



## **MURRAY WRIGHT**

STARTING 2020 WITH COMPASSION AND ACTION

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**LEADERSHIP MOMENTS PODCAST TRANSCRIPT**



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# EPISODE 58



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[Start of Transcription]

**MURRAY:** (00:00) Pa pa pa pa, the Leadership Moments Podcast of 2020. It's the first one and here is your host Murray Wright.

(00:14) Okay folks, we've let it go. We will not be continuing that but we just thought to give you a sound of what it could be like.

[music]

(00:29) Hello and welcome to the first Leadership Moments Podcast of 2020. Now what a start to the year it has been. The last few weeks and even months in Australia have certainly demonstrated that it's going to be a challenging year in so many ways for our own individual and perhaps even more so, our collective leadership. Of course, I'm talking about the bushfires that have hit different parts of the country. So first of all, to my Australian listeners and friends, I hope you're all safe and well and I'm sure you would join me from all over the world in sharing our best wishes and thoughts for all of those caught up in in the unfolding bush crisis in Australia. And that's whether it be emergency service workers, volunteers, communities affected by the fires and most of all, those who have lost homes and loved ones. Now at these times we can feel a bit helpless. We look on and wonder how can we help? And as you sit there and you think about that, the advice that keeps coming up again and again is that giving cash donations is the most useful way and really supporting the various professional organizations that go about helping, supporting, and not just in the moment but for the long term through the recovery process. And personally, I'm really mindful of the fact that fires will go out one day. We'll all get back to work and we'll be busy with our lives but the people in those communities, their recovery and the hardship continues. So it's really important not to forget them and keep them in our minds.

(02:17) So with that in mind, I dedicated this episode to recovery assistance and all those people out there who need support for now and the longer term. I put up a link on my podcast page that takes you to the Red Cross donations page. And I've chosen the Red Cross because they cover the wide gamut of services – immediate need, food, help, but also longer term counseling and support. I'm going to keep it up there on my podcast page for the immediate future. If you've enjoyed my podcast, you've used the resources or downloaded the transcripts I would ask you to consider making a donation because even if it's only a dollar, it all counts. If you think you'd prefer to give somewhere else and you haven't had the chance yet, I've given links to St. Vincent de Paul, the Rural Fire Service and WIRES who take care of wildlife in the Show Notes, if you prefer to donate to them. There are, of course, many other ways to donate. My



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advice would be to be careful and check the appeals that they're authentic and the money is going to go where you really want it to go as apparently there are a few scams around.

(03:27) Okay. Let's get to the show proper. It's just me today. Normal services will resume with the next episode with guests sharing their leadership moments and we're lining up a great set of guests over the next 12 months to bring you those leadership moments and hopefully those insights about leadership, insights that you can take on yourself and maybe get a bit of inspiration and as I always say, about being a better leader, making a better world and also living a better life, looking after yourself.

(03:59) Now, to be honest as I've thought about today, and this has been building up over a few months, what am I going to say? What's going to be meaningful? Because there's a lot going on around us and you really wonder, what can I say that's going to be meaningful and is relevant? It hasn't been easy. I'm going to have a go. I hope I cover something that resonates with you and if it doesn't, well, you've only got 15 minutes to tolerate me and then it will all be over. But I do hope by sharing some of my personal reflections and thoughts it just gives you a shift and something to think about as we go into 2020.

(04:39) So what I'm going to do is share a few of my recent leadership moments and these moments, they've really led me to look at the future and challenge myself about what next? What am I going to do next? And I find that really magnified in this environment with so much going on around us at so many different levels. And in this I'm going to explore compassion and what does real compassion mean for me? And what I'd learned from thinking about that and how I'm going to use that? And then I'd like to finish by sharing an uplifting and empowering story to take us into 2020, a story that I hope just condenses it down to something really simple that we can grasp and take with us. It's very simple but well, I think it's quite powerful and a lovely story and there is a personal connection to that story. So I hope you enjoy. Here we go!

