



## The Domino Effect

With the weight of so much pressure, dealing with stress at the top isn't always easy.

**The Domino Effect** looks at gas-lighting and what it's like to be bullied in the boardroom, including personal portraits of how anxiety, isolation, depression and stress at the top has played out for directors affecting their sense of self, their family lives and their ability to stay 'checked in.' It also explores the challenges of speaking out, the impact of stress on the body and mind and how that plays out under the weight of the decision making process.

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### **Sonia Yee:**

This podcast was made with the help of ASB Bank, supporting businesses to get one step ahead.

### **Tina Jenen:**

My ankles were crushed, very serious. I had 17 screws in one ankle and a broken leg. I ended up with a cast on every limb.

### **Paul Dykzeul:**

Kerry was notorious because he was such an extraordinary bully.

### **Taimi Allen:**

A really nasty experience in the past where an employee on their way out decided to use the fact that I'd cried at work. They threw that back at me.

**Kirsten Patterson:**

When you are challenged, there's an autonomic response. It's really like fight or flight where the flood of cortisol and adrenaline that's released because of that, actually limits the blood flow in the frontal cortices of the brain.

**Ross Townshend:**

Persistent calls to my home all the way through to death threats.

**Kirsten Patterson:**

Kia ora I'm **Kirsten Patterson**, also known as KP.

**Sonia Yee:**

And I'm **Sonia Yee**, the producer of this seven part podcast series across the board made by the Institute of Directors and Association with the New Zealand Herald.

**Kirsten Patterson:**

We're just over halfway through the series and in this fourth episode you'll hear firsthand experiences of how anxiety, isolation, depression, and stress at the top have played out for directors, affecting their sense of self, their family lives, and their ability to stay checked in. But how realistic is it to leave external stressors at the door when we leave the office for the night?

**Sonia Yee:**

Or conversely, if you're dealing with family or personal issues at home, please note that some of the content in this episode deals with discussion and descriptions of gas lighting, bullying, depression, and suicide and may not be suitable for all audiences. Discretion is advised.

**Tina Jenen:**

Because I was running an acquisition, I only had one official board seat in a couple of advisory boards. I was primarily working in horticulture technology.

**Sonia Yee:**

This is Tina Jenen.

**Tina Jenen:**

And an executive role that was very demanding.

**Sonia Yee:**

She's a passionate initiator, and when the mother of four has her sight set on something, there's no stopping her. The 10th of January, 2017 was an ordinary day for Tina.

**Tina Jenen:**

It was three o'clock on a Tuesday. I had just left my office in Katikati.

**Sonia Yee:**

She was driving out to Tauranga in her Ford sedan. It was a stones throw away.

**Tina Jenen:**

Driving to priority one because we were working to put Nurofen on the Regional Research Institute bid because they needed a big global player to approve the application. I was also checking in with my students because I was leading a summer student incubator that was a partnership between Waikato University and Tokoroa. With traffic, it can be 45 minutes, but I was literally only on the highway less than a kilometer.

**Sonia Yee:**

But turning 200 meters onto State Highway two.

**Tina Jenen:**

Someone had fallen asleep on the highway.

**Sonia Yee:**

It was a head on collision.

**Tina Jenen:**

I was crushed in the car.

**Sonia Yee:**

Her injuries ranged from a punctured lung, damage to her knees.

**Tina Jenen:**

My ankles were crushed very serious. I had 17 screws in one ankle and a broken leg. I ended up with a cast on every limb, so six serious broken bones. Had a compound fracture on my right arm, got a fair bit of metal in my body now.

**Sonia Yee:**

The Herald reported 46 deaths and 153 serious injuries occurred on that same stretch of road between 2000 going back to October, 2018. Most of those deaths have been caused by head-on collisions, much like Tina's. In fact, she was one of the lucky ones.

**Tina Jenen:**

I was actually told months later by someone from the wreckage company. They said it was the worst car they'd ever seen where someone had come out alive.

**Sonia Yee:**

Fortunately, Tina doesn't remember anything from the accident, but despite her very serious injuries, she wasn't able to switch off.

