**The Inspired Leader Podcast - Ally Stone & Kim Jones "Elevating Women in the Workforce"**

**Ally Stone**

Welcome to the inspired leader podcast! I'm your host, Ally Stone. All of my life I've been passionate about leadership, I've been a senior level leader in the hospitality industry since 2005, growing a chain of franchise restaurants from one unit to 12, spanning across Northern Alberta, and during that time I've been on a journey to discover what leadership means to me and how I can utilize it to show up in my career and in my life.

What I've found is that the most impactful, most meaningful experiences that I've witnessed or been a part of as a leader, have come when we connect with our hearts. Over the past decade or more I've honed in on and refined a Leadership Model that speaks to this, I have developed numerous programs that help leaders deepen their understanding of the impact they can not only have on their careers, but also on the world around them and now it's my mission to share this model of leadership through a heart-centered focus with the world.

I'm the founder of the Inspired Leader, through which I mentor and Coach leaders. I facilitate engaging and inspiring workshops that help you think outside of the box and connect with your heart and your emotions, and I also deliver keynote speeches to inspire and motivate teams to engage in their own personal leadership style in a way that's authentic to them. It's my hope that through these podcasts you feel inspired to go out and challenge yourself, to try new things as a leader, to show up in the world maybe just a little differently and hopefully find a deeper connection with who you authentically are. Thank you for being here!

All right, hello everybody, welcome back to another week of the inspired leader podcast! I'm your host, Ali Stone, and, as always, super excited to be here. A little slow on podcasts this summer, but it's okay, sometimes you get really caught up in this idea that you have to do things, and things have to happen in certain ways all the time and I'm really just enjoying conversations right now with amazing women and, so I have an amazingly beautiful woman with me today her name is Kim Jones, say hi Kim.

**Kim Jones**

Hi Ally, such such a pleasure to be here!

**Ally Stone**

Thank you for being here with me, I'm really excited to have this conversation with you. We've known each other for a couple years now, maybe even two and a half years at this point. I'm really excited to sit down and talk to you, we're both coaches in the industry, you support me and I think this is such an important conversation that we can have today, especially two coaches talking about our careers and what we do, because number one, I think, coaching in a lot of ways is kind of unknown, people often ask me, what is coaching really and what is that all about, and number two, I think it'll be really cool just to shed some light with listeners on what we do and what our careers look like and what our businesses look like so let's do it.

I'm super excited to do that, so I really like to kick things off by getting you to introduce yourself so maybe share a little bit of your history with the listeners, what brought you to this point in time in front of me today? How does that sound?

**Kim Jones**

Absolutely, a little bit of background on me. Ali, you know this because you and I went through coach training together back two, three years ago, we started thinking about becoming career coaches, not coaches of careers, but coaches in our careers around the same time. What my trajectory looked like prior to that time was all about corporate. I spent 25 years making my way climbing the corporate ladder, started out at the lowest level as a file clerk and an administrative assistant and eventually worked my way up to the C-suite.

I was divisional CIO most recently for Farmers Insurance company where I was responsible for the technology vision and strategy for the personal Alliance division of Farmers and and then that did expand over my time there to take on some other functions as well, but inherent in that journey were a lot of twists and turns, that I never could have predicted going in.

What I was really looking for from my career was really having a job that was challenging and exciting and where I felt like I was making a difference. I used to look at people who were in executive positions and corporations and I thought, you know, I want to be like them, they look like they're making a really big difference in the world and they're doing important things. And so I went in that direction by starting my career actually in finance and operations and eventually worked my way up to the senior levels of leadership. I was in operations and then eventually transferred over into IT, running technology shops from a business perspective.

In all of that movement underlying current was where I was at internally, it was this sense that through each step that I was taking, I still wasn't hitting the mark in terms of delivering on that career, that I really felt like was my own and where I was making the kind of impact that I wanted to make so I just kept moving and as I worked my way up higher and higher in organizations, I actually found that my satisfaction levels were decreasing not increasing, which was a big surprise to me, but by then, I had a lot of the perks and the reasons to stay, relationships etc.

There's a lot of social capital and having these great jobs that other people admire, so I kept plugging along and hoping that with the next job or the next opportunity I might find my way to something satisfying so that takes me about 25 years into my career.

