



How to Have a Conversation That Matters | Celeste Headlee

[00:00:00] Caldera Lab

Darin: This episode is sponsored by my favorite skincare line, Caldera Lab. I never used to give much thought to my skincare routine. There weren't enough brands making the products that I would actually feel safe to apply to my skin and that is the truth. On top of that, the idea of finding a routine that would suit my skin and my schedule was just too much effort. I just blew it off. Nobody has the time or money to try a bunch of different products, look into them, and of course, I'm looking into every single ingredient, most of them are junk until you find one that actually improves your skin. That's why finding Caldera Labs was a blessing for me. They made it easy for me to take care of my skin in a way that fits my routine and my lifestyle. I cleanse my face in the morning and at night using the Clean Slate Cleanser. Then in the morning, I use their Base Layer moisturizer to keep my skin nourished throughout the day. At night, I use my favorite product from them, The Good, which is a serum that just leaves my skin feeling incredible. It's that easy. Their products are made from completely clean, nontoxic ingredients. My favorite part about it is their sustainably harvested botanicals, and they're going above and beyond organic and their incredible extraction processes to create the best skincare that actually works. My skin has never felt or looked healthier. If you're ready to take your skincare to the next level, Caldera is offering my listeners 20% off when you head to calderalab.com/darin and use the code, DARIN. That's C-A-L-D-E-R-A-L-A-B dot com forward slash Darin, D-A-R-I-N. You will not regret it. Now, let's get to the episode.

[00:01:56] Guest Intro - Celeste Headlee

Darin: Hey, everybody, welcome the show. This is Darin Olien. This is The Darin Olien Show. Thanks for tuning in. We got a hell of a guest here, Celeste Headlee. She is an internationally recognized journalist, radio house professional speaker. She wrote an incredible book called *We Need to Talk: How to Have Conversations That Matter*. She's done TED Talks. For 20 years, she's been in public radio. Celeste has been an executive producer on *Second Thought*, a Georgia Public Broadcasting, and anchor of many programs, *Tell Me More*, *Talk of the Nation*, *Here and Now*, *All Things Considered*. She's also the president and CEO of *Headway DEI*, a nonprofit that works to bring racial justice and equality to journalism and media through targeted training and intervention. She is the granddaughter of composer, William Grant Still, known as The Dean of African American Composers, and she is trained operatic soprano, that's right. She lives in DC area, and she has an incredible rescue dog named, Samus. We'll put the link in the show notes to her TED Talk. *10 Ways to Have a Better Conversation* has been viewed over 26 million times. It is some incredible takeaways to learn how to listen, how to care about the person that you're listening to, to not do other things while you're listening. It is so important for us to have better conversations in this world. So, we get into it. Celeste is an incredible human being. It was almost a little intimidating having a conversation with her, interviewing her because she knows so much about a good two-way conversation. It stretched my muscle a little bit in terms of interviewing



her, but it was an incredible conversation about how to have conversations. So enjoy this conversation about having better conversations with my great friend, Celeste Headlee.

[00:04:12] Podcast Intro

Darin: You are listening to The Darin Olien Show. I am Darin, and it is my life's mission to find and share healthy and sustainable ways of living. In this podcast, I talk to inspiring people and professionals from around the world to uncover ways that we as humans can improve our lifestyles, strengthen our mindsets, and take better care of this beautiful planet we call home. If you're looking for motivation to take the next steps towards a happier, healthier life, then you're in the right place, and I'm stoked that you're here. So let's do this. This is my show, The Darin Olien Show.

[00:04:56] First Part of the Interview

Darin: Thank you so much for jumping on here. I was digging into and watching your TED Talk. It's such a fascinating world that you've cracked open yourself from Best Selling Author, Ted Talk, broadcaster, journalist, speaker, musician, NPR, PBS, on and on. Wow, if anyone's been communicating, it's been you. Even in music thinking of your background and Bachelor's Degree and vocal performance, I'm like, wow, that's communication. It's very powerful, and probably one of the most powerful ways of communicating.

Celeste: Yes, because it's visceral.

Darin: You started there, how did the evolution happen into all of these extraordinary books and Ted Talks and epiphanies from vocal to the arts to where you're at now?