**Tina Jenen:**

Listen, I was literally still running that acquisition. It was a very big role that I had while I was in the hospital. I was hiring people from my hospital bed, even running my summer student incubator pitch sessions in the hospital garden, which I got in a bit of trouble for. I still went to board meetings in my wheelchair. What allowed me to be okay was just to keep going. That helped me have the momentum to get out because I could tell that staying there and feeling stuck there was going to affect my mental health.

**Sonia Yee:**

Tina was desperate to leave and despite the hospital wanting to keep her in for three months, she managed to find a loophole.

**Tina Jenen:**

I figured out what the barriers were. I needed one load-bearing limb to be able to meet compliance to get out and I needed to prove that, that I could manage myself in our home environment and I was out by four weeks. I was still in that reaction mode of surviving. I had such a challenge in my

own mind, again, that was really more driven, wanting to make sure that the children knew that I was going to be okay and that I was back to my normal self.

**Sonia Yee:**

Putting on a brave front for everyone might have helped her to push through the pain and onto a quicker path to recovery. But doing things faster doesn't always make it better. Tina says if she had to do it all over again, she'd do it differently.

**Tina Jenen:**

I had slowed down significantly in comparison to what I had been doing. However, when you have a traumatic event like that, it's easy to still stay in it. There were all sorts of things that I, in hindsight could have done differently.

**Sonia Yee:**

Time to reflect is always productive. And while Tina doesn't want to stay stuck in the past, the event ultimately changed her way of thinking,

**Tina Jenen:**

My mobility is just fine. My ankles were crushed so I can no longer run. I did do a, I guess power walk triathlon last year as a milestone for myself, but I had 17 screws in one of the ankles and it will never be what it was. But injuries happened to people all the time, so I do count myself lucky. It was a very serious incident. I used to do quite a lot of public speaking and I did a keynote while I was still in a wheelchair and that gave me such a formative experience of what it can be like, and how much harder it is to get around when the world isn't designed to allow you to have access.

**Sonia Yee:**

But, not one to stay stuck in the past, Tina's been able to shift gears and redirect her career. One that sits more closely with the personal vision for how she wants to live her life and that's also informed the boards she now sits on, including the tech board.

**Tina Jenen:**

Which is a billion dollar portfolio here in the Bay of plenty. We just went through an incredible restructure process that got high court approval to become a community trust.

**Sonia Yee:**

She's also on the board for the New Zealand Institute for Rural Entrepreneurship, Collective Intelligence, Waikato Link, and Amenta, a not-for-profit that supports people with access needs.

**Tina Jenen:**

I'm still on track in the sense that I had this goal of being fully into governance by my mid forties and then doing a PhD by 50. I'm going to be 50 this year, and I'm not going to be finished with my PhD, but I am on the path.

**Sonia Yee:**

So what was the biggest takeaway from the crash where, in a split second, things could have been very different?

**Tina Jenen:**

The biggest change is that alignment has become more important to me than getting the outcome. I was so out focused in the past, but what I realized is that I was doing everything for other people. I'd been shoulder tapped for all of my roles in New Zealand. Entrepreneurs say yes. So I just kept saying yes because I really want to add value in the world. But now what's happened is, I'm much more aware of what's aligned and what isn't. I've always been a curious person and I do see things that others don't and that's what has allowed me over time to provide value in lots of ways in my career. However, now that I've turned that curiosity more inward, I'm really paying attention to when something doesn't feel right and really getting more curious about what that means and then having the courage to say no. We have all the answers we need inside of us. It's just sometimes we don't slow down long enough to listen.

**Kirsten Patterson:**

But listening and slowing down isn't always easy when you're up against the clock, especially when there are deadlines, massive piles of board papers filled with information that need to be digested, and for CEOs, it can all start to weigh pretty heavily.

**Paul Dykzeul:**

When you go into a company, the first thing I look at and I focus on really, really hard is who's leading it.

**Kirsten Patterson:**

Paul Dykzeul is the former CEO of Bauer Media Group in an Australasia. He started out his media career working at renowned ACP Media, founded in 1986 by the Packer family.

**Paul Dykzeul:**

In my early days in the business I worked for Kerry Packer, but he was an iconic figure in Australia. He was like a Rupert Murdoch of Australia.

**Kirsten Patterson:**

ACP Media published a range of magazine titles including Woman's Day, Australian Woman's Weekly, Next, Metro, and North and South.

