DR. CRYSTAL WRIGHT (HOST):

Welcome to Central Line. I'm your guest host for this month's leadership episodes, Dr. Crystal Wright. I'm here with Dr. Solmaz Nabipour to discuss the March Monitor article, *Networking, Building Purposeful Connections*, she co-authored with Dr. Daniel Cole. Welcome to the show, Dr. Nabipour.

DR. SOLMAZ NABIPOUR:

Thank you. I'm so excited to be here.

DR. WRIGHT:

I am excited about this, too. Networking is such a, an interesting topic. I think we can never talk about it enough. So let's dive in.

Networking and community benefit us and a variety of ways. I'm wondering if you can just talk a little bit about what are some of the benefits of networking on leadership specifically, but beyond that as well.

DR. NABIPOUR:

I sort of look at networking, or connecting, as basically the foundation that you build for success as a leader or as a physician out in the community. Everything we do is really about connecting with other people and making sure we have a stable framework for what we're building, whatever our project is, whatever we're working on. And just the more people you sort of get to know and know enough about them to know what kind of things they're into, what they're interested in, what they work on, the easier it will be for you to find the right people to reach out to when you're like, oh, I really need someone
to help me with this thing for this project, or I really need to look for a new job and I know, you know, Dr. Pearl, who's the Chair at Stanford. So I'm going to reach out to him, which is what I ended up doing, what I needed a job because I, I knew him from before. And, and so I was able to, you know, get myself a new job. And, and a lot of studies show now that, that that's how the majority of people do job transfers or new jobs and things like that. It's really about your network and your connections.

DR. WRIGHT:

Those relationships, even though they may be five to ten years prior, often play significant roles in the advancement of your careers.

DR. NABIPOUR:

Absolutely. Absolutely. I mean, I, when I reached out to Dr. Pearl, when I was leaving my private practice, I hadn't probably talked to him in probably five years, like you said. But it just had been that I'd kept in touch with him over the years after I took my residency interview actually is the funny thing. So things that, you know, back when I was doing my residency interview, I didn't think, oh, I'll keep in touch with Dr. Pearl so that one day I might need a job I could get. You know, like fifteen years down the road, I might need a job. So, yeah, it's, it's always surprising that the people that you later, when you're thinking that, you know, you have something that might help somebody else and you remember, oh, I know someone who's working on a project and this might be interesting or...

DR. WRIGHT:

Right.

DR. NABIPOUR:

You know, to, to fill your own needs as well.

DR. WRIGHT:

Absolutely. So what makes someone a good networker or a good connector? I'm sort of envisioning in my mind people that I think that are good connectors and I, I'm thinking of what some of those characteristics of those individuals are. So I'm curious, what in your mind, do you think qualifies someone as a good networker or a good connector?
DR. NABIPOUR:

Well, it's funny because when I was reading up on stuff for this article, I read a lot of like traditional business type connecting books or networking books, and, and I found that actually they're right. You know, the people I know in my real life who are the best connectors are the people who are just really curious about other people. They're really curious about what makes other people tick. You know, what other people are looking for, you know what they need help with. And they keep that in mind. And then as they're going through their daily lives and they meet somebody else who could meet someone's need, who they know about, then they connect them. Or, you know, if they meet somebody else who's working on the same project, they are really generous with their time and with their energy. And they're willing to put the effort in to connect people.

So connecting really isn't about how can I connect to someone for my own needs, but it's really about creating a network of people that you know, that you can bring together as needed to get things done and to, to sort of help the grand, sort of, the, the bigger picture. Right? Help the profession, help the group, whether you're in private practice, whatever it is. But truthfully, the best connectors are people who are just like incredibly curious about other people I would say, and just really like the process of getting to know people.

DR. WRIGHT:

And those people that I'm envisioning in my mind right now, they are absolutely some of the most curious people that I know. So that's very interesting that it's about curiosity and not only curiosity, but this sense of community, I think was what you were mentioning, which is so important when we're trying to advance or help people advance for just the, the improvement of community in general.