Darin: I got offered a job as a classical music host on Public Radio, and it's actually quite difficult to find classical music hosts because you have to be a good broadcaster but then you have to be able to pronounce all of those names and all of those titles and know a little bit about music. So I did that for a while and then they started training me to do cultural reporting. From there, it just continued on. It certainly was not the profession I expected to be in, but it happened pretty organically.

Darin: It's kind of that thing in life, life happens.

Celeste: While you're making other plans.

Darin: Exactly.

Celeste: Indeed.

Darin: I'm enriched by getting to know you because I love the art of communication, and I want to unpack this and hear your wisdom around this because I think we require a healthy discourse and competent communication, I think. I guess my first question is, do you feel like things are improving in communication? Do you feel there's hope because of the current situation? How are you feeling around this right now?

[00:07:09] The current state of communication



Celeste: If I didn't feel hope I'd become a stockbroker or something. I'm in this business because I do think there's a chance to get better at it. Are things improving? No, they're getting worse. Look, my TED Talk has somewhere between 26 and 27 million views. That's because people have gone online and searched for some version of how do I get better in conversation or how do I become a better communicator, whatever it may be. Some version of that search has led them to my TED Talk and that's heartening. That means people recognize something's not going the way it should, that something's wrong. Because look, conversation, and communication is not rocket science. It really isn't. We're talking about a skill that we as human beings do better than any other species already. It doesn't take a whole lot to improve as a conversationalist. So if people are searching for ways in order to do that, they are going to find them and they will get better.

Darin: We've had broken down communication in ways that I haven't even seen and experienced individually myself within the fabric of friendships for 20 years. Then in this last couple of years, all of a sudden, you're like, whoa, that's a line, I can't even have that conversation, that's crazy, and then it's hard to not form judgments.

[00:09:37] How to have a meaningful conversation

Darin: Then when you have judgments, you're not interested in anything else that they have to say. It's just a spiral of dysfunction. Your book, *We Need to Talk: How to Have Conversations that Matter*, everyone should get that right now because really we're talking about within the homes, I know it's more and more difficult. How do we start? How do we start to maybe there's people like me that are saying, man, I lost a bunch of friends, I believe in this, they believe in that, I don't want to have this conversation, I don't want to go home anymore, I'm sick of Christmas time and Thanksgiving and all of that stuff? How the hell do we start to bridge meaningful conversations again? I want to unpack that because if you do that well in terms of when you do have meaningful conversations, it's so bloody rewarding. How do we start?

Celeste: I have a couple of responses. My first one is you don't have to talk about the stuff you don't agree with. When you talk about meaningful conversations, they generally occur organically. They don't occur because you sit down and you say, I'm going to have a meaningful conversation with this person. Stop avoiding small talk. If you can't agree on Putin and Ukraine, talk about pets. There's this great quote from the website called *Shit, My Dad Says*, and it was briefly a TV show, but there's this great quote from this guy's dad. The guy is complaining about this dude that really doesn't like him. He says you know, stop talking to him. When you go to the park, you don't put your picnic blanket down next to the only pile of dog poop. I feel the same way about conversation. If you can't agree on abortion, don't talk about it. It's okay. Unless you're at a high-level diplomat and your conversation about that really will change the world, then it doesn't make a big difference if you let that go for right now and talk about something else. So that's the first thing I would say is stop forcing meaningful conversations, stop assuming that you have to talk about the one, two, or maybe even three things that you guys completely disagree on.

Darin: What you said there, it pops into my head because I've certainly been there myself in judgment, certainly of like, you've been my friend for so long, you don't agree on this and therefore, I don't even want to be around you. That's not the greatest approach either, and



not talking about the thing that you want others to change their mind about and you want to be right about takes you shutting up and pushing, call it the ego aside to even get to the point of let's not even talk about the things that we know we don't agree on.