**Paul Dykzeul:**

Kerry was notorious because he was such an extraordinary bully.

**Damien Galvin (as Kerry Packer):**

Did anyone ask for your opinion? I'm the one that makes the decisions around here. Look at me when I'm talking to you.

**Paul Dykzeul:**

You'd go to a meeting with Kerry and you'd go into his office and you're never allowed to sit, for example, no one was. You'd stand at the other end of the desk and you would just get this tirade of abuse and it was a mixture of abuse in relation to the business, to personal abuse, and you just had to filter it. You had to stand there and go, I can deal with this. This is just his way of dealing with his anger. That taught me a hell of a lot. You just got to shut off, you know, you can't absorb it otherwise it does affect you.

**Kirsten Patterson:**

Paul's day today was intense. Not only was he overseeing events run by the company, he was CEO, as well as holding a publishing role.

**Paul Dykzeul:**

We had about 1200 staff in Australia and about 270 staff, 260 staff here in New Zealand. By the time you added up all the publications around the world, in the ACP days, it was well in excess of probably 150 and as CEO, you know, you are responsible for everyone, the New Zealand business was an arm. Like so many New Zealand businesses, they're arms of Australian company, so they reported to the Australian company. The pace at which you work at in New Zealand is not as intense as it is in Australia.

**Kirsten Patterson:**

ACP was bought out by German company, Bauer Media in 2012. Everyone was excited about the change, until the work culture diminished and it was all about the numbers.

**Paul Dykzeul:**

There was quite a bit of relief because there was a view, well this is an incredibly successful publishing company in Germany. One of the top three publishing companies in Europe. Been owned by the family since 1886. I reported directly into the owners of the business in Germany. The shift from, say for example, private equity, where private equity all they care about is the numbers. They don't care about the magazine or the publication. All they're looking for is to make the business as efficient as they possibly can so that they can get a premium price when they exit. They're never long-term owners. We used to have weekly meetings and they always started at sort of seven o'clock in the evening and they finished at about 11:30.

**Kirsten Patterson:**

And if that wasn't bad enough, you'd think international travel might be a perk of the job.

**Paul Dykzeul:**

I used to travel to Germany six, eight times a year. It was not unusual to hop on a plane and fly up to Germany for a meeting for two hours, turn around and come home. It was crazy. I went up there at one meeting and turned up and the guy was sick and I said, well I've flown up from the other side of the world and they went, but he's sick. And I said, well get him out of bed. They didn't want to know about it. They didn't come down to our part of the world. They had no concept of a 24-hour flight. What I could see



from previous CEOs, they were bullied, and they buckled. And the minute you buckle, you're gone.

**Kirsten Patterson:**

But back to what it was like on the ground, the day-to-day and the changes taking place in the business.

**Paul Dykzeul:**

A lot of good things that were happening and good things that were being developed were just cut because we couldn't do it and meet the number requirement that they had set us.

**Kirsten Patterson:**

In order to fit the Bauer model in Germany it meant cutting staff as well as magazine titles.

**Paul Dykzeul:**

Their business portfolio in Germany was very, very different from the portfolio of magazines in Australia and New Zealand. They had made all of their money out of the bottom end of the publishing market, whereas we had made our money out of the top end. Cosmos and your Harper's Bazaars and your Australian Women's Weekly. So there was a lot of angst and difficulty. We had a division called the Motoring Division. Magazines and a digital business built around the car industry. And, of course, that's really, really big in Australia, not so big in New Zealand. And in its heyday it made millions.

**Kirsten Patterson:**

The reality, though, is that it was struggling. So Paul had a meeting with the Germans, he was pushing to keep it their response.

**Paul Dykzeul:**

Close it, just get rid of it.

**Kirsten Patterson:**

The matter was a very serious one.

**Paul Dykzeul:**

I'm going to have to make 200 people redundant that it was based in Melbourne. I knew a lot of the people because I used to go down there a lot and for them getting another role in a similar environment was going to be really difficult. So it was the people side of it that really, really, really got to me.

**Kirsten Patterson:**

On the other hand, Paul had a better idea.

**Paul Dykzeul:**

And I said, well can I sell it?

**Kirsten Patterson:**

An idea the Germans didn't have much faith in.

**Paul Dykzeul:**

They said, well if can... if anyone's silly enough to pay money for it.