Then about eight years ago I started experiencing a series of personal tragedies that made me reassess the priority that I was placing on my work, relative to what was important to me outside of work and also realizing that my life force was really being invested into something that wasn't creating satisfaction and happiness, but was in fact creating a lot of stress and overwhelm and just, sort of, a feeling of “is this all there is” in my life?

So when I started experiencing some of these tragedies in my life, it became apparent that I didn't have the room for both my job and giving these events the attention and the personal investment that I felt they needed, so it was because of that, that I finally decided to leave, and it's not that I hadn't thought of leaving before, but I didn't know what I was going to do next, so I kept waiting to figure out what that looked like before I would make a jump and then it finally occurred to me that I was just going to have to make the jump, that I probably wasn't going to learn what I needed to know about my next step until I took the space and the time to really figure that out.

So five years ago I resigned unexpectedly. I wasn't planning on it, but it was in a conversation with my boss and in one moment it became incredibly clear to me that I need to move on and I approached the conversation with him. We worked out an Exit Plan, and I was gone in about a month and a half after that, with no plans of what to do next and and, to be honest, I needed a break, so there was a part of me that just needed to decompress and reflect and deal with what was happening in my personal life.

I also made the decision to go back to school to get a degree in cultural anthropology so that I could justify the time that I wasn't looking for work. Fast forward after I got that degree, I decided that I wanted to coach the kinds of women that I myself had been. Women who have invested significantly in career paths and in professional lives that don't feel like it's enough for them or that they're there getting the impact that they want out of work and also have no idea how to actually make the kind of desired career a reality or what that even looks like.

Now I work a lot with women who are grappling with these big questions and don't know where to turn and having gone through my own process I enjoy guiding them and helping them figure that out and then I also do a lot of work with companies. I do Executive coaching and companies speaking events workshops and, going back to my anthropology degree, I've really emphasized the work that I do with companies around gender equity, advising, because I'm very passionate about the advancement of women in the workplace and women bringing their authentic selves to work, so that we can really benefit from the gifts and the talents that they have.

**Ally Stone**

This is such an important work that you're talking about. I'm going to jump back a little bit because I had a few questions along the way that I think would be cool to explore.

You were talking about how you weren't like… you used the word “life force”, like that wasn't you, where you weren't getting what you needed out of this position. What does that look like for you? I'm just curious because I’ve asked my clients sometimes when I get different answers, what does it mean to be connected to this feeling of life? What is that and what is that for you? What were you missing in that time, what were the indicators?

**Kim Jones**

I think what was really missing for me was that I felt so passionately about a lot of things in the world that mattered to me, I mentioned gender equity. A lot of what's really important to me is the representation of people in the workplace and in society, who have not had equal access to the systems of success that those in dominant groups have had. That's why I went back and studied cultural anthropology, because this is something that I'm very passionate about.

I felt like the work that I was doing was serving something very different than what was so important to me and when I say that there was no life force there, where I was putting my energy at work - it was in solving a lot of big problems and leading teams and setting vision and strategy and really advancing the agenda of the organizations that I've worked for, but what it also involved was a lot of of internal struggle and external struggle to get there.

I was dealing with my own experiences with gender bias, especially as a woman in technology, who didn't come up from the technology rank, so a lot of people questioned whether I was competent to do the job that I was doing, which made it much more difficult for me to have the quick impact that others, who don't have those obstacles, could have.

That's an example of an internal struggle, there were also lots of politics and the jobs that I had with changing leadership and priorities and budgets and projects being funded and cut and all those things that took a tremendous amount of energy in managing and I felt like that was not energy that was serving in the way that I wanted to serve.

Now I work very hard in the business that I have and I love it, and I feel like the effort that I'm putting in, the work that I'm putting in is serving something that, I feel, is having the impact in the world that I want to see. My mission for my company is to ensure that society actually will be a better place when more women are doing work that they love, that more women stop doing work that they can barely tolerate and that they understand and bring their gifts into the world.

We look around we've got a number of intractable problems that we're facing in our societies, in our communities, and I believe that having more balance in positions of power, where there are different perspectives, and that it's not so singular, will help to bring the different experiences and thinking that we need to solve some of those problems.

I see women's advancement as being much more about each individual person living a fulfilling life. We really are a part of a bigger issue we have, which is a singular focus in how we approach a lot of our problems and not solving them.

**Ally Stone**

I totally agree and as you're saying all of that I'm having these memories or thinking of even myself at times or different women I've worked with, who stay because they feel that they have to. There's this societal pressure, peer pressure to stay in these roles, thinking that you should be grateful you got this role, like the one you're talking about working with Farmers Insurance etc.

