



# The Human Optimization Project

## Pod-Club

### E33 Managing Conflict: Sorting Facts and Feelings to Turn Disputes into Progress

#### **Discussion Questions for this Episode:**

- 1) Dr. Martin defines conflict as a "misalignment of basic needs, values, or goals" between two or more parties. Think about a recent conflict you experienced. What was the underlying misalignment?
- 2) As discussed in this episode, conflict at work often has higher stakes (job security), but we tend to "take the mask off" and be less guarded in personal relationships. How does this difference in psychological safety impact your approach to conflict in these two settings?
- 3) Dr. Martin emphasizes that unresolved conflict can lead to decreased confidence, lower performance, and missed opportunities for growth. Think about a time when unresolved conflict had a negative impact on you or a team you were part of. Discuss with your pod club: what would you do differently now to try to resolve that conflict?
- 4) The discussion suggests that conflict can be positive and productive, especially when seeking diverse thought or managing complex problems. Can you recall a situation where conflict, managed respectfully, led to a better outcome or strengthened a relationship?
- 5) Dr. Martin explains that our human nature and past experiences (even childhood trauma) can contribute to an "unhealthy fear of conflict." Take a moment to reflect on your own personal history or worldview and how it influences your current reactions to conflict. What is one thing you hope to change?
- 6) The three-step framework for managing conflict involves: 1) pre-conversation reflection, 2) curiosity during the conversation, and 3) post-conversation self-reflection. Which of these three steps do you currently practice most effectively? Which one will you practice improving this week?
- 7) The podcast advises using "maximizers" (e.g., "this is going to be very uncomfortable") rather than "minimizers" (e.g., "this is just a quick chat") when setting expectations for difficult conversations. How might this shift in language impact the tone and outcome of a challenging discussion you anticipate?
- 8) The challenge encourages listeners to reflect on a past conflict using the post-conversation self-reflection questions ("What went well? What didn't? What could I do differently?"). With a friend or trusted coworker, identify a past conflict and reflect aloud, using these questions to guide you. Ask your dialogue partner what they notice about your reflections and if they suggest any opportunities for further growth.