The Future of Work podcast is a weekly show where Jacob has in-depth conversations with senior level executives, business leaders, and bestselling authors around the world on the future of work and the future in general. Topics cover everything from AI and automation to the gig economy to big data to the future of learning and everything in between. Each episode explores a new topic and features a special guest.

You can listen to past episodes at www.TheFutureOrganization.com/future-work-podcast/. To learn more about Jacob and the work he is doing please visit www.TheFutureOrganization.com. You can also subscribe to Jacob's YouTube channel, follow him on Twitter, or visit him on Facebook.

00:06 Jacob: Welcome to another episode of the future of work with Jacob Morgan. My guest today, as you can see is Jonah Berger, he is a professor at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, and the best-selling author of numerous books including the most recent one, which I think just came out six days ago called "The Catalyst: How to change anyone's mind" and that's what we're gonna be talking about today. So Jonah, thank you for joining me.

00:29 Jonah: Thanks so much for having me.

00:30 Jacob: My supposed first question is, How are you holding up over there with the whole Corona situation?

00:36 Jonah: Yeah, I mean, I think it's been interesting and challenging for all of us, just thinking about sort of how it's changed the working environment. I'm not teaching at the moment so I'm not dealing with distance learning, but just the challenges of doing that, the challenges of working from home, I think it's interesting, many organizations have thought about is work from home a good idea or a bad idea. They've been forced to deal with it and I think a lot of organization will actually probably use more working from home in the future than they have in the past, 'cause they'll learn, it's not perfect, but it's also not as terrible as they might have thought.

01:04 Jacob: Yeah, totally agree. Well, why don't you give us a little bit of background information around what you do and why do you do the things that you do. So you've written several books, you're a professor, how did you get involved teaching and writing about these types of things that you're involved in now?

01:19 Jonah: Yeah, so I did my PhD at the Stanford Graduate School of Business in marketing and do a lot of research on word of mouth, social transmission, change, and my products, ideas, and behaviors catch on. I've taught at the Wharton School now for 13 years. I teach them marketing core at the moment, but spend about half my time doing teaching and research and the other half working with companies and organizations. So everything from the big Fortune 500s, like the Googles and the Nikes and the Apples of the world, to small startups really helping them get things to catch on, change their organizations, and become successful more generally.

01:51 Jacob: Very Cool. Well, your new book that just came out is really all about how to change anyone's mind. And first question that I'm really curious about is, obviously, we're all dealing with this pandemic that's going on out there. Do you find that during times of uncertainty or a stress or a chaos is it easier to change somebody's mind versus when things are normal and everything's okay?

02:12 Jonah: Yeah, I mean in some instances it's a little bit of what you're trying to change their

mind about. I think what's interesting about the current situation is everyone starve for news and information. If you look at the media consumption these days, everyone's paying a lot of attention to certain things, but not paying attention to others. And so, while general uncertainty can be good in some areas. I have lots of clients reaching out to me going, "God, how do I deal with this situation? Budgets are slashed, people aren't taking action." So in general, I think this is gonna be bad for business, but that question about uncertainty more generally is certainly one of the barriers. To change, right? I mean when we think about changing minds and driving action. New stuff is always risky. And so, uncertainty is one of the things we have to deal with.

02:54 Jacob: So when you talk about changing someone's mind maybe you can give a little bit of context, what sort of mind change are we talking about? Are we talking about like how do you get somebody to quit smoking? How do you get my leader to approve this great idea that I have? Are we talking about just any subject, any topic?

03:13 Jonah: Yeah, so the expertise is human behavior... Do they do things that they do and working with the variety of clients that I work with, I noticed that everyone had something in common, which is they all had something that they wanted to change employees wanted to change their bosses' minds and leaders often wanted to transform organizations, folks in sales wanted to change the client's mind and folks in marketing wanted to change consumer behavior, non-profits wanted to change the world and startups wanted to change industries, but what I noticed is that we were all trying to change minds and incite action, but it often wasn't working. People often sort of push again and again, they provide more information and more reasons and often nothing changes. And so what the book is really about is why. Why is change so hard in the first place, and what can we do to make change easier?

04:00 Jacob: So let's talk about that actually. Why is change so hard? And I suppose that a lot of what we're gonna talk about can be just as applicable in a corporate level as it is to a personal level. So how do I change my spouse's mind or behavior, or a friend or anybody like that, or the leader of my company? So why do we struggle with this so much?

04:22 Jonah: Yeah, so I think it helps to start with kind of what we're doing already, why what we're doing isn't working, and most of us when we try to change minds, whether we're trying to change the mind of a boss, a colleague or a spouse, we often resort to some version of pushing, right? We think if we just send the boss one more PowerPoint deck they'll come around. If we make one more presentation in a meeting or provide more information about why we think what we're doing or suggesting is a good idea, people will change. Indeed, when I interviewed hundreds of folks from a variety of different industries, and ask them to write down something they wanted to change and what they had tried to do to change that thing, over 98% of the time, people list some version of pushing. And it's 'cause of why we think pushing will work, right? So if you look at a chair you're sitting in a room, there's a chair in the middle of that room, you wanna move the chair, pushing that chair is often a pretty good approach, right?

05:11 Jonah: If you push that chair in the direction you want it to go, it often moves in that direction. But there's one problem, when we apply that same notion to people which is that people aren't chair. When we push physical objects, they tend to go, when we push people they tend to push back. Rather than changing, they often do the exact opposite of what we want. And so what the book is really about is, is there a better way? Could there be a different approach? And if you look to chemistry there actually is. There's a special set of substances in chemistry that make change happen faster and easier. They don't do it by adding more pressure or pushing harder. They do it by

removing the barriers to change and those substances which you can probably guess are called Catalyst.