People probably dream about this and then you find yourself in this place where you're like “oh my gosh, it's not it's not what I thought it was going to be, it's not aligning with with who I am as a person” and having the courage to acknowledge that and step out of that and step into something new is just so inspiring to other women, so I want to say that on the podcast, because I think that's a really important thing.

You're talking about how you want to work with all these other women, but you've done it, and I think the best mentors that we can work with are the experienced mentors, the ones that know it, have been there, have their war stories for you and can help you with that because that's how we share with each other and how we connect on really deep levels. Because we know we've been there together and that's how we can act too, even though we come from different industries.

**Kim Jones**

Absolutely! 100% agree with everything that you just said and touching on the point of the experience and having walked the path that was something that was really missing for me when I was on my own career journey, because all I heard were the voices in my ear that were saying that I had lost my mind for walking away from from something that was our definition of what a good life is supposed to look like and it was.

It really is gratifying when working with people, who are getting those same voices in their ear, to provide a completely different perspective on what a journey to meaningful work would look like for them, and how they can have even a bigger impact.

But they've got to work against all of that conditioning that tells us that these are the paths we should be on and if we deviate from them that is something that we should internally fix, as opposed to looking externally and saying, well, maybe it's what I'm doing and not that there's something wrong, that I can't feel happy in this role, that's supposed to be making me happy.

And what I think I learned through my process of making this transition is just how many people feel this way, but because everyone… a lot of people… I shouldn't say everyone, but a lot of people feel like they're the only ones who are struggling with these questions and they need to figure out how to fix it and make it work.

It's not really talked about enough for people to know that this is actually quite common and doing something about it and aligning with something that's really meaningful for you is the best gift that you can give yourself in this life, I believe.

**Ally Stone**

And the world… yeah… right… like, we weren't here to not live in our true nature, right! And so if you're living against that your whole life, you're just fighting against something that naturally you somewhere, you naturally want to be, even if you're not quite sure what that is.

**Kim Jones**

Yeah, and I know you're about that as well, I know that's the work that you do as well. The work to continue to look at who you are and what you can bring as offering, your gifts to the world and benefiting the world through that work, and I just see that the impact that people, who bring that forward, have in ways that we need again as communities and as societies.

**Ally Stone**

Agreed, so I have a deep question for you. It wasn't on the list, but it came up while you were talking and so I want your opinion on it. I want to see what you think and we'll have a little talk about it, but we're talking about these societal pressures to conform, to stay in the job, the good job that you have, that society thinks is great…

In my mind, I see that there's these societal pressures, but there's also this internal ticker tape, which, in my mind, at least in my own personal experience, is actually stronger than the societal pressures. Somehow, at some point in my life, at least specifically it became stronger than the societal pressure, and I had to work through that. How do you help women with that when they're struggling with that kind of ticker tape in their own minds?

**Kim Jones**

Well… this is where I'm going to come at it a little bit from my cultural anthropologist background. So if we look at what culture does, as in… and I study culture, what culture does is it actually creates the norms and the rules around which a society can function effectively according to whatever the goals that society has.

So we live in societies that are very much based on a capitalist system and economic prosperity, and so the way culture works is we have been conditioned to buy into the values and the beliefs of those cultures, and what that ends up looking like is we begin to internalize them as our own beliefs.

So where this conditioning becomes effective to where you know people are basically working in the cultural system in ways that support the society, but may not always benefit themselves.

As an example, doing work that is important for our communities and our society, but doesn't necessarily serve who we want to be or what we want to do in the world. What allows that to work is when the beliefs and the values that we've been conditioned into, start to feel like our own voice, so when you hear it in your mind that you should be grateful for this job that everybody will think this is exactly what you should be doing and you feel guilty if you go off and do your own thing, all of those statements start to sound like you.

And that's what makes them so powerful is that it's Ally, it's Kim, you know, it's saying that, but really, what it actually is or what it actually originates from is much more related to that metaphorical water that we're swimming in. What I do in the work that I do is exposing that water and saying - you know what, there's other ways and in order to move in the direction of those other options you have to understand and be aware of where a lot of these beliefs, that you now hold as your own, have come from and start to challenge if they're actually true.

Is it true that I'm selfish if I go off and do work that I love or is it true that by doing that I'm actually serving in some greater way and possibly serving as inspiration to those who are watching me?