Celeste: You have to remember that there's a big difference between a good talker and a good conversationalist, a big difference. A good talker is someone who is engaging and interesting and has funny stories or whatever it may be, that's a good talker. Somebody who knows a lot of stuff. But in order to be a good conversationalist, your listening skills have to be equal to your speaking skills. Listening skills are where people fall down. That's the hard part. But in order to have any kind of conversation, you have to stop talking and think about not what it is you want to say but what it is you want to hear. That part can be really difficult. We have a tough time shutting up in general, and everyone thinks a lot of people think they don't. A lot of people these days like to think of themselves as introverts, and I'm not the type that talks all the time. But being introverted, and being a good listener is not at all the same thing. They have no relation to one another. We all have to kind of be honest about how good we are at listening, are we sharing space, are we actually listening for an equal amount of time that we talk, or are we not, and work on that. It's funny because a lot of times when I get interviewed people are like, give us five things people can say on their first date or five things that people could say-- I would rather have you ask what are five things I'd like to know from somebody else because what you're going to say, you're going to be fine. Most people actually have no trouble talking. That's almost never the problem.

Darin: I agree with you. I've heard you say it in other ways. It's like, maybe I didn't, but I'm assuming people are amazing. That's why when I was reading some of the stuff on you, I was so amazed at the musician, about all of the stuff that prepared you to communicate. Then what was the impetus, what was that final thing for you to start this book on we got to communicate, we need to talk, how do we have a conversation? What was that moment like if there was a moment or moments would you realize this is a problem in the fabric of our world?

[00:13:50] Why write a book on good conversations?

Celeste: It wasn't a moment, it was all my experience as a reporter. I started as a reporter in 1999. I have seen the devolution of our political conversations. Not just among regular people like the rest of us. I'm talking about even among politicians, who even if they disagreed, they would still go to each other's kids' birthday parties, or sit down over dinner and have a nice conversation. Now, it's gotten so tribal, and so full of hate that they don't even hang out. They can't even have a civilized conversation with one another. When you begin to take a look at some of the research in how human beings relate to one another, and you realize that conversation is sort of the crux of how we recognize one another as human beings, the sound of our voice is how we recognize here is another human. That's when you realize that not only our refusal to speak to people who disagree with us hurting us, but our use of technology to where we don't hear each other's voices, that's hurting us, too. So that's where that began the interest in saying, this is solvable, we can fix this. There are lots of problems in the world like climate change, like the Ukraine, like racism that are really complicated and difficult to solve but this part, this we can solve.



Darin: I guess the first thing that comes up when I hear that is, who or what are good examples of healthy discourse that you are seeing, you know what, these people don't agree but there are still examples because wow, it's hard to see that? Where do you think that exists right now?

[00:15:47] Examples of healthy discourse

Celeste: I don't know. There are small examples everywhere. I hosted a podcast for Newsweek called The Debate. We bring people on all the time who disagree with each other on fundamental issues and they get through that conversation, that debate without arguing with one another, and often end by saying, hey, it's really great to talk to you. You see this in small areas and certainly, even in my own experience, a show I hosted out of Atlanta called On Second Thought, every Friday, we would do what we called the break room where we brought in people from completely different perspectives, and had them talk about very, very controversial things often, and they all liked each other. In fact, they all chose to go to dinner, and hang out and do stuff together even though they sat there across the table in the mornings absolutely disagreeing with one another. I know it's possible. Absolutely, it's possible. I've seen it for myself. We have seen examples for it on the public stage, they're just a few and far between. Sometimes they get hijacked and this is the problem. They'll get hijacked for political, really blatant political reasons. I'll give you a really good example. For a while there over the issue of abortion, some of the leaders on both sides of this issue said, look, there's a bunch of common ground between us because what we're really trying to do is prevent unwanted pregnancy. So between us, the anti-abortion folks, and those who are pro women's rights, there's a good amount of common ground, so let's find out where that common ground is and build just on that. We'll leave the other stuff alone, but we'll find just the things that we really want to work together on. But again, when it got political, it became this nasty word of compromise and bending your knee to the other side or whatever. Whenever we let politics come in and corrupt a regular conversation between two human beings, we're in trouble. Sadly, we're letting politics touch everything now.

