Standing Up Strong Jake Campbell

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**SPEAKERS**

Jake Campbell, Jackie Congedo, Dr. Neal Mayerson

**Jackie Congedo** 00:03

These are your superpowers positive character strengths, you have them, all of them some more than others.

**Dr. Neal Mayerson** 00:10

What we are best suited to do in our lives, connects with who we are and our character strengths.

**Jackie Congedo** 00:19

Standing up strong, activating your superpowers is how you can change the world. And you're pioneering the future of humanity. Let's start right now. I'm Jackie Congedo. And today I'm so excited to share my conversation with my colleague at the Nancy and David Wolf Holocaust & Humanity Center, Jake Campbell, Jake is the Senior Manager of Professional Development Trainings and Upstander Education. He engages every day with the science of character strengths, and has helped hundreds of people learn what their strengths are and how they can use them to be upstanders. So this is a really fun conversation, because I get to sit here with my good friend, Jake Campbell, who is our incredible Senior Manager of professional development trainings and upstander education, I have to take a deep breath and make sure I look down to get your title, right. But it's an important one, because it really talks about the breadth of what you do at the Holocaust & Humanity Center. And just how essential your work in the science of character strengths is to informing how we think about how we can be upstanders, what that means and what that looks like, and how we use that science to inform that. So before we get into all that, I just would love to hear a little bit more about for those who may not know you, as well, as I do. Give us a little bit about your background. And like what brings you to this work. Why have you found it personally so meaningful?

**Jake Campbell** 01:45

Yeah, thank you so much, Jackie. And it really is great to be here. If you can't tell by my accent, I was born and raised in West Kentucky.

**Jackie Congedo** 01:52

Oh, yeah. I thought you're gonna say Australia. Yeah,

**Jake Campbell** 01:56

but like, no, Sydney, Australia to an interfaith family, my family on my mother's side. Were my grandfather and grandmother were Holocaust survivors. And my mother was a refugee from Poland, who escaped violent antisemitism losing siblings along the way, the experience of antisemitism that rocked our family to the core really sort of inspired in me this passion around how can we bring in the lessons of history to inspire action today. And so for the last 12 years, really, I've been working in that kind of social and emotional education and also community organizing. Yep.

**Jackie Congedo** 02:39

And so now you're at the center, we're so lucky that, you know, we stole you from Australia, and you're here for until further notice. Your role there really is to serve as the nexus point and sort of the brain trust around this incredible framework of VIA character strengths, the 24 that we talk about all the time, and in this space, as a language to help people actually, you know, walk away from the experience with us, whether that's in a workshop or visiting the museum with a sense of real agency, about, you know, this is an abstract, right, this whole concept of what it means to stand up what how you how we rise to be upstanders, this isn't, this isn't some huge, necessarily huge grandiose act, it's way outside my scope. And in you know, it's also not sort of abstract and theoretical, it is very concrete, and you have a specific way you can do that through this framework. So, tell us just just talk a little bit more about like how you see that come to life in your day to day work, and the responses that you get, as you're leading people through workshops, and, you know, tours in the museum, what the response is, yeah,

**Jake Campbell** 03:55

and so I think to answer that question, I'd love to talk about like, the sort of way that we framework, our pedagogy, the way that we, you know, do our workshops, through this model of aware, explore or play, right. And so the idea is we want first people to be aware of their strengths, understand how they show up in themselves, how their strengths can be, overused, underused, even seeing their strengths in others. And that's when we come into like the Explorer plot, exploring concept in character strengths, like strength, spotting the golden mean, and also exploring the stories in our museum, spotting strengths in the upstanders in the survivors and the rescuers seeing themselves in the story, to inspire action afterwards. And then following from that, we give them activities to really apply these concepts in ways that might be some times you know, theoretical and other times Around scenarios that they could find in their work at their school, right on the street in their community, to really inspire action, remembering that our definition of what an upstander is, is yes, people who stand up for others, but also people who stand up for themselves.

**Jackie Congedo** 05:20

So deep, I'm sure you get to see, my favorite thing about the work that we do are the lightbulb moments, like when you see something really go off for somebody where they've kind of realized that the potential lives within them in this case, have you? Have you seen those things? I mean, I happen to know that you see them all the time, but I'm wondering if you could share maybe how this surfaces for people and and how they kind of realize their own potential?

