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JIM: Today’s show is going to have a little bit of a different twist but it definitely ties in to estate planning, wealth transfer, and real wealth is not about money. It’s about passing on values, passing on vision. Today, a lot of us really struggle in communicating with younger adults, specifically the millennials. I was at a seminar a while back and they talked about the millennials were the first generation that was born where there were always personal computers. Here we’re supposed to be so well-connected these days with Google and Facebook and LinkedIn and we’ve got all these tools to be connected but are we really truly connected. I have a couple millennial adults that just graduated from college and we had a graduation party at our house and we had a campfire and a lot of their friends were sitting around the fire and they weren’t talking to each other. They were talking to the friends that weren’t there by text messaging. They all had their faces down by the phone. It was like a discussion sometimes with a group, you have what we call the 20-minute lull. I look around. Nobody’s talking to each other. They’re all texting to see what they’re missing outside. I think a lot of millennials are missing purpose in life. They’re used to instant gratification. They’ve got kind of a false self-esteem because they’ve got all these participation awards. It’s not based on results and I think a lot of them, all of a sudden they go through this whole system where they don’t have any interpersonal relationships. They’re not connected with anybody because of all these tools and video games and they have this thing that just by being there they should get rewarded because that’s what they’ve gotten all through school and all of a sudden they’re tossed into real life and they’re just not prepared for the realities of life and I know a lot of parents and kids. They struggle to communicate and one of the things we see in wealth transfer, how much of that wealth actually lasts because the kids aren’t prepared to handle it. They don’t know what they should be doing and I look at a family like the Rothschilds where they’ve passed on wealth from generation to generation and they have family meetings every year. They have what they call the family bank where they each come and contribute and make deposits to the bank of what was going to help the family from an influence standpoint, from a financial standpoint, from a purpose standpoint and then you look at the Vanderbilts, one of the richest families, and within three generations they were broke, not a millionaire among their descendants. How do we bridge this gap? I met this guest on an airplane ride coming back from a business trip and we just happened to start talking about different things. Turns out he counsels a lot of these youth and helping them find purpose and I’ve got to tell you. My initial reaction with counselors and stuff, I hate to say this but I thought a lot of them are a bunch of quacks but I met Brian and he talked about how he focuses on kids’ strengths and building bridges and building the communication and I’ll tell you I’m all about that and I was very intrigued by the way he does his counseling to help families. Today, we have with us Brian Flynn. He’s a counselor, a coach, and he offers supportive services in the Milwaukee area but these things are transferrable anywhere. Brian, thanks for joining us today.

03:07

BRIAN FLYNN: Thank you, Jim.

03:08

JIM: I started out the show by talking about how we’re more connected than ever but we’re probably more disconnected than ever. Do you find that to be true?

03:15

BRIAN FLYNN: I do, Jim. There is a real lack of authenticity. Many of the young adults that you’re talking about are turning to false idols and false scenarios that give them this false sense of self-worth.

03:30

JIM: Yeah and that ends up being kind of empty because one thing we see now, I talk to people across the country and they’re kind of surprised that there’s a heroin epidemic in their area and they don’t realize it’s everywhere in America right now. It’s probably one of the worst things. Heroin is cheap. It’s an unbelievably powerful drug and we find more and more of our young adults and teenagers are getting caught up in this stuff. They’re just not prepared and when they get tossed into the real world with some of this false sense of security, all of a sudden they find out the world isn’t as rosy as it might have been growing up and there isn’t instant gratification. You don’t just push a button on a video game and get the results you want in the real world so I think it’s got to be tough for those kids.

04:13

BRIAN FLYNN: Very true, Jim, and when these young adults turn to drugs, the consequences can be devastating. Part of this devastation is that these drugs give these kids a false sense of self-esteem, a false sense of self-worth, a false sense of belonging. Jim, one of the things that I hope to be a part of is meeting these young adults where they’re at to help focus on their strengths and bring them back to a more authentic experience so that we can prevent the desire and the need to turn to these false senses of fulfillment.