It's bringing a broader perspective that starts to look at these beliefs for what they are and bring in new ways of thinking about things, so that we can start to understand that these beliefs aren't serving us and they're not really serving much of anything really other than this broader system that we're all part of.

**Ally Stone**

I think that's such an important thing that you're saying, because our realities are created from what we believe and you and I have been working together on limiting beliefs and I think it's really powerful stuff when you sit down and you really ask yourself.

 It's so funny, if you have this belief, for example, that “I'm not worthy”.

You have this belief “I'm not worthy” and that is your belief, you rarely think to challenge it until you find somebody to help you do it.

I always say, for me coaching is helping you see around your corner, like the edge of your consciousness. We all have edges to which we can see and we can stretch those edges, but we need help to do that and so this creates more awareness.

Would that be the right way to describe it? It's like you’re unaware that it’s a thought you're even having that doesn't serve you and when you can start to become aware, I feel like everything shifts and there's just such powerful transformations.

That happens in coaching when you're willing to sit down and look at these beliefs that may or may not serve you.

One question I've had a couple times and I know how I would answer it, so we'll talk a little bit about it, but I think this is a really interesting question and we've never talked about it before… I'm way off script now…

**Kim Jones**

I love it!

**Ally Stone**

A question I've had a couple times is “will coaching change what I believe”?

And it's a really interesting question, because what you can tell when somebody's asking that question, they're nervous, and they're nervous about what might happen, but what do you think about it, if somebody asks you that question?

If one of your clients asks you that question: “is coaching going to change what I believe? Is it going to change who I am?” What would you say? How would you know?

**Kim Jones**

It's such a good question and I have a million things that are running through my head as to why I think that's such a good question, because there's something about holding a belief really strongly that creates a lot of it, can create a lot of amazing things. I believe in some cases that's really beneficial or it can be. But also it is behind a lot of the struggles and the challenges that we have personally, as well as how we relate to each other.

Often, when there's conflict whether it's internal or external, it can be traced back to a belief and something is happening that is contrary to that belief, that's creating some kind of friction in some way.

As an example, if I believe that I am unworthy and I start to hold on to that belief, anything that suggests that I might be worthy starts to create friction inside, but if I don't hold that belief at all and I'm open to what am I, if I am open to the question “Am I worthy?”, “Am I unworthy?”, “No, I just simply am”. I am here and I've got some things that I want to accomplish in my life, then worthy or unworthy almost feels like it's a question that doesn't even apply.

If you're not holding on to the belief so tightly and then, of course, we can look at externally where we have so many divided communities right now, where people aren't even really able to talk to each other, a lot of that stems from a belief held really strongly, so that's my thought on belief.

If someone were to say to me “am I going to change what I believe?” I will probably answer from my own perspective that some of the best things that have happened in my own life is when I have changed what I believed and so being open to that in terms of what it would mean for you to shift a belief is something we would explore in coaching and if it's a belief that you are holding on to really tightly, I will probably want to explore what that belief means to you, how is it serving your identity, how is it serving your sense of who you are in the world and in those conversations so many insights can be had even if the belief doesn't shift at all.

**Ally Stone**

Exactly, and that's like the edges of the consciousness.

**Kim Jones**

I would love to hear Ali, what your thoughts are on that.

**Ally Stone**

Oh yeah, for sure. That's what I would say too. I cannot change your beliefs, you would only change your beliefs and that's up to you. All I will do is ask you powerful questions that will help you see around the potential blind spots you might have in your life and when we talk about it, you can decide if that belief serves you or not. That's not my call, all I'm here to do is help you, be a thinking partner for you.

I always say that and a lot of thought leaders say this now, but I actually think it's really powerful. What got you here is not going to get you to where you want to go and it's maybe becoming a little bit over-said, but I think it's pretty powerful when you think about it.

And it's true, if we level up in our lives, you and I in new careers and we have what we did to get there, what we got done before is not going to get us to where we want to go now. And you have to get outside of your comfort zone to experience those things in life, I think, that's so important.

**Kim Jones**

Yeah I think that's exactly right, I love that!

**Ally Stone**

Yeah, that's super cool… so in your experiences you've had a lot of challenging moments, by the sounds of it, coming up in Corporate America… and I should point out that you're an American, so you live in California and I live in Canada, so we live in a little bit different climates and we have different circumstances, but a lot of similarities at the same time, and I think we can both definitely agree on the gender equity thing.