Darin: That's crazy how much that comes in all over the place. You lose track of what the conversation really is about, and I love that because if we can't find a common foundation for us as humans, at the end of the day, I've been all over the world and you go, listen, people want to be happy, they want to have water, power, food, shelter for their family, and there's a lot of common ground. The thing that going back to finding examples, it seems as though if people disagree, there used to be still a form of respect. The examples that you gave where they went out to eat, but they just fundamentally disagreed, but there was some sort of respect there that call it it wasn't politicized or it wasn't in this whole other realm of judgment. What would you say the differences now? Is it fully politicized? Is it this radical form of judgment? What has shaped that difference the most, do you think?

Celeste: Honestly, I think it is craven political forces. I'm going to be totally honest with you because yes, social media has contributed to it. Yes, we are the worst version of ourselves online, and that's not my gut feeling. That's actually proven by science. But when you have political parties who will literally put out messages saying, yay, to every single Republican president and boo, we hate you to every Democrat, not this is pretty good, I agree with the President on this particular policy, but this part we're going to disagree. When that's what it becomes, when it just becomes this us versus them, or Yankees versus the Tigers, or



whatever it may be, that's you trying to simplify things to the point of saying, it's our tribe versus their tribe. This is just me speaking sociologically, not in an indigenous sense. You have these things like there was a study called fear and loathing across party lines, and what they found was, and this is pre-Donald Trump, by the way, they found that people are more likely to make assumptions about other people based on their political party than they are in their perceived race. Meaning, we are more politically partisan than we are racist, and we are very racist. Politics is what is getting in the way. People think that if you voted for Donald Trump, or if you voted for Biden, or if you voted for Bernie, that's all they need to know about you. That's literally all they need to know about you. They feel like they know everything they need to know, and that is ridiculous. This is not me being Mr. Rogers like everyone grab hands and sing together. This is me saying that is stupid. That is a stupid thing to think because I would like anybody to list off a single person with whom they agree on everything. There's nobody who agrees, I don't care how much you love your spouse or partner, you do not agree on everything with that person, and it makes perfect sense with this person with whom you think you disagree on everything that is impossible too. It's not possible that you disagree on everything. It's not possible.

Darin: That is such a powerful lens to hear and to take in because you put your finger right on the elephant in the room and that is this politicizing and separation or convenience that we're just assuming all of the stuff in these buckets. Then everyone's, oh, you voted for that person so therefore you're this, and you voted for that, therefore, you're that and there's no common ground. It's so freaking reading ridiculous, and also scary, man. That shakes me to my core. What's going on right now? People can't be heard, and it's just so politicized in every form and fashion and health. Then I say, well, it does have to start with us. You and I, even in this conversation, we're talking about something that's so unbelievably uncomfortable because this is what's going on. This is what's going on in the world. This is what's going on and the politicization of all this stuff.

Celeste: We understand this on the micro-level. We understand that if you want to remain friends with someone, you can't stand on principle all the time. For example, I'll give you one of my principles is I only adopt pets. I do not buy pets. That is a strong, very strong principle of mine. But one of my very good friends bought a Labrador from a breeder, and I could be like, I have nothing to say to her, I'm so upset, blah, blah, blah, I can't get past this. Yes, you can. Come on. I have another person who's like, I can't I don't invite that friend over in because she's a vegan. Come on, life is too hard and we're all too busy to worry about this shit. Yes, you can stand on principle if you want to but I'm going to tell you right now, it takes more energy and more time for you to stand on your principles than to just let it go and let other people do what they want. The people who feel they are the most tolerant are very often the least tolerant of difference that is different from themselves. This is where we are right now. We have to ask ourselves some tough questions and interrogate our so-called principles because they are making us less than human.