04:48

JIM: Now one of the things I see and I’ve just got to add to this too is lack of purpose. I belong to a charitable foundation that I’m very involved with. We were at a fundraiser and we were talking about this. This charitable organization is made up of financial advisors throughout the country and I’ve got to say the average age of a contributor is probably about 65 or 70. When we talk to the younger members, they’re disconnected. They’re not giving to charity. I was at an auction for my high school and the vast majority of people there were over 50. I was talking to another client of mine that serves on a foundation board. They said the same thing. Their average contributor is in their 60s. One other thing that is really critical right now is for these charities and these worthy causes, a lot of these kids are a little bit self-absorbed. They’re not thinking outside the box. They don’t have purpose of who they’re going to help and I think not only are families in trouble but charities and worthy causes that we all care about are in trouble if we don’t get young people engaged in things that are meaningful.

05:52

BRIAN FLYNN: Jim, that’s so true. One of the things that I’m involved in right now is developing social groups for young adults who have this uncanny obsession with media and Facebook and the internet. Instead of engaging young adults in those types of media, we are bringing it back to more authentic experience like finding organizations where kids can volunteer, finding projects these kids can work on together to build something, bringing these kids back to nature so that they can see value in real life situations.

06:31

JIM: Alright well, we’ve talked a lot about the problem. Let’s focus more on the solutions but we’re going to take a short break so when we come back, let’s talk about things families can do to start bridging that gap and the tools and techniques that you’re using as a counselor to help these kids and help these families because let’s face it. When we come to financial and estate planning and all that, we’ve got all the money. It doesn’t matter if we’re not happy and it doesn’t matter if our kids end up not benefitting from what we worked so hard to put together because we haven’t taken the time to build that relationship with our kids to be good stewards with that wealth so please stay tuned.

[BREAK]

07:37

JIM: Welcome back as we continue to visit with Brian Flynn, who is a counselor, coach, and offers supportive services to young adults. He has a different perspective than the average counselor. Where a lot of counselors like to treat the problems and we did a very good job of talking about some of the problems before the break but how do you create solutions because I know right now even in my own family, when we try to talk to young adults, they do a really good job of tuning out. What are you telling kids and parents? How are you counseling them to bridge that gap and create those open lines of communication so they can start building a meaningful relationship?

08:13

BRIAN FLYNN: I could tell you a story, Jim. Several years ago, I was referred to a young man who was nonverbal. I spent three or four sessions with this young man who didn’t say one word to me but he kept meeting me. I was trying to figure out how do I reach this young man? It turns out he liked Connect Four. I’m telling you, Jim, we played Connect Four for two or three weeks and then three weeks later, the kid opened up to me and he started talking to me about the different adversities he was faced with. He started talking to me about the problems he was having with the family. Two weeks after that, I’m in his home meeting with his mother, father, brother, sister, and him. Together we started to create an alliance. We started to focus on each other’s individual strengths. We started to see how these strengths have helped us overcome adversities in the past and we started talking about how we could use those today to get past the adversities that were facing them at the present moment. Soon after, the alliance continued to grow. Grandparents became involved. I was at the young man’s school meeting with his teachers and one of the things that kept them coming back was that I never focused on the negative. I always focused on the positive qualities that I could clearly see in these young adults, in this particular young man’s life, and the qualities that were in his family members and family dynamic. One of the things that I think I’m real good at, Jim, is identifying strengths. This comes in handy when the young adults today cannot see these. I’m finding that the family members and families are also struggling today identifying their strengths. One of the things that really works bringing families together and helping strengthen the bond is if we decide to move forward together with mindfulness of what is working in this family dynamic.

10:13

JIM: In other words, Brian, I think people a lot of times have a tendency to be blinded by the negatives and focus on the negatives and if you look at our news media today, I always tell people I mean, man, if you just bought into everything the news media said, the sky is falling, the world is being destroyed, and everything is going to be terrible, try to find positive news today and then you look at the paparazzi and all these reality shows. It’s all focusing on their shortcomings and they’re making fools of themselves or whatever it might be trying to catch the celebrities in an awkward moment. I mean it’s all about negative, negative, negative, negative so it’s got to be challenging to find those positives to focus on.