05:50 Jonah: And so this book is all about applying that same intuition, to the social world, how can we make change, happen? Not by pushing harder but by figuring out what are those barriers to change and how can we mitigate them. I think a good analogy comes when you think about a car, so imagine your car parked on an incline, you wanna start your car, you stick your key in that ignition, you turn it, you put your foot on the gas, if the car doesn't go. We think it just needs more gas, but then we just push a little more on that gas it'll move. But often, less often, do we look over and say, "Well hey, maybe we need to depress that parking brake. And so that's what this book is all about. It's really about what are those often hidden parking brakes that are often preventing change from occurring and how can we mitigate them. How? By removing those obstacles can we make change more likely.

06:29 Jacob: Why did you actually even write the book to begin with? Did something happened in your personal or professional life where you were having a hard time driving change, or were you seeing a lot of your clients experiencing this? What was the impetus for it?

06:42 Jonah: Yeah. So in 2013, I came out with my first book which was called Contagious: Why Things Catch On. It was all about word of mouth, really sort of positioned in the marketing space and it opened up a lot of opportunities for me. I got a chance to work with a variety of clients, everything from big brands you've heard of to small brands you've never heard of. And I tried a certain set of approaches that often worked. Some of those approaches worked but some of them didn't always take hold. And I started wondering, "Well, why did certain things work and others not work?" And I started digging into the academic literature, I started conducting more research myself, I started trying out some of these approaches with different clients and I started just interviewing a broad set of people. Everything from great leaders that had transformed organizations to regular Joes and Janes who had changed their boss's mind. I talked to folks like hostage negotiators to figure out how they get people to come out with their hands-up and substance abuse counselors to figure out how they get people to quit. And again and again, I started to see some patterns and so I try to pull those patterns together in just sort of a framework and that's exactly what the book is. It's a framework, sort of the five key barriers that often prevent change from happening, what those barriers are and how we can mitigate them.

07:50 Jacob: So let's jump into some of those. So, the five areas; reactance, endowment, distance, uncertainty and corroborating evidence. Maybe what we can do is spend our time, just quickly, we'll go over each one of them and what they are and maybe some tips that people can apply and I think that'll be a perfect way for people to learn about all these different types of things. So let's start off with the first one, reactance. What is reactance as a barrier to driving change and how do we overcome that?

08:20 Jonah: Sure, yeah. So, I think an interesting way to think about reactance is to examine something that happened to Tide a few years ago. So, your listeners may be familiar with Tide pods, they are these things that you drop in the laundry to help make doing laundry faster and easier.

08:34 Jacob: Or you can eat them?

08:36 Jonah: Well, that's actually where we're going. [chuckle] So, yeah. So, a few years ago, as you noted, Tide had a problem which is people were eating these things. Now imagine you're a Tide

executive in that situation, you're sitting there going, "What do you mean, people are eating detergent? Why in the world would people do that?"

08:52 Jacob: Let's talk about how dumb that is for a minute. What, uh, men. [laughter] What is going on in the world where people are eating Tide pods, man?

09:00 Jonah: Yeah, I agree with you. And so, as it was called the Tide pod challenge, mostly young people though some older folks as well were challenging folks online to eat Tide pods. And so, you're a Tide executive, imagine you're sitting in this situation in a meeting going, "What do we do?" And so they put out these "Don't eat Tide pods" that had celebrities like Rob Gronkowski to tell people not to eat Tide pods. And they released all these messages saying, "Don't do it" and that's exactly when all hell breaks loose. So the number of people searching for Tide pods goes up fourfold online and so does the poison control go up as well. In the next two weeks more than two times the number that had come in the past two years show up at poison control sort of having some of these issues. And so essentially a warning had become a recommendation, telling people not to do something, had made them do it. And so one question is, "Why did this happen in general and why did the warning back fire?" So this is actually part of a broader...

09:58 Jacob: One quick question really quick before you get to that part. Why did this even happen to begin with? And I suppose maybe this is something that you talk about in your previous book Contagious, but did you look at why this Tide pod thing even happened? How does this pop into somebody's mind to eat Tide pods and why did this become such a viral... Obviously, it's not good for you to eat detergent. These are not dumb people.

10:25 Jonah: Yeah, unfortunately today, we live in a culture where extreme things get more attention, right? Because we have access to more and more information, more people, more ideas than we've ever had before. It's tough to cut through the clutter and one way to cut through the clutter is to be extreme; extremely positive, extremely negative, extremely unusual. And so this was definitely something that most people went, "Woah, what is that thing? And is it a way that I can become famous by doing something like this? Can I get more attention for myself by doing something that most other people wouldn't do?" And so I talk in Contagious about this idea of social currency where a lot of reasons people share things is flex on them. I'm gonna do things that reflect positively on me and unfortunately, at least in this case, eating Tide Pods was one way people could look good.

11:11 Jacob: It's insane. Alright, sorry, go back to your original point you were talking about reactance.

11:16 Jonah: So you were asking about reactance. And so, this is an example of what's called reactance. People like to feel like they have freedom and control over their lives, they make the choices and they do the actions they do because they chose to. Are they in the driver's seat? But whenever we try to influence them, we try to get them to do something, now we stem their ability to feel like they're in control. Now, they're not sure if they're in control or we're in control. And because of that, they... Right? So whether where Tide telling people not to Tide Pods. Whether we're telling our boss, "Hey, we should fund this new initiative." Or trying to get a colleague to do something. The mere fact that we're encouraging them to do it, makes them less likely to do it 'cause it makes them feel like they don't have control. A good way to think about it is people almost have an anti-persuasion radar. So think about it like a spidey sense that when you feel like someone's trying to persuade you, your defenses go up and you do a lot of things to try to avoid

being persuaded. You avoid the message, you ignore it or even worse you counter argue, you think about all the reasons that that message or idea is wrong. And so, just pushing people is not gonna work.

