Moving Beyond Entitlement

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Guest: David Lowry, Don Drew

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David Lowry: 0:29
Hello everyone and welcome to Peaceful Life Radio. I'm David Lowry with my good friend Don Drew.

Don Drew: 0:36
Hey David, I'm doing really great today. I'm looking forward to today's topic. And I think it's going to be a good one.

David Lowry: 0:42
Several things have come up that caused me to think about Self Entitlement. I've learned a few things about entitlement and I think it's going to be good to talk about.

Don Drew: 0:50
Before we jump into this week's topic, please download, like, and share our podcast and invite your friends to listen as well.

David Lowry: 0:57
Don, we have heard so much about entitlement. That person feels entitled to this or that, or that person is acting so entitled. And sometimes people throw that around as an insult to somebody. And at other times, they're absolutely right. We can behave as though we are entitled to things that we're really not entitled to.

Don Drew: 1:19
Yeah, it's just often easy to see somebody who's claiming entitlement for themselves, but quite often we miss it in ourselves as well. And I know we're going to be talking about that today.

David Lowry: 1:28
That's true. What it is refers to your belief or somebody else's belief that they inherently deserve a special privilege, treatment or a reward. But the kicker is they don't feel like they have to earn it or work for it. They think that, I'm due this. A sense of entitlement is the notion that the world is revolving around you. A story I want to give you and it's sort of a small confessional on my part, illustrates how easy it is to fall into entitlement thinking

without realizing it. My story is this. I have a friend who's really good with electronics and video recording and he knows about a class I'm teaching where students do video and audio production. He said he'd be happy to help. We sat down and I began to outline a few things he could help me with, he seemed excited about it, and I was excited about it, but as I got to thinking about it, I realized this. He was doing all of the giving. I didn't offer him anything in return. I set up this idea that he would come to my class, teach these ideas and that He would love to do that. But the thing that struck me later on was, I was the one getting all of the rewards, he wasn't getting anything. He wasn't getting any extra money. Wasn't getting a benefit other than helping somebody. That's what entitlement is. It's where you're looking after yourself and not really considering how others are being impacted. So, I had a little talk with him and I said, you know, I'm really sorry about this. I didn't think about you and I should have. What can we do to make this right with you? And so we talked about something we could do later on and that's between him and me. But the point is we need to think about whether we are making demands and giving nothing in return, or whether there's reciprocity involved.

Don Drew: 3:21

I've seen this in my own past as a professor. Quite often I would need the staff to support something I was doing and it was an expectation on my part that they would gladly help but I never thought about how I might be able to help them or bring reciprocity into the process. What I think is interesting is that this entitlement idea manifests in numerous different ways. It can be very demanding. Demanding of special treatment. Expecting other people to do things for them and not showing gratitude. These are some of the characteristics of people that have a sense of entitlement. It's pretty easy now as I think about it to see it in myself. And frankly, I'm somewhat embarrassed, but I also recognize that it is our tendency to feel entitled or feel like we have a right to be treated well.

David Lowry: 4:06

I was reading an author. I wish I could remember the person who said If you're born in America, you probably have a sense of entitlement. We go and acquire things. We use our money to buy things. We live in a competitive environment. It's what have you done for me lately? We are very short term thinkers here in the United States. It's ingrained in us that we do stuff and we expect other people to come through for us. And we're not a collective consciousness here in the U S like some countries like Japan and China where they think more about the community and how things are impacting the group. We tend to think more individually.

Don Drew: 4:45

Yeah. And of course that presents problems of an opposite nature in their world. But it's well known that the culture of the United States and for that matter, all English speaking nations to a large extent are very individualistic. So it's kind of, Normal that we think about ourselves. And in fact, we're encouraged to do that. The problem with this is it can really do some pretty serious damage to relationships.