DR. NABIPOUR:

Community is something that, that we, we've sort of developed in anesthesia, but we could probably develop quite a bit more of and it's sort of natural that we don't have a, a, a really robust community in a lot of ways because anesthesia is such a solitary job for most people. And so we tend to be people who enjoy working alone. And yet there's so much benefit to all of us to have a really robust community within anesthesia.

DR. WRIGHT:
Right. Let's switch gears a little bit. In your article, you talk about the involving role of individualism. Can you tell our listeners a bit about the history of individualism, and why did it arise, and how is it helpful or problematic?

DR. NABIPOUR:

Yeah, for sure. It's, it's interesting cause it's become so much more of a prominent thing right now that a lot of people are discussing due to the political events of the last, I would say a few years. But really, it's in his book called The Second Mountain, David Brooks talks about the, the rise of individualism within America that really started in the 1960s as a response to the, the conformity and the rigid structure of the 1950s. And so at that point, it was a natural response to that to say, you know what, it's about me. It's about what I want. And I don't have to do what society tells me to do. But now it's progressed to be so extreme that, you know, we're seeing things happening like people getting together and burning their masks because they don't want the scientific community or the CDC to tell them that they should wear a mask. They want to make their own decisions.

And in ways other than that, it's really become an issue because it's led to an increase in suicidality among young people, because what we've told young people is, you're the only one who can solve your problems. You have to do it yourself. You have to look within yourself. There's no, there's no sense of community around, around these vulnerable young people to sort of lift them up. And that's why just throughout America now, I mean, we're in our third year of seeing a decline in overall lifespan. And, and the deaths are due to diseases of loneliness, as they're called, which is things like suicide, drug overdose and liver failure from drug and alcohol use.

DR. WRIGHT:

Wow, that's fascinating how when we look at individualism and, you know, in comparison to when we talk about community and networking, so you've got individualism versus community versus community helping one network. And on the problem side of individualism, it's not just related to the limitation of progression in one's career, but it also has mental health side effects that we're seeing in our society.

DR. NABIPOUR:

Absolutely. I think there was a long term Harvard study that showed that being lonely is like, as far as the health risks of loneliness, it's about the equivalent of smoking 15 cigarettes a day, or having diabetes and being overweight. I mean, it's a huge differential.
DR. WRIGHT:

Wow. It's huge.

DR. NABIPOUR:

Huge.

DR. WRIGHT:

Right. Right. So what role does mentorship play in building these strong networks? And I'm asking a, both about the role of being a mentor and about being a mentee.

DR. NABIPOUR:

Yeah, absolutely. So, in terms of from the mentor aspect, our best, so we developed this mentorship program at Stanford for early career faculty, and our best mentors have been the ones who have been really willing to connect their mentees with their network. So if the mentee comes to a meeting and says, you know, I'm really interested in doing research on such and such topic, our best mentors are the ones who say, you know what, I know someone who doing research on something similar. Let me connect you. And then what they do is they send an email introducing the person connecting them, and that's how they can really get their mentees to succeed, which is what I assume mentorship is about. And it should be, right, because it's not a zero sum game.

But in addition to that, what those mentors are doing is actually expanding their own networking circle now because they have this it's like a little web that drops down, right? So now they have this mentee who's out there networking within their network and building it for them, in essence. And so it's a great way to sort of support both yourself as a mentor and your mentee.

And then as a mentee, I think the best way to, to build a strong network is to be willing to go to your mentor and say, I want to, you know, I need help finding people who do this to be really curious like we talked about. And even if you're introverted, just sort of set goals for yourself and say, you know, even though I don't like talking to a ton of people, I'm going to make a goal of talking to at least one new person every day at work. Right? And getting to know them and, and getting to know them well enough that I could introduce them if I had to. And I could think about what they might need down the road or what might be helpful to them.
One of the books I read called Superconnector by Scott Gerber and Ryan Paugh, in that book, they talk about setting a goal of reaching out to one person within your network within every week to just sort of check in or see if there's something you can do to help them or if you know something you could do to help them, to do that once a week. Meet someone new once a week and sort of just keep that going as a way to build your network without it being a ton of new work, but just something you sort of build into your life.

