

Audio Transcription

Season /Episode #:	Season 4 Episode 7
Guest:	Kirsten Aghen
Title:	How Ownership Inspires the Leaders of Tomorrow with Kirsten Aghen

Dr. Shari Dade	You are now listening to the Audacity to Go podcast, a podcast about mis stepping into success. Get ready to dive into conversation and real stories from leaders as they share how failure activates. The growth mindset is an important part of learning and motivation for improvement. I'm your host, doctor Shari Dade, psychologist with the National Center for Organizational Development.
Dr. Shari Dade	Thank you for tuning in. Let's get started.
Announcer	Support for this leadership podcast comes from the National Center for Organization Development. NCOD aims to increase the long term growth and performance of the Department of Veterans Affairs by collaboratively working with the leaders throughout the VA to improve organizational outcomes by supporting the development of an engaged workforce for additional information on our services. Click the link in the show notes.
Dr. Shari Dade	As leaders, we often talk about the importance of ownership. When team members feel a genuine sense of ownership, they're more engaged, more motivated, and more committed to the collective goals of the team. They become the organizations leaders of tomorrow. But what does it truly mean for a team to feel a sense of ownership? How can leaders cultivate an environment where every team member is invested, engaged, and feels responsible for the success of the team?
Dr. Shari Dade	Well, we'll tackle some of those questions on today's episode. I am excited to be joined by Kirsten Aghen. Miss Aghen is the director of the VHA National Improvement Office and IO within the Office of Quality Management in the VHA Office of Quality and Patient Safety. Since joining NATO in 2018, she's been an integral part in establishing NATO as a program office.
Dr. Shari Dade	She currently leads teams of improvement and analytics experts who develop and promote a culture of continuous process improvement to enhance both clinical and administrative performance of VA medical facilities around the country. Get ready to join us as we explore an incredibly important topic how leaders can inspire ownership within their teams. This is the Audacity to Fail podcast season four, episode seven How Ownership Inspires the Leaders of Tomorrow.
Dr. Shari Dade	Hi, Kirsten, how are you?

Kirsten Aghen	Hi. Good. Thank you so much for having me.
Dr. Shari Dade	Yeah, thank you so much for being here. I appreciate you. And I'm extremely happy to have you here, today, because you've got some pretty extensive experience in helping leaders and teams build cultures of ownership and accountability just in the work that you do each and every day. So I'm excited to hear your point of view on some of these things and also talk a little bit about how you, as a leader, has also moved from the doing into the ownership of leading.
Dr. Shari Dade	Sure. You ready to happen?
Kirsten Aghen	Yeah, for sure I am. Thank you.
Dr. Shari Dade	All right. So I always like to start off by just getting a firm understanding of what we're talking about. So let's start by understanding what ownership really means in the context of a team environment. How would you describe a team that owns the moment and owns the responsibility for their own success?
Kirsten Aghen	Sure. That's a great question. So I think when I think about moving into the space of a team, really establishing an investment and ownership and the outcome of the environment that we're trying to create, making that space for change, making that space for creativity. For me, with the leadership team that I'm working with now and moving into that space, creating that not only that environment where creativity can happen, but creating space both for failures and for the understanding of my vision.
Kirsten Aghen	Right. So I may have all these skills that I've spent my VA career, but I'm the private sector and in the in the public sector building. And as you move from being that technical expert into that leadership space, you know, the challenge I found was how to bring the leadership team into that space with me. Are they on board?
Kirsten Aghen	Are they really seeing the potential in the possibilities? And then how do I create that space as a leader for them to move into that, that leadership space in a way that brings their teams along in a cascade, that success and that vision throughout the team in the organization. And I think the biggest challenge was really trying to see if they really bought into that vision that I was trying to create.
Kirsten Aghen	Yeah. And I knew that, you know, I had a vision and that maybe sometimes I wasn't maybe articulating it in the best way, or that they weren't buying into what was possible. No fault of anybody's, but just I had a vision, and how can I articulate that and create the excitement and empowerment to go from, you know, what's not possible to what could be.