To this day women are still paid what, 80 cents on the dollar of men and that's just reality and I think sometimes, even male leaders do that unknowingly, because it's so ingrained and so that is really challenging, and so I want to bring it back to you working with these women.

So when you're working with these women and they're facing these issues, these are really hard issues, how are you helping them through these things? How are you helping them see that there's a possibility for them to grow and step into who they are, even when they're facing these external elements that are holding them back?

**Kim Jones**

It's such a great and important question! A couple things that come to mind, the first is that, the boss that you reference, who has no awareness that there's this bias… I often find that that's the case with many of my clients.

A lot of people still haven't been fully educated or made aware of the impact that bias creates, whether it's gender or something else. What those biases impact, by way of our career trajectories, so there are a lot of biases that work against women in the workplace.

An example includes that women are not seen as competent as men in leadership roles and there's an expectation that women have to prove themselves by demonstrating experience before they'll get a promotion, whereas men, who are aligned with the leadership stereotype, are much more likely to be promoted, based on their company, their potential.

What you end up having, over the course of an entire career evolution for a man and a woman, is that a woman is going to have to work harder and gain more experience in order to be given the same opportunities as men, that's just data and research that we know, this is how this plays out.

But if you look at an individual woman's perspective, she's seeing around for that people are getting promoted where she may have more experience or where she may be more competent and feel like there's something personal going on there, so she may internalize that to think like there's something off with what she is doing.

I don't know it or understand exactly why I'm not getting ahead when I do all these other things and it tends to feed into our own beliefs that we adopt, which is - we're not as capable, we're not as confident and we hold those as much as the general society, because that's what we've been taught, and so in those cases she may go her entire career wondering why she's not getting ahead at the same rate and that starts to impact her confidence.

Another bias is that women are judged much more harshly for their mistakes, because they're not seen as being as competent, whereas if male counterpart would make a similar mistake, it would be attributed to a bad day. Whereas for a woman it would be attributed to the fact that she's not as confident as she needs to be better, and over time that can start to foster things like perfectionism that have to be perfect for me to get ahead, it can foster imposter syndrome, it can foster a lack of confidence.

So the first thing that I do with my clients is I create awareness around the broader social and cultural dynamics that create these imbalances and the good news is there are lots of strategies some people like, some people don't like, about how to manage around these biases.

It takes almost more intention, it takes more forethought and strategy for people who have biases that do not work in their favor, to navigate in those environments, but it can be successfully done and that's what I work with my women clients on is how they can start to decide what strategies they want to deploy in order to deal with the things that almost all women deal with in their day-to-day work.

**Ally Stone**

This is really interesting, we've never really talked about the strategy around this … what would you say, the average stay versus leave rate once a woman really understands these biases, understands what she's facing, understands what the strategy might be that she has to employ.

If she wants to work this out in her career, how often do they leave? Do they turn around and say “this isn't for me”?... like this is a lot of work and maybe I should go somewhere else and find somebody who's willing to work more openly and doesn't have gender bias or do you find that women are really willing to put their head down and work through it?

**Kim Jones**

I find both for sure, the stats are pretty grim on this in technology, which is the field that I most recently came from. By the midpoint of their careers, half of women have left the field, because of the very harsh biases that are actually amplified in technology versus other fields that have better gender representation.

So in technology you still have about 25 - 35% of positions, depending on the company and type of role, being held by women, so they are highly underrepresented, so you see a lot of attrition. I think there are multiple things going on and people are now aware that these biases exist, but they may not fully understand what those biases are and how they're impacting them and so therefore they may not know that there are things that they can do to navigate those challenges, so let me just give you an example so you know what I'm referencing.

So there's this double bind concept that most people have probably heard about by now, which is that there is a set of characteristics that are desired for leaders and those characteristics align very well with the characteristics that go into being, what they call, a good man.

Meaning that it's not a good person, it's more of “you fit The Stereotype of what people consider to be a good man”, however those same leadership characteristics do not align with what it means to be a good woman.

For example being ambitious, being all of those things align with both good leaders and good man, but with women they actually contradict what it means to be, quote unquote, a good woman. A good woman is nice, accommodating, differential, not rocking the boat, likable etc.

So the more a woman acts like a leader - the more she's less liked, which then affects how the company perceives her, and if you're not liked, then you're less likely to do well and have good relationships. If you act like a good woman then you don't have what people consider to have the chops to do leadership and so you're well liked, but you're not getting ahead.