12:18 Jacob: Makes sense. So what do you do instead? I know I've certainly fallen into this trap many times, whether it's with family members or with friends, we have disagreements on something and I'm just kind of like, "What do you mean?" I try to present more facts and more data and more stories and it's just like butting heads, nobody moves. So what do you do instead?

12:39 Jonah: Yeah, so I talk about four ways in the book, but I think the core idea is really how do you allow for agency? How do people feel like they have some sense of control or freedom? So I'll give you one example. So, often when we try to persuade people, we give them one option. So we're in a meeting, we're presenting to the boss and maybe our colleagues and we're saying, "Here's what I think we should do." Now, everyone's sitting in the meeting, looking like they're listening but really what they're doing, they're thinking about all the reasons wrong with what you suggested, this will cost too much, this won't really be feasible, how will this fit in with the other projects we're doing, right? They're sitting there and their persuasion radar is going up, they're sort of shooting holes or poking holes in whatever you're presenting. And so, what really good change agents often do, is they don't present one option, they present multiple. They present two or maybe even three options. And one thing that does is it subtly shifts the role of the listener. Before the listener is sitting there thinking about all... Along with what you're suggesting. But once you've given them a couple options, now they have a different job.

13:36 Jonah: Now, they're sitting there going, "Well, which of those options do I like better?" And because they're focused on which of the options they like better, they're much more likely to pick one at the end of the meeting. Think about the same thing with your spouse or with a friend, right? When they ask, "Hey, what do you wanna do this weekend?" Well, when we give them one option we say, "Hey, let's go to the movies." They often go, "Oh, but it's gonna be so nice out," or, "Shouldn't we go out to dinner?" But if you give them two options, or three options, now they're sitting there going, "Well, which of those do I like better?" And so, it's essentially guidance. Notice it's not infinite choices. Notice there's not 15 options, 20 options, or 30 options. It's a limited set of choices that guides that journey, not telling them what to do, but allowing them to have choice within a restrained, strained situation. And so that's just one way. I'm happy to talk about others if it's useful, but that's just one way to combat this. Rather then pushing or telling people what to do, give them some sense of choice or control over that situation.

14:29 Jacob: And it sounds like this is just as applicable in something like sales as it is trying to get, and I think this is the example used in your book, "Trying to Get Your Kids to Eat Their Vegetables." And I've actually been doing this. I have a three-year-old, well, she's three and some change, and when she doesn't wanna eat something, we basically, like broccoli. And I think this is the exact example you give in your book, and so instead of saying, "Eat your broccoli," we say, "Well, you can have broccoli, or you can have chicken." We usually give three options. They're all healthy. And it's like, "You can pick which ever healthy option you want."

15:00 Jonah: Yeah. And notice you're choosing the choice set, but you're letting her choose from within that choice. Yeah. And I have a two-and-a-half-year-old, so it sounds like we're going through similar things, but same thing. It's like, "Which do you wanna put on first? Your pants or your shirt?" Now he's not sitting there going, "Okay, what I'd rather do, is throw these things on the ground," because he's sittin there going, "Which one of those do I wanna do first?" And then

sometimes by allowing them to participate, you've given them a job, which is a different job than thinking about why they don't like what you're suggesting, and because they've participated, because they've picked it, they're much less likely to not do it later. And sometimes they've committed to the conclusion, they've said what they like, and so it's harder for them not to follow up doing it later on.

15:39 Jacob: Yeah, no, that makes a lot of sense. I know you said you have four for this. Maybe we can just briefly do one more before we jump to some of the other ones.

15:47 Jonah: Sure, yeah, and I totally understand. We're probably not gonna be able to get through all five barriers in depth. I think it's often two or three so people can understand them, but happy to give another example of reactance here. One thing I really like in organizational context, is something I call highlighting a gap. And so, a good way to think about this is... Attitudes and their actions to line up. So if I say I care about the environment, and I think I care about the environment, I probably need to recycle, or at least think about recycling. If I say I care about tax reform, I need to do things like sign petitions and do stuff that fits along with that.

16:23 Jonah: And so one way to get people to do something, is not telling them what to do, not trying to persuade them, but let them persuade themselves by pointing out a gap between their attitudes and their actions, or a gap between what they're doing and what they might recommend for others. So you can think about a project at the office for example. It's an old project, it's lost money year after year, it should be shuttered, but no one wants to get rid of it. Someone's attached to it, someone has that status quo bias, it's their project. They have inertia, they don't wanna give it up. Now if they started that project today, they might not have wanted to start it, but because they're already doing it, it's hard for them to let go. So you could tell them, "Hey, let go of this project, don't do it," but they're gonna be reticent to do it.

17:03 Jonah: So one way to switch it a little bit, is to say not about them, but someone else. Say, "Hey, imagine we had a colleague in another division, where there's a friend of yours at a different company that was thinking about starting a project like this. Knowing what you know now, would you suggest that they start this project?" And most people sitting there would probably go, "Well, no. Knowing what I know now, I know it's not such a good idea. I probably wouldn't start that project. I wouldn't recommend they start it." Well, then you can say, "Well, why are we still doing it? If you wouldn't recommend someone else starting it, why are you still doing it?" And what it does, it points out a gap between what they're doing, thinking, and what they would recommend for someone else, and encourages them to resolve that gap. It creates what's called dissonance. And encourages them to do a little bit of the work. Again, you're not pushing them, you're not selling them, you're encouraging them to buy in and make that choice themselves.

17:53 Jacob: I like that approach a lot. I think that makes a lot of sense, is let people come to their own conclusion by subtly planting the seed in their mind and letting them get to it on their own, which I certainly try to do as well in my personal life too.

18:11 Jonah: Yeah, and we can even think of that, things like questions versus statements. So I was talking to a leader who's trying to get employees to work harder, stay after work on the weekend. You tell people to stay after, they're gonna say, "No thanks." So instead he had a meeting where he said, "Hey, what do we wanna be? Do we wanna be a good company, or a great company?" Everyone knows how people answer that question, "We wanna be a great company." "Okay, well, then what do we need to do to be a great company?" And now you're asking people their opinion

they're more than happy to give you their opinion, and then later, if you suggest we do something that's consistent with their opinion, they're gonna have to do it, 'cause they came up with it. Now if we can allow them to participate, have a role in that process, the more bought in they're gonna be to that outcome.