(05:34) So, the first question I always ask is, "Who has influenced you the most?" And someone who has influenced me a lot in the last 12 months has been Peter Hawkins and if you've not listened to Peter talk about tomorrow's leadership in episode 46, then I'd really say to you, do listen to it and if you have, maybe it's good to listen to it again. Peter has got such great wisdom, insight and compassion and as he talks, he asks some great questions. Why he has influenced me a lot is his systemic approach



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and by taking that approach he really challenges us to be accountable for what we do. And it's not just accountable to ourselves and to our current job and what we've got to deliver but he really challenges us to go beyond that and think about our stakeholders, but our stakeholders in the wider community, wider business not only now but in the future. And his question to us is always not what do you want to do but what do you need to do? What do those stakeholders need from you? And it's very challenging. And part of this, part of the stakeholders he brings in are our future grandchildren and the environment. Now I'd always listen to this and intellectually I got it and I've used it, particularly the grandchildren and the family piece with clients. And it actually does create shift and new perspective. So, as I say, I've got an intellectually but I'd never really until now in the wake of what we're experiencing in Australia, all I can say is it's taken on a new poignancy and meaning for me and really activated something deep in me. And this has also been fueled by discussions with my own children and listening to them talk about the current situation, talk about their concerns, their frustrations and what's happening to the climate and how we're responding to it. And importantly the level of consciousness they bring to how they go about things, how they consume resources, the consideration they put into the choices they're making. They are really invested and it really made me question myself. And I want to go back to Peter in an exercise he does and I want to share it with you and maybe it's useful for you. It just helps you think a bit differently. In this time of turmoil around us, what can you do? What do you need to do? So what Peter does is he connects us with our future grandchildren and he gets us to think about them standing in their future world, their future planet and he asks us to think about what would they say to us? What do they need from us as we go about our daily business, as we fulfill our lives? And we're working in the present, what do they in the future need from us now? So take a moment in your own mind's eye, be with your real and if you haven't got grandchildren yet, your imagined grandchildren, your prospective grandchildren in this future world. Be with them. See them there and just bring them there to you and visualize their faces and just think of the world around them that they're sitting in and they're looking at their grandfather or grandmother, what will they say to you as you go about your business today? What is it they need you to understand now? What do they need from you? What's the message they give you? And again, it's not what you want to do. It's about what you need to do and how do you want to be able to respond when – I'm going to borrow a question from Greta Thunberg – when they ask you, "What have you done?"

(09:25) I leave that with you and you can explore that as you will, but what's changed for me with this is I've got a new perspective and whilst I'm clear about my 'why' – and I talked about it earlier – I connect people to their potential to be better leaders,



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make a better world and live a better life. My 'aha' moment – so we go to the second question, Leadership Moment question – my 'aha' moment in recent months has been to realize that it's all good and well to have the purpose but I've actually got to lift to another level and really commit to action, commit to that better world and deliver. Now, I know I have positive impacts. I know that I do good things, but this year for me as I look at 2020, it's going to be stepping up a bit more, getting more uncomfortable, because as you do think about it and you do ask those questions, I don't know about you, but for me it's very uncomfortable. It is much easier to just keep going on the way I am in my comfort zone. I've worked hard for a long time. I don't want to talk about how long but I've worked hard. I'd love to take it easier but damn, that conversation with my future grandkids, even with my present kids, it's a great motivator. So, my purpose is all good and well. My 'aha' moment, the question is, "What am I going to do about it? What's next?" So, that's for me. Don't get me wrong. I don't expect to stop climate change myself. I don't expect to lift societies out of poverty. It's just that by adding more stretch and hopefully having a bigger impact on different parts of the world around me, I can have a legacy that I can be proud of and my grandchildren can be proud of. And again, I don't want to preach to you what you should or shouldn't do. It's a personal reflection and I'm asking the question, opening up the space to build more consciousness. It's certainly brought new perspective to my thinking. I hope it maybe helped you with your thinking or maybe you share it with someone and it helps them.