One of the ways that you can get around this, as a woman, is you can do things like smile a lot more, you can instead of saying “here's what I think” you can ask a question, so you can get your same point across. Rather than “I don't agree with that strategy” you can say instead “have you thought about this instead”.

You can set context so if I go in and and, say, in a situation where I don't agree with something “company really values, as one of its core values, being direct, and so from the spirit of that I thought I would share with you some thoughts that I have”.

So if you put it in this way, “I'm not doing this because I'm a direct woman, who's unlikable. I am doing this because I'm a good company steward, who's abiding by the values of the organization”. When I talk about this with my clients, a lot of them will say to me “that's not fair, I shouldn't have to do all those things and that doesn't feel authentic” and my response to that is absolutely! I 100% agree with you.

I know, I think it's pretty outrageous that we have to do some of these things, but if you want to get ahead in the job, these things will help you, because they're shown in studies to help navigate around this double bind, that I mentioned earlier.

And then a lot of women will say at that point “I don’t want to do that so I'm gonna go start my own business” or “I'm gonna go find a company that's going to be more inclusive and more aware of these factors so that I don't have to be so strategic and how I'm navigating my career”, but what I love about having those conversations is it really gives people a set of options that they can work from and they can decide what is best for them.

**Ally Stone**

Yes totally. I think that's really important too and we already hit on this with the coaching, but being able to decide what's best for you is very important.

The thing that was coming up for me is that once you become aware you can't really become unaware, but you have to make a decision based on your values. At that point you have to decide one way or another once you know what needs to happen, once you understand it's either you're in or you're out and those are pretty crucial moments in our lives when they come up for us and I think they're really important and shouldn't be overlooked.

There's a lot to unpack in those moments for people when they come up.

So I think that's really important and we've never really talked about the strategy before, so I think that's great that you shared some tips like that. I think that I can see how those work and I can see how I've used them without even really knowing that those are the strategies, but asking a question rather than presenting a statement is so much more powerful, at least I find for me.

I don't know if men feel the same way, but for me when I'm working with somebody a question goes so much further.

**Kim Jones**

Absolutely, and it is really helpful from that perspective and it works for women more than being more direct, and it's nice for our wonderful male counterparts that they don't have to worry about this stuff like we do, but the good news is that there are things that we can do to be effective.

I find that a lot of women actually do want to navigate in these environments because they feel strongly that they can start to be also the change that the company needs, so the more education they are able to give and the more women we have in organizations and then there's lots of men who understand this, who invest in this, who are allies, who support equal representation for everyone and they are doing their part as well and the more of that we get on the inside of these companies the more likely it is that we can start to have more inclusive cultures as a norm rather than an exception.

**Ally Stone**

Absolutely, so that probably brings me to a question that I wrote down…

**Kim Jones**

I love it.

**Ally Stone**

You're just coming along on the ride with me … What do you think it is that women need most to bring to the workforce these days, to show up and to contribute in authentic and genuine ways and make and create more inclusive workplaces?

**Kim Jones**

I love this question because this, in my opinion, is the time in history where the natural qualities associated with feminine energy and women are being recognized as what's needed in our modern workplaces and elsewhere, so things like empathy, collaboration, listening and focusing on problem solving.

So you have a need to balance of the traditionally masculine types of traits, that we tend to idolize in companies, things like competition, quick decision making, risk taking, being very quick, hustling, like all of that has contributed to work environments where a lot of workers are starting to vote with their feet and quit because they want to be in more humane environments.

They don't want to have to feel like all they're doing is hustling and competing and grinding and competing and I mentioned that one so all of those things, that have been in place, have led to a lot of churn as a result of the pandemic and people really assessing the value and the meaning that work has in their lives.

What women bring to the table is much different, but again, we're talking about generalities here, so this obviously doesn't apply across the board to everybody, but certainly the traits that are now being looked at by these companies, where managers are being encouraged to empower their staff, to listen and have empathy to really work with people who have different experiences and bringing those experiences and perspectives to the table.

Those are all things that I think women generally are socialized and do very well and can serve as a great balance so we achieve a little bit of a counterbalance to the over indexing that we've had on these more traditional masculine traits that we've tended to run our companies according to.