[00:23:43] Wren Ad

Darin: What is our future of this beautiful earth going to be like if we keep treating it so horribly? It's easy to feel helpless, even after making a conscious effort to reduce my own impact, your own impact on the environment and offset our carbon footprint, it still doesn't feel like it's enough, I get that. There's still the frustration of not knowing what's being done



on a larger scale. Thankfully, there are some awesome projects and organizations that are making positive changes in the world, and subscribing to Wren is an easy way to support more and more companies doing good. Wren as a startup that is making it easy for everyone to make a meaningful difference in this world. As a monthly subscriber, your carbon footprint is calculated and then offset by supporting incredible climate projects like planting trees, protecting rain forests, investing in green, clean technology, and removing CO2 from the freaking sky. Wren is on a mission to unlock the collective action of millions of individuals to drive this systemic change needed to end this insanity. We keep doing the same thing expecting our planet to just be good. We take so much from our environment without giving anything back. What do you think is going to happen? We need to regenerate. Things can and should be done differently. We need to move forward in a regenerative way for our planet and for our own well-being. That's why Wren means so much to me. They're moving forward in a real pragmatic way of making change possible. They offer flexible monthly subscriptions that you are able to change at any time, and you're provided with monthly updates on your specific positive impact. It's going to take all of us to end this insanity, the climate, the world, the environment is screaming. Do your part today by signing up to Wren. Go to wren.co and sign up. If you let them know I sent you, they'll plant 10 extra trees in your name. W-R-E-N dot C-O, start making a difference. Let's do this and let's make a change. Thank you, Wren.

[00:26:41] Second Part of the Interview

Darin: The thing that pops up for me is because of these stances that people are making and the way that they're making them, the politicization of them, and the right and the wrong, it's hard to trust, especially when they're at that type of authority and they're mostly hypocrites. There's hypocrisy that's just bleeding over into everything and then this finger-pointing back, do this because I said, and then not having the discourse, this hurts everybody, both sides of all of it, and then they put their heels in. Then that just creates further and further and further separation without a discourse. Many lives could have been saved in many ways, and mental health and etcetera if people weren't canceled from a normal conversation and normal question, that's where this gets really just dangerous.

[00:27:42] You can be right and wrong at the same time

Celeste: Yes, and I want to be totally clear here that I'm not saying that there are two sides to everything, like there are not two sides to racism. Someone can be wrong and still not deserve to die. Someone can be wrong and still be perfectly worth having a 5 to 10-minute conversation about. Not only that, but someone can be very, very wrong about one thing, and super right about something else. There are tons of people throughout history that we see this is true of. Sometimes I give this example because I'm black and Jewish and I say to people, would you be surprised if you found out, and I have no idea, I'm just saying, what if you found out Oskar Schindler was a horrible sexist? Does that suddenly wipe out what he did? It means he's horribly wrong in one area and incredibly right and admirable in another. That's the complication of humans. Frankly, it's what makes humans so very interesting, it also makes us dangerous, but it does make us very interesting.

Darin: This is where right, wrong, good, bad, we want to go back and uncover and make wrong people from doing stupid shit in their past and cancel everybody and again, not have



a conversation. It's a dangerous weapon. It's overwhelming to see the change of our media, the change of healthy dialogue, what the hell happened? It's so politicized now. Why can't we have healthy discourse? It's a very thing that we need to do as individuals, and we're not doing at all, and it's worse. Like you said, you started the show saying it's freaking worse than ever. I don't even know what to say about that because again, it goes outside of ourselves, but how the hell do we get back to having healthy discourse again, and not having agendas and judgments and everything else? What do we do?

Celeste: This is happening now and it will continue to happen. It happens in a micro-level when you're at a work event and somebody sits down next to you and says something you very much disagree with. We already know how to handle that in a polite and respectful way because very few people freak out at work and suddenly start screaming at the other person that they're awful and should be ashamed and what kind of person are they. We know how to treat other people with respect despite disagreement and that happens right now. We just have to stop thinking that it's okay to treat people horribly because their political views justify that. They don't. For a very, very long time, there was a study of rhetoric, which is the study essentially of argument and discourse, civil discourse. We don't study that anymore, but I kind of wish we did because one of the things that you learn when you're studying rhetoric is to think about ethics. What do I owe this person in whom I'm engaged in conversation with? What is consent when it comes to conversation? If someone says something that I disagree with, is that consent for me then to argue at them or berate them? We don't think about that or ask ourselves those questions. We think that it's okay as long as we strongly disagree with what they've said, then it's okay for us to call them awful names and berate them, literally berate them. Now, that's certainly the case if they are doing something damaging, or if they are harming another person, then yes, I would love for people to berate the people who are harming others. But that's not usually what happens, what usually happens is some person walks in with a Bernie t-shirt and that is somehow implied consent for us to go over there and tell them that they're the reason Donald Trump got elected, or whatever it is. It's not, it's not consent. We have to think about these things. We think a lot about what's owed to us, about how we want to be treated, and we complain a lot when we're not treated the way that we believe we should be, but we don't think about that the other way.