18:47 Jacob: Okay. I love that advice. I think that makes a lot of sense. So the next one after reactance is endowment, is a roadblock for why we can't make change happen. Let's talk about that one.

18:58 Jonah: Sure, yeah, so the basic idea of endowment is this notion of the status quo bias. And so maybe I'll talk for a couple of minutes about the problem in the first place, then we can talk about some of the potential solutions. We're basically attached to stuff that we're doing already, right? Whether they're our products, whether they're ideas, whether they're programs, whether they're initiatives, we like the stuff that we're doing, and we're wary of the stuff that we're not doing already. Loss aversion means we're attached to the stuff we're already doing, sort of losses feel bad, we can't cut or get rid of the old things.

19:29 Jonah: There are some great studies on something called the endowment effect, for example, where they say, "Hey, here's a mug." Imagine a white mug let's say with a Wharton logo on the front. And they ask some set of people, "How much would you pay for this mug? You don't have it already. How much would you pay to buy the mug?". And they say, "Oh I don't know $2 maybe $3." And then they ask a second... "Okay, I'm gonna... It's yours. How much money would you be willing to accept to get rid of it? How much money would someone else have to pay you for you to sell it to them?" Now, the mug is the mug. Whether you're buying the mug or selling the mug. It's the same white Wharton coffee mug whatever it might be. And so those evaluations should be the same, but they're not. If you already have that mug, if it's something you're already doing, you value it times two to even three times higher than the folks that aren't doing it already. You have it, you're endowed with it and so it's harder to give it up. And so one of the challenges then is that how do we get people to let go of the stuff that they're doing already? Even home owners for example. You're selling a home, the longer you've lived in that home, the more you value it above and beyond market price. It's yours and so you can't imagine giving it up.

20:38 Jacob: So what's the solution there? Because I imagine that... Thinking about this, this is true for so many things, whether you're even talking about being in a relationship that is not a good relationship or whether it's a leader who won't give up a project or... I mean this is applicable in so many different aspects of our personal and professional lives. And I guess it's understandable, because we get these types of attachments to things. So what do we do?

21:03 Jonah: Yeah, so one strategy I talk a bit about is something I called "highlighting the cost of inaction." And so one of the challenges is we don't think that the status quo is costly. We're already doing it. And so we think new things are costly and maybe in a couple of minutes we'll talk about uncertainty, how new things are risky, people avoid them. People like the old stuff, it's safe. I'm already doing it, even though it's not perfect, it must be safe. But one thing you have to do is point out there's actually a lot of cost to doing nothing.

21:30 Jonah: So there's a great study that was done in a medical context, but I think it applies more broadly as well, where they asked people, "Look, which do you think causes you more pain, a minor injury or a major injury?" So a minor injury being something like spraining a finger, spraining your knee, twisting your ankle, something along those lines, or a major injury, something

like breaking a finger, or breaking a kneecap or something else." And obviously most people say, "Well, of course, a major injury is more painful." It hurts a lot more when you break your kneecap or when you break your finger than if you just sprain one of those other things. But if you actually look and you talk to people who have these injuries you find out something interesting which is minor injuries end up being more painful.

22:12 Jonah: You say, "Well, hold on, how is that possible?" Well the reason that happens is because major injuries, we do a lot of work to get them fixed. They're above the threshold that we can't just do nothing, we can't ignore them, we have to go out and get them fixed. And so we do. We go to the doctor, we get that finger set, we get a cast put on our leg whatever it might be. Minor injuries are below that threshold, but because they're below that threshold they never end up getting fixed and over time, they cause us a lot more pain. And I think this is true all the time at the office, right? Where there's something we're doing that isn't that costly in the moment, but add up that cost over continuing to do that thing for months or years and it actually ends up being quite costly.

22:50 Jonah: So one thing we have to do is highlight that cost of inaction. How can we make people realize, "Look, every day this isn't that costly, but over time it is." And so I tell an example in the book where I was talking to a cousin of mine, his name is Charles. And every time he would write an email, at the bottom he would write something like, "Best Charles" at the end and send the email. And I was like, "Well, why don't you just add that to your email signature, right write the words 'Best Charles' and every time you write an email it'll show up at the bottom." And he was like, "Oh, I don't know how to use email signatures and it'll take me a while to learn and it doesn't cost me that much every time I write this, it's only a couple of seconds." So if you think about it for him, that's a minor injury.

23:28 Jacob: Yeah.

23:28 Jonah: Not a major one. It's not worth doing the work to fix because the work to fix it seems worse than the cost of doing nothing. And so, I tried various ways to get him to change, they weren't working. So I tried a different approach. I said, "Hey, how many emails do you write every day?" He's like, "I don't know, 50 emails." And I said, "Okay, how many emails do you write a week?" And he said, "I don't know, 300, 400 emails." And I say, "How long does it take you to write a signature for each one of these emails?" He stops to think about it for a moment, and then he opens up his web browser and types in how to automate an email signature, because what that did was it showed him that yes, each individual time wasn't that costly, but in aggregate it was really costly. It highlights that cost of doing nothing might seem really low, but how do we make people realize it's actually above that threshold, so it's worth doing something. If it's a minor injury, you don't need to take care of it but if it suddenly seems like a major one, then we'll do the work to get it fixed.

24:21 Jacob: So let's say I'm an employee at an organization and maybe there is an outdated workplace practice, maybe something like a flexible work program, or you know, there's so many outdated workplace practices these days, whether it's how budgets get allocated, whether it's trying to get approval for something, whether it's a flexible work program. And I'm trying to talk to one of my leaders and they just say, "No, no, no, this is how we've always been doing it. I need to be able to see you." How would you even start to approach something like that? So let's say I was your leader and you wanted to get me to change something, how do you even begin that conversation?

