

Corey Andrew Powell (00:02):

I am joined today by author, speaker, coach and consultant Garland Vance. Garland's current book is titled Getting UN-Busy, which Forbes named as one of the seven books everyone on your team should read. Garland Vance, welcome to Motivational Mondays.

Dr. Garland Vance (00:16):

Thanks so much, Corey. It's so exciting to be here.

Corey Andrew Powell (00:17):

Well, I'm happy you're here too, because you've got some great information and so much of it resonates with me personally. So I can't wait to dig in, but let's just start off though, with a little bit of your background. So you are a co-founder of advanced leadership, which helps companies succeed through leadership development. So can you share a bit more in detail about the mission of your company?

Dr. Garland Vance (00:37):

Absolutely. So if you think about the jobs you've had in your life, you think about the places that you've worked before, most of us would say that we've had some pretty terrible jobs at times, right? We've worked in some terrible cultures. We've worked in places where we would never recommend anybody to go to work there. Yeah. And, and then on occasion, some of us have been blessed to have one place that was amazing. And if you look at what makes the difference, almost every single time, it comes down to who is leading. Who's in charge and how are they developing the leaders around them. And so our company was founded, back in 2017, just a few years ago, really. But it was around this idea of, if you make one leader better, you make everybody they influence better.

Corey Andrew Powell (01:27):

You know, it's funny. I was just speaking to a friend about that, who's doing the job search and she's in between positions and looking for something new. And we had the discussion that it is said that when people leave a job, very often, it's, they're leaving people, they're leaving the manager, they're not leaving the actual job itself. Do you think that's a cliché or is that really in essence, what you're referring to?

Dr. Garland Vance (01:47):

I don't think it's a cliché. Gallup actually did some research around that and they found that 51% of people who leave a job site, that the reason they're leaving is because they want to get away from the manager. And I haven't read a ton of research around this, but one of the things that I've found is that bad leadership ends up causing the same effects as a PTSD. So maybe bad leadership is PTSD for people. So I fully believe that people leave because of bad leaders. And so, you know, if companies begin thinking our people are leaving, what's our best retention strategy. How do we keep more customers? How do we keep more employees that all comes down to leadership and the decisions that they're making?

Corey Andrew Powell (02:29):

Yep. Yep. I agree. I know my first time being a manager, I was so stunned to find out that 80% of the job was managing people. It wasn't the job itself. It was understanding that some people are having a bad day or they're having problems at home, or they're just maybe are good at some things and not good at others. And it was really people management. And once I learned that I had a really good successful time as a manager. So I agree with you totally. Now in your book, you share proven steps to help readers get unbusy as you call it and live a more contented life. And I wanna speak more in detail about those steps, but first I wanted to ask you just what was the inspiration, if it was personal or professional, whatever it was that inspired you to write this book.

Dr. Garland Vance (03:07):

Yeah. So in 2013, I, uh, went to my doctor with all of these medical problems. I was having chronic migraine headaches and heart palpitations and, uh, extreme even fatigue and forgetfulness. And so I, I went to my doctor whose name was Dr. Tate, and just said, Dr. Tate, what in the world's going on? And he said, well, Garland, tell me about your life. And I said, oh, I said, what everybody says, right? I said, it's a good life. It's just really busy. And my doctor had the insight to say, well, tell me what you mean by busy Garland. And I said, well, you know, I work 50 to 60 hours with this leadership development part of Chick-fil-A. I love what I get to do there. I work 10 to 20 hours a week on my doctorate in leadership, my wife and I have three young kids and we're getting them involved in the community.

Dr. Garland Vance ([03:53](#)):

And you know, we go to church and oh, and I said, and by the way, my mom passed away last year. So we've slowed down a lot this year to make room for some of the grief. And my doctor said, Garland, I know what's wrong with you. This is called stress. And the reason that you're stressed out is because you're so busy. And I said, and um, Dr. Tate, everybody's busy. Right? And he said, I know everybody's busy and it's killing us all. And so, since I was working on this doctorate in leadership, since I heard so many people talk about how busy they were all the time, I said, I'm gonna just go back and do some research. Like what is busy-ness actually doing to us? And it ended up becoming the entire focus of my doctoral research was what is busy-ness? What's it doing to us and to our companies? And how do we actually stress less and accomplish more?

Corey Andrew Powell ([04:44](#)):

So is the idea that busyness is just the way in which we overwhelm ourselves with everything without, I guess, managing it to a point where we are protecting our health better, or like, what exactly, if you were to surmise, what is busyness?

Dr. Garland Vance ([04:59](#)):

Yeah. So busy-ness, I define as an overcommitment to too many good commitments. So the reality is when your life is busy, it's not because you're doing things that you hate. It's not because you've made bad commitments, right? And it's not because you're, you're doing awful. Things are work is meaningful. The things that we're doing with our kids, that's we take on meaningful projects at work. We wanna improve our homes, right? We wanna, um, take care of our bodies, all of these things. These are good commitments. But when you put too many of those good commitments together, it becomes bad. So it's kind of like an all you can eat buffet. We're treating our lives like an all you can eat buffet. When people go to an all, you can eat buffet, the idea isn't, I'm gonna eat good food until I'm satisfied, right? That's rarely what people do they eat until they make themselves sick. And that's what busy-ness does to us is we put so many good commitments into our lives that actually harms us physically, mentally, emotionally, relationally hurts. Our organizational habits hurts. Our productivity just does massive damage to us.