David Lowry: 5:08
Yes, it damages your relationships. And later on we'll talk about it can be harmful to your mental health. If you have this inflated sense of self importance, it's going to impact those around you. And it's not good for you either. We want to cover seven key elements involved in this sense of self entitlement. You may see this in people around you. It'll be pretty easy to spot for them. It's harder for us to see it in ourselves. And part of becoming a more peaceful, happy person is learning to do that hard work of self examination and saying, Okay, I made a big ask of somebody without offering anything in return. Let's start with the first one, which is an exaggerated sense of self importance.

Don Drew: 5:51
Individuals with this trait believe they're superior or more valuable or more deserving than others. They overestimate their worth, their abilities, their contributions, and often this leads to unrealistic expectations in personal and professional relationships. A couple of examples of this is interrupting others in meetings and believing one's ideas are the most valuable, so they assert themselves and their thinking over others. Or assuming one's opinion can carry more weight. I know that I have been guilty of these things at times. And I look back on that and I go, what was I thinking?

David Lowry: 6:24
As a parent it's easy to think, I know more than my kid. But not necessarily. There's some things where your kids know more about something than you do. Maybe they've learned something in their education that you haven't been taught. We have to realize with a bit of humility that we don't always know more then the person around us. One time. I was sitting on a committee and we were giving away a little bit of money to go to a conference or something like that. We asked people to submit proposals, we got some very, very, very detailed proposals. They were astounding. But one person who was well regarded in the organization, wrote a handwritten paragraph and submitted it. It wasn't well written and didn't reflect nearly the amount of thought and effort so the committee said thank you, but awarded the monies to other people. This person called me up and gave me what for. Talked about how discouraging it was to work for an organization that didn't appreciate, blah, blah, blah, you know, on and on, and I remember thinking to myself that, Wow, if you could have just seen what we had before us. He felt, because he

was well known in the organization, that had been on all kind of committees and things like that he should be an immediate,

Don Drew: 7:40
Automatic win for him. Automatic win. So, I see this every day on the streets also these days. Sure. Okay. I saw somebody today run through a left turn signal light. Made everybody else wait while they go. And that's part of it. believing the rules or laws don't apply to oneself due to their own belief of their right or superiority to do this. Somebody feels like they have the right to receive the best score or treatment just because who they are. And that is an inflated sense of self that is very problematic for themselves and others in relationships with them.

David Lowry: 8:15
I think we're getting into this notion that it's an expectation of special treatment. I'm special. You guys need to recognize this. I'm not the usual person you're dealing with here. I'm not some ordinary person. I'm a special person. And I expect to be treated specially. So, if these people come to a fully booked restaurant they say, I'm special. You need to put me at the head of the line. I'm not going to wait in line and I'm going to get a seat here and you're going to give me one. They believe people should do extra things for them, like, I expect to be upgraded automatically or be given a dessert at the restaurant that I didn't pay for just because, you know, I'm just this wonderful person. You can tell what a person is like by watching how they treat people they think are inferior to them. Maybe it's a waitstaff or a janitor or maybe it's a gardener. Some people speak demandingly and harshly to people like that. They make a lot of demands like you need to get over here and take care of this right away without the least bit of gratitude.

Don Drew: 9:16
The third area we want to talk about is something called the lack of reciprocity and empathy. And that's really kind of what you were talking about in your earlier story, right? A person who is acting. In ways they're self-entitled, will struggle with give and take in relationships. They expect others to cater to their needs without any kind of reciprocity. They often dismiss others emotions and fail to recognize how their actions affect others. We have a hierarchy and then staff are below us. Oftentimes, I find that is so ingrained and embedded in us that we actually believe it.

David Lowry: 9:47
There's a lot of arrogance in places like universities where we've worked all of our lives. Hospitals have the same thing where there's this hierarchy of who's the most important around here.