24:56 Jonah: Yeah. So I think a lot of what I talk about in the book is exactly what you just said. So we talked about a strategy, highlighting the cost of inaction. But before we even get to that

strategy, we kinda have to understand what the problem is. And I think this is one of the biggest issues I noticed whether it's changing mind or trying to change behavior, we often are not aware of the barriers. We're often blind to why someone doesn't wanna do something. Take that boss you just talked about. You have a workplace program you're trying to change the boss doesn't wanna change it.

25:26 Jonah: You often actually don't even know why they don't wanna change it. And if you don't know why they wanna change it. It's gonna be really hard to change it. Imagine you're a doctor, let's say, if you don't know what the issue someone has is you can't prescribe the right medication. You don't know whether to prescribe one thing or another. You gotta do a diagnostic first to figure out what the problem is. And so I think about this a lot. I have a, not a huge yard, but a decently sized yard and so, I moved into this house recently, I have spent more time weeding than I ever thought I would.

[chuckle]

25:55 Jonah: The first time I weeded, I just pulled off the top of the weeds, 'cause that was the easiest thing to do. But then they grew back, they grew and they grew again 'cause I hadn't found the root. And so whether it's a weed or a boss you've gotta figure out what's the root of that problem. You've gotta figure out, what's that underlying cause for why they're not doing what you're hoping they'd do and then figure out what the solution is. And so in the case of the boss you're talking about here, I would really start with a set of questions that gets you to the core of the problem. I was talking to a hostage negotiator. They talk a lot... Reactance chapter and some of the strategies he uses. And he starts talking, "Well, hey, I don't start with the change I want to achieve. I start with the person I'm trying to change. And I start by understanding them.

26:37 Jonah: Why is this person hold up in a bank with hostages? Why does this person wanna commit suicide? I start by understanding why that person is doing what they're doing. And then I can figure out the best solution." And so with that boss, I'd start by sitting down and asking, "Okay, I totally understand and respect that you don't wanna change this program. Can I understand a bit more about why?" And once you understand more about why then you can figure out, well, oh, is this an endowment problem or a reactance problem or a distance problem. But until you understand the problem, you can't really prescribe the right solution.

27:07 Jacob: Perfect. Okay. I think that's wonderful. Yeah, and oftentimes, we don't understand the problem. I've fallen victim to this many times, back when I used to work for organizations as well. And we tend to just get very frustrated because we ask for something and we want change to happen. We just get told no, but we really have no idea why we're being told no. Maybe the leader is scared for what this means for them. Maybe they don't know what to do. So, I think understanding that root problem is essential.

27:31 Jonah: Yeah, but notice, even as you just said, if they're scared, then fear is the problem that you need to address. If you think it's gonna cost too much. That's a very different problem that requires a very different solution. And if you don't understand the problem, you can't figure out the solution.

27:44 Jacob: Got it. So I have a totally random question for you from somebody who's watching live, from Cheryl, she says, "Can you tell the puppy story that you told last night?" I literally have no idea what that means. Because...

[laughter]

28:01 Jonah: I feel like I'm in a call-in show, or something. This is great. So I'm happy to share that story. So let me give you a little backstory, and then I'll share the puppy story. It also feels like I don't know if you ever go to a show with a musician and someone's like, "Play this particular obscure song of yours." So I will tell the puppy story. I'm more than happy Cheryl. So in the uncertainty chapter, I talk a lot about how to ease uncertainty, to make people more comfortable doing something that they don't wanna do. And so the puppy story is actually a story from my personal life. I love dogs and I have always loved dogs.

28:34 Jacob: I have two dogs here which you might hear barking.

28:37 Jonah: Oh, oh, fantastic. Mine is not barking. She's too far downstairs and doesn't bark very much, but I will let you know if she said hi. But I've always wanted a dog. I had one growing up, our family had dogs, but as I sort of started living on my own, after college, graduate school, I was never... For a dog, I don't know if I wasn't trying to get a long enough walk, I wasn't sure I knew enough to take care of a dog. And so I would go, and visit animal shelters once in a while and think about dogs, but I never had really gotten one.

29:08 Jonah: And so a few years ago, I was up in North Philadelphia, I went out to dinner. I walked by this animal shelter called Street Tails Animal Rescue, great place. They do wonderful work there. I saw this very cute puppy in the window. Walked inside. Played with this puppy for a couple of minutes, she was a little black Pitbull mix with sort of a tuxedo coat, so black with sort of white down the middle, a really cute dog. And I really enjoyed playing with her, but I sort of sat her down and started to walk out to go to dinner.

29:34 Jonah: And one of the volunteers there said, "Oh, you know, you look like you really like this dog." And I said, "Yeah, I do, but I'm just not sure I'm ready for the dog." And she says, "Okay, well, we have a two week trial period." And so, interestingly, now, that dog is named Zoe is downstairs as we speak. Now she's eight years old. She's a wonderful member of our family. But she never would have gotten here if it wasn't for that two week trial period. Two week trial period did, it didn't make it any cheaper, on the front-end, I still had to buy food and a cage and all those other wonderful things that a puppy needs. But what it made me feel like was worst case, if it didn't work out, I could bring her back.

30:11 Jonah: And of course, no one would ever do that because puppies are wonderful. But it made me feel like, "Hey, this is gonna help me resolve my uncertainty. And so whether it's on the front-end and we can talk a little about it in a couple of minutes, sort of lowering the barrier to trial, or even on the back-end, making it reversible things like trial periods, money-back guarantees. They don't just make things less costly in terms of money, they really solve that uncertainty problem, because, at the core, that was my question, "Am I going to be a good home for a dog?" And what that two week trial period did is it let me figure that out.