Kirsten Aghen	And there were several things that several lessons that I learned along the way. For example, even my words or actions could shut somebody down for sure, and I could squash that space inadvertently. And how I needed to be intentional about what I was doing, almost to the point where uncovering those on those on resistance places within my team was the challenge.
Kirsten Aghen	And then how do I address that in a way that still creates an environment that it's okay to fail and it's okay to disagree, because wanting that disagreement allows a different viewpoint. And then to create a space where I'm not reactive and instead saying, you know what I don't understand? Or that sounds crazy to me. That sounds interesting.
Kirsten Aghen	Can can you tell me more about what you're thinking and feeling? Yeah. And that's hard, hard to do when you are to sometimes be like, I can't. So, I think one of those things is just being measured and, and how I create that space, it just takes a lot of practice. And then when I fail to create that space thing, you know, wow, I really failed to create that space.
Kirsten Aghen	And having that humility to be like, we're on this journey together and how can I how can I bring you along in this space, like if you don't buy and can you talk to me? Why you don't buy in and let's work through that in challenging.
Dr. Shari Dade	No, I think that's huge. One of the things I mean, you said so many amazing things when you think about getting a team to the point to where they can take that ownership and like you said, move from that tactical expertise into that leadership expertise. And one of the things you mentioned is communicating the vision, sharing the vision, sharing what you see as a leader for the way forward and getting people bought in and being able to communicate that.
Dr. Shari Dade	What role does communication play in inspiring others to lead? And then how do you make sure that that message resonates with your team?
Kirsten Aghen	That's a really good question, because that's actually something we've worked on in the last year and a half or so about what communication and what that language we use as a leadership team looks like for each other. We've done things like desk assessments, three 60s to understand how we communicate in that space, because I learned it and it was kind of an moment in the beginning when we were talking about strategic planning and what the future look like for us, what our current state was, where we wanted to go and how we got there, that we were all actually saying the same thing, even though we thought we were saying something totally different.
Kirsten Aghen	So the fact that we were saying the same thing in that space, and I think, you know, we didn't know we were saying the same thing. We thought it was different, and we were focused on amplifying our own personal voices instead of really listening and

	saying, well, I think you're saying the same thing. Is this person, and let's really listen to where that is.
Kirsten Aghen	So I think we had to go through that storming in the beginning to understand that really we have a common denominator and anchoring us in that value system of why are we here? We're trying to achieve the same thing. And, you know, once we had even written out our values and one of our values is strong communication, writing out our values and anchoring us into that, that place, we were able to say, okay, so now that we know we can communicate, we just have to figure out what we want to communicate and when.
Kirsten Aghen	And do we need to know everything all the time? Do we need decisional communication? Do we need information communication? Do we need, you know, what does that communication look like for us. And then we trialed that for several months. You know that on top of the idea of tethered huddling and what information needs to go to our teams versus what needs to bubble up outside of our immediate office, we had to work through all of that with with examples, and we tried lots of different modeling formats.
Kirsten Aghen	We revamped our internal and external communication processes, and we we went back to our bigger team and said, you know, we're working on this as a leadership team or overcoming some of our own internal challenges. How can we keep you in the know on what's going on? And I think what we learned was that people wanted to know more than we thought that they did.
Kirsten Aghen	And people wanted those interim steps, those bite sized chunks of information to kind of feel like they were in the know and making some of those decisions along with us. So we learned to overcommunicate and we learned to overcommunicate with the team, with each other in multiple formats and writing. And it felt like a lot of work at first because we were like, oh man, I've said the same thing like ten times.
Kirsten Aghen	But at the end of the day, at the end of the day, like it was for a different audience or it was with a different purpose. And, and we needed to be very intentional about what we were saying because somebody wanted to hear and wanted to. And, and we learned really an absence of communication. People are going to make stuff up, right?
Dr. Shari Dade	Yeah. When people don't have the story, they make one up. Right.
Kirsten Aghen	Great. I got a lot of great stories in my head that things that could be going on. Right. So we had to fill that gap and really intentionally say, what do people need to hear and what do they want to hear? And how can we we make that available. And we we also try to work in this, this an office where things are very flat.