Corey Andrew Powell ([06:05](#)):

When I mentioned that your points resonate with me. It's the one where you actually say, well, you talk about how to say no to unwanted commitments without feeling guilty. And I said, when I read that, I said, you know, this is something I've always had a problem with. I'm a people pleaser by nature. So I wanna say yes to everything. And often I do, and I haven't considered, my bandwidth was already maxed out, but I'm like, oh yeah, sure. At nine times out of 10, I find myself down to the wire, not performing as well as I would've if I had given myself more time or had just said, no, maybe later, maybe some more time. So speak a little bit about this idea of, you know, how do we say no without feeling guilty when we wanna say yes.

Dr. Garland Vance ([06:46](#)):

I think at the heart of what is happening is that we, as people who are people pleasers as high achievers, that we have this desire, or this impulse where we default to. Yes. Right? So when somebody asks us to do something, our default answer is sure. I can do that. Or if we say, no, we start defending all the reasons we can't do it. I'm so sorry. I'm too busy. I have an appointment at that time. Right. And as soon as we start defending that, no, that opens up the door for the other person to say, oh, well, let's do it another time. Or, you know, they'll find a way around that. No. What we need to do is really switch that. And we default to no. And to defend our yes. So to default, to no means that you become really comfortable saying no to people, because you probably are stretched to your bandwidth right now.

Dr. Garland Vance ([07:35](#)):

Right? Most people have about 110% of what they can actually accomplish. They've committed to it. And so we've gotta undo that. So begin saying no to people make that your default answer. And one of the ways to do that is just to slow down a little bit, right. Just slow down and let people know that no is gonna be your default answer most of the time. And then if you're gonna say, yes, you want to defend your yes, you've gotta be really convinced that you wanna take this on. So there's three ways that you can defend your yes. The first is you slow down your, yes. You just say, gimme 24 hours, gimme 48 hours to think about this. Second is you become more careful with your yes. You actually think about the ripple effect that's gonna happen. If you say yes to this, you know, is it gonna mean more travel time? Is it gonna be a longer commute? Is this gonna be weekend projects that I have to work on? What all is included in this? And then the final one is with your yes, you want to subtract before you add. So before you say yes to a commitment, it, another commitment of equal or greater value

out of your life to make room for it. And so at the very least, at that point, if you're saying yes to something, you're balancing things out so that you're not getting busier and busier.

Corey Andrew Powell ([08:55](#)):

Right. Like removing one thing off the plate before you pile another eating metaphor, cuz we apparently right. <laugh> exactly the buffet was, uh, the first one and now yeah, it's actually piling too much on your plate and it makes perfect sense to at least try to finish a project first or just, you know, level the playing field, a little bit of your responsibilities and then take on another project first.

Dr. Garland Vance ([09:17](#)):

Yep, absolutely.

Corey Andrew Powell ([09:18](#)):

And you also mentioned the visit to your doctor, which kind of prompted the whole book. You know, he mentioned it's killing us this inability to get un-busy, it's killing us. So you mean in a physical sense, there are actual repercussions?

Dr. Garland Vance ([09:30](#)):

Yeah. This was one of the most shocking things to me as I came across, this is the realization of what busy-ness does to us. So in order to understand this, you've, you've gotta understand the stress cycle. Okay. So our bodies are designed to respond to stress and we go through five stages whenever we encounter stress. Right. So let's say that you are walking through the woods. I live here in east Tennessee, right? So let's imagine I'm walking through the woods and all of a sudden a black bear comes out in front of me, which has actually happened in my life. Right. So, so this is a, this is too close to home for me. Right? So the first stage is we experience something that causes stress, right? So the black bear comes out, right? It triggers stress in us. The second stage is that our sympathetic nervous system kicks in and all that means is our bodies release adrenaline and cortisol.

Dr. Garland Vance ([10:20](#)):

So adrenaline, we know for the fight and flight symptoms, cortisol is there and it shuts down our ability, our body's ability to use the unnecessary systems, right? So I don't need my digestive system if I'm getting ready to fight a black bear. And so the cortisol is there and it shuts down all those unnecessary systems. The third stage of stress is that we actually deal with the stress, right? We run from the bear, we punch the bear in the nose, you know, in my case, I threw down my wife so that the bear would attack her first and then ran off. Not really, I didn't do that. I didn't do that. I promise.

Corey Andrew Powell ([11:01](#)):

I didn't think so.