Don Drew: 9:57
Yeah. And I know there's been times when, I would ask our assistant to do something to help me without any thought about what her workload looks like. I just know I'm busy. I need this done. There's an assistant. I ask her, right? And I look at that power arrangement that we have here, right? And, she would rarely ever think to ask me to help her with anything. Now, if she did, I'd like to think I would, but maybe I'd say, well, you know what? I'm just too busy or I'm too important. I might think that I probably wouldn't say it. But yeah,

David Lowry: 10:27
You're here to help me. I'm not here to help you. That's sort of an attitude. This shows itself in a lot of interpersonal relationships I can remember when I was a younger man we would do things with friends and a particular friend of mine always wanted me to take the car use my gas and never offer to use their car. They never came through. Or there's people who are happy to come over if you invite them over to your place, but they never invite you over to their place. Right? So reciprocity is very important. What happens if there's no reciprocity, people finally wise up and realize You're just a taker, you never come through for others.

Don Drew: 11:05
Yeah, there's a lot of selfishness involved in this, which leads to our fourth area that we want to look at. That's the disregard for others needs or feelings. Now, we've already been there. talking a little bit about this, but it's a self centered perspective that leads to strain relationships and difficulties in all manner of social and professional settings. Some examples of this might be playing loud music late at night, ignoring neighbor's complaints. If you live in an apartment and you're turning your music up really loud; you've got to know that it's going to impact others around you. I understand you like to listen to your music loud, but not everybody likes to listen to your music and you're not giving them a choice.

David Lowry: 11:41
This happened to me a few days ago. I was coming back from Los Angeles and sitting next to a person and the first thing this person does is, pull out their cord and take the one USB port and plug in their phone, right? There's no do you mind if I use this for the first part of the flight and then if you need it, I'll share with you or we can both share on this? It was just an assumption that it's there for me without even a thought that I might need it. That's the sense of entitlement too, the idea that There's only one resource here. I'm going to use it and I'm not even going to think about you.

Don Drew: 12:15

I don't have any data to back this up. but I understand that people don't RSVP anymore. Or if they do RSVP, there is a reduced sense of responsibility to follow through with however that plays out. I have a friend who threw a small party for a small group of people and sent out an invitation. She did get RSVPs from several people and then nobody showed up. They said they would be there and then they weren't. Okay. And this cancelling plans last moment without any consideration of the impact on others and things of that nature, yet another example of disregard for others needs or feelings. One of the reasons we're saying this is because we know many of our listeners will resonate with others that they know that are guilty of these kinds of things. But the real value that comes from today's podcast is helping us better understand ourselves, become more emotionally intelligent, more self aware in order to self manage our way to a less entitlement way of thinking.

David Lowry: 13:15

The same is true in our workplace, in our marriages some people just never do things for their partners, they never think, What would my partner like? What kind of a vacation would they like? Or what's happening in their life right now? How can I help them? Or even bringing a cup of coffee or saying, What would you like to eat here tonight? We make assumptions that they're there for us.

Don Drew: 13:38

You mentioned being confessional today, and something just popped into my head. You and I have known each other for gosh, I don't know, it's Close to 20 years. Yeah, close to. And we've been through a lot of different things. Good, bad, ugly. We have seen each other at our best and at our worst. One of the things I appreciate about us and our friendship is that we have learned how to roll with and support each other in the good times and the bad times. I think it's because we are very conscious of the needs of the others. And so it's not just a mindset, it's way that we have to learn how to be with all the important people in our lives.

David Lowry: 14:15

Sure. And Don is such a great friend and he's always been very considerate of me and I try to be considerate of Don too, but honestly, I think the reason that our friendship has gone 20 years or so is that we do understand this concept we're talking about and it's been great!

Don Drew: 14:34

Let's talk about our fifth area here which is resistance to criticism and feedback. This element describes how self entitled individuals struggle with negative feedback. They

react defensively, become angry or dismiss constructive criticism that might be helpful hindering their own personal growth and improvement. So in other words, people with an entitled mindset feel threatened by criticism or feedback that doesn't reinforce their own feelings of entitlement.