Darin: Yes, and that's just so hypocritical. That's where the society flexed its muscles for far too long and it's just ridiculous and we lost that. Just like you said because no two people are going to agree on everything, so let's just straight up that's the truth. We literally have to learn or relearn how to communicate and not certainly learn that behavior from what's going on right now by the politicians or by many of the media. We have to literally learn and take responsibility because I love a good conversation because it makes me feel good, I feel listened to, I feel empowered, either sitting back and listening to the awe of someone answering questions that I deeply care about and they share who they are. I mean, that to me, every person has a story, every person has wisdom, every person you can learn from which you talk about. Like you said, about the abortion thing, let's work people at finding the places that we agree on and start with that foundational stuff. Everyone listening has a conversation that's gonna be a little altered as a result of listening to this podcast. Let's go through a couple on those 10 rules of good communication because they are so good and so powerful. Why don't you start with a couple of those and we'll see where it goes.

[00:33:33] Rules of communication



Celeste: Let me start with the one that's hardest for people to accept, and that is the one where I say not to equate your experience with others. So this is where someone says something and then in this case, we're basically talking about a situation when someone talks about something they've been through that's a struggle, some pain, something an adverse event. I'm not talking about like, hey, I went to go see that new movie, so did I. You wanna add your experience to that, feel free. But if someone says to you, I just lost my job, you have to resist that impulse to say, that's awful, I'm so sorry, you know, I lost my job at the beginning of the pandemic and it was really horrible. If someone says, I got into a really bad car accident, you have to resist that temptation to say, are you alright, that's horrible, you know, I got into a horrible accident 5 years ago, and blah blah blah. This impulse that we have to relay our supposedly similar experience back that we think that we feel inside ourselves is us expressing empathy is not empathy. It's something that sociologist, Charles Gerber, talked about and he described it as conversational narcissism. It's that we are extremely talented at turning conversations back to the subject that we know best and that we're most interested in and that is ourselves. You have to stop saying things I didn't know how you feel for a number of reasons. Number one, you don't. You literally do not know how they feel. By that, I mean, we know neurologically speaking that as soon as some painful event occurs, your brain immediately begin softening that memory for you immediately. It starts smearing Vaseline on that lens. A year after your dog died, you no longer remember how painful it was for your dog to die. So when someone says, my dog died last week, and you say, I know how you feel, that's not true and you're completely diminishing their experience. So you don't need to hear them tell you about it because you know already, and it's not empathetic. It's not. That's the first one and I know that a lot of people have a tough time with that one.

Darin: It is because it's like you mentioned that too. It's like the brain is so much faster than our listening side and so it just makes stories, gets a little bored. And remember because obviously, before they're even done about it, shit that happened to me, then you want to blast that in. As a speaker who's sharing, obviously, something so bloody vulnerable, you don't feel listened to. It's a very frustrating thing when you don't feel heard especially on top of the wound itself. It's like you're sharing something, that one is just shutting up. Something what is similar to that could be reflecting back to them, like listening to someone is literally just listening to someone and not doing, it's not like a technique.

Celeste: Yes, you can learn how to listen better, it is a skill that you can practice and improve, but that first step to listening better is to stop talking. That's number one. By that, I mean, stop talking and stop talking to yourself also. That's another one of the tips. Since we're kind of going through a couple of the tips, the other one is to go with the flow of conversation. Meaning, your brain is constantly supplying you with information constantly. It's trying to bring up memories of things. It's trying to call up whatever you know. If somebody says, I tried pasta last night, your brain will flood you with all this information about the taste of pasta, the smell of it, how it's prepared, that information is for you. That's not for the other person. That's to help you understand and put everything into context. When someone's talking and you come up with these thoughts, what sometimes happens is that we can't wait to tell the other person what we just thought of. We stop listening, we're just holding on to that thing we want to tell them and we're waiting for them to stop talking. That part of the go

with the flow is part of listening. You can't listen if what you're trying to do is hold on to something you want to say. You got to learn to let that stuff go and return to listening.

