these healthy conversations? What do they look like regardless of what the topic that we're talking about? I think respect is a part of that. If we can't have respectful dialogue to design how we're going to have good conversations, it'll never happen.

Dave Gerber: Yeah, that's the first thing. So we have to focus on that. We have to focus on process. We also have to look at and the greater society has to make some choices about this, but is this subject of order? And order and respect do go hand and hand in some ways. So we can't just have and to justify the means, we have to have a process of how we're going to communicate. We have to follow some semblance of order so that we're moving in the right direction. I think those are some of the fundamental things that have to be thought of as people want to move towards high performance.

Mike Domitrz: Do you think that part of the problem is that people mistake venting as communication? And what I mean by that is right there are a lot people that feel they're not being hurt. They feel that they're being harmed by what's happening in society, whatever viewpoint they're coming from. So they have a genuine need to vent, and they're venting. But when they're venting they think they're

educating, they're communicating, they're impacting. Those are two very different places to choose to communicate. If I'm venting it's usually a release from my own emotional needs. And the odds are it's not going to help you typically. It's not going to move the needle either, unless you're already in the exact same place as me. But if you're not, it might even do harm to where the needle is for our relationship on the bouncing beam there. It could do harm. Do you think that's one thing that people have to go right nice we'll step back and go wait. Am I venting right now or am I trying to influence? Because when I'm trying to influence, venting could be the worse thing that I do in this moment.

Dave Gerber: Yeah, I think social media brought about a wave of society of oversharing. I think that people always have had a desire to be heard and unfortunately in the most aspects of peoples lives, they don't get that space. Whether it's from their spouse or their family or their kids or their boss or their colleagues, everybody's constantly trying to fight to be heard. So that feeling was given an outlet, a fire and forget outlet, the one where people can say whatever they want because someone's not knocking at their door with violence, or a threat of violence based upon what's said. So we've created this oversharing society, where to your point, now when there are no bookends on accountability, people can say whatever they want to say. So yes, then that moves into my opinion being stated as fact, and there's that old expression that everybody's entitled to their own opinions, but you're not entitled to your own facts. Well unfortunately, we have such misinformation that's happening, that it's very difficult for people to actually base their opinions on reality because reality is shifting and moving, and it's hard to determine what that actually is.

Mike Domitrz: Do you think that creates a conflict in specifically the workplace? Because if I'm on social media, and I can vent, and everything can be valued by who likes, or who doesn't like, and then I come to the workplace and I want to do the same, is that appropriate? Or where is it appropriate? Where is it not to vent? How do you balance that in a workplace setting?

Dave Gerber: I think that's like the \$64,000.00 question. How do we find some balance when we have a society outside of work of oversharing, of entitlement, everyone gets a trophy, you have to love me no matter what I do or say, and this is sort of we're lacking some order and process and things, and then we want to go into work and depending on that workplace, will really depend on how you're going to behave, what your job is, where you fall on the organizational chart, how much power you have. You know, all these things are going to influence self and others, and I think that's where things are starting to get tricky. The problem is that there are no boundaries, and worse yet, people don't the skills, and it's not their fault, but they don't have the skills to talk to this out.

Dave Gerber: That's what I mean when I say we talk about process. One of the things that I do with companies is I help them learn a multi-generational conflict planning model. So it's a model that I put together that can be used to talk about difficult subjects, and it helps people plan for both sides, whether that's a performance planning assessment or whether it's a discussion about how social media is

impacting the workplace. We have to have some non-personality driven tools that can assist us in a society where it wasn't given to us in any of our K-12 education, or by our parents or teachers, because it wasn't in any of their lesson books. So we have to get conflict skills, and we can't assume that because we're a successful communicator that that means we're actually a successful conflict manager.

Mike Domitrz: Is there an example that you could give us that people could use in their workplace, if someone's listening right now? What's a question that maybe I could ask myself in that moment to help recognize what's happening right here, to identify what the component is that's taking place, that's causing this?

Dave Gerber: I'll give you the acronym WAIT, Why Am I Talking? It's a little funny one, but it's really like the version of chomping down on your tongue and not saying anything when you want to say something, because are you talking to ... when you hear something that you want to respond to, are you trying to defend, defy, problem solve, react, respond? In that moment, the key is to sort of slow down and wait and use silence to gather more details so that you can make a better response. So kind of like two steps back we talked about before, it allows us to sort of slow down. You should talk about that shock jock delay, you know, when the radio station would pause for five seconds in case somebody swore. Those are some of the things ... that's a really good tool that everybody can use right away to slow down.

Mike Domitrz: Oh my gosh, that's beautiful. And look, I'm somebody that innately likes to talk. It's how I'm wired. So, when I can catch myself in a meeting where everybody's contributing going, "Wait, do I need to say this?" It makes a huge difference because otherwise, when you're wired to talk, you just talk. It's not that you're trying to talk over ... be the center or whatever, you're wired to think by talking out loud. But if you could acknowledge that to yourself and going, "Why am I about to say this? Is this necessary right now? Has this already been said by somebody else?" In other words, maybe they need reinforcement, but maybe it doesn't. We're already on that page. We don't need to repeat this. I would imagine that could be very powerful.

