

Living the Mission Episode 3: Congruent Chaos with Dr. Tracy Masterson

Delaney [00:00:05] Welcome to Living the Mission with the Center for Service and Social Action. I'm Delaney Burns.

Caroline [00:00:09] And I'm Caroline Maltese. Pull up your Adirondack chair.

Delaney [00:00:13] Or grab your favorite snack from The Tween.

Caroline [00:00:14] And come chat with us and some friends about experiences that have shaped our values to promote social change.

Both [00:00:19] And Live the Mission.

Caroline [00:00:24] Hey, Delaney.

Delaney [00:00:25] Hi, Caroline.

Caroline [00:00:26] What's going on this week? How are ya?

Delaney [00:00:29] In a good mood today! Have some exciting things happening. My student teaching school got to go back in person today. Taught my first lesson.

Caroline [00:00:38] How to go?

Delaney [00:00:39] Very well.

Caroline [00:00:40] Yes, that is exciting.

Delaney [00:00:41] Yeah. What's happening in your life?

Caroline [00:00:45] I don't really know. Pretty neutral week. No extreme highs. No high highs. No low lows.

Delaney [00:00:50] That's all right. I have a lot of weeks like that.

Caroline [00:00:52] I'm chillin. I get to go home. Oh, actually, I get to go home on Friday. It's my brother's 14th birthday.

Delaney [00:00:57] Oh, very nice.

Caroline [00:00:58] Yes. So we'll have a little dinner, for him. I'm excited.

Delaney [00:01:03] Celebration!

Caroline [00:01:03] All right. So today congruence is on the agenda. So we're going we're going to be talking about congruence today. Congruence, according to the social change model, is thinking, feeling, behaving and acting with consistency, genuineness, authenticity and honesty. This has to do with the alignment of who we are and how we lead.

Delaney [00:01:25] Yeah. So today, our guest, she is someone we have heard great things about. We have not had her as a professor personally, but we've had good experiences with her, encounters with her. We wanted to bring her on because we feel like her background is something that aligns with this tenet and this value. Our guest today is Dr. Masterson, and we are excited to hear about her background in psychology and how congruence has played into her life. Kind of hear about, you know, the discomfort that we might face as individuals and as college students and throughout our lives and how that kind of can come into play with congruence. And also seeing that level of congruence and consistency that we thrive off of as human beings. So just looking into that and seeing how we can take all of that and live it out. So let's get started.

Caroline [00:02:18] Let's get started.

Caroline [00:02:27] OK. Well, hello, Dr. Masterson. Thank you so much for joining us today to get started. We would like for you to introduce yourself. Um, include any fun facts or any quirks about yourself so that our students can get to know you a little bit better.

Tracy [00:02:42] Absolutely. So I'm Tracy Masterson. I'm a professor in the Department of Psychology, and I love it. I'm in the car because I have two children and a husband, but I'm picking them up. So I'm, you know, just a working mom. But I love what I do, so I wouldn't really have it any other way. I have a daughter who is in fifth grade and a son who's in second grade, and they are a handful and humble me as a child psychologist all the time. Fun sort of random fact is, I went to John Carroll as an undergrad. But I was a bio major. I sort of did medical school first and decided I just really wanted to do psychology. But I actually this is sort of interesting related to the Center for Service. I there was no center for service when I was there, which makes me feel old. But I remember taking a class and it was through the Department of Sociology called Introduction to Community Service. And so I sort of like did my own thing. I did do volunteer work in service at but I was at John Carroll. I did some tutoring at a school that also was no longer there, which makes me feel old, Mary B. Martin and I. So I would drive the van. And so I think, like, if I fast forward to present day CSSA, I would have probably been like a liaison or something like that. So that's my fun fact. I know one of your icebreakers is what's my favorite food in the in The Tween. Yeah, it used to be called like the Wolf. And back then I'm giving you like John Carroll history 101! But I mean, I, I wish I went there more often. I'm sort of, again, this working mom. So I have a fridge in my office and I usually eat in my office. But I remember being sort of a fan of like the Philly Steak sandwich or sometimes pizza in The Tween. Nothing crazy.

Delaney [00:04:26] Yeah,.

Tracy [00:04:26] A little thing. Yeah, that's me. I teach like I teach a lot of the child classes, so I teach Adolescent Development, Child and Adolescent Psycho Pathology and Autism course, sometimes I'll teach Intro and sometimes I'll teach Child Development. And if you ever saw a baby around like a fake baby last semester in the fall I think twenty nineteen. That was from my class. We had a fake baby and I made them carry it around.

Caroline [00:04:50] I think I remember that.

Tracy [00:04:52] Maybe made some appearances on Warrensville and other fun places.

Caroline [00:04:55] Oh that was that baby. Oh I didn't know about that.