Darin: That go-with-the-flow is so important because that's literally like surrendering to the actual moment of being with that person instead of sitting with these pre-programmed questions. It's not even organic.

Celeste: Not only that, but a lot of us have a whole repertoire of stories we tell. Very often this thing that you're holding on to, this story, in the TED Talk, I gave like the time you met Ellen DeGeneres or something in the coffee shop. You've told that story 20 times before and yet there you are holding on to that Ellen story, and not hearing a word they're saying so that you can retell the story. You already know everything that's going to come out of your mouth. You're not going to surprise yourself with anything that you say, you know it all already. If you really want a great conversation that's surprising and interesting, that's only gonna happen because you hear something surprising and interesting.

Darin: Would you say that then we're just buying time to regurgitate story only to get it out of our mouth to pump up some sort of illusion or ego side of ourselves just because we think someone gives a shit on the other side. It's so fucking crazy. It's so narcissistic in that microcosm, it's laughable.

Celeste: It is, and at least if nothing else, we all have this as our shared experience. We all can share the fact that we're a little narcissistic in our conversation, and we all probably talk too much about ourselves. We're not curious enough about our other fellow human beings, which is unfortunate because we all know the power of really great stories. Not everybody tells stories in a really engaging way. I get that. The story they have to tell is often really surprising and fantastic. We all know that. I mean, that's why we spend so much money on MMORPG video games and movies and books is because stories are awesome. So let the other person tell a story and in fact, get really good at helping people tell great stories. You can use your questions to pull someone back to the mainline. You can go, you're getting off on a tangent and I'm invested in this story, tell me what happened after this, tell me what happened then. You can make other people better, and what a great use of your time and energy rather than hanging on to whatever story it was you wanted to tell again for the 14th time. We can make one another better.

Darin: That's a beautiful way to look at communication and up-leveling and uplifting each other by listening so that we can contribute to the betterment of each other instead of just regurgitating a story 14 times, 1400 times.

Celeste: Exactly.

Darin: I'm bored just listening to that, that I've done that a million times. I'm sure that we do that as people but in fact, the contentment, I think, is that really receiving the brilliance and the amazement how someone views the world, how they look at life, and the ability to sit with someone is extraordinary, even in this moment. I'm excited for you. You have another book that you're firing up on racism.

Celeste: It came out in November.



Darin: Oh, it did? Okay. It's called Speaking of Race. Incredible, and again, timely because we need to learn how to do that. As a journalist, as a musician, as someone that's speaking a lot, and can be a catalyst for more and more of a better way of doing this, what are you the most excited about right now, even in spite of seeing the weird-ass fabric that's being thrown out in front of us? What are you excited about right now and what are you invested in?

[00:42:18] The future of conversations

Celeste: I gotta be honest, I'm super excited about Gen Z because so many things that have taken me 50 years and change to not just realize but feel the confidence in myself and the sort of the psychological standing in myself to stand up and go, no, that's wrong. Maybe how it's always been done but it's not right. Gen Z gets it. It seems like they're not really ready to tolerate anything less than great, and they're ready to fight for that, and that's exciting. Millennials, we're the generation that we're most likely to believe that text exchange, for example, is the same as a conversation, like hanging out with their friends. But some of the people who are most passionate about putting their phones down and getting away from them are Gen Z. I feel like we have this generation coming up that has a lot of promise. Now, look, I don't buy into the whole every generation has its own personality. I don't believe that at all. People are just people, but they grew up in different circumstances and those circumstances can create trends and can create a sort of shared consciousness. With younger people, we are getting to a place where there's a real opportunity and so that has me very excited. I will say, though, also, okay, not to bring it back to politics but look, I'm black and Jewish, a single mother for most of my adult life, I feel like most people are going to understand that I am not a Trump supporter. But there is one tiny slim silver lining that has come out of the presidency of Donald Trump, and I think it is that white liberals especially woke up. It was shocking to many of my friends who are white progressives, his election, but it also forced them to come to terms with the fact that America is not the equitable meritocracy that where we defeated racism with Martin Luther King in the 1960s and '70s, that they'd grown up believing in. And that's good because if we're going to make the kind of societal changes that we need to make to bring more fairness, more equality, more equity, and more justice, we need white people to help. We need white people actually leading that charge. I feel like for the first time in America's history, that's actually possible. It could be that the next great wave of civil rights comes about because of the voices and the effort and the energy of white people, and that gives me a great deal of hope.