Kirsten Aghen	So any any employee, any member of the team can reach out to any leader or supervisor or me at any time with any question. There's nothing or nobody. There's no question that can't be asked. And there's nobody who's off limits in terms of getting that answer.
Dr. Shari Dade	Yeah, you said some really powerful things. And what really struck me is this idea of getting in the space where you're speaking the same language, because we often talk about communication and we say, do it, communicate it, and then communicate it again and again and again. But it's really hard for folks to take ownership of things if they're getting a lot of messages, but they're all different, right.
Dr. Shari Dade	And so being able to get to a space and bring your team together and say, let's make sure that we're using the same language, we're saying the same things, and maybe you add a little bit of your own personal space and maybe add a little bit of mine, but let's make sure the heart of what we're saying is linked and it's aligned together.
Dr. Shari Dade	And so being able to have that same communication and then taking that communication to ask questions and to say, like, what do you want to hear? What do you need? And partnering with folks to give them the information that's needed, as well as leaving the door open for there to be questions? if folks need further understanding or if they need more information doesn't feel like, well, they gave me everything they got, so I got to deal with it.
Dr. Shari Dade	But the open door to be able to ask questions as you go along.
Kirsten Aghen	And on top of that, I think one thing that's been eye opening for us is that even though we might think that we're communicating something, the message that's received is very different. Yeah. And so it's and it's been a hard journey. Right. That humility of saying instead of saying, you know, I've told I've communicated this in so many ways, are we good here?
Kirsten Aghen	If I'm communicating this with you, can you help me understand if you're hearing the message or what did you hear me say? Or what questions do you have? Or how can I reframe what I'm saying in a way that lands with you in the space that you're in? Oh, I instead of being, you know, talking louder in a different format or taking the same thing and moving in a different space, it's, you know, I'm sensing that we're not on the same page.
Kirsten Aghen	How can I what questions do you have that I can reframe what I'm saying to kind of hit you where you are and not just bring my lens, but what's your lens? And can I put on my lens and what I'm trying to say. And that takes and that's hard work because I

	don't know about you, my my family.
Kirsten Aghen	Like, sometimes I'll say the same things ten times to my kids and I'm like, wait a minute. I have to reframe because it is definitely not landing on my teenagers, right? So that said, like, how can we just take that approach in everything we do and just be a little calmer and more intentional and just like, flip the vision around and say, how can I how can I support you in the success of what I'm trying to ask you to do?
Kirsten Aghen	And if it's and I own some of the I own 50% or more of this communication. So what does that look like for you and how can I enhance what I've said? And our teams have said, you know, we'd like a little more information. We want to close the loop. We need, you know, things in different format. So we're learning that some people are visual learners, some people read it, some people need time to digest, and we can't hit them right off the cuff with a bunch of stuff they need to to really digest things.
Kirsten Aghen	And so really just being a little more sensitive and intentional on what we're saying and how we're saying it, I think is starting to starting to pay off. But it's certainly it's definitely a journey.
Dr. Shari Dade	Yeah, it is a journey. And like you said, it's much easier said than done because when you start asking those questions as a leader, you kind of pull you out of that driver's seat and say, like, what do you need to hear? Like, how do I need to reframe this? How do I need to explain this? And it takes you out of the equation a bit and it puts everyone else or puts the team in that driver's seat.
Dr. Shari Dade	And sometimes that can be really hard for many leaders, because there is that level of uncertainty. Like, what is that going to be like, where are we going to be going? And so being able to say, this isn't it about how I want you to get the information, it's how you need to get the information. It's not about how I want to communicate to you.
Dr. Shari Dade	It's about what is the best strategy that allows for you to align and want to take ownership of this and drive it to success.
Kirsten Aghen	And I think that could be really at any level, because if we think about it, when and if we broaden the scope a little bit, when folks will come and say, you know, I have an issue or I'm not really understanding this or I'm not buying in, it's easy to transfer that responsibility to somebody else.
Dr. Shari Dade	Yeah, yeah.