**Ally Stone**

Yeah and that brings me to the concept of “leading from the heart” because I think this is so important right now, so what does it mean to you Kim, to lead from the heart? Coming from Corporate America and into a place where now you run your own business and you get to interact with leaders in such a different way, what has this come to mean for you?

**Kim Jones**

I got this one on your list and so I was thinking a lot about what it means to me and I think what I would say now is that I'm able to bring a perspective that pushes the edges for some people.

It's on the edge of a lot of things that people believe and what it means to lead from the heart is to be true in that message, but do it in a way that's inclusive and it invites in all kinds of different perspectives and experiences and really doesn't leave anybody behind, because of what they have grown to understand, believe and know.

In my mind, the only way to solve this is first solve things like gender equity, is first to acknowledge that we have issues here and to be aware of the systems that have created those inequities and then to be able to work with all kinds of different perspectives on that in ways where we can have a dialogue and a conversation and so for me leading from the heart is really bringing who we authentically and truly are forward in a way that invites and doesn't divide.

**Ally Stone**

I love that and I think that's so important. I've been thinking a lot about… I did one of my other podcasts with the hospitality podcast and this woman at the end… I was talking to her just about a story that had touched her heart and she said to me “we need to hold hands” and I was like yes, we need to hold hands, we need to stop pushing each other away, we need to start connecting, we need to start unifying and finding ways to remind ourselves each day that this is important right now.

You already mentioned the pandemic a little bit, but coming out of a pandemic, coming out of all of this disconnection and then all of the other issues that we already had before it, we've just layered this extra piece on top of it all.

That's just not helping things if we don't get intentional about what we're doing right now, every day and it's so important as I'm talking to you. I can see in my window over here, I can see my pride flag so I always keep my pride flag in my office and I keep it close and it's an important reminder for me of diversity and inclusion, but on all levels it's not just about pride, but it's a symbol for me and I always keep it in my office and it's always something I think about because I think the more we become aware of those things, the more we start to live it and breathe it and move into it and just come from that space without even really thinking about it in the end and then that's when things just become so beautiful.

**Kim Jones**

Amen, absolutely, yes to all of that.

**Ally Stone**

I love it. I love what you said there, I keep thinking I'm like, I should do a podcast on holding hands? People will think “she's crazy”.

**Kim Jones**

I agree it's really interesting to hear the perspectives of people who don't really want to associate with people, whose beliefs feel like violations of their rights and I totally understand that perspective, like I can't argue with it. I don't disagree with it.

What I tend to be about is - where can we find common ground and then use that to have a conversation that starts to shift, because in my mind the polarization and the disconnection, that we have from people, who don't believe in ways that we feel, is important to our own safety into who we are in the world, that is actually in my mind exacerbating the situation.

Whereas the conversations where you can start to find areas of common ground and then use that as the basis of starting to have a shift to me feels like a bigger impact than than the disconnection.

**Ally Stone**

Agree. I often talk about the swing of the pendulum. I don't know if I've ever talked to you about this, but I'm always talking about when we make a change in our life, we'll swing that pendulum one way and we tend to swing it really far, because we're human and that's what we do, we overcorrect and this happens with these issues too.

And sometimes we have people on the far right of the pendulum or on the far left and they don't swing back and find that balance and sometimes, that can be really hard because it gets us confused about the issues and has us in a hard place where it feels hard to find that common ground, hard to find that equality, that unity, but I think it's important to remember that that's not everybody.

If you're facing that and you just need to keep searching for your community of people that you can connect with in all different places that you can start to have these conversations with too, so I'm having that thought in the back of my head that some people listening might be thinking that yeah, but there's some really extreme things that are happening out there, some really extreme groups, some really extreme people.

And yes there are, but there are also many many people who are willing to sit at the table and have a very open conversation and I think that's what's really important to remember and I think the extreme seems big, when we think about it, but it's probably not as big as we actually think it is, if we actually sat down and held hands.

**Kim Jones**

Yes, I I have lived that so many times where I used to think I'll never have anything in common with a trump supporter, as an example, here in the U.S. and I actually have lots of of friends and people that I talk to all the time who are Trump supporters and that's just one example and many other like them, but where I can sit down with them and just ask them questions, ask them to tell me what is it about this way of thinking politically appeals to them.

In that I can start to understand things like, this person has as many fears as I do, but they happen to be different fears. Where they might fear something like loss of freedom and free speech, I may fear loss of fair treatment of people and civil rights. You start to see those areas of common ground and in that understanding there's a lot more opportunity for solutions than in not having the conversations at all.