David Lowry: 14:58
I had this friend, and I do consider him a friend, but many years ago, he wrote a booklet for a class that he taught, and he decided he would charge the students fifty dollars for it. Our administration looked at this and said, I'm sorry but that's a conflict of interest. You're requiring your product, which is not been reviewed by anybody else to be purchased by your students at a price you set. It's not coming through. our bookstore and they wanted to have a conversation about that. I can remember how indignant and angry it made this person. He didn't want to hear it. He's a nice guy, but he was a bit self entitled. They should buy this. I did all the work. I'm entitled to this. It never once occurred to him that, well, no, You've got a little bit of a conflict of interest here. There's a power difference here and requiring everybody to use what you've put together that we can have an ethical discussion about this different minds can see this differently.

Don Drew: 15:58
I remember when I was in college, David, I was working at a department store that was sort of the department store in town. Management had a very high opinion of their store, their products, and so on. This got passed on to the staff and the people that interface with the customers every once in a while we would get a customer complaint for something that clearly needed to be addressed. But I would find that management would often dismiss these complaints as irrelevant or unimportant. Because of their own high view of themselves and their right to be whatever they wanted to be simply because they were known as the best.

David Lowry: 16:34
We know what we're doing and we understand that we're not going to be for everyone. None of us really like criticism and it's hard for us to sometimes look at ourselves and say, yeah, I probably shouldn't be doing that, but we don't grow if we're always turning away the criticism. Let's move on to our next one, which is blaming others and avoiding responsibility. That's sort of what you were talking about there with that organization where, They would say the customer just doesn't understand, or, no, we're not at fault here we're perfectly within our rights to do this the way we're doing it. But sometimes it's just not so. Sometimes we are our problem. We are our own worst enemy.

Don Drew: 17:16

What is the tendency to shift gears? blame for problems onto others or refusing to acknowledge their role in negative outcomes and so on. That may make excuses, rationalize behavior, deny involvement in the problems and so on. And all of these are problematic and feeling entitled.

David Lowry: 17:31
I was a Dean for 12 years and Don was also a Dean. And we've done deanly things together in our careers. But I made some big mistakes as a dean. That's just part of the job. If you hold a job, you're going to make some mistakes. If you're a leader, you're going to make some bad decisions. The real question is, can you learn from those? Are you going to double down on those? I've noticed that leaders who double down don't last very long because they don't learn from their mistakes.

Don Drew: 18:00
I was at a store the other day and the line had gotten rather long and there was only one person handling the checkout, they didn't have any automatic check or anything like that. I witnessed the manager by the door and he did not make a single move to try to help out, right? You know, the most important thing in that role is to get your customers through and make your sales completed. There would have been nothing for him to walk over, open another register, and at least we would have had two. It would have helped, right? But he didn't do it. I came to the conclusion that he believes that because he's manager, that type of action is beneath his role that he's entitled as a manager to not have to do those lesser things. And if you ever find yourself in a position where you're a manager or a leader and think you're the people that are relying on you are in trouble or need help and you refuse to step in that's highly problematic, and it's a sign of an entitlement. And it can be very damaging to your relationship with your employees, your customers, and so on.

David Lowry: 19:00
What you're talking about is our last point called belief in inherent superiority. When I first became a dean, I was invited to a meeting. And Chick fil A was going to be speaking. In fact, Eldon Cathy was there. And when I walked through the door that day I was escorted to my table. This is where I work, and so I'm not used to people taking me to. You got one up on me. I don't think it ever happened to me. It's just like, hey please follow follow me to your table. So they sat me down. And Eldon Cathy and the others served us. They brought our food to us. And then they made a big point. The big point was nobody is too big to serve. That made a big impression on me, Don. Well, let's talk about how these things impact our mental health and then talk about A few things we might do to get out of this mental space we're in sometimes where we feel entitled.