Kirsten Aghen	And then when you flip it around and you say, well, how can I help you get to that place of success, what do you need from me in order for you to create that space to move into my expectations and give the outcome that I'm expecting from the team? What do you need for me? It shifts that responsibility that somebody may have inadvertently thrown up their hands and been like, I really don't get it.
Kirsten Aghen	Like, y'all are crazy too. Can you reframe this for me? And this is what I think I'm taking away, so that I can continue to meet your expectations as a leader and move into that space and succeed in that and that way. And that's that's been something I've had to learn, like through trial and error over time and just keenly be aware when somebody shifting the ownership, you know, for whatever reason, either they don't have the knowledge or the expertise or they just simply, you know, are in that space right now.
Kirsten Aghen	But to flip it around and and give back that empowerment with empathy and kindness and support can be a really powerful strategy.
Dr. Shari Dade	Absolutely. It shifts. It, like we said, from the doing to the leading. Right. Let me just do this task because Kirsten came in as my leader and told me to do it into more of like, I want to be in line with that. I want to have the responsibility. And that's why ownership is such a powerful tool, because it does.
Dr. Shari Dade	It goes beyond just completing the task, and it's really about a feeling of personal stake or responsibility in the outcome and then really taking the initiative to drive the team forward. But like you said, that that's a mindset shift. And so when you think about shifting the mindset for folks are helping people in their journey of shifting the mindset.
Dr. Shari Dade	What are some things that you think have been helpful for you as a leader?
Kirsten Aghen	Yeah, that's a really good question. That's so multi-pronged. And in my mind, shifting the mindset from myself as a leader has been to allow my, my, my leaders, my team of leaders to really own that process and for me to trust them to take chances to to succeed and to fail and to see my own personal success in the eyes of their successes and their successes with their team that's, you know, for, yeah, forever.
Kirsten Aghen	It was, you know, I was succeeding or failing and, you know, if I needed to get something done, I would just do it. But really stepping back and reframing the possibilities of what success could be through the success of other people and letting go of all that stuff that I've been clinging to for all these years and seeing my success is through the success of the team.

Kirsten Aghen	And my failures are through the the failures of that team and that that's okay. And being okay with that. Personally allows for my team and my leadership team and the bigger team to all take those chances and know that we're not going to rise or fall on one decision or one bad day, but the collective outcome of our centers of values and our center of we'll all get through this together through our collaboration, has allowed, you know me, to take those chances and then allowed my leaders to step in line and fall into that space.
Kirsten Aghen	And sometimes we fail, and we fail every day. But that doesn't define who we are or what we can do in our potential.
Dr. Shari Dade	Yeah, you said that so beautifully. And it's no small feat though, right? When we think about how we've aligned over the years, aligned ourself with success based on our own actions. Right. This is what I'm doing to succeed. This is what I didn't do that led to a misstep or a failure. And we've been able to do the self-correction.
Dr. Shari Dade	But when you are inspiring others to take ownership, it's exactly what you said. Like your success is through the eyes of your team. It's through the successes and the failures of your team. And that takes a lot of just mental maneuvers to get to that space, to be okay with that. What helped you to be able to move into that space where you are okay with with allowing the team and the leaders who are under you to run and to trust them with that?
Kirsten Aghen	Sure. For me personally, I think I've done a few things to help me get into that mindset. In the beginning, I actually had to mourn kind of the loss of who I was and accept the challenge of what was before me. And I remember I said to one of my leaders, I was like, I don't know if I signed up for this.
Kirsten Aghen	And she's like, well, you actually did. You did sign up for this. So, you know, strap in and buckle up because it's going to be a ride. And I was like, okay, I can do it. So I think, you know, and that just reminds me that, you know, I attach myself to various mentors. I feel like I've had a lot of great mentors and I and every different person has, you know, helped me and guided me through different situations.
Kirsten Aghen	So I reach into people all the time. Former coaches from Endicott, people that I've met, facility directors and colleagues that I've known for a long time. When I'm like, hey, you know this, I'm having a tough day. Am I out of left field or is this making sense to you? So there's no question or person that I've come across that's off limits, because I just might need a different perspective at that different moment.
Kirsten Aghen	And then and then just, you know, and I think I've like many of us like had moments where I've just really been working too hard or really put my personal life aside. And I think somewhere along this leadership journey a couple of years back in this role here,