DR. WRIGHT:

I like the way that you talk about the process of networking, as an active process. It's not necessarily always a passive process, but there is some planning that goes into the process of networking.

DR. NABIPOUR:

Absolutely. You know, like I kind of remember, Crystal, how I met you. Someone got me in touch with you, actually, cause I, I was looking to build a mentorship program and I was, forget who I was talking to, and they said, oh, you should talk to Crystal. And, you know, they connected us. And it's sort of the same thing, right?

DR. WRIGHT:

That's right.

DR. NABIPOUR:

Yeah.

DR. WRIGHT:

Exactly I remember that.

DR. NABIPOUR:

Yeah. That's how I met Jenny Lee-Summers, as well. And Jenny and I have been working ever since then on building a, a speaker exchange program called Aspire to get early career faculty involved in speaking engagements. It's an active process for both of those, I mean, I think it was that that I actually said to someone, I think it was either Sam Wauld or Ed Mariano, or one of those people. I said, you know, I want to work on this, and do you know anyone who can help with this? And they said, oh, yeah, I need
to get you in touch with Jenny or I need to get you in touch with Crystal. So, yeah, it's just about asking, you know, not being afraid to ask.

DR. WRIGHT:

And not being afraid, exactly.

DR. NABIPOUR:

Yeah, because if you don't ask. The answer is always no, right? That's right. The worst thing that can happen, is that the answer is no.

(BANTER)

DR. WRIGHT:

Exactly. That's right. That's right.

DR. NABIPOUR:

I've never had anyone say no, though. I'll tell you. I mean, in all the time that I've asked…

DR. WRIGHT:

No, because, every, what is great in our profession, in the medical profession, everyone wants to help. When everyone feels good about themselves and they want to help. And so I, I agree. I've never asked for help and had someone tell me no.

DR. NABIPOUR:

No, I mean, the worst thing that happened or what happened is that as they've said, I don't know someone, but let me ask around and see what I…

DR. WRIGHT:

Exactly, exactly.

DR. NABIPOUR:

And usually, they come through, you know, and even my, my co-author on this article,
Dr. Daniel Cole from UCLA, I've actually never met him in person, but I was introduced to him because he's known throughout the anesthesia community as a great networker and community builder. And so I was put in touch with him and we were able to write this article together.

DR. WRIGHT:

That's great. That's great. So finally, a little myth busting. Can you tell us one thing you think is a common leadership misconception among anesthesiologists and why are they wrong about it?

DR. NABIPOUR:

OK, and I think it's not just among anesthesiologists, but in general, I think our idea of a leader is someone who's strong and has strong set opinions and they just go in there and get it done, but in my experience, that hasn't always worked out to be the best and I find that approaching a problem with sort of the same thing, a sense of curiosity, right? You go into a meeting or you set up a, a zoom with a bunch of people and you have this problem you have to solve. And if you go into it with the curiosity of like, I want to know what these other people think of the problem and I want us to problem solve together, I find that you tend to get more buy-in from people than if you just try to solve their problems yourself.

DR. WRIGHT:

I agree. Everyone wants to be part of a process. And the more that we can incorporate people into the process, the more buy-in that we're going to get.

Well, Dr. Nabipour, thank you so much for the opportunity to speak with you today. I truly enjoyed our conversation talking about networking and mentorship and how mentorship integrates and relates to networking.

To read Dr. Nabipour's leadership article and the other articles we're highlighting in this month's podcast, visit asamonitor.org. And please join us again for more episodes of Central Line.

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