Don Drew: 19:57
Yeah, absolutely. The impact of an entitlement mentality can extend far beyond the individual. It impacts our personal relationships and our own mental health as well as the mental health of others. Understanding these impacts is crucial for recognizing the signs of entitlement in ourselves and others. And for taking steps toward fostering healthier, more balanced relationships and improved mental well being. So let's talk first about the effects on relationships.

David Lowry: 20:20
It creates tension. When you are acting in your self entitled way, it really creates tension on other people. You've got expectations. You're making demands and other people feel that and it's not a good feeling. And they also notice that you're not contributing equally. That's what we call a lack of reciprocity that we talked about earlier.

Don Drew: 20:43
Yeah. And then there's, of course, the disregard for other's needs, just being aware of what other's needs are is a great first step. Those with excessive entitlement often prioritize their own wants and needs above everybody else's, and this strains relationships and creates tension. There's also the issue of difficulty with compromise. People who feel entitled are less willing to compromise. They don't listen. They have to win. So you're going to struggle to find a middle ground or consider their partners or their whoever it is they're working with, their perspective. And the last thing we've already talked about a bit, but I just want to mention it quickly, is the issue of power imbalances. Entitlement can create unhealthy power dynamics where one partner always gets their way. Think about any couple that you know where one individual in that couple seems to always get their way. Almost always you will look at that relationship and recognize that does not seem like a very healthy relation. It just seems like it's intuitively obvious.

David Lowry: 21:39
It is. And Don and I both when we worked together as deans, would meet leaders, who were not open to any suggestions. They would make a decision they wouldn't consult others, and then when it turned out not to be the greatest outcome, they would double down rather than saying, how can we fix this or what do we need to do? So this ability to compromise and these power imbalances, make life difficult for us.

Don Drew: 22:02
This podcast is all about peace and finding peace and developing peace in our lives. When somebody is claiming Entitlement over us or when we claim it over others all of this

leads to chronic dissatisfaction unhappiness and disappointment. These do not make for a good relationship, whether it's a couple or a work relationship.

David Lowry: 22:23
I promise you there are many, many, many, many, many organizations in America and elsewhere where they are scared to death to ask employees what they think about management and leadership because they know there's great unhappiness and disappointment. But they never stopped to consider that it could be a sense of entitlement that's going on around there, and it has nothing to do with the employees being inferior or the employees not doing their end of things.

Don Drew: 22:52
If unhappiness and disappointment is where it ended, that would be bad enough. But unfortunately, quite often that manifests itself in anger and resentment. Sometimes it can even lead to depression for people who feel like they are the victim of somebody who is entitled and they have limited options. All these things can come to a head simply because an individual who is in a position to claim entitlement is claiming it at the expense of others around them.

David Lowry: 23:20
That is so well said when we're acting entitled. We're doing it at the expense of others. Well, let's move on to some practical steps for overcoming a sense of entitlement and double checking how we're behaving and, having a little talk with ourself.

Don Drew: 23:35
Okay I think the first step is self awareness. I mentioned earlier, done a podcast on emotional intelligence. Go listen to that folks. It's actually kind of gives you a lot of background on this, but emotional intelligence, the ability to be aware of ourselves, to be able to manage, because we're now aware there's more to emotional intelligence than that, but that's the first stage or first part of it. And it's really important for us to learn, to be self aware and understand when we're doing it. In times when I have been acting entitled, I'm not sure I'm always aware of it in the moment. But I am very aware of its existence and my propensity to act that way at times. That awareness at least gives me the ability to back up, correct, or hopefully catch before I actually act on it.

David Lowry: 24:21
One of the reasons Don and I have had a bit of self confession going on today is we want to make it okay for you to do it for yourself. We want you to assume that you do act self entitled. And not that you're a bad person, it's just because we do these things not

realizing it in the moment, and we're wanting you to be more reflective about how am I living my life and where are some things where I may have made demands without giving back anything in return?