Tracy [00:04:59] My son will ask about the baby, like, where's the baby?

Delaney [00:05:03] Oh, my goodness.

Tracy [00:05:04] I'm nothing if not consistently wild.

Delaney [00:05:08] OK. Well, thank you so much for the thorough introduction and some fun John Carroll facts. So we're going to hop right into it. Today, we're talking about congruence. And we are just going to ask you some questions. Our first question today is, how do you feel that congruence and psychology are interconnected?

Tracy [00:05:25] Oh, they're very connected. I mean, there's even a theory that sort of rooted in that by his name, and be all fancy, his name is Leon Festinger. And he talks about the theory of cognitive dissonance. And so that's sort of when someone has maybe a belief, but yet their behavior is sort of inconsistent with that belief. So something easy to maybe think about would be like we kind of know cognitively, obviously, that drinking and driving or driving while intoxicated is not good. But at the same time, really intelligent, well-meaning people sometimes engage in those behaviors and sometimes they sort of rationalize that behavior because there's that discomfort. And we don't do well when there's discomfort as human beings, emotionally and psychologically, we like things to be in sort of a homeostatic balance. And so we sort of rationalize it. Maybe it changes our way of thinking. So you might say so someone who even knows, like, OK, it's not okay. Of course. Of course. You know, you might say, you know, I didn't have that much to drink or I've driven before like this. It's no big deal or, you know, I am a really good driver. I can handle this or something bad won't happen to me, that kind of thing. And so, you know, in psychology when you have some inconsistencies, you know, your that's causing you stress, distress, it sometimes things that we work on for sure in a clinical setting since I'm a clinical psychologist. So I would say Festinger had it right. We sort of manipulate our beliefs or behaviors and that's probably the most consistently psychology relates to that I would say.

Caroline [00:07:04] Yes to this concept of congruence. It definitely plays a huge part in some of the things that you're teaching.

Tracy [00:07:10] And it also has implications for things like. So I study a lot of teenagers. Again, one of my main core classes is adolescent development. And, you know, and I see the same thing sort of in my young adults that are college students. Right. So sometimes how they are when you're trying to figure yourself out. You do have to sort of try different things. And that's pretty normal and natural. But like some don't fit well. Or sometimes you're doing things like how you maybe present yourself in the classroom, may be extremely different from how you're presenting yourself outside. And, you know, obviously it makes sense to be sort of mildly different. You know, I don't want you to behave how you would on Thursday nights in my class, you behave when you're out with your friends, how you are in my class. But I think when you have too discrepant like it's too far removed from each other, it it sort of rattles too who they are and that identity process. And, you know, you can get lost. I think especially in this day and age, with so many possible options, so many exposures to, I don't know, social media outlets or dangerous things, I think it can be really dangerous if your presentation is to discrepant across places.

Delaney [00:08:25] I like what you were pointing out and alluding to there is like I think as humans and as individuals, we really like to at least have like a baseline of congruence. You know, there's

allowed to be separation and discomfort and trying new things, but we really thrive off of, like, at least some consistency and some congruence there.

Tracy [00:08:42] Right. For sure. And it's sort of alarming, you know, when you see your friends behaving in that kind of way, when you see family members, people you love sort of acting, you know, in ways that is not in their best interest or not not consistent. So, yeah, we love consistency as human beings. We sort of thrive for that. And sometimes we even thrive for consistency when it's sort of unhealthy. You know, it's funny, like sometimes I work with families. And so that's the sort of theory that I sort of ascribe to when I think about families is called family systems therapy. And it's the same. It's a little bit different than congruence, but the same idea of homeostasis. We like things stable. And when like, say, even there's something like there's a lot of fighting within the family or something and that may even feel normative. So sometimes when something changes, people sort of maybe when when finally one issue is resolved, sometimes because they love the chaos, another issue will arise in another kid to sort of maintain that even if it's a negative cycle we still sometimes like to keep things. So my job is to help notice that, and have some insight about it and change it. So I don't know. Human beings are interesting creatures, that's for sure.

Caroline [00:09:50] So to sort of segway here into our next question, as we're talking about these values and as this whole podcast is centered around the social change model of leadership. And the seven core values that go with that, we were wondering if you would be able to tell us about a time when maybe your values were tested and some strategies that you used to overcome that situation.

