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Edited for readability. Filler words and false starts removed.

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TRANSCRIPT

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Good morning, good morning. I just felt compelled to do a cartwheel out here, but I was afraid to pull a hammy. I don't know where that compulsion came from.

You're going to need your hands free, so put your things down. I didn't even plan this, but it's really cold in here, so everyone's going to do a Mr. Miyagi to start with, because we're all a little cold. Get a little warmed up. Thank you. I have to make sure you're ready for when we participate.

Have you ever met someone and felt that instant click? Maybe even last night, maybe when John said "avuncular." Or maybe you've had a relationship where you were really connected, and it's been a long time since you saw them, but when you see them, you pick right back up. That's the click of interpersonal chemistry, and it has always fascinated me.

As an athletic coach and an executive coach, I understand that chemistry is strong and does powerful things. But in leadership, I kept seeing that no one understood it. So I thought, what if I studied it to see if there are techniques, or a track record of chemistry, that I can teach to others? That began my fascination and my doctoral research.

Before we get into chemistry, I have to talk about what happens before chemistry. That is the thing that happens between two people, or seventy people: the relational container. It's what happens the minute we come into space together. CTEDU did a great job of already building this beautiful relational container that we get to enjoy for this entire conference.

When we come into space together, we have a responsibility to steward that space. We have to honor it so it stabilizes, so that something like chemistry can emerge. Think about a first date. You wouldn't carry all the relational baggage from your past into that first date and expect a stable conversation, or a second date.

So we can't bring our assumptions, our expectations, our bad mood, or our attitude into that relational container. We have to come into that space purified in order to honor it.

That's a little of what I call relational drag. Think about my hair. My hair is not very aerodynamic. When we carry our expectations into the relational container, it creates relational drag, and chemistry can't emerge as well.

So now we're going to participate in our own making of chemistry. I'm going to divide the room right here. Lovely. This side of the room, you're the clappers. You're going to be the stompers. We're going to practice. I'm going to cue you. When I do this, I want one stomp. Ready? This means one, two, three.

Oh, very smart people, already woken up. You're the clappers. Same premise. You've got it. And you want to start singing, "We will, we will…" Thank you.

[To AV: next slide.]

Thanks for participating. See how quickly we jump in? Oh look, we get in sync. Cheesy boy band, here we go.

The beautiful thing they describe in music is actually quantum physics, the theory of entanglement. They call it entrainment. If I have two guitars that are tuned and I pluck the A string on one, it will vibrate both. That is the beautiful work of what happens in this relational container for chemistry: it only takes the work of one to multiply it. That's why it is so powerful.

In the space of that relational container, it's like the South African philosophy of ubuntu, "I am because you are." I am forever changed because of what happens in that space together, and so it can spread and multiply.

[To AV: next slide.]

So it's not just quantum physics. It also happens in biology. Have you ever sat in a field and watched the lightning bugs get in sync? Or birds in flight? There are beautiful circadian rhythms all around us, and we as humans are part of that biology.

When we come into space together, our limbic systems start to resonate. That's why, when we've had history together, we can still do it even when we're not in person: our limbic systems remember. Even if it's been ten years, there's this memory. So chemistry has this stickiness.

I found interesting surprises about chemistry that actually caught me off guard. Chemistry has characteristics, almost a formula of sorts, and we just did it together in that experiment. Chemistry isn't something we create. It's something that emerges from that space. It's like a 24-hour buffet in Vegas. The food is always there, but I have to go in to take it. In our relational space, the chemistry is waiting for us.

I found particular gates through which chemistry emerged: attunement, agency, dignity, legitimacy, mutual orientation, and rhythm. We did all of those things together. Think about

the things we learned through our coaching certification and training. That's why they're so powerful: they open a gate, and chemistry emerges through it.

Then our limbic systems resonate with it, and it sticks. Rhythm and consistency over time create a space where we don't have to recreate chemistry, because our limbic systems remember it.

Unfortunately, there are also killers of chemistry. You can remember them by putting a CAP on it: control, avoidance, and power. Nobody wants to be talked at, talked down to, interrupted, talked over, dismissed, or devalued. All of those things can kill chemistry.

Here's the beautiful thing I discovered in the research. If the relational container is stable and I inadvertently kill chemistry, I can invite it back through a gate, as long as I don't destabilize the container. But misusing control, avoidance, or power over time can destroy the relational container. Since then I've also noticed something interesting: in spaces with multiple people, one person can kill the container for everyone.

There are also accelerators. How amazing is this? They're easy to remember with the word MITCH. You can remember it because it rhymes with something that starts with a B.

M M is mirroring. This is why we do reflective listening and language repetition in coaching. When I use your phraseology to repeat your experience back to you, it accelerates chemistry. My favorite part is that this includes cursing, by the way. Cursing accelerates chemistry because it emphasizes the passion you feel in that moment.

I I is interruption. Interruption can also kill chemistry. But interruption used with dignity, with respect for boundaries, and with the excitement of layering conversation accelerates chemistry.

T T is tension, because that's our job, right? To increase tension and challenge. In a stable container, it always accelerates chemistry.

C C is consistency. I saw over and over again how important rhythm and consistency are: the same way of opening and closing, the same voice and tenor, the same attention. That consistency makes the container so stable it's hard to destroy, and then chemistry flourishes.

H H is humor. Humor can also be used to devalue or destroy, if it's used with power or used inappropriately. But humor used to lighten the mood and accelerate what's happening benefits chemistry tremendously.

Nerding out for one more minute. There are four levels of chemistry. I used hermeneutic phenomenology, and not for how many syllables it has. I chose it because I wanted people to experience chemistry and describe it in their own words.

It showed four different levels, all the way from transactional chemistry, which was reflective and rhythmic and had a lot of reciprocity and gain, through meaning-making chemistry, where there were identity shifts and behavioral changes, into somatic chemistry, which is felt: the kind of epiphany that knocks you over, or the goosebumps you get when you watch your client realize something.

And into my favorite, distributed chemistry, which is also quantum tunneling. It means the chemistry we build can hop to another relational container with little or no effort, if I bring it. That's the power of the whole continuum of chemistry together.

I'm going to leave you with four statements:

> *Attunement without abandoning yourself.*
> *Dignity without disappearing.*
> *Power without controlling.*
> *Presence without proving.*

That's a really great way to think about what I've talked to you about today.

We're going to do one more exercise to close, because it's fun and you need to warm up more. Right down the middle again. I was going to pick the side of the room with Jayc on it for musicality, but he's not here this morning, so I'm going to rely on you to do the hard part. Are you up for it?

[Audience: Yeah.]

Okay, hold on. You're the snappers. Don't take offense to that, you can do it. Same premise. They're with me now. Hold it. Your part is "ba da da dum." Ba da da dum. It's going to go a little faster, though. Ba da da dum. Even a little faster. Are you ready?

You've got it. Thank you.