**Kirsten Patterson:**

So Paul got to work, it was like an us versus them scenario.

**Paul Dykzeul:**

But I spent two or three months working really hard, coming up with a new plan for the business, but also finding a buyer. And I mean I had a terrific number two. It was a guy called Andrew Steadwell who was my CFO. And we found a buyer and they were prepared to pay 12 million dollars for this business.

**Kirsten Patterson:**

It was a win-win. So the pier flew to Germany to do a presentation, a pitch that would hopefully save the magazine. And it worked, but hold the applause. The reaction from the Germans wasn't exactly what Paul anticipated. They were like, why should we sell it if it's worth so much?

**Paul Dykzeul:**

I said, I've been telling you for the last two years it has potential but you weren't prepared to invest in this area and you told me to get rid of it.

**Kirsten Patterson:**

So the upshot, they got to keep the magazine and the staff. But how does that look to the people who've already decided to buy the magazine? Yeah, not great. It's a whole lot of relationship building out the window. Frustration was brewing. Paul's job was already stressful and at every turn there were constant obstacles and mixed messages. And after 25 years with Bauer Media, it was time to call it quits.

**Paul Dykzeul:**

I felt as if I had done my dash and I'd had enough.

**Kirsten Patterson:**

But that doesn't mean he stopped everything. He picked up a few board roles and some consulting work, but there was more he wanted to do.

**Paul Dykzeul:**

One thing that I had an absolute passion for was trying to guide and steer CEOs and MDs. And we started a business, it's called Weave. There's four of us involved.

**Kirsten Patterson:**

Weave is a business and leadership center that offers support, leadership development, and relationship building for CEOs and business leaders. And what Paul discovered is that his experience of feeling stressed out and alone isn't isolated.

**Paul Dykzeul:**

A lot of the problems that these guys all have as managing up, how do they manage to the board, how do they stop being really lonely, and feeling really isolated, and feeling as though they can't talk to anyone. That's a really big issue, like a really big issue.

**Sonia Yee:**

But again, if no one at the top can speak out, then change won't happen.

**Kirsten Patterson:**

And the status quo effectively gets away with an abuse of power and is never held to account.

**Dr Emily Beausoleil:**

When you are challenged and this can just be information that challenges what you believe is true.

**Kirsten Patterson:**

Here's Dr. Emily Beausoleil from Victoria University.

**Dr Emily Beausoleil:**

There is an autonomic response. It's really like fight or flight where the flood of cortisol and adrenaline that's released because of that actually limits the blood flow in the frontal cortices of the brain where all higher processing occurs. So your ability to even access your own knowledge, to make new thoughts, or to encounter anything unfamiliar is truncated. Very literally on a physiological neural level until you are given information that affirms your view and then it'll calm.

**Kirsten Patterson:**

Dr. Beausoleil says, making room for people to be heard is also about acknowledging and creating space for diversity.

**Dr Emily Beausoleil:**

I think it's a really good point to think about looking at that individual action is an expression of something bigger, both socially and historically, and that's really good important work to be drawing out that context.

How is this idea making sense? Why is this it's being expressed in this moment by this person? It's much more than just an individual expression.

**Kirsten Patterson:**

And one place where people can have a voice is social media. But in the wrong hands, it can create a dangerous environment and even contribute to social upheaval and unrest.

**Dr Emily Beausoleil:**

So much of social media is very also anonymous, can be incredibly toxic as an environment as a result. The nature of algorithms and echo chambers means that we actually stop having it function as effectively as a civic sphere where we meet across differences and get to engage in public discourse together as citizens. Instead, we have tribalisms that are forming through these modes and they're becoming inoculated from other views and other groups. The less we have that contact, too, and that chance of

being challenged and affected by other ways of seeing and living in the world, the more we're going to simplify others, right? Where the more we're going to dismiss, objectify, and really make into two dimensions, three dimensional people.

**Sonia Yee:**

You are listening to Across The Board, brought to you by the Institute of Directors made with the help of ASB Bank.

**Kirsten Patterson:**

There are a raft of social issues that directors and boards also have to keep on top of. And with many views being expressed online, including social media being a powerful platform for freedom of speech, it poses risks for people in positions of authority.

**Sonia Yee:**

And we had one person come forward who wanted to share his experience as a warning to others.