Darin: How is that showing up in the Gen Z movement? What road do you see if you had a crystal ball, what road do you see being paved here? What does that look like?

Celeste: I'm going to put on my researcher hat here for just a second and say that while women are the most likely to speak up about sexism, for example, people of color are the most likely to speak up about racism. But when a woman speaks up about sexism, she is almost always punished even by other women, she is much more likely to be seen as a troublemaker and a complainer even by other women, and it is very likely to hurt her when it comes to her income and her promotional opportunities. The exact same thing happens to people of color when they speak up about racism, but that all sounds like bad news. The good news is that when a man speaks up about sexism, not only is he seen as virtuous, but he's listened to, he's believed, and he has the power to affect change. The same goes for racism. I realized that a lot of people you start talking about racism and white people like I do



enough for what else do you want from me, I hear this all the time. I want people to view it the other way, like, you have power, maybe you didn't even realize you have. You have the opportunity to change history here. I hope that's exciting to other people, as it is to me. You have the power to do stuff I can't do. This is where it comes in with the younger generation is like, they get that and you will see younger people, younger men standing up and being allies. I was in a meeting where it was just me, another woman, and then nine men. Early on in the meeting, one of the highest-ranking guy there said something to me about being difficult and high maintenance and blah blah blah. And this kept going until everyone else started also saying that. It was like a 22-year-old dude that said, I have to stop, I feel really uncomfortable. This is making me uncomfortable. She's the only woman here and you're saying this stuff about her being high maintenance and it's not funny, I don't think it's funny. You're just feeding a stereotype. You could have knocked me over with a feather. That was absolutely the right thing for him to do but it almost never ever happens and it was this 22-year-old kid. I mean, you talk about hope and what the difference, I feel like that's the difference.

Darin: That's really enlightening. I love that example based of what you just said because there's an angle to all of us in our communications and just hearing that as a white male, I can definitely be in that situation moving forward in any part of my life, and that sticks. It's not okay for us to not say what is wrong, and to call out that which needs to change. Thank you for that. That was really, really powerful. Celeste, you're a rock star, man. I am so grateful to have this conversation, and this is what we need to do. I want everyone to keep diving into those 10 because they're powerful. Your TED Talk was so succinct and powerful as well, and it's easy to absorb and to apply and apply this stuff right here right now. Shut your mouth, listen more, just like you said in the talk, at least do one.

Celeste: Start with one. It really is that simple. You don't have to turn it into rocket science. It can be just as simple as saying, I don't know when you don't know. That's all that you got in you today, that's awesome.

Darin: Listen, all of us can just shut our mouth and listen, and really care about someone and just listen to them. We don't need to say anything and that's powerful and people walking away feeling heard are happier people.

Celeste: Absolutely.

Darin: So thank you so much. Keep rocking. Keep using your voice on every level.

Celeste: Thank you.

Darin: And for everything that you're doing.

Celeste: I really appreciate the time. Thanks.

Darin: Thank you very much.

[00:49:14] Podcast Outro



Darin: Thanks for tuning in to this episode of The Darin Olien Show. I hope you took something valuable away from this conversation that will help improve your life in some way. If you'd like to learn more about my incredible guests, you can find all of their information in the show notes on my website. If you enjoyed this episode, or even you didn't like it, please rate this podcast. The team and I value your feedback so we can continue to give you the most value possible. We want you to get the most out of every podcast. So please rate, subscribe, share anything you feel called to do. I truly appreciate it, and I love and value your support. So, thank you, and I'll meet you in the next episode.