10:49

BRIAN FLYNN: What you’re talking about, Jim, is the interest that these young adults are having today. They’re interested in all the stuff that you’re talking about. Well, my question is what are their true interests? Are they interested in becoming a doctor? Are they interested in becoming a lawyer? Are these dreams that they have that they’ve just let go because they’re obsessed with the media or distracted by these other factors in life that are pulling them further and further away from themselves? I think, Jim, you talked earlier about passing on the legacy. When we can really identify who we are and get in touch with that and then share that with our families and strengthen the bond that exists with our families, that’s when we can pass the legacy on and that’s when the legacy will continue. It will continue to be prosperous and it will continue to manifest but it’s really only when we strengthen healthy relationships with ourselves and with our families. I really try to do this by identifying strengths and really trying to find out what are young adults’ true interests.

11:51

JIM: I just had a board meeting. It was a big topic. How do we deal with the millennials? We’re all struggling with our kids. It’s not something that’s only a few families. I think not enough people are talking about it. We all just kind of figure well, maybe there’s an odd duck or maybe that family member I guess you just can’t help them but there’s so many of these kids that don’t have those interpersonal relationships. They don’t have the communication skills. The families aren’t equipped to deal with it themselves. For those that are listening out there that are probably struggling with the same thing because I know we are. I know a lot of my clients share this. When the conversation comes to young adults, everybody just kind of throws their hands up in the air and says what can we do to help these kids? Tell us, Brian, what are some of the resources that are available? I know you mentioned offline a couple national resources and obviously people could get in touch with you as well. Can you share some of those resources people can get help with?

12:44

BRIAN FLYNN: One alliance on the national level, Jim, is the National Alliance for Mental Illness. This alliance can offer feedback to families and young adults who are faced with different behavioral and physical challenges. Their number is 1-800-950-NAMI. Another program and agency that offers supportive services to the population that we’re talking about, Jim, is Harrigan Development Supportive Services. They’re out of Ozaukee and their phone number is 262-853-5569.

13:20

JIM: We were talking about this mental illness. People think of that as people you’re going to lock up and that kind of thing. When you think about mental illness, it’s really people that are struggling emotionally, that they’re suffering from depression and things like that where they don’t have necessarily the positive outlook and the vision and everything else. To some degree, I think most people suffer from some degree of mental illness but as we’ve been talking about in this program, the young adults are really struggling. A lot of them are suffering from this. Check it out. Get some resources and find out what tools and resources are available. Brian, you talk about alliances and bridges. The first step is if you realize there’s a problem, you’ve got to reach out and get some help.

14:00

BRIAN FLYNN: We have to start talking about this, Jim. I like to think of mental illness rather as mental health. How’s my mental health? How’s our mental health? We can always get stronger. We can always get better and that’s kind of how I think about things in regards to “mental illness.” Another thing I just have to say, Jim, is that you asked about what solutions do we use to face some of these adversities and really we need to start talking. We need to start getting together as families and talking and hearing what other family members have to say, hearing what Grandma has to say, hearing what Sister has to say, hearing everybody’s take and I think once we start to come together, Jim, as a family, that’s when we can really start to move forward and really start to tap into our success and tap into our innate success.

14:46

JIM: That was awesome, Brian. The glass is half-full. It’s not half-empty. What can we do to fill that glass? Lastly, what I want to do, Brian, is this has been awesome. I’ve been very impressed because you take a positive approach to things and you search for a solution. It’s not focusing on the problem. Obviously, we have problems that need to be fixed but let’s focus on how we fix those problems. If someone wanted to reach out for help from you, Brian, how do they get a hold of you?

15:12

BRIAN FLYNN: They can contact me at 414-305-8283. I’d be happy to take their call. I look forward to hearing from them, Jim.

15:22

JIM: Thanks for joining us this week and tune in again next week as we explore another phase of the Real Wealth process and remember if anything you heard in today’s show you’d like to get more information about, contact your Real Wealth advisor. Also, if you feel that any of this information would be helpful to a friend or family member, just click the Forward to a Friend button.