**Ross Townshend:**

Oh no, I put up the place before she left and said it's a mistake sending somebody like this to the Middle East.

**Sonia Yee:**

This is director Ross Townsend. In 2021, he was on a number of boards including a North Island dairy board and that somebody he's referring to as MP Nanaia Mahuta.

**Ross Townshend:**

I'm a reasonably vocal correspondent on social media, usually in confined groups about my political views. And in particular, I thought that the Nanaia Mahuta was an abysmal choice for the position of foreign minister.

**Sonia Yee:**

So, at the minister's departure to the Middle East in 2021, Ross found a cartoon image of the MP online and posted it on his Facebook page along with a comment. In Ross's mind, it was harmless.

**Ross Townshend:**

The image was of Nanaia Mahuta as a gang member. And back at the time there was the crisis about the funding of gangs, in particular in Hawkes Bay about drugs where several million of taxpayers money given away. It wasn't a flattering picture. It didn't have any racist comment. It actually just raised an issue about her suitability as a Minister of Foreign Affairs. I didn't have adequate security on that posting and it went viral with some interesting consequences.

**Sonia Yee:**

It was clear the tables had turned.

**Ross Townshend:**

The media made the most of that.

**Speaker 2:**

The Facebook post, which has since been deleted, contained an image in text and-

**Speaker 3:**

It was widely condemned online with users calling it racist, disgusting, and appalling.

**Sonia Yee:**

There was nowhere to hide.

**Ross Townshend:**

There were a group that were angry about what they saw as the racist position, and there were another group that saw it as being misogynist, and now they didn't have to like my message.

**Sonia Yee:**

Something to note here is that directors' residential addresses are publicly listed in the company's register, not their phone numbers, but it poses a privacy risk for directors and their families who could be targeted by disaffected shareholders, customers, or protest groups. In 2018, the institute of directors advocated for residential addresses to be removed from the company's register with a suggestion that service addresses be listed instead. Now, earlier this year in proposed changes announced by commerce and consumer affairs minister David Clark, directors will be able

to apply to remove their home addresses from the company's register. But until the legislation is enacted, directors' residential addresses are still available. And in Ross's case, his phone numbers were available online.

**Ross Townshend:**

We're in the phone book. I'm reasonably widely known, my cell phone number's on things like my LinkedIn page. So these people pursued that. They obviously searched the company's register and found other companies that I was a director or the chairman of and rang them all and demanded that I be dismissed or stood down or otherwise terminated from all the other boards as well.

**Sonia Yee:**

Being chased by the media was one thing. But being hunted down by social media trolls was another.

**Ross Townshend:**

It ranged from a relatively unpleasant comments to persistent calls to my home.

**Speaker 3:**

You're racist, too.

**Speaker 4:**

Bloody deluded, that's what you are.

**Speaker 5:**

Makes you think you can say that about-

**Speaker 6:**

I mean how dare you have the audacity to call up-

**Speaker 5:**

...You don't deserve sit on that board or another.

**Speaker 6:**

...When you're doing that yourself and you can't even see it?

**Ross Townshend:**

All the way through to death threats. There is no justification for somebody sending me a message that says that I can expect a gang to turn up and leave me for dead at my front gate. I didn't like it and my wife liked it even less. And it was discussed repeated over and over and over again over several days.

**Sonia Yee:**

Ross recognizes that there are people who feel disenfranchised, but does that justify his Facebook post? Importantly, directors hold a lot of power. One of privilege. Their role is to guide and advise the companies they serve, and act in the best interest of their shareholders. And not to mention, that we live in an environment where one simple act that's viewed as unethical can tarnish a company's reputation. And for some, there's no coming back. Ross had no other option but to resign from that board.

**Speaker 7:**

Diary director quits over vile social media post about labor MP.

**Sonia Yee:**

The outcome for everyone was bleak.

**Ross Townshend:**

Everybody's regretful that it happened. Everybody is worse off as a consequence.

**Kirsten Patterson:**

If you're on a board of directors, you might want to think twice before pressing publish because speaking your mind can have negative consequences and you might get held to account. Let's head back to Dr. Emily.