**Jake Campbell** 05:48

Yeah, one of my favorite activities that we do. It's often at the beginning, sometimes it runs throughout the whole of the training is the strength spotting element. Where we have participant really one yes, we'll have them strengths, spot, character, personalities in the museum, or strengths, what, you know, big personalities in the world. But we also have them strengths, but each other. On the adult, sort of corporate and nonprofit side of what we do with that, it's sometimes you feel in the room where people start seeing the power of character strengths and the power of what it means to not only strengths, but someone but be strengths. So And oftentimes, there are people that are crying in one training, I remember one woman, again, after again, after again, her co workers kept on spotting her for social intelligence, which is the strength of empathy. Yeah. You know, being able to understand where people are coming from being able to put yourself in their shoes, being able to see yourself in others, it's one of the most important character strengths are being able to stand up. And at the end of it, she started crying, and I was like, why are you crying? Tell me more about what you're feeling right now. So like, she said, social intelligence is my 24th character strength is right at the bottom. And I have done so much work with my therapist around this. Don't like I really wish he could see me right now. Oh, my gosh. on the student side, we did it with character strength certificates, cards that they would hand out throughout the day. And you're smiling now because you know the story because it really is one of our power moments. Yeah. And the idea was, they had five strengths, certificates that they had to get give out for out the day to people that they had never seen before met before. These are 12 year old, 13 year old children. And I don't know how you were when you were 12 and 13. But I didn't want to talk to someone new, let alone, you know, make myself vulnerable to tell them how they impacted me. In the first time, when we asked people to do this, one girl received seven strength certificates for the strength of human chi said, I had never thought that I was that funny before? No, just like had this moment like how did I get all of these cards? By the end of the session, we had people asking for more. Do you have any more? Do you have any more because I just wanted to keep on complementing each other. And then when we did the evaluation, and we did a manual evaluation for this one, no. One of those just like multiple choice on a scale of one to five, how much did this impact you? One person put in five and then wrote in when when there was no way to write? I have never felt so seen. Wow. Now strength spotting itself. You know, there's a lot of research around it. And one of the things that it creates is this feeling of elevation, which is those warm fuzzy feelings do you have the den inspire towards action? And they say that this happens? Yes, by being strength spot. But it's perhaps even more powerful when you strengths but others

**Jackie Congedo** 09:30

really? Yeah, it's like the sort of the effect of recognizing a strength and someone else creates. How does that work in terms of like, what does it do for the person who's strength spotting that moves them towards a place of upstanding?

**Jake Campbell** 09:48

Yeah, well, I'll give you one piece of like research that I felt was extremely powerful. Niemiec, in 2020, he

**Jackie Congedo** 09:58

met Brian one of the fathers of

**Jake Campbell** 10:00

the character strength work that we do, especially in Cincinnati, the person who really created this idea of mindfulness-based strength practice, knowing yourself to, you know, harness your strengths. He looked at people strength-spotting characters in film, and how that impacted them, to inspire them towards action in their lives. And I've got some quotes here, right? And shows that you would think would not actually like impact people morally, even films, like Batman Begins. And this person, you know, when they were asked to string spot, they spot bravery and social intelligence. And they said, I started to face my anxiety for social situations head on, and went to to events I had been avoiding.

**Jackie Congedo** 10:55

Because they watch Batman Begins, and spot strange strengths spotted Batman as

**Jake Campbell** 11:00

someone who was brave, someone who put themselves in uncomfortable situations,

**Jackie Congedo** 11:07

like the feeling of feeling inspired by watching someone else, leverage their strengths, and actually seeing that it's possible to do exactly

**Jake Campbell** 11:12

and then imagine how much more impactful that is. When you do the same in some way, like a Holocaust Museum. Yeah. When you're strength spotting people who came up against incredible adversity, huge risks to their lives, to stand up for other people who are in existential crisis is to save them, hide them, or even do small things, like, save their possessions so that they would be able to have the most special moments. Both the great and the small.

**Jackie Congedo** 11:48

Yeah, I think this whole framework is so interesting, because I think when people come in for workshops, a big part of your portfolio is leading our corporate and civic and nonprofit workshops. And we use this character strength framework as a language to talk about and inspire upstander behavior. And there's a whole pedagogy that really, you know, you have, I think, in partnership with via, developed for the particular upstander application and, you know, grounded in these stories, and the history that we we tell at the museum, and it's so interesting to watch the evolution of people sort of engaging with that, and that, you know, they walk into a workshop, and they're like, why are we talking about mindfulness? Or why are we talking like, I'm here to, I want to know how to stand up, you know, I want to know how to just like, get to get to work. And, you know, the acts of upstanding is what people immediately think about, but really this like, foundational component to understanding your own strength, and being able to recognize it and other people is, it's like, you can't get to step three without that foundational step one, and they get it after going through this workshop with with you and engaging in the museum. It's really powerful to watch.

**Jake Campbell** 13:03

And we see that in our impact indicators as well, right, that 92% of the people who come through our training come out with a greater sense of hope, and purpose 97 Being more inspired to act feeling a greater responsibility to stand up against hatred.