(11:36) Now, let's get on to the next part, something that's come up part of this and again it comes from my work with Peter. It's this whole concept of compassion and showing compassion for people. Now, Peter has talked about it says that when you're coaching people whether it be individuals or teams that you have to have compassion for everyone in the system. So, not only the people in the room but all the people outside the room. And some of those people outside the room may be the ones who are causing the problems and difficulties for the people inside, but when you're holding that space it's important to have compassion and hold it, because if you don't, you're going to lose perspective. You're going to become biased and you're actually, you're going to take sides. You're going to start judging and in fact, you're not helping anyone in that space. But if we can hold empathy and compassion for everyone including the other person, then we can build better understanding and do better work. Because if we lose that compassion, we can't understand, we can't serve because we lose our ability to be constructive and collaborative and effectively we take sides and it doesn't help anyone. I get this and I can say to others, "Well, you have to show compassion and be compassionate. How do they feel? It's great! It really helps people sit in other's shoes. It gets new perspectives and they find new



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ways. That's all good and well to tell people, but actually when it's yourself and you have to have that compassion, and I'm talking about real compassion, it can be hard. And I bring this up now because right now I am struggling to have compassion for some. Ultimately I know if I'm going to be able to do anything positive I have to find compassion. I have to have more of it. I get it on and off, but retaining it is the key. I'm not beating myself up too hard about it. I'm only human, but intellectually I know I have to build that compassion.

(13:42) Let me explain a bit more. In the current situation we have in Australia, it's easy to see a whole load of compassion out there for those affected by the bushfires. We talked about it earlier. It's easier, easy. You see the outpouring of compassion, the donations, the different ways people are helping one another. That's easy. But there are others, and it's not so easy to apply to. And of course I'm talking about some of our political leaders, not only in Australia but all around and there's other players, other people in different situations. It's not just now. There is always somewhere someone who really drives you crazy and you get angry. And I've struggled to have compassion at this level. But what's helped me is digging deeper and actually looking and understanding what compassion is. And what I've learned, and I understand it better now, so instead of just seeing it as an intellectual thing, I'm starting to embody it and embrace it more. What I've learned is that compassion is about showing kindness and caring and a willingness to help others. Now, that's the obvious bit. You know, when you feel compassion for someone, you really want to help out. The key thing here that has helped me find more compassion is understanding that compassion is not forgiveness. So, it's not about letting people off the hook. It's not about forgiveness. It's not about a lack of accountability. So, I'm clearer now that to get to compassion, it's about putting the actions of others aside and looking at the person because let's face it, we all do stuff and we're all humans. We've all got needs beyond what we do and if we can look at the human side, we can consider what's going on for people. Let's take political leaders, for example. Let's face it, it's not easy leading a country. Who would want that job? I'm glad I'm not doing it and I'm sure you're relieved that I'm not doing it. But they have to do stuff and it's not all going to gel with us and it gets frustrating and angry when they don't seem to listen. But at the end of the day these people are human beings. So, with that appreciation and working – and it is work because it's not easy – to hold that compassion, I can ask the question, what can I do? What can I do to help? What can I do to support? And it may not be to help or support them directly but what can I do? What's needed? What can I influence? So, that's a big example. Have you got anyone in your life? You struggle with compassion.



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What would be different if you could think about them as a human and what is it they need? What support and help they need from you that you can give them that will actually change? Because this is what Jim Dethmer talks about when he talks about “leading above the line”. It’s passing through that defensiveness, blaming, angry place, taking a deep breath [breathes deeply] and making a choice to get above the line, having compassion, asking questions, acknowledging what you own and then asking, “How can I help?” “What part do I have in this?” Because at the end of the day we all have a part in it. What can I do? And that’s the constructive, collaborative, solution focused space that leads to better outcomes and it’s a better place to live as against living in that defensive, combative, negative space below the line. I’ll put a link into that podcast where Jim Dethmer explains it in the Show Notes.

(17:24) Now, as I said earlier, I realize this. It can be hard work. Sympathy is easy, isn’t it? But real compassion? Real compassion to those who you feel have wronged you? That is hard. That takes effort. And what I’m finding, it does change perspective and actually I’m starting to find it quite empowering as I go to higher levels with this. Sounds a bit corny, a bit preachy but that’s just where I’m at. With all this going around me, it’s the thoughts that have been going on for me. So, I hope this helps you sharing.