**Dr Emily Beausoleil:**

That anonymity means we're less accountable and so it brings out the worst. And people are so targeted. People who are targeted anyway by racism, for example, are absolutely targeted for having any kind of voice in public. But if someone is expressing something publicly and they are in this powerful role, I think, there's one way to break a norm to say, we collectively, we say this is not okay. We do not accept that people making



these big decisions on behalf of our organization should espouse these views.

**Kirsten Patterson:**

And that's when the backlash, the marches, and the protests happen. That intensity percolates until it builds up beneath the surface and finally explodes. Why? Because no one's listening and nothing has changed. Yes, social media is used by those who are disenfranchised and disempowered, but equally it's dangerous in the hands of those who hold status in society, especially when it's used to reinforce that power and control.

**Dr Emily Beausoleil:**

When someone has the energy and patience and fortitude enough to actually tell us we could do better, that this is wrong. That's actually a gift. If you're an advantaged person, if you're used to being in a powerful position, you're not used to being challenged, certainly based on race, there's an identity that you're also speaking from. That can feel jarring, like being put in a corner, even though it's actually about trying to rectify a deeply and massively unequal balance in the world.

I think that our frameworks for interpreting those moments of difficulty are really impoverished because if we could only get away from trying to be the one that's not racist, the one that is, I had good intentions, I didn't mean that. Those kinds of narratives that really are about personal liability and intention are really misplaced when we're talking about systemic structural social issues like racism. That are as much a part of what language we're speaking right now, as they are about what we teach in the curriculum as the representation of literature or history. It's the water we're swimming in. And so it's a collective issue, it's a structural issue, it's not personal.

There are some people that are worse than others of course because it's expressed in individual actions. But we're talking about something that's shared across and that is inherited.

**Kirsten Patterson:**

Whether it's about gender, racial discrimination, inequality or otherwise. How should boards and directors engage in territory that is confronting? Where their own personal views or values are being challenged?

**Dr Emily Beausoleil:**

There are lots of tricks. Even just taking a big breath and naming the emotion and then asking a complex question helps to calm the autonomic nervous system and tell your body on a very deep unconscious level that it's safe. It could be a mathematical question or it could just be like, I wonder what's behind what that person said just now. But those three little tricks are a way to bring yourself back if you're triggered.

**Sonia Yee:**

Dealing with emotions can be hard at the best of times and directors are humans, just like the rest of us. They have families and lives outside of their border executive roles, but one reason many do the work they do is because they care.

**Kevin Kenrick:**

It's always mixed emotions. I had a blast. I mean it was a great place to work.

**Sonia Yee:**

This is Kevin Kenrick, the former CEO of TVNZ. Stepped down from his role at the beginning of 2022 after a long nine year stint at the helm.

**Kevin Kenrick:**

I'm definitely missing the people in the environment and I've got a lot of affection for the organization and I think that they'll stay with me for some time.

**Sonia Yee:**

While at TVNZ, Kevin dealt with a range of high level issues. Now, a key consideration for CEOs involves reporting to the board and providing transparency across all aspects of the business. Top of the list and well covered in the media have been the changes regarding the merger between RNZ and TVNZ, but on a more internal focus, just like for any other company or organization, it's important for directors or CEOs to ensure that the culture of the workplace is positive and inclusive and looking after the wellbeing of your people as tantamount to a company's success. But when your staff are also in the public eye, it adds other layers of complexity. In 2018, the sudden death of TVNZ's beloved broadcaster Greg Boyd was one that hit the organization and the nation hard.

**Speaker 8:**

Today broadcaster Greg Boyd has passed away in Switzerland. He was just 48 years old. He leaves behind two children and a wife.

**Sonia Yee:**

He'd fronted a range of programming including Seven Sharp, One News, Fair Go, Q and A, Closeup and Target.

**Kevin Kenrick:**

Those situations, they really hit hard in an organization and Greg's passing was something that deeply affected those of us there personally. People who had worked with him in the past who were no longer there, the organization as a whole. And I think it's one thing to talk about and to cover stories about topics at arms length, and it's another one when it's very personal and that makes it very real. And I think one of the things that we constantly had to remind ourselves and to be focused on, is the people who were presenting on behalf of the organization put themselves in the public eye.

**Speaker 8:**

A few years ago he spoke to John Cowan, our Sunday night program Real Life.