Dr. Garland Vance ([11:02](#)):

So<laugh>, we deal with the stress. The fourth stage of, of this stress cycle is that our parasympathetic nervous system kicks in. And all that means is that our body gets rid of all that adrenaline and cortisol. It kind of gets all that stuff out of system. And that moves us into the fifth stage of stress, which is recovery. We have the ability to recover, to rejuvenate, to get back our energy. Here's where busy-ness is so toxic for us. Busy-ness introduces stress and then kicks in stage two, right? Adrenaline cortisol get released, which then leads us to stage three, where we have the energy to deal with the stress. But then busy-ness immediately introduces another stress into our lives. Whether it's a project or another deadline, or we've gotta take our kids somewhere, or we've got a meeting with the boss, it introduces some other form of stress in our lives. And when that happens, it skips stage four and stage five. And there's been over 25 different diseases that have, have been linked to over exposure to adrenaline and cortisol from heart failure to, uh, major muscle tension, to migraine headaches, uh, colitis, diverticulitis, all kinds of, of major medical conditions. So busy-ness really is killing us.

Corey Andrew Powell ([12:33](#)):

The one problem I see that I'm trying to sort of figure out how do we get past that is now currently where there's such a blurred line between home and office because of the pandemic? And there's no clear separation for many people between those worlds.

Dr. Garland Vance (12:48):

Absolutely. I think the stage that we're in right now, so I, I work from home. I've worked from home for, uh, since, so I totally understand this world of what happened in the midst of COVID. So the key word here is boundaries and the challenge is we have to set up seemingly artificial boundaries in order to make things easier for us. So let me just share couple of boundaries. I talk about some of these in the book, but I think there are other boundaries that have come out as a result of this. So one boundary to set up that's really important if you're working is what's called the end of work boundary. So an end of work boundary is where you say at this time in the day work stops for me. My job stops. You can even put it into your calendar where it's, you know, 5:00 PM every day, 4:30, 6:00 PM, whatever time it is, you've gotta put something into there that mentally triggers you to say I'm finished with work.

Dr. Garland Vance (13:49):

When my kids were younger, one of the ways that I actually made this boundary even stronger was I set up a time every day and I would tell them, my job is gonna end at 4:30 every day and I'm gonna come upstairs. And there was a song that I would sing, right? Like, and, and I just sang a song to them. Uh, not the whole song. Nobody wants to hear me sing the whole song, but I would sing, you know, a couple of lines of a song. And it was an indication to everyone I'm finished with work. And it was my commitment to them that I'm finished with work. I do think another kind of boundary that we've got to build our space boundaries to the best of our abilities, meaning you have dedicated space for work and you have dedicated space for all other things in your home. And that's not always easy to do, but sometimes it's as simple as you know, if you're having to do all your work at the dining room table at the end of the day, pick up your laptop and go put your laptop in a different location. So that mentally you are making a break with the work that you're doing. So boundaries are absolutely critical right now.

Corey Andrew Powell (15:00):

And also you speak about something interesting too. That's inhibiting beliefs that keep us trapped in busy-ness. And so this is really intriguing because it seems like it's something that's systematic in us that we are continually doing. So speak a little bit about that.

Dr. Garland Vance (15:13):

So when I first started researching busy-ness, I thought it was a, a time management issue, right? Or a calendar issue of, oh, we just don't know how to manage our time really well. And as I got deeper into the research, what I realized is time management or busy-ness is actually a conviction issue. It starts with these beliefs that we have. And so I dug deeper into the research to find out what are the beliefs that are driving this, you know, compulsive need to always be busy to always say yes. And what the research showed is that there's essentially three inhibiting beliefs. They're not lies. They actually probably have some validity to them, but we believe them so strongly that they keep us trapped in busy-ness. So these three inhibiting beliefs: The first inhibiting belief is I need to be more, it's this idea that something is, is fundamentally wrong with me, that something's missing within me.

Dr. Garland Vance (16:15):

And as soon as we start believing that, right, like what's wrong with me? I'm not a good enough dad, or I'm not a good enough boss, or I'm not a good enough leader. I'm not a good, you know, fill in the blank. Right. We're always looking at ourselves and criticizing ourselves. So whenever we start thinking that I'm not good enough at that, then the immediate, next inhibiting belief comes in and that's, I need to do more. So if I need to be more, then the solution is I need to do more. Right. And so then we begin looking at the to-do list, right? What can I begin doing to fix this problem within me. And so we start looking at, you know, what are the books that I need to read? Or what are the courses I need to take? Or what's the job that I need to leave?

Dr. Garland Vance (17:01):

You know, what all do I need to do? And then the third inhibiting belief that keeps us trapped in busy-ness is this idea of, I need to get more. And there's actually two different ways that this expresses itself. One is this economic expression. I need to get more stuff. I need a bigger house, a better boat. I need more cars. I need more, I need more stuff, right? But there's also an experiential expression to this. And that says, I need to get more. I need to travel more. I need to take more vacations. I need to take martial arts lessons. And it's, it's about accumulating experiences. And that forces us into having too much to do too many commitments. So those are the three big inhibiting beliefs. I need to be more, I need to do more and I need to get more. And if you're gonna beat busy-ness, you have to replace those inhibiting beliefs with empowering truths.

Corey Andrew Powell ([18:05](#)):

Thank you for listening to motivational Mondays presented by the national society of leadership and success and available wherever you listen to your favorite podcast. I'm Corey Andrew Powell, and I'll see you again here next week.