**Ally Stone**

Agreed, that happened to me about, I don't know, 10 years ago. I was doing business with a company in Texas and I got really close with this woman that owned the company. We were doing this business and one day she was talking about going out and shooting on the weekend. I was thinking that I need to understand, because we had this amazing conversation and she enlightened me into what her family culture was, how she had grown up and I felt so differently about it by the time I got off the phone, and I think that's so important that we're open to those conversations for sure.

I still don't want to carry a gun, but that's fine, that's my choice, but we can still talk to these people and we can all come together and share our beliefs and our views of the world.

**Kim Jones**

That's my hope.

**Ally Stone**

It would be such a more beautiful place if we could do that.

**Kim Jones**

Yes I agree.

**Ally Stone**

I want to ask you one last question. I'm taking lots of time, I only wanted to take an hour, but we've been having a good conversation, so I want to ask you one more question, and then I'll let you on your way today, but I've been wondering… for you, what has been a defining moment for you in your career?

I just love this question, I think it's a cool question, just give some insight into your experiences that you've had, so what's something that's happened for you that's been like “oh that's really changed who I am and how I show up and brought me to where I am today”?

**Kim Jones**

Okay, so this is not going to be, probably, the answer that you were expecting, but the thing that popped into my head was one of the personal tragedies that I mentioned that I endured, which was when my brother died eight years ago suddenly of a heart attack.

It was a defining moment in my career, because in that moment, where my brother did not get to live a full life, he got to 45 and in that moment I saw very clearly the choices that I had been making that, all of a sudden, it was like the the scales fell off my eyes, and I could clearly see how I had been managing my life in ways that were so contrary to what I actually wanted to accomplish during my time in this life, and so my brother, who I love dearly, was my greatest teacher when he was here, and he's continues to be my greatest teacher now that he's no longer physically in this space with me.

**Ally Stone**

Yeah, but always in your heart.

**Kim Jones**

Right, always in my heart, every single day.

**Ally Stone**

Yeah, well… we'll dedicate this up if so to your brother then.

**Kim Jones**

Sure

**Ally Stone**

I love that I think that's so important and I think we have these moments in our lives and I think it's important that you… that was the example that came up because I'm all about integration and not balance and I really believe that every part of our life touches the other, and in some way affects another part of it and when we try to push that off pretend like that doesn't happen we find ourselves in places that we're really not where we want to be right and then one day we wake up and we're 95 and we're like, what the hell happened to our lives!

**Kim Jones**

Yeah and so nobody wants that, nobody wants that, and, I'm sad to say that, it took a tragedy for me to see what I always knew.

**Ally Stone**

Yeah and it's so hard to lose the people we love, it's so hard.

**Kim Jones**

I know you know that as well.

**Ally Stone**

Yeah you got me, it's got my brain over here … anyhow, okay so let's wrap it up, I think this has been an amazing conversation, thank you first of all, I'm always so incredibly grateful for you. I think you're amazing, I'm so grateful you're in my life, I'm so grateful to have conversations with you every week. I just feel so blessed so I hope you know that.

**Kim Jones**

Oh my gosh, seriously, Ally, you know I feel like coming from you that means so much because I feel exactly the same way about you.

**Ally Stone**

Thanks, Kim. So as we wrap it up, are there some final words you'd like to leave with the listeners today? Maybe some thoughts on, I don't know, career life or our conversation?

**Kim Jones**

I would like to wrap it up with what you just said, which is don't wait until you're 95 to do what is going to make you feel fulfilled and happy in this life.

**Ally Stone**

I love it,that's beautiful and if listeners want to connect with you where can they find you.

**Kim Jones**

They can find me on my website which is kimjonesalliance.com and my main social media is LinkedIn and I'm Kim Jones.

**Ally Stone**

Nice, awesome okay, well great this has been a pleasure today, thank you so much.

**Kim Jones**

Oh this is so fun, thanks so much for having me Ali, I really enjoyed the conversation.

**Ally Stone**

Thank you so much for listening, it's been an honor of sharing this podcast with you, if you like it share it with a friend we're always made stronger by supporting one another and if you'd like to learn more about the inspired leader you can find me at the inspired leader.com the Inspired Leader on Facebook, Instagram @allystone underscore a LLY and Linkedin at Ally Stone. I'd love to hear from you and I'd love to connect.