Tracy [00:10:11] Right. You know, it's interesting, too, as a psychologist, you know, one of the tenants of, one of the important characteristics of being a psychologist is sort of being nonjudgmental, working on, you know, we all have biases. We're sort of born that way. I mean, we have sort of automatic thoughts about things. We have stereotypes, but sort of as a function of going through my grad school and even my time at John Carroll as an undergrad, you know, you have to sort of really look at yourself, look at your biases, search them out, not pretend that they don't exist, but sort of look for, you know, I don't know, operative opportunities to grow, to learn from others, expose yourself to lots of different people and stuff. And so I think, you know, one thing that's become important to me in terms of being congruent is like, look. I'm I'm at the core of who I am, I'm really a big believer in all human rights and fighting for those rights, and I think sometimes not being silent when I see or hear those things being, I don't know, people being saying inappropriate remarks or people making jokes. And I'll give you sort of an example. You know, I live in this. I have a lot of friends who are very open minded, non judgmental, and, I don't know, just again more open-minded. And like I remember one day or one time we went to a holiday party at my husband's work. So he's in the world of business. I'm sort of in this academic ivory tower world. And again, in psychology, most of my friends are very open minded and just sort of, you know, here to help anyone who needs assistance. And, you know, at times some people, like my husband sometimes is like, you have to behave herself. Right? Like, I'll say things a lot. And, you know, I think, you know, sort of I think that's an example when even my husband, who's fantastic and wonderful, you know, sometimes it's not always the most comfortable thing when someone makes like a racial remark or even a slight joke about things. So even then, like sometimes our neighborhood, you know, you'll hear people like joking about like Black Lives Matter. And you're like, I you know, I do believe black lives matter. So I know it at times, even when it was not super comfortable. And it was also with my husband's some of his bosses, some of his coworkers that I just sort of had to say, you know, I find that pretty offensive and or, you know what I'm saying? And it was really it's a hard thing. And I think my husband understood and

appreciated it. But it's also a hard thing to do at those situations. You know, it's one thing to sort of be silent and not contribute. But at the same time, I think you have to express it can't be tolerated to say, you know, sort of rude comments in any circumstance, particularly not in a business setting, even if it's a social one. You know, I can't sit there. I have to walk the walk.

Delaney [00:12:53] I just wanted to ask too, and then in that sense of, you know, standing up for what you believe and making sure that that is coming through, I know that it can sometimes be difficult. And we have like conversations where we talk about how we need to communicate that and how we need to, you know, be brave and stand up and walk the walk. Like you were saying. Is there anything else that you like would say is like a tangible strategy or just like a piece of advice in and doing that and really living that out?

Tracy [00:13:24] It depends on the issue. But I think it's so much easier to have respect for other people when you, again, through service or through traveling abroad or doing immersion trips to sort of like spend more time with other people. I think when you get sort of closed off in your own world, it's really easy to only see your own world view. And as human beings, there's another sort of tendency that like tends to say want to feel more comfortable with like and I think pushing yourself out into different comfort zones, which colleges about the most perfect place I can think about to do that in a really a safe and and like a really deliberate, meaningful way. So so I think that's a really important thing. And I would say, you know, I didn't, like, come out of the womb super evolved. I grew up in a really small white suburban town. And it wasn't that there just wasn't a ton of opportunity to interact with all kinds of different people. But I've sort of made made up for that in time. And so I think that's a great piece of advice.

Delaney [00:14:24] And the one thing I was thinking, too, and just in terms of, you know, sometimes you have students who don't want to do service and then we have some that are like liaisons or that are going deeper into CSSA. I think that sometimes we forget that we are trying to be congruent and we are trying to, you know, live out what we're saying. Like when we have those experiences, when we do service, like those are all conscious efforts. I feel like sometimes people think that's not enough, but we are doing, you know, the work to try and, you know, meet people and love people and serve them and everything. So I think that's a good point that you were making as well.

Caroline [00:14:55] So our last question here for you is, how do you see the value of congruence playing into living the John Carroll mission?

Tracy [00:15:05] You know, try to be pretty, living the John Carroll mission. I mean, I feel like my my life again as a psychologist fits in really well with all of that. I think I, living the mission for me is sort of seeing my students as, I don't know. I'm very interested and interested and aware that they are, you know, holistic human beings. And they're not just students in my class. And my class is not the only thing they do.

Caroline [00:15:34] Well, thank you so much for coming on here with us today. We really appreciate all of your insights that you had talking about the value of congruence and how you Live the Mission..

Delaney [00:15:45] Yeah.

Tracy [00:15:46] And sorry I'm in my car! I'll show you my kid's cubby. So, anyway, I'm a mess. Congruently.

Caroline [00:15:55] Congruently, thank you so much.

Delaney [00:15:59] Thank you, so nice to meet you. Talk with you.

Both [00:16:03] Bye bye!

Delaney [00:16:07] Thank you for gathering with us here on Living the Mission.

Caroline [00:16:10] We hope that you continue the journey with us as we learn how to be socially responsible members of our community.

Delaney [00:16:16] In the meantime, connect with CSSA on all your favorite platforms.

Caroline [00:16:19] Instagram,

Delaney [00:16:20] Twitter,

Caroline [00:16:21] Facebook.

Both [00:16:22] See you next time!