30:39 Jacob: Okay. Another question for you from Claire, she says, do you think that people are struggling with change when the change brings them into a zone of discomfort? In other words, too far from their comfort zone? And if so, do you have any advice for how to get over that?

30:58 Jonah: Yeah. So this is really the distance chapter of the book. This is exactly what you're

sort of talking about too far from your comfort zone. And I think a good analogy is to think about people as arrayed on a football field. It's easiest to think about this in politics, but you can think about it in any sort of area of life. In politics, they're republicans on one end, Democrats on another, and they're sort of those are the end zones, but there are gradations in between. Exactly in the middle, sitting on the 50-yard line of the moderates, somewhere on the 20-yard line of each side or moderate Republicans or moderate democrats, and it goes more extreme from there.

31:29 Jonah: You can think about the same thing with a workplace situation. Someone's really pro, and someone's really against, someone's really supports one thing, and someone doesn't support something else. And so it turns out people have a range around their position on the field that's called their zone of acceptance. Sure, they have a position on the field, you may be a moderate Democrat, or a extreme liberal or a moderate conservative and so on. But you willing to consider some things that are a couple of yards in either direction, things that are in that zone of acceptance, sure you might not believe them now, but you're at least willing to consider that information.

32:00 Jonah: But if it's where you are, at the moment, say the other side of that football field, or 40 yards down the field, it falls in what's called the region of rejection. Right? Not only does it get ignored, but it often backfires and leads us to do the exact opposite of what someone wants. There's a great study that looked at this in the political domain, for example, where they found that exposing people to information about the other side in politics. So give democrats information about republicans and vice versa, actually polarized people rather than making them more moderate.

32:28 Jonah: And it didn't lead them to sort of see the other side and move towards the middle because that information was so far from where they were, at the moment, it actually pushed them in the opposite direction. And so how do we deal with that? Well, one way I talk about in the book is to do what I call asking for less. And I think there's a good example of this with a doctor, but we can think about it more broadly in any context. But I was talking to a doctor who was trying to get an obese person to stop drinking so much soda. He was a truck driver. This guy was drinking three liters of Mountain Dew, he was morbidly obese.

33:00 Jacob: Wow.

33:00 Jonah: He was drinking them 'cause it's easy to have in the cab of his truck, and would down them as he was driving down the road. And so the tendency in that situation, like the tendency in the office, is to want big change right away. "I want everyone to adopt my proposal. I want everyone to switch the way they're doing things." But the doctor realized, "Well, that's probably not gonna work. That's probably gonna fall in that region of rejection, be too far and backfire." So instead, she started by asking for less. She said, "Hey, I know you're drinking three litres of Mountain Dew. Would you mind trying to drink two for a week? Two, and have another one where you can fill up with water along the way." The guy grumbled, didn't wanna do it, but eventually was able to do two.

33:33 Jonah: So the next time he came back, she said, "Okay, now can you try going to one?" And he grumbled, and he didn't wanna do it, but went to one. And then eventually when he came back, she said, "Okay, now can you go to zero?" And so eventually, the guy lost over 25 pounds, because what she did is, she didn't ask that big thing right away. What she did, is she broke up or asks, she started by asking for less, but then she asked for more, right? And what she did, is really, she chunked the change in some sense. She took a big change, something that's uncomfortable because

it's so different from what people are used to, and then broke it up into more manageable chunks.

34:04 Jonah: Product designers often describe this as stepping stones, if you think about fording a river, right? Yeah, it's big, it's wide, you don't wanna cross it, but if there are some hops you can make along the way, it feels much safer. And so same thing at the office. When you're trying to get someone to do something big and new, you ask right away, it might be too scary, something that's uncomfortable, 'cause it's very different from what they're used to. Think about working from home. Now, many of us are working from home, but imagine two months ago, when you might have asked your boss, "Hey, I wanna work from home." Your boss probably would have said, "No, you can't work from home."

34:34 Jonah: But if you said, "Hey, can I work from home one day a week, and let's... In two months let's stop and see how it's going, and let's look at my performance." That's asking for less, and if one day a week works, two days a week, and if two days work, then you can go to three. And so thinking about taking a big change that might seem scary and make it not seem so scary by breaking it down into smaller increments.

34:54 Jacob: Sort of like that joke, "How do you eat an elephant?" And so, "One bite at a time."

[laughter]

35:00 Jonah: Right, but I think it's a great joke. And very apt in this case, yeah. Make it feel more manageable.

35:05 Jacob: Okay, so ask for small things before you try to do big things. And I think this is very, very applicable for leaders as well, and I love the flexible work example. Start with one day a week, see how that goes, and then try to extend a little bit more from there as opposed to just saying, "Hey, I wanna be working from home full-time. [laughter] Always. See you later." Because that probably won't work right off the bat.

35:26 Jonah: Yeah, and I think as a leader, you can think about the same thing. I can't tell you how many conferences I've gone to where someone says, "We need to be more innovative. We need to take bigger risks." And that might seem really risky. And so instead, say, "Hey, let's pick one concrete small thing that we can do that moves in that direction." And then once you get people moving, then you ask them for another small one. Later, you've eventually got them where you want them to go.

35:51 Jacob: Okay. So here's another question, and I was actually gonna ask you this one a little bit later. It's from Sayeed. And he says, "Change demands having an adaptable mindset. And so what can we do ourselves to be more adaptable?" So, which I kind of read as, "How do we change our own mind?" Because sometimes it's not just about other people, it's convincing ourselves to do something.

36:13 Jonah: Yeah, I think that's a great question. And that's one thing I thought about a lot when writing this book. Some people ask, "Oh, is this... Is this about how you change yourself?" And my first answer was, "No, it's a changing others book. How to change anyone's mind." Then I was like, "Huh, these same principles are equally useful when you're trying to change yourself." So I think the first thing I would say, is the same thing we said a few minutes ago, which is figure out what those barriers are. Be honest with yourself about... You're not willing to change. Is it that you're

scared of the new thing? Is it that you're attached to the old thing? Is it that thing is too expensive? Is that thing too far from what you're doing at the moment?