**Speaker 9:**

I'm still quite awkward. People sort of recognize me and go, oh, I know you. I go, oh-

**Speaker 10:**

Have you ever pretended to be someone else?

**Speaker 9:**

No, I don't. I tell you what I do do. If people don't click straight away, I can't bring myself to say, yeah, I'm on telly. Even my daughter sort of say, why don't you say something? I said because the to me seems nothing more big noting than saying I'm on telly. It's just because we are such a wee country and-

**Sonia Yee:**

Dealing with situations like these are heartbreaking. And as a head of the organization at the time, establishing an inclusive and supportive culture enabled staff to not only acknowledge the loss but deal with their grief.

**Kevin Kenrick:**

The thing that made a big difference for us was taking a te ao Māori approach to it. And we're very fortunate at TVNZ to have people with real skill and real mana in this space. And the individual who made a massive difference for the organization was Scotty Morrison, who at a time where everyone was deeply affected by this. Scotty held a ceremony and a blessing within the newsroom and invited the entire organization to participate in that. Gave people help in terms of how to manage it. It was a really powerful thing, but it was also a really positive thing. A year after someone has passed, it is sort of common practice to then have a photo of them within the Mariah. And so a year later we had a photo ceremony where Greg's photo was unveiled and people were invited, including members of his family. And that was also a really powerful way to bring people together and make sure that we didn't forget and make sure that we honored him in an appropriate way.

**Speaker 11:**

He liked having a laugh and he loved working in radio. He was a real prankster. He was very mischievous. When I was reading the news, he'd be walking past the studio, pulling faces, trying to make me laugh, and he loved having the fun even though he was very, very professional on air. And we gave up smoking around the same time.

**Sonia Yee:**

Since leaving the organization, Kevin's had a chance to reflect on his time at TVNZ. So is there anything he wishes he'd done differently?

**Kevin Kenrick:**

The thing that keeps recurring in my mind is the things that I would've done faster. When you have a challenging problem to deal with, taking time doesn't make it less challenging, it just means you address it later. And I think timeliness and the willingness to make a decision without full certainty is something that is really important in a dynamically changing environment. We adopted a mantra of saying, we might not be right, but we won't be confused. We'll make a decision. And we kind of looked at it and

said, well, the best thing we can do is make the right decision. The second best thing is actually to make the wrong decision, and the worst thing you can do is not make a decision.

**Taimi Allen:**

My foot is an anvil on the accelerator and the little master's tires spin wildly churning up gravel and sand. They're used to gentle urban tar seal. It's completely ill-equipped for off-road, so it complains loudly as a careen through a scrub on an overgrown track full of potholes. I'm on my way to the Coorong. The mighty Murray River runs two and a half thousand kilometers through three states and ends here where the mouth gobbles up the Indian Ocean. I will also end here, I think. It seems fitting given that I've heard this is where the first peoples of this land believe the spirits launched themselves into the afterlife. Perhaps they will let me come with them.

**Kirsten Patterson:**

This is Taimi Allen with an excerpt from her soon-to-be published book "Depression Lied To Me" featuring 16 stories of women who've worked their way through distress and come out the other side.

**Taimi Allen:**

That was just kind of my opening and talking about, in a safe way, my path through and out the other side of suicidal feelings.

**Kirsten Patterson:**

Taimi has 17 years in the mental health sector. The former CEO of Changing Minds currently sits on the board of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission of New Zealand, Te Hiringa Mahara and is now a full-time director of Ember Innovations. Between the ages of 15 and 30, Taimi was given eight different diagnoses. So how did each of them allow her to manage her emotions?

**Taimi Allen:**

It was a bit of a relief when I first were diagnosed with something. Obviously if I've got a name for this, then it's happening to other people. I'm not that strange. As the diagnosis got more and more and more profound and more acute and kind of more judgmental, I realized that they weren't actually that helpful, that putting a label on an experience was really just how I was presenting in the moment with the things that were most acute,

not who I was as a whole person. Whether or not you get a label, whether or not you agree with that label or think it's helpful, it's certainly not something that you have to live your entire life with.

**Kirsten Patterson:**

As for the levels of distress, and those times when she was at her lowest ebb, for Taimi it was like dialing the numbers up on the volume knob.