**Jackie Congedo** 13:22

Wow. Yeah, it's it's really energizing work. And I think particularly in the times we're living in where it's, you know, the default is hopelessness. To sort of immerse ourselves in this framework where there's so much potential and where, you know, the the default is this positive growth and opportunity for the best of humanity today. What do you hope for, like, in terms of how you think about the future of this work, you know, the role that Holocaust education and history can play in sort of inspiring, upstanding, and, you know, how we, how we use our own natural resources or known character strengths to be part of that? Where do you think the future of that work is headed? Where do you think the opportunity is for museums like ours, to do more in this space? Yeah,

**Jake Campbell** 14:22

and it's a really, really good question, because you think it's almost intuitive when you ask, right? It's like, of course, there is a moral imperative in the work of learning about the Holocaust. People would, I think, naturally, you know, go to that famous quote, where it's like, Those who forget the past and doomed to repeat it. Yeah. Yeah. But there's been a lot of research that actually that's not the case. Usually, that when people study dark histories, because they study it as dark histories, yes. There's often no impact on behavior. And so we're I think we are really sort of pushing the envelope and being really innovative, is that our aim is to help is to, rather than people feeling exhausted by the gravitas of the history, although there's a place for that, that they instead come out. Knowing themselves, right. Not just thinking about already, instead of thinking about what they would have done, or whether they would have survived, they come out thinking, being inspired and energized, thinking about what they can do now, today, tomorrow, in their fields, in their sphere, to stand up for themselves and for others. And so I really see the opportunity of museums like ours, whether it be Holocaust museums, or museums around any other histories that deal with identity and injustice. And the work of, you know, pursuing that justice that people start looking in within themselves and what they uniquely have, and how they can create impact, based off of those lessons that they just learned. Yeah,

**Jackie Congedo** 16:20

thank you. I mean, it is it is really so empowering. And it's, it actually is kind of a relief, you know, you go through the Holocaust gallery at the center, and you're you feel heavy. I mean, it's it's impossible, I think, to immerse yourself in that history and not feel a weight and a responsibility. But the beauty in this framework that you really helped guide of strengths and sort of, you know, this whole concept of upstanding is that you sit in that Points of Light theater, and all of a sudden, you realize it's actually like, the potential to do better is not such a reach. It just lives in me. It's like what I naturally have these things and identifying which ones are right there at the surface, that we can tap into in any moment, at any time, in small and large ways. It's, it's almost like I feel people feeling lighter as they leave, because they're like, oh, like, I've been sitting in this heavy, not just this experience, but the world that we're living in. And now I actually have like an awareness of the fact that the solution in digestible ways that aren't a stretch for me lives in me. It's really cool to watch that. And

**Jake Campbell** 17:32

then when they end and they see our final quote by our survivor, Edith Carter, that everybody, every human being has an obligation to contribute somehow to this. Well, my understand the implication that it's not clear contributing, the financial centers contribute in the sense of what can I do to lift up and light up other people's lives? Whether it's by standing up for myself, or standing up for those that are around me, or doing a simple act of kindness? Because kindness comes naturally who Why shouldn't I share that with the world? That it's just so clear, right? That people are really feeling that, you know, sense of elevation that we were talking about before? It's like, what can I do now? Yeah,

**Jackie Congedo** 18:18

yeah, that I mean, we but we all have that in us as human beings, we all have the darkest of dark and the brightest of right and it's in, its in our awareness of our potential to be that light, that we can bend the arc towards the brighter, brighter nature is as human beings and, and as a society. So I always learn something new every time I talk to you. And even though we talk multiple times a day in the center, I'm really glad we got the chance to do this today. Thank you so much for this enriching conversation. It

**Jake Campbell** 18:50

was such a pleasure. And you know, I love talking about our work because I truly think it's so impactful.

**Jackie Congedo** 18:58

Our thanks to the Mayerson Family Foundation and the VIA Institute on character for supporting this series, we have a link in the show notes so you can take your own free Character Strengths survey and learn more about your strengths. We'd love to hear about your experiences with character strengths and how you're using them to stand up. You can reach us anytime by email and you can listen anytime on Spotify, Apple podcasts or visit Holocaust & humanity center.org/podcast You can also connect with us on Instagram and Tiktok at Holocaust & Humanity. Center X and Facebook at Cincy. HHC. The upstander ripple effect is a production of the Nancy and David Wolf Holocaust & Humanity Center. This series is part of the Cynthia and Harold Guttman Family Center for storytelling, visit us in person at historic union terminal in Cincinnati, Ohio or online at Holocaust & humanity center.org Executive Producers are David Wise and Jackie Congedo. Managing Producer is Anne Thompson. Consulting Producer is Joyce Kamen. Technical Producer is Robert Mills. Technical Director is Josh Emerson. Opening sequence is by Ken Furman. Select music is by Kick Lee, and this is recorded at Technical Consulting Partner studios in Cincinnati, Ohio.