36:49 Jonah: Do you not have enough evidence that it's actually gonna work?" Start by figuring out what those barriers are, and then begin to think, as we talked about before, about how to mitigate them. I think the uncertainty chapter, I told the story of the dog. That happens to me in spades all the time. I am someone who's very, very risk-averse, as many of us are, both in my personal and professional lives, and so I'm not always wanting to make changes, because they feel uncertain, but then the question is, "Well, okay, how can I make them feel more certain? How can I reduce the risk? How can I de-risk that process a little bit? How can I lower the barrier to make it easy to experience what something is so I figure out whether it might be actually much better than I thought?"

37:31 Jacob: Okay, that makes a sense. So the same approach that you would take for leaders, or for somebody else, kind of identifying that root cause, is what you would also do for yourself. "So why, why are you struggling making this change? Why are you doing X, Y, Z?" Really trying to get to the root of that, it sounds like, is the same approach that you would take.

37:49 Jonah: Yeah, and I think the only thing I would add, is sometimes we don't... Insight into our own behavior. So we wish we do, and we think we should, but sometimes the people closest to us have better insight into our behavior sometimes than we do. That person might be a spouse, it might be a best friend, it might be a colleague at the office, and so not just introspecting about your own barriers, but asking some people around you, "Why do you think I'm so averse to doing this? What do you think? Here are these common barriers. Which of these do you think I fall most pray to?" That might provide some useful insight as well.

38:20 Jacob: It's a good self-awareness exercise, I think. So another question for you. This one comes from Lisa, and it's again, something that I wanted to ask you a little bit later. A lot of people tend to make decisions, especially in this current environment that we're dealing with, based on fear instead of logic. And we see this in the stock market, for example. People panic they're withdraw all their money. Whereas the best course of advice is to just leave things, and stay the course. Do you have any advice for how to get people to move from making decisions based on fear to getting them to be a little bit more logical? 'Cause I would imagine that this is something that you probably see and experience quite a bit.

39:02 Jonah: Yeah, I think my answer to this is gonna be different than what she might have expected, or what I might have expected, which is, I don't know if you're gonna be able to get people to not make decisions based on fear. I'm a behavioral scientist. I spent God, now, 20 years or so-ish being a behavioral scientist, and what I've learned is that people don't always make the best decisions or do things rationally. And so often the better way to solve, or lead people to good outcomes, is not to try to make them make decisions rationally, but understand what those irrational processes are, and design for them.

39:41 Jonah: So it's almost like imagine you're building a system and you know the people that are gonna operate that system are imperfect, they always make a certain type of error. Well, you can try to fix people say, "No person, don't make this type of error," or you can design a system that says, "Hey, I know you're gonna make this type of error, but given you make this type of error, how can I solve for it?" So when we talk about people have to say, "Oh well people share, they don't share the right information, they don't share the best... Yeah, people should eat more vegetables, they don't

always eat vegetable, sometimes they eat junk food, but if we cook vegetables a little more differently, they'll get the same nutrition, cook brussels sprouts differently, they taste better and so people are more likely to eat them, and so, rather than saying, "Hey, don't eat junk food," say "How can we cook those brussels sprouts better?" And so I would say the same thing here, I'd say, "Great, okay. People tend to make decisions based on fear. Well, I can either try to force them to make logical decisions which I may be able to do or I can say "Great." People tend to make decisions based on fear, how can I lead them to make better decisions by using fear rather than something else?"

40:41 Jonah: So I'll give you one example you mentioned sort of financial markets. I was talking to someone in one of my exec courses and I think I share the story in the book, but I'm not sure, who had a client, their financial advisor had a client who was keeping too much money in savings. This person was saying, "God I'm so scared of the market. Maybe it'll go down, as it has recently but I should keep all my money in savings. Now at the moment, that's a decent idea, in general, that's a terrible idea. And so how could she get the guy to put more money into the market? And so she tried sort of showing him different graphs, various things, but he wasn't doing it. And so eventually she just said, "Look, I'm gonna create a counter, over time that shows you how much money you would have had, had you invested in the stock market rather than keeping that money in savings." And so first it showed a couple of dollars then it showed a couple of hundred dollars then it showed a couple of thousand dollars, and the guy said, "What do you mean, how am I losing money? I'm making money. My savings account is growing." She said, "yes it's growing but not compared with this other thing you could have been doing."

41:38 Jonah: And she didn't say, "Hey don't make decisions based on fear," she said, "Okay you're risk-averse. Let me show you that actually this other thing you're losing money doing what you're doing compared to something else which encouraged him to put more money in the market. And so I think that notion of kind of designing for users, rather than hoping users will completely change is often a better approach.

41:58 Jacob: It's funny, thinking of designing for users, it makes me think of The Matrix. I've seen like there's that scene with the architect where he's basically like, "We know that Neo is the anomaly and we've designed for that by creating the Oracle that's in there that will steer the decisions that you make. So it really makes me think of that. You know that somebody's gonna take a certain path, and you put in these controls to kind of deal with it when they go down that path instead of being like trying to force them and to push them the other way.

42:28 Jonah: Yeah, and I think what's tough is we have the notion that some of these things, oh we're controlling people we're manipulating people, isn't that that bad? But if you're helping people make better choices, it's not terrible. So think about a buffet line, there's some nice research that shows if we put the vegetables at the front of the buffet line rather the end, people take more vegetables. Now, you can sit there and going, "Oh my God, we're manipulating people." Yeah, but we're encouraging them to eat healthier. Isn't that a better thing? So I think as long as we're using these tools for good, subtle shifts and things that get behavior change can often be useful.

