

Overcoming self-doubt - be determined and find a good listener

An interview with Ron Prasad - 12 October 2020



Connection Matters Radio (CMR): As many of you are aware, I'm joined on most Monday programs by my good friend, counsellor, life coach, and CEO of Beat Bullying With Confidence, Ron Prasad. Today's program coincides with the return to school for many of Victorian students and we'll get to that in a minute. First of all, Ron, my wonderful friend, welcome back to Connection Matters Radio.

Ron Prasad: Hello, Uncle Charles. Thanks for having me back.

CMR: Ron, you speak a lot about bullying. This is your life passion to help parents, to help schools and above all to help students who are being subjected to bullying. And also, I'll point out to help those students who are actually bullying others themselves. Ron, what led you to founding with your co-founder Gus, Beat Bullying With Confidence? What were your life experiences as a youth?

Ron: Thank you for Uncle Charles. I was subjected to bullying at school and when I was playing sports for clubs. Mostly because of the colour of my skin - I've got dark skin and I also had a speech impediment when I was a child so I had difficulty in speaking. And those things made me a prime target for bullying.

My friend, Gus, who is the co-founder of Beat Bullying With Confidence Foundation,

he was a migrant kid and he could barely speak English, so he also had a big target on his back.

And having been subjected to bullying for many, many years obviously, as you would know Uncle Charles, because you've done a lot of work in the mental health space, it takes a toll on you, emotionally, mentally and physically as well.

So after going through all that, Gus and I decided, "Look, we went through this. We all overcame this. Let's share our story and provide hope for kids who are getting bullied right now, for whatever reason. Colour of their skin, their religion, their life choices, anything. Let's give them hope. Let's remind them that if we can overcome it, so can they."

CMR: Ron, it's interesting we're talking about bullying and of course that brings to mind visions of school kids picking on school kids but it can actually take a more, maybe, passive approach. I remember you once telling me that you, years ago, had a desire to be a public speaker - and you are now of course, a quite successful public speaker - and someone to whom you spoke said, "Well, with that speech impediment you're never ever going to make it."

Yet, what you did similar to me, you joined an organisation and we won't name it right now and you proceeded to just discipline

yourself and deal with that impediment and prove that person wrong. Tell me a little bit about that story if you wouldn't mind.

Ron: Yeah, for sure Uncle Charles. So I took part in a speech contest as part of this public speaking organisation. And after I gave my speech in the speech contest, a very highly experienced member of this organisation said in front of everyone, "Ron, that was a really good speech but please realise that you have a speech impediment or speaking difficulty and this is not for you." He said those things. And I had a notepad in front of me and I put three words in bold letters, in red, PROVE HIM WRONG.

CMR: And you have. You have.

Ron: Yes, Uncle Charles. I said, "You know what? I'm going to work on this craft and get better and better and better. And there'll be no end to this process. It's going to be ongoing." And as you will remember Uncle Charles, the following year I competed against this gentleman in a speech contest.

CMR: I remember.

Ron: I won and he didn't even get second or third place. I'm not saying that from an egotistical point of view, all I'm saying is that when you have been bullied your confidence takes a big hit.

You start feeling down about yourself, you question your abilities and when people like that come along, they amplify the problem. And then only you are the one who is responsible for picking yourself up, taking yourself to the next level, working as hard as you can to achieve the goal that you have in your mind and in your heart.

CMR: And, I think, another interesting side from that story or lesson to be learned from that particular story, Ron, because yes, I do remember it quite well and I think it's so important, is that whilst you were determined yourself to, as you wrote on that bit of paper, prove him wrong, one of the great things about the organisation to which we both belonged, let's mention it, it's okay, it's Toastmasters International of course, is that it's a peer support organisation. And in order to improve, you work with mentors, you work

with colleagues to improve. And I think that really has such a bearing when it comes to bullying and any severe life pressure situation. That doing it solo doesn't always work. Now, how much did you benefit from your colleagues, friends, and mentors within the organisation?

Ron: Well, Uncle Charles, the biggest bonus for me was I met my wife through this organisation. So that was good. And then having mentors and coaches like yourself, that was priceless. That was invaluable.

Another thing I want to talk about just quickly, Uncle Charles, when you get bullied it's important to reach out for support. We've said this many times. And the same applies when you set a goal for yourself, it always helps to reach out for support. And Uncle Charles you, you have supported me so much through this journey.

And really it's for everybody, whether you're looking to overcome a speech impediment and become a speaker or you're going through the real stress of being bullied at school, keeping it to yourself doesn't really help, does it?

No Uncle Charles. Now, I know I've said this before it can eat you up on that inside and you might feel lost, you might feel lonely. The point that I wish to emphatically make is that if you want this support, if you want, you will never be alone.

CMR: The difficult thing, of course, Ron, and you and I have discussed this several times before on air and off air is finding someone to trust. It can be so difficult. So how does someone go about, whether they're a student or whether they're someone in the workforce who's being bullied or who is being thumped down because of this constant doubt expressed by their peers or their managers, how do they find someone they can trust? Is it always someone within the family?

Ron: Uncle Charles, it can be anyone. And let me quickly break this down for you. This is how I refer to it. There's two types of support out there. One, is what I call personal support, which is within your inner circle and then this professional support within your outer circle. So at school you might talk to your teachers, the school counsellor.

At the workplace you might talk to someone in human resources, for example, and that's the professional support in that outer circle. When it comes to finding support in the inner

circle with your family, your friends, most people would have someone that they can confide in. Someone that they can use as a sounding board. Because sometimes Uncle Charles, and I've not seeing this through my experience as a youth mentor and a life coach, sometimes people don't need solutions, they just need a sounding board.

CMR: Yes. I was going to bring that point up. You don't really need to have someone to whom you're speaking, just constantly consuming the conversation themselves and going back with their own solutions. You need someone to talk to.

Ron: Hundred percent Uncle Charles. So if anyone, any of our listeners ever get approached by somebody who needs support, be it through bullying or mental health issues, please remember one thing: the most important thing for you to do or you can do is to understand that person's situation. It's not about you acting in a professional capacity and giving them 100 solutions to choose from. It's all about you showing them that you're doing your best to understand they are coming from.

CMR: Ron, we have run out of time. We will pick this conversation up again next Monday. Once again, thank you so much for coming on to Connection Matters Radio, sharing your experiences that were very personal today and also your knowledge. Take care and we'll speak soon.

Ron: Thank you, Uncle Charles.

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