	somebody said, you will create the culture that you will raise.
Kirsten Aghen	You'll create the culture that you will you'll foster over this time. And then I was like, oh my gosh. Like, I got to stop this. Like I got to get off the treadmill because if I don't, the moments that are creating the larger space that I'm going to drive everybody into the ground and just having that moment of like, yeah, I've been working so hard all these years, but if I'm going to lead other people and create that space, I better keep it in check.
Kirsten Aghen	No more late night emails, no more weekend stuff. If I can't do it in the period of time, it's not like I've failed. It's just that I know that there's a big ask and I need to be measured and paced so I can bring everybody else on this journey. Like, it's not fair of me to ask other people to do maybe what I've been doing it in order for me to be a good leader.
Kirsten Aghen	I have to take a step back and learn how to just prioritize and move into that space where I allow other people to live their lives like I really want to live mine. So I slowed a lot of things down intentionally at the same time. Well, speeding things up in terms of more mentoring and coaching and less weekend and night stuff and really try to strike that work life balance, because retaining good talent is really important and I want it.
Kirsten Aghen	My goal is to make our office, the national private office, the best place to work and be. And what do I need to do to do that? And certainly having some boundaries in that space was really important for me personally. And then realizing, how can I operationalize that for the rest of the team?
Dr. Shari Dade	Yeah, absolutely. I love that idea of what do you need to do to get to that point of success for you and for your office? But also what you mentioned is, what do you have to give up, right? And giving up those late nights, giving up that spotlight, the me, even the individual connection to success. Right? I know that if I do this thing, it will lead me here, but the idea of being able to pull in that trust to your team, to get to know your people, to make sure that you're bringing in that talent, that you're cultivating their talent as well, and their leadership skills allows for you to to reach that success
Dr. Shari Dade	in a, like you said, a more global way.
Kirsten Aghen	Yeah, yeah. And I think so long we spend time doing in that space and meeting people's expectations and deadlines and the bigger picture of what the needs are of the organization on so many levels. Checking those boxes, I personally needed to stop and reframe and say, how do I meet the needs of the team to allow that movement for general collective success and what those boundaries needed to be around our

	office and and still meet expectations and meet the needs of the team and in terms of that work life balance, because if we lose that at the end of the day, we're not going to we're not going to remember that we missed a deadline,
Kirsten Aghen	but we're going to remember that our our supervisor or our peer says, said, that's okay. Go be with your family. It's too important. This can wait. It will be here. We got your back. You know we'll be okay when you come back. This will be here. Go do what you need to do. And that's what they're going to remember.
Kirsten Aghen	Not that we, you know, may have missed a deadline or we needed some renegotiate a deadline, but that we we were there for them and really went to bat. So then they show up with their full selves here at work. And that's way more important than, than anything else.
Dr. Shari Dade	Absolutely. And I've had the the pleasure of meeting your team and seeing it in action and really seeing how top down it starts with you. And then it truly has trickled down that these folks are saying, I want to take ownership of this. I want to lead from my own seat in my office. And that's whether it's the deputy, whether it is the team member, the the manager, the program supervisor, whatever folks are saying, like, I want to take responsibility for our success.
Dr. Shari Dade	I want to be a part of that train. And so ownership is something that is so important and it's so powerful. But what we also know is that everyone doesn't always buy in. Right? Right. And so what happens when someone's not on board? Like how do you get people out there their stuckness.
Kirsten Aghen	Sure. You know, when we talk about change management and the people side of change and moving through that resistance, there's a lot of different tactics and things that we can use, right, to get them through that on stuckness. But I think I've learned that when somebody is not on board or things feel stuck having that conversation about, you know, I'm noticing that, you know, this is occurring right now.
Kirsten Aghen	Can you talk to me about what you're feeling like? What is it about this process that's really giving you pause? And let's have an open dialog about that. And that's something which will often do in one to ones. You know, I've learned the hard way. You definitely don't want to pull that into the community space because that's that's never going to go anywhere good.
Kirsten Aghen	I've learned that lesson the hard way. It's not going to go anywhere good. But but having that dialog on the side and, and starting off of the conversations with, you know, not with, you know, I see that you're having a really hard day, you know, what's going on. Right? But you know, and he talk to me about what it is that your thoughts are about this.

Kirsten Aghen	Tell me more about why you're feeling this way or am I missing a perspective that you're bringing into something that I haven't thought about? Talk to me about. We might, you know, play that role of of it devil's advocate here. And where am I failing? Is it something that I can do, or is it something that you're bringing into this?
Kirsten Aghen	Let's talk this through because I really appreciate your your lens, because I have a feeling you're bringing in something that I, I haven't thought about before. Because I do believe that not every there's no one person that has all the answers. Yeah. Absolutely. Right. We're only as good as everybody who voices their opinions around us. And I find that, you know, when moving to that unstuck position, there's often something, you know, that I hadn't thought about or things that people assumed that I knew that I had no idea were going on.
Kirsten Aghen	No clue, no clue. I feel like I should also exactly what's going on. I was like, actually, I really don't have a clue. But you know, knowing that other piece of information and out of respect, maybe that person didn't want to share it in a community forum or didn't even realize that they were maybe stuck in this space and that their buy in was needed.
Kirsten Aghen	And if it's a if it's one of my leaders in that space, I know that if we're not aligned, that the entire team under that leader will not buy into what it is I'm trying to do. And so that supervisor, that leader, I really need to be tightly aligned and really address any concerns or even adjust my vision if I'm like, wow, you know, I don't I didn't think about that whole customer base or that whole vision or that whole concern and really bring that in.
Kirsten Aghen	And let's talk about what a new vision or an adjusted vision could look like based on that new knowledge. And then we have to go back to the leadership team and say, you know, there's been some changes. What do you guys think about this? Can we shift a little bit and we're to the space now where it's not, you know, we're we're past the eye rolling and all that.
Kirsten Aghen	But now it's into you. You know, that's a really a great idea. Let's talk about what that looks like because I'm not understanding or I need more information in order for me to cascade that to my team. Let's really work through it. So all of that is super time consuming. Like just to be honest, it's hard and it's uncomfortable because it's meaning that I don't have the solutions.
Kirsten Aghen	I don't have the I don't have the way to right. Always right. But I have to create that deliberate engagement with my team to get to that space. And then collectively we get to right. And then I course correct or add or negotiate if there's powers outside of our office that are coming into play. But it's so worth the time addressing that barrier,

