

Ending Well is a Leadership Skill:

Episode 293

Elena: If you know that ending the year on a high note is important for your team, but you don't know how to make it happen, then this episode is for you. Hello friends and welcome to the Bright Morning Podcast. I'm your host Elena Aguilar, and in each podcast episode you will learn how you can lead conversations that build connection and spark change.

So today we are talking about a leadership move that often gets overlooked, but that makes all the difference, which is ending well because how you close a year leaves a mark, and in many ways it does set the tone for what comes next. So let's get into this. Think about how much time we typically put into beginnings.

We plan retreats, we launch meetings, we make vision boards. We come up with icebreakers. We know that how we begin matters. But here's the thing, endings matter just as much and yet. Often, by the time May and June roll around, many teams are just scrambling and coasting to the finish, and that's understandable, but it is also a missed opportunity because what happens in those final meetings and even in the final minutes of those final meetings that sticks, that is sometimes what people carry with them into summer.

That's what echoes when they come back in the fall. So today I wanna offer you a simple but powerful frame. Ending well is a leadership skill. So a few years back I worked with a leader, I'm gonna call him Jordan, who led a team of interventionists at a large middle school, and it had been a really hard year.

There was mid-year staff turnover, a lack of clear direction, a lot of emotional exhaustion, and by May, Jordan was tempted to just call it, to cancel the final meeting, to send a quick thank you email and to be done with it. But after some coaching, Jordan decided to gather the team one last time, and he started off that meeting with a simple question.

What's something you're proud of from this year that no one else might have seen? There was this pause and then people started to share. There was some laughter. One person talked about a breakthrough with a student who hadn't spoken for months. Another person shared how she finally felt confident leading small group instruction.

And then Jordan added his own. He said, I'm proud of how we stuck with each other, even when it was messy, even when I didn't lead as clearly as I wanted to. I have learned so much from each of you, and there were tears and there were hugs. That meeting ended up being one of the most meaningful of the entire year because Jordan chose to end with intention.

With presence. Now, if this is something that you are interested in trying out, here's a structure that you could use for a final team meeting that builds trust and closure. So first. Open with appreciation. You could say something like, before we wrap up this year, I wanna slow down and recognize what we've been through and who we've become, and then invite, reflection, ask each person to share something that they've learned, something they're proud of, or something they're leaving behind.

Keep it flexible. Giving people options helps to create safety 'cause it really just allows people to go as deep as they're comfortable with. Next, celebrate wins. Name the goals that you met, and human moments. Name the growth. Name the resilience. So don't make this a performance review. Make it a way to highlight your team's strength.

Finally offer a thread forward. Say something simple like we made it, we learned a lot, and we'll come back stronger because of all that we've been through this year. And of course, you need to adapt this to your style, and this could happen in 30 minutes, or it could happen in an hour. The point is really to choose presence, to mark the ending, not just have people trickle out the door for the last time as the year ends.

Now if you would like some tools to guide that conversation, then in our teams learning library, we've got end-of-year protocols and celebration templates that make it easy to do this well. You'll find a link to those in the show notes, and here is a challenge for you for this week. Choose a way to close the year with intention.

This could be a reflective circle or a letter to your team, or carving out time for a moment of shared appreciation and whatever you choose. Just remember, you are not just wrapping up a to-do list. You are shaping how your team feels. How they reflect, and you're laying the foundation now for how they will come back in the fall.

If you want to keep learning with me, and if you wanna transform the way that your team gathers and prepare to build a culture where everyone, including yourself thrives, then again, check out the show notes to learn more about our

team's learning library and PLC. And you will also find a link to our upcoming free community webinars.

Okay, folks, thanks for being with me today, and if you appreciated this episode and if you are listening via podcast, then please share it with someone who might benefit from it. Or you could hop over to Apple Podcast and leave us a five-star rating and a review, because that helps other people discover it.

And maybe you're watching me on YouTube. And if so, then give this video a like if it was helpful, and perhaps share it with a colleague. And if you're not yet watching us on YouTube, then come on over there and join us. You'll find a link to our channel in the podcast. Show notes. Alright folks. LesLee Bickford is the podcast producer and Stacey Goodman does the Sound Engineering.

Take care, be well, and I'll see you next time.