(17:57) Now, let’s finish this off with a wonderful quote from Desmond Tutu. You know, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, he was the South African Anglican cleric and he was in South Africa. He worked against apartheid and he supported human rights, a wonderful, energetic man. So I would ask you to imagine his loud, booming voice speaking this, because this really makes it clear for me. So Desmond Tutu says:

“Compassion is not just feeling with someone, but seeking to change the situation. Frequently people think compassion and love are merely sentimental. No!”

Imagine his voice. No!

“They are very demanding. If you are going to be compassionate, be prepared for action.”

Be prepared for action. So a question to all of us as we think of being compassionate is, and for me that has particular resonance at the moment is, “Are you prepared for action?”



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(19:07) Okay. Now, I don't have a mistake to admit to. Let's move on. There's plenty of them in the year. I want to finish with a story. And this story I hope demonstrates both compassion, but the action. But I think more importantly I hope this gives us a place to start at these times when it can all be a bit overwhelming.

(19:34) So the story is actually set in Lilongwe in Malawi and it's in the early 2000's. There's a team visiting from the Simpson Maternity Centre in the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary and they had gone to Lilongwe to support and do work there. There would be volunteers within the unit who said, "We're going there. We're going to do our work." Off they go. So when they get there they discover that there's a top hospital for the well-to-do citizens and a bottom hospital for the less fortunate. So the Simpson's team spent their time in the bottom hospital and they found the conditions there terrible for the mothers giving birth. They saw this was resulting in high maternal and infant death. So they spent their time there. Visit over. The team comes home. One of the midwives was so moved by her experience, so filled with compassion – because remember compassion as we've seen is about taking action, wanting to help, she felt she had to do something. A passionate cook, she put together the recipes she'd collected from her mom and family members and friends over the years and she published the recipe book in 2005 called "MUMs Recipes" and the aim of this was to help other families particularly women and children in Malawi. Let's fast forward to a few years ago. In the end she produced three recipe books and from the funds raised with those books and from her visits to the hospital over there, she helped build a new hospital clinic. She made HIV retroviral drugs available. They built feeding centers for the under-fives which in turn became nursery schools and so many other things. In all "Mums" raised 600,000 pounds sterling for Malawi. Now that midwife was called or is called Linda McDonald and she was deservedly awarded an OBE for her work. So why am I telling this story? Well Linda lived in the same street as me back in Coatbridge near Glasgow where we grew up. To be honest, she was my first girlfriend. I was in touch with Linda at the end of last year after many years... Not being in touch really. I knew she'd been doing the "MUMs" work but I hadn't realized the extent of the work being done. So the "MUMs" success is part of why I tell this story. It's inspiring and it's so... but again, it makes you feel a little bit insignificant. How do I match that? Oh, blimey! But I want to share part of what Linda wrote in her email to me that whilst it's challenging, it has focused and empowered me and I hope it resonates with you as you look to 2020 and gear yourself up for a great year. And I hope it helps if you're seeking to answer the question, "What can I do?" So let me share what Linda wrote:



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"I have a great belief we can all do something no matter how small. Mother Teresa of Calcutta used to say, 'If you can't feed hundreds, feed one.'"

(22:39) That's it. Thank you for listening. Have a great compassionate 2020. I look forward to being part of it with you and bringing you more leadership moments. If you haven't already, please make a donation to the bushfire recovery. No matter how small, it all counts. Use the links provided in the Show Notes. Thanks again. Until the next time.

[music]

That's it for this episode. Thanks for listening. Head to the podcast page at [www.murraywright.com.au](http://www.murraywright.com.au) for the transcript, key learnings and resources from this episode. You'll find the Leadership Questions from all my guests under the Resources tab and while you're there, why not subscribe to the Leadership Moments and that way, you'll never have to miss one. Until the next time.

[End of Transcription]



## PLANNING A CHANGE?

In the middle of, or planning change for yourself or team and want to get it right? Talk with Murray to discuss options on building clarity, setting expectations and creating the culture that will engage people and bring success.

Either call +61 407 262 475 or via the website.  
Look forward to hearing from you.