Don Drew: 24:50
One of those reflections that I think is important, David, for us to remember is the need to practice gratitude. When you feel like you are owed or due something, you're not able to express gratitude for it because you feel like it's expected. And I think one of the things that we can do is to try and develop more of an attitude in which we recognize that the things that we're given in life, the benefits that we have, some of us are born with benefits, okay, over others and to recognize that for what it is and to be grateful for it. You're not going to change that. You got what you got, right? But but to be thankful what you have and recognize that the universe is kind enough to give it to us.

David Lowry: 25:28
We are so lucky and we do not realize how great a life we have so often. Start practicing gratitude. Another one we would say is, work on your empathy. That means trying to understand how others are feeling. If you notice that some people aren't responding well to you, take a moment and think, did I just do something here? Have I made a demand without offering anything in return? Have I been unfair with my power or my viewpoint to the point where I'm not interested in what somebody else has to say?

Don Drew: 25:59
Another thing we can do to help ourselves overcome this kind of mindset is to cultivate humility in ourselves and recognize that we are, not superior to others. It's easy to think you are the center of your own world, but in reality, you are part of a much larger universe of people and ideas. I was struck recently. I was on a hike in Europe with hundreds of other people. At first, I was thinking to myself. Isn't this so great? I look like I'm outfitted better than they are, and I'm walking better than they are, some of them look kind of ragtag.

David Lowry: 26:35
Sure.

Don Drew: 26:36
Yeah, and I was thinking, you know, on this trail, I'm just one of, hundreds, if not thousands of people. And there's nothing that this trail owes me any more than it owes them. Learning to acknowledge our limitations and what areas we have of need for improvement to be open to feedback and constructive criticism is all important. And then

I think it's just important to celebrate other success without necessarily feeling threatened ourselves by their success and that's not always easy to do. But cultivating humility can help us. The last one we want to talk about here really is contributing to others. Well, being David,

David Lowry: 27:10
I'm going to challenge myself, Don and others who are listening to our program today to do something that some of you, this will be a no brainer, you do it all the time. But for others of you, it may take a little courage. Start giving your money away. We're not talking about large sums of money, but start handing money to other people who need it. There are times when you see a person who's on their last leg. See what you can do to help. You may have reservations about giving money versus giving food or something like that. But start looking for ways to contribute to people's well being. Don't be the person who has everything and doesn't share any of it. In other words, the more we serve others and the more we contribute to the well being of others, emotionally, physically, and all the other ways, in sharing our time with our children and our family and others without being distracted, all of those things go into the well being of others.

Don Drew: 28:04
Yeah, there's some behavioral changes that can help us make this kind of change in ourselves. One of those is volunteering. You mentioned giving money away, but some of us don't have money to give away and others can do that, but they also wanna do something more. So volunteering. I recently started volunteering at the Oklahoma City Zoo half a day, one day a week. And it's just been a real blessing in my life. I really enjoy it. I've met some new friends and so on. That's been really great. Another thing we can do is practice patience. And when I say practice patience, this is coming from a guy who invented impatience. One of my great accomplishments in life is I feel like I'm about half as impatient as I was when I was in my twenties, which puts me probably at about the 90th percentile and impatience. So I've had to work at this all my life, but having to learn to wait on gratification and to be patient for things to happen has helped me appreciate more when I do actually receive them.

David Lowry: 28:58
We've examined this issue of self entitlement and noted its effects on personal relationships and mental health.

Don Drew: 29:04
in this episode, we've explored how these behaviors manifest in various ways, and we want to conclude with the reminder that overcoming self entitlement is not just about

changing behaviors, but also fostering a deeper understanding of ourselves and our connections with others by actively practicing gratitude, empathy, humility we can break the cycle of entitlement that often leads to conflict and dissatisfaction. Remember the journey toward a more peaceful life begins with small steps towards recognizing our shared humanity and valuing the contributions of those around us. Thank you for joining us today. We hope you found this discussion enlightening and empowering.