**Taimi Allen:**

When things are really distressing and really bad and you can't find a way out and those suicidal feelings become really the most prevalent thought in your mind, then I liken that to have the volume knob at 11. So we have to kind of learn lots of different ways to be able to turn the volume down on that.

**Speaker 12:**

It's hard sometimes, living, but I try. Mostly I do all right. I hold down jobs, have meaningful relationships. I work hard and I play hard. I have friends and even find my soulmate and get married, but that's another story. In the moments between joy and fulfillment, though, I sometimes forget how to live when the shame gets overwhelming. Those moments blur into a compote of emergency rooms, first responder uniforms, pills, and hospital beds.

**Kirsten Patterson:**

But Taimi's come a long way and those days are behind her now. Through her career, including in her former role as CEO for Changing Minds, an organization that supports mental health and wellbeing, Taimi's been able to bring her lived experience to her work and her day-to-day. So what advice does she have for managers and CEOs?

**Taimi Allen:**

Yeah, well I think that comes back to how leaders build culture across their whole organizations. A good leader will walk the talk, but they won't be the only one that acts in that manner. So building a culture of trust and sharing is a very slow process, but really important.

**Kirsten Patterson:**

But there's a fine line between what you show and who you share it with, and that can be even trickier when you're in a leadership role.

**Taimi Allen:**

I had a really nasty experience in the past where an employee on their way out decided to use the fact that I'd cried at work. They threw that back at me in an employment situation, and I thought, gosh, here I am trying to promote a culture where we can be open and honest at work, and they're using that against me in this moment, and that was a real wake up call for me. We actually have to have a culture of keeping each other safe in the workplace, and that has to be built up at all levels, and there will be some people that aren't comfortable about doing that. So you really have to spend time with as many people as you can in the levels of the organization that you are able to touch and reach and have an open door with to say, how are we going to build that trust and the open and the honesty, and where are people's comfort levels with that so that everybody is in that waka.

Sort of in those moments as a director or a CEO where you feel the wheels are going to fall off if I don't do something, you know who in your organization, who in your management structure, who in your your ka mahi you can trust with this information so that you together you can work to fight that fire or get over that hump or that hurdle.

**Kirsten Patterson:**

Firsthand experience in this space has empowered Taimi to give back.

**Taimi Allen:**

A thousand percent, because in being open about how you navigate challenge, you're able to give tools to other people as well. And the way I might get through a challenging day or a challenging week or month or year is going to be significantly different from how you might navigate that. So if we're sharing those sorts of things, then that's likely to help someone who might not be so confident in speaking up about the tough stuff that they're going through.

I would challenge people to say that they can't bring that to the director's table, because if I think, even at the commission level and we've got directors around that board table that are incredibly accomplished people, have such high manner and standing in the community, our whanaungatanga meant that we got to know each other a little bit more.

And I think that's sometimes missing in boards, that they don't spend enough time in whanaungatanga because what we were able to bring out is those lived experiences of our lives and our challenges that make our position and our governance at that table so much more strong. And to see those things as strengths, not weaknesses, is incredibly powerful around the board table.

**Kirsten Patterson:**

That was Taimi Allen. You also heard Tina Jenen, Ross Townshend, Paul Dykzeul, Dr. Emily Beausoleil, and Kevin Kenrick, with additional scenes voiced by Damien Galvin as Kerry Packer and Noel Prentice as a reporter. The sound engineer for the series is Mark Chesterman. I'm **Kirsten Patterson**.

**Sonia Yee:**

And I'm producer **Sonia Yee**. You've been listening to Across the Board. Special thanks to NZDM and News Talk ZB for the use of archival audio featuring Greg Boyd and Niva Retimanu. If you are experiencing depression, anxiety, or distress and you need to talk, contact Lifeline on oh 800 5 4 3 3 5 4 or free text 4 3 5 7. And there's a range of other support providers available including Suicide Crisis Helpline and Healthline.

**Kirsten Patterson:**

If you'd like to listen to more from the series, you can download or subscribe on iHeartRadio, Spotify, Apple, or wherever you get your podcasts. And while you're there, we'd love for you to rate the series too. In the next episode, we move to fresh air and green pastures and take a look at the risks and opportunities around climate change and what boards of directors and businesses need to think about and why it affects us all. Thanks for listening.

**Sonia Yee:**

Bye for now.