Dave Gerber: I think it's an interesting point, and one of things I talk about with companies is looking at some of the inherent differences between introverts and extroverts, and how to be able to actually better prepare for meetings by using that data. If I know that I've got a bunch of extroverts that are going to be at this meeting, I know that if I don't give the extroverts a heads up and a way to sort of hash this out ahead of time, they're going to dominate the conversation because the introverts are going to be thinking. So maybe as a part of my ... I send an agenda out early and I give a question. So now the question is at everybody so nobody feels like they didn't get the question. But it gives the introverts time to think, which is what they want, and it gives the extroverts time to think out loud or talk to themselves, or talk to their colleagues, so that when they come to the meeting, the communication can be more effective, and I think that's what we're trying to do.

Mike Domitrz: That's powerful. Would there also be the reverse? Why am I not talking?

Dave Gerber: You know, I think one of the things if we circle back, we talk about respect and trust, and who's sitting on the golden egg, because they've been wronged or conflict hasn't been addressed and they don't want to share. I think that's one thing. I think also the leader has to be good at facilitating and bringing people in who aren't normally talking. That can be done as ... that's another advantage of sending out an agenda ahead of time, because it allows people to prepare, so nobody can hide behind, "I don't know," or "I haven't thought about it." The other thing is to facilitate using small mini groups within the group because you can have people not have to own ideas, but they can share ideas and get going. So I think it's a matter of being creative as a leader in terms of how you facilitate to get the best out of people. Sometimes that just happens at a regular meeting, but the definition of meetings is where the minutes are kept and the hours are lost, right? We have to be more effective beforehand, otherwise we just find we need more and more meetings, which burns people up, and then more opportunity for conflict.

Mike Domitrz: Right, exactly. You, in your work, talk about underlying needs in conflict management. What is the connection between underlying needs in respect, and what does that mean? If somebody's just saying, "What do you mean by underlying needs?" I could assume it means a lot of different things.

Dave Gerber: When we talk about underlying needs, this goes back particularly to the conflict management stuff that I do training with is getting people to understand that underlying needs are really like the fuel tank for why people are stuck. We talk about predetermined outcomes. So people will come into a meeting, take a standard employee/supervisor meeting and the supervisor says, "I'm going to give a reprimand at the end of this meeting," and the employee walks in and says, "Well I don't care what happens, but by the end of this meeting I'm not going to get a reprimand." So they could go back and forth, yes/no, yes/no forever, and they're not going to get anywhere. But when we look at the underlying needs that are driving the person to have the position of the predetermined outcome, it's a lot easier to sort of find overlap and discussion starters for moving through the conflict. So in most cases, respect is one of many, but highly prioritized underlying needs for people when they come into a conflict situation.

Mike Domitrz: And knowing that, for you personally, when you hear the word respect, what does it mean to you, and what do you think it means to most people? And what you've seen in the work you're doing, how do they interpret, how do they define the word respect?

Dave Gerber: Well remember the golden rule used to be treat other people the way you want to be treated.

Mike Domitrz: Yeah, I've always actually taught audiences that's a horrible rule, because there's so many people that don't treat themselves well.

Dave Gerber: Well and not only that, the platinum rules says treat other people the way they would want to be treated. Do unto others the way they would want you to do unto them, which means effectively, we all have different currency, and we all have different needs. If teams are going to go well, relationships, families, we have to find out what those underlying needs are of those individuals, and meet them where they want to be met. So that's critical.

Mike Domitrz: Yeah, I absolutely agree. When I'm working with companies I'll say ... you know, we talk about creating a culture of respect throughout the organization, and they'll say, "Well I'm afraid I won't be able to have fun at work. I won't be fulfilled at work if I have to worry about what I say," and I say, "You don't have to worry about what you say when you lead it with respect, but the key is, you have to know what matters to the people around you." If you want to have an incredible feeling workplace, imagine if everybody who worked around you and knew what mattered to you, and talked about that with you, and asked about that with you versus trying to crack a joke that can suddenly become inappropriate, when could have said something meaningful to me if you actually knew me better. That would have been way more powerful.

Dave Gerber: Well that's huge and I think that's a good responsibility of leadership to encourage the relationship development that goes on, on these teams. We can't get the high performance if we don't understand one another, and that's why we talk about it takes 18 months to grow a high performance team. You don't build it, you grow it. You do that by some of these conversations that happen at the beginning that are "seemingly meaningless," or for some are "slowing down the process." But we have to have a strong foundation, and we got to get to know each other better so we understand what our boundaries are and our limits are. It'd be kind of like getting pulled over for speeding, and there hasn't been a speed limit sign for like 30 miles. It's like how do I know how fast I'm supposed to go?

Mike Domitrz: Right, what road got you here? What was your path that got you to where you are?