	because we won't get past that barrier in the leadership team through the entire organization until we address that and really have either that critical conversation or that hard conversation or that sort of moment of, wow, I didn't think about that.
Kirsten Aghen	Thanks for bringing that up. Like, what does now that we know that, can you talk to me about what should I do in that position? What's your recommendation for me and the team so we can incorporate that bigger vision into that, into that dialog?
Dr. Shari Dade	No, I, I really appreciate the honesty and the transparency of saying these are some really tough things to do. Right? Because as a leader, yeah, it causes you to move into a space of uncertainty. You've got a vision, you've planned it out, you're like, all right, we're walking it. And then all of a sudden you see a gaping hole that you didn't see or you realize like, oh my goodness, I didn't take that into account.
Dr. Shari Dade	And you got to rework your vision or you got to start having some of those conversations again. And sometimes that's really hard. And so the ability and the humility to be able to say, like, I don't have all the answers and I am only as successful as the voices around me. I love, love, love that it's a really difficult task.
Dr. Shari Dade	Great. And it's easy to say, it's easy to say like, yes, that's a great practice, but it's a really hard thing to do. And so I really appreciate just the the honesty of bringing that to leaders, because there are challenges that happen when you're attempting to really inspire ownership and leadership and others. That continues to be growth areas for yourself as you go along the way.
Kirsten Aghen	Yeah.
Dr. Shari Dade	So it's like a parallel process, right?
Kirsten Aghen	For sure. For sure it is. And I you know, another thing that I've really tried to work on in the last couple of years, too, is knowing when to celebrate those small successes. Right? Because as we're this is hard work and there's been, you know, it's like it's tough and there's been moments when I'm like, oh gosh, are we going to get there?
Kirsten Aghen	And we do. We always do. And that commitment to each other and, you know, to the team and to veterans and to VHA really drives us forward. And what we do, because I know it's good work and we've deliberately woven opportunities to celebrate those small wins and small successes within the office into our standard work as leaders, into our standard work as a team, and capturing those moments is takes a lot of intentional thought and process that we put into place.

Kirsten Aghen	But, you know, just today, actually, I had a couple members of my team who had some great ideas, one member who had some great ideas and and somebody else who I really wanted to make that connection. And I created the space, and the two of them were able to say, I have a great idea, I have some thoughts.
Kirsten Aghen	And the other one was like, you know, that's really great. I hadn't thought about that. I was kind of confused, but now I get it. And can we meet and talk about this? Because I can see how we can leverage this for the bigger group. And honestly, a couple years back, I don't think that would have happened. We just weren't in that space because we were just holding it together like a, you know, we were strong together, but now we're connected and we're woven in ways that really ties us to the collective outcome that I just I just think we didn't have that before.
Kirsten Aghen	And so that journey is remarkable. And so that small win today of just the two members of my team saying, I have some information and somebody else saying I can receive that, and I'm going to celebrate that and we're going to make that happen, because I can see the benefit was to me, that was a win. And they may or may not even know that they did that.
Kirsten Aghen	But I'm in the background going, yeah, that was huge. And I may tell them later because now they're going to hear this and be like, what? But it was just, you know, just capturing those small moments. And then what I'm seeing is between my teams that actually, you know, are the frontline, the ones that are getting the work done.
Kirsten Aghen	They're noticing those small moments with each other. Yeah. And that that means that they're that the message is getting through and they're empowered to make those connections. And to me, that is the joy of them working despite me or the leadership team like they can. They need to know that they can do that and that they are doing it.
Kirsten Aghen	And I think that message is getting across and I it wouldn't have been able to happen without my leaders being able to model that behavior, which they're doing every day in small ways that I bet that they don't even notice.
Dr. Shari Dade	Or that is ownership in action. Right? They're like literally seeing it get down to the folks who are going into the facilities doing the work, like that's that's it, right in action. And so I know you're saying it's coming from their leaders. And I would venture to say that that's coming from you as well. The importance of ownership and inspiring ownership and other folks to want to take initiative and driving the team to success.
Dr. Shari Dade	I think that's just amazing. Yeah.