43:02 Jacob: So I think we covered reactance, endowment, we did distance, and we covered a little bit of uncertainty as well I think. The last one we haven't touched on yet is corroborating evidence. So, can we touch on that one a little bit unless you have anything that you wanna add to the other four if you don't think we covered them.

43:17 Jonah: Yeah, I think we only have a couple minutes left, so I would say a couple of things more about uncertainty, and then maybe we can wrap up. I just think we got into part of uncertainty but I didn't unpack the other part. And I think that other part is key, which is kind of how can you allow people to experience the thing that you're suggesting to them? So think about freemium for example, where we have a free version of a product and a premium version of a product. And I think about test drives of a car where you want people to buy a car, they don't ask you to do it, to put your money up front, they say, "Hey come check it out, and if you like it, then you'll wanna buy it." And so to me, the same thing applies at the office. Any time we're asking people to change, there's a switching cost, things cost money, things take time, things take effort, we're scared of new things, they're often risky and we don't know how they're gonna pan out. And so one way to make people more comfortable is to lower those upfront costs to figure out a way to allow them to experience the outcome that you want them to. So I was talking to a guy who worked at a bank and was trying to change his boss's mind, so he was trying to get his boss to sort of adopt this new initiative where they would care more about the customer experience, they would greet people by name, they would remember customers birthdays, do all these different things.

44:27 Jonah: And the boss was saying "We're a bank, we're not a hotel, not a customer service industry, we're not a warm fuzzy group, we shouldn't do this. And so, guy makes presentation after presentation and hires some consultants, gets the consultants to come in, but the boss won't budge. And so, eventually, what he does, he takes a slightly different approach rather than sort of trying to change the bosses mind, he actually allows the boss to experience what he's offering. So he collects information about all the members of the management team, their birthdays and anniversaries, how long they've worked on with the company, and he starts celebrating those things. He starts having people send birthday cards to members of the management team when it's their birthday, when they're going on a long hike someone knits them a hat. When someone's child gets sick, they raise money for them on Facebook, they kind of do all these things that would be part of that customer experience and so it sort of building the relationship.

45:12 Jonah: And then a couple of months go by, and then he has another meeting where he brings this up and now he doesn't have to change their mind because they've been experiencing it. Right? They've been spending the past couple of months being celebrated, having more deeper relationships, building an emotional connection with the firm. And so they've seen the value of that, now they're much more likely to say, "Let's do that for our customers as well." And so I think the question there is really whatever you wanna change, how can you allow someone to experience it? How can give them in some sense an appetizer, a little way not the full sense, but a little sense of what you're hoping they'll do at a lower cost way to experience it themselves. Rather than trying to push them, let them say, "Okay, how does this thing work? And if it ends up working for them, they're gonna be much more likely to roll it out more generally.

45:40 Jacob: I love that approach. The taste test. Yeah. And so we have like two or three minutes left. Can you just maybe say one or two sentences about corroborating evidence just so we cover all of them.

[laughter]

46:05 Jonah: Okay, I think I would say that the key insight from crabbing evidence is, when one person says, "You have a tail", you laugh, but when five people say, "You have a tail", you turn around to take a look. And so, sometimes, one person is not enough. Sometimes, one person saying something or doing something doesn't provide enough proof to change others. And so, collaborating

evidence is all about how you get multiple sources, which sources are right, how you disperse them over time, to drive action.

46:30 Jacob: Got it, okay, fair enough. Well, since we have two minutes left, maybe we can just end on, any last parting words of wisdom that you have, and then I'll ask you where people can connect with you and grab the book? But from all the things that we've been talking about for these series, road blocks, barriers, are there maybe one or two common ones that people will experience more often or do you recommend that we focus on any one of these more than the other?

47:00 Jonah: Yeah, I would say the two things I would take away, the two next step, as I began to apply these ideas outside of... Thinking about the frameworks and understanding how they work. I think the first thing is just to start by finding those barriers, identify those road blocks, those parking breaks. We tend to have barrier blindness, we tend to ignore them, but in case we don't know what they are, we can't solve them. And so, really start by being more aware of what they are and discovering them. And only then, once we've discovered them, then can we solve them. I talked about five ones in the book. I think those are the five ones that come up again and again and again, but there are others, in different situations, people may experience others and so I would start by understanding those five and then look for others in your own situation.

47:40 Jacob: Got it, and it sounds like part of this is, you need to have a little bit of empathy too.

47:45 Jonah: Oh yeah, I talk a lot about empathy in the reactance chapter. Really understanding where others are coming from.

47:50 Jacob: Yeah, need to have the emotional intelligence. Well, perfect, Jonah, thank you for joining me. Why don't you mention where people can go to connect to you or grab the book? Anything that you wanna mention, please feel free to do so.

48:02 Jonah: Sure, yeah. So, best place to find me is just my website, that's Jonah, J-O-N-A-H, Berger, B-E-R-G-E-R.com. There are links to the book, interviews, information, there's also a bunch of free resources, guide on how to change your bosses' mind, how to change your client's mind. One page with some tips and tricks that your listeners can download to get a start while they wait for the book to come in the mail. The book is available wherever books are sold. Certainly, Amazon, though I know there's some delays in getting books from Amazon.

48:31 Jacob: Yeah, unfortunately.

48:32 Jonah: Barnes and Noble, Audible, is definitely a great place to get an audio book at the moment. And so, anywhere where books are sold. And then, they can find me on LinkedIn, or at joneberger on Twitter.

48:43 Jacob: Very cool. Well, thank you again for joining me and thanks everyone for tuning in. Who's listening to the podcast and those of you who are live. My guest, again, has been Jonah Berger. Check out his brand new book, Catalyst: How To Change Anyone's Mind. And I will see very soon. Jonah, thank you, again, for sharing your ideas and insights today.

49:00 Jonah: Thanks so much for having me.

49:01 Jacob: Alright, see you guys later.