Dave Gerber: I'll tell you it was a seriously winding road. It started off with the acknowledgement at some point that conflict always seemed to find me, so maybe I should sort of monetize it or move into that business and try and help people address their conflicts not only through my experience but through research and proven skill sets and techniques in the industry. I just had a lot of winding experiences. I mean everything from ... like many being bullied when I was younger, to I have a BA in Sociology and Gender Studies, a Masters in Education. I went on to teach high school. I left high school to go start a business so that I could say that I tried. I did that 15 years ago this past month, we celebrated.

Dave Gerber: On that journey I had a lot of things happened, family, divorce, child. More conflict stuff, you know that you get experience in like many people do. And Krav Maga and trying to figure out how to continuously just give back, and find

ways to give back my learnings, and all the while sort of be a lifelong learner and going back to school all the time and building certificates and working with people, and building relationships. I've been fortunate to speak to over 10,000-12,000 people and work with them in different capacities. I love that, is how can I help people level up faster and that's what I like to do.

Mike Domitrz: You mentioned that there were a lot of conflicts along the way, conflict experiences for yourself along the journey. What was the most difficult one?

Dave Gerber: You know, I've had a lot of very power experiences from divorce, to getting Grave's Disease when I was 35, and working through thyroid issues. All the way through getting a black belt, and the struggle to do that as well. As you know, my mom passed away a year ago, so the struggle of that. So there's been a lot of challenges, and I think a lot of people have them and it's a matter of, I guess, how you try and just bounce back from them.

Mike Domitrz: Take one of those, one of those that you thought was very difficult. What did you learn was a key for bouncing back into where you were before?

Dave Gerber: I think actually with all of the things that I've learned is that no one's going to do it for you. Everybody's busy. Everybody has their own dreams. Everybody has their own life. You have to find the motivation and you have to dig deep. You have to remember the successes that you've had in your life. You have to find the people, the right people, around you to help you when you're not operating your full potential. I think it's faith in yourself, I think that's what I've learned is just keep going. We learn that in the martial arts community, and it's knock down seven get up eight.

Mike Domitrz: Absolutely. And your website's davegerber.com, that's G-E-R-B-E-R.com. Davegerber.com, and you have several, lots of books yourself, and then there's two that you always talk about, that you [inaudible 00:29:04]. As you know, we always like to explore that here on the show. There's two you recommend which is Celestine Prophecy by James Redfield, and The Alchemist by Paulo Coelho, which I personally am a big fan. I know that book very well. Why those two books?

Dave Gerber: Well, you know in the western hemisphere we don't really talk about the spiritual side, and I think one of the things that I've learned is you've got to find yourself. I think many of us are still in that process, but finding happiness, finding gratitude, finding the fundamental pillars of life before trying to find everything else. I think both of those books are written in a way that any reader, adult reader, regardless of whether they read all the time, or they just want to pick up a book. They can really help level up in their life faster and find what's really truly important to them. And they're books that you can always revisit because there's so much stuff going on at any point in your life to also find motivation, because they're really both about a journey.

Mike Domitrz: Well I want to thank you, Dave, for sharing so much brilliance here on this episode, and really some insightful conversation on conflict. Thank you.

Dave Gerber: Thank you very much. It was a great conversation. I appreciate it.

Mike Domitrz: This week's listener's question is: "Mike, how do I lead with respect with somebody who's just saying things that really bother me, that are triggering me?"

Mike Domitrz: This is a great question because leading with respect means we also treat those that we disagree with, with dignity and respect. We can't just say those I am like-minded with I'm going to treat with dignity and respect. Now, treating you with dignity and respect does not mean I have to agree with anything you say. That doesn't mean that at all. Ways that I can try to find common ground so that I can see the dignity and respect of you, a fellow human being, to recognize, "Hey, this is a person in front of me with personal feelings and beliefs, and they strongly believe what they're saying even though I disagree with it. They believe it. They're probably not just saying this to infuriate me, to upset me, to hurt me. That's probably not what's happening."

Mike Domitrz: So in this situation, I want to lead with, "They genuinely believe this. I wonder why?" [inaudible 00:31:14] why. So explore the why. Say, "Well that's interesting, why do you believe that?" Or, "I have never thought of it that way," or, "I don't believe that, so why do you?" It's okay to express your own. Ask why they do. Be in a place of discovery. Let me also be clear that it's important that you're also in a safe space for this to occur. I am not advising if somebody's harming you in that moment to try to discover and understand where they're coming from. That is a completely different discussion. I want you to always be in a place of safety and support. I think that's super important. So when are in a safe place to have a conversation with someone with different views, opinions, thoughts, when you're in that safe space, come from a place of a discovery, of a why? Of, "Hm, that's curious." And learning. That's the key.

Mike Domitrz: Thank you for joining us for this episode of The Respect podcast, which was sponsored by the Date Safe Project at datesafeproject.org. Remember, you can always find me at mikespeaks.com.