Kirsten Aghen	Thanks. It's good. It's a journey for sure.
Dr. Shari Dade	Oh, it's it's definitely a journey. You know, it is definitely a fun one, a hard one, but it's worth it in the end. You know, it's worth it when you start to see those actions trickling down and being a part of the culture. All right. So Kirsten, we've got to the end of our episode. But before we head out, I do like to play a game of word association.
Dr. Shari Dade	And so I'm going to say a word or phrase, and I want to get your thoughts on just what comes to mind for you.
Kirsten Aghen	Okay. Sure.
Dr. Shari Dade	All right. So the first word is one that we talked about throughout the episode. And it is vision o vision.
Kirsten Aghen	vision to me, first of all, I see it in purple like bright red than purple. Yeah. vision to me is where I see things going in the future. It's what is possible and anything that could be. So a vision is not just a thing, but it's an attitude into a space where anything is possible.
Dr. Shari Dade	Right? Right. It's an attitude. And it's in purple. In red. Right. Who couldn't who couldn't make that shift? The next word is ownership.
Kirsten Aghen	ownership to me is ownership is what's my role in the outcome of the action or the deliverable or that place where I want to take things? And how do I enhance, create, crush? Yeah. Right. Or destroy whatever it may be. Ownership is the role that I play and what's about to happen and how I make that that path going.
Kirsten Aghen	Yeah.
Dr. Shari Dade	And we get to write our own story in that. Right I love that. Oh yeah.
Kirsten Aghen	For sure.
Dr. Shari Dade	And the last, of course, but not least is audacity to fail.
Kirsten Aghen	Oh man, I have so many. We need more time because I have so many stories.

Dr. Shari Dade	I love it.
Kirsten Aghen	Oh, I have, I feel I just told somebody today, I was like, I feel like I don't have any ego left, but it's, you know, it's okay to it's if somebody told me once and I, I mentioned this earlier, like, there's no one way to write. There's many ways to write. Yeah. And once we like, once I stop trying to advocate for my way to write, I was like, oh, there's so much out there.
Kirsten Aghen	Like there's so many different things that are possible and so many different visions and so many different lenses that we could wear to get to write the the amount of creativity that can occur is phenomenal. It's just phenomenal. So it's so creating that space where we're thinking about failure as a learning opportunity and failure as a place where we we're like, yeah, you know, I really didn't do a good job, but that's okay.
Kirsten Aghen	What did I learn in that space and how can I bring that forward in the group for the greater good of, you know, what we do in the VA and for veterans and creating that that positive outcome and really taking that forward has been really key and hard but good over time.
Dr. Shari Dade	Yeah, that's really lovely. There's no wrong way to. Right. That is so true. And audacity is all about exploring all of those different ways in and up and stepping in the meantime, but figuring out the way in the end. Absolutely. Well, thank you so much, Carson. This is an amazing episode as I knew it would be. I so appreciate your honesty, your reflection, and just you being an amazing leader and just person in your own right.
Dr. Shari Dade	And so thank you so much for being a part of today's episode.
Kirsten Aghen	thanks so much for having me. I feel honored to be here. I really appreciate you and and all you're doing, and I just really am glad to be here. So thank you so much.
Dr. Shari Dade	So we've come to the end of another great episode of the Audacity to Fail podcast. Thank you for tuning in to learn how missteps can lead to growth and success, so be sure to check out the key lessons in the show notes for a refresher. To request services from the National Center for Organization Development, check out our website.
Dr. Shari Dade	Also linked in the show notes. Remember, if you missed the target 100 times, you have not failed. Instead, you've simply found 100 strategies that did not work. Be well and continue to fail. Forward until next time. Thank you.