# Transcript

**Instructional Coaching and getting to know
Dr Jim Knight**

Introduction:

You’re listening to the Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership podcast where we showcase conversations with some of the world’s biggest thought leaders in education. We also bring you the thoughts and reflections of teachers and school leaders from across Victoria.

Simone Eirth:

Hello, everyone. My name is Simone Eirth, and I'm a leadership excellence division principal in residence here at the academy. Today we are lucky enough to be joined by author and education thought leader, Dr. Jim Knight. If you're a principal, assistant principal, or an aspiring school leader, this episode is definitely for you.

Jim is a senior partner of the Instructional Coaching Group, ICG for short, and a research associate at The University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning. He's renowned for his expertise in instructional coaching, and has authored several influential books on the subject, including Instructional Coaching: A Partnership Approach to Improving Instruction. And if you haven't gone onto it yet, make sure you do, Jim Knight's podcast series Coaching Conversations where he talks to a host of international thought leaders and you learn so much from listening to the experience. With the extensive experience in professional learning, Jim works to empower educators and promote instructional excellence. Today we are going to be discussing instructional coaching leadership, and how to better understand yourself as a leader and a coach. Thanks for joining us, Jim.

Dr. Jim Knight:

I'm excited to have the conversation. I'm looking forward to it.

Simone Eirth:

I'm so excited to have the conversation too Jim. Let's start with what's on your mind today?

Dr. Jim Knight:

Well, we've been doing the institute here the last couple days. It's here for five days. And I have to say what's on my mind, now that you ask it, is how incredible this facility is that you've got at the Victorian Academy for Teaching and Learning. It's amazing and it's just the perfect setting for the group we've got. So I'm grateful to everybody who made it happen. It's great to be a part of it.

Simone Eirth:

There is no doubt. This building is absolutely magnificent, and you know it's been actually built around the story of learning with the past at the bottom level, and the present in the middle level, and the third level being our future, and how we work towards that. So Jim, I'm really interested in your journey as a learner yourself. And I'm just wondering if you could share, what's your passion at the moment? What are you learning about?

Dr. Jim Knight:

Well, it's a bit strange, but I'm working on a book on data, so I'm really interested in data. But what I'm really reading a lot about, and this doesn't sound particularly cheery, but it's suffering, and how to be an ally with other people when they're going through difficult times, and how to do that in a way that doesn't diminish you. I mean, if you carry around the weight of the world, you can burn out pretty quickly. So how do you be an ally with people who are going through hard times, and at the same time, not have it tear you apart?

And I think trying to avoid pain is not the solution. Somehow you have to go into it, and live with it, and move through it. So I am just beginning to read different books. There's books about this whole business of how to be an ally, how to be a compassionate person, just understanding suffering even in religious texts. That's really been my interest for the last few... And unfortunately, it's because I think people are going through a lot of difficult times right now, and I'm trying to figure out what's the most humane way to respond.

And also, sometimes we study the very thing we need the most. I have tended to avoid that. To me, avoiding suffering totally makes sense. But it's great for yourself, perhaps, but I think you have to be a friend, a colleague. You have to be somehow, to be able to live with the person as they deal with what they're dealing with. So that's in confusing way what I've been thinking about studying the last few months.

Simone Eirth:

Jim, I think that we can all relate to that on so many different levels after the last few years we've all had here. I know that you are able to travel around and see it in many different countries. What do you think are some of the common things that people are doing to actually cope with some of the experiences we've had over the last few years?

Dr. Jim Knight:

Well, I think there's a growing awareness of the importance of self-compassion, that you have to treat yourself the way you would treat a good friend. And last year at our conference, Kristin Neff was a presenter, and she's probably one of the top, if not the top person talking about self-compassion. It's a book called Self-Compassion. She studies at the University of Texas. She's a researcher there. And she just said, "We have a tendency to treat ourselves worse than anybody else." If you made a transcript of your thoughts, about the way you think about yourself and read it, you'd say, "Man, how could anybody say that to another person?" But we do it to ourselves.

And my friend Ann Hoffman puts it this way. She says, "Imagine you're walking down the street and your friend falls down, slippery outside or something. Well, your first reaction is, 'Are you okay? Can I help you? No wonder you fell down. This road's so slippery.'" Everything would be about helping them and being help. If you fall down, it's like, "I can't believe I can't even walk down the street without falling down." Your natural reaction is to be self-critical.

And what Kristin Neff says is treat yourself the way you would treat somebody you like. Treat yourself like a friend. And I think that's one trend right now that I think is really helpful. It can seem a little superficial, but I mean just as a core idea, treat yourself with the same compassion you'd extend to a friend. I think that's a really powerful idea.

Simone Eirth:

I think we talk a lot about kindness to others. But I think in terms of really bringing out the best in ourselves, being kind to ourselves is a critical part of that. And I think that if we are kind to ourselves and we bring out the best in ourselves, we'll get the best out of others as well.

Dr. Jim Knight:

It's funny it's so hard. That's why I like that phrase treat yourself like a friend, how you would treat a friend. It's just a little mental shift, but when you slip into self-criticism, you can hopefully pull yourself back from it. I don't know what the draw is. I don't know why we're so attracted to tearing ourselves apart, but it can often happen. And I don't think it needs to be a cliche, it's just compassion, participating. I think that's the key thing.

Simone Eirth:

Who are some of the key people that have influenced your thinking and your growth along the way?

Dr. Jim Knight:

I think I've always felt that learning was a really important part of a fulfilling life. I've always been passionate about learning. And for me, it probably started with my family. My grandmother was a teacher, my aunt was a teacher. My grandfather taught me how to read when I was really young, using a little keyboard on a typewriter. Taught me all kinds of things.

So I was surrounded by people who... I remember my aunt taking me into the library to get my first books, and they all believed in learning. My parents were firm believers in the power of education.

And so I think I grew up in an environment where learning was the natural thing. And I don't know if it's genetics or environment, but when I do those various personality tests like the StrengthsFinder or the VIA StrengthsFinder, learning is always the number one thing.

So I think it was there. It was in my makeup, either because of environment or because of genetics. But when I went to the University of Toronto and I studied in the education department before I went to do my doctorate at the University of Kansas, I worked with Michael Fullan. And he had me read Peter Senge's book, The Fifth Discipline, and I went to Kansas to work at the Center for Research on Learning.

And so Senge, as I went to Kansas to study learning, I think his Fifth Discipline really gave me kind of a language for understanding, "This isn't just kind of like a feelgood thing. This is really a thing." Developing organizations that promote learning, helping other people learn. And then my mentor at the University of Kansas, Don Deshler, he shared with me this quote from Eric Hoffer. This was the deciding factor when I heard him say this. He said, "In times of change, the learners inherit the earth and the learned are beautiful"... You probably heard the quotation, but, "The learners are beautifully equipped for a world to no longer exist."

When I heard that quote from Don, I said, "Well, that's why I'm going to leave Toronto. I'm going to go to Kansas and do my doctorate." So I'd say Don Deshler and Michael Fullan, particularly because he pointed me towards Peter Senge's work. That would be the big influencers that got me thinking about learning not just as something you do, but as kind of a professional way of life really.

Simone Eirth:

And how did that connect to instructional coaching?

Dr. Jim Knight:

Well, I worked with kids with learning disabilities. And I think when you succeed with students who historically haven't had a lot of success, you want other people to know what you did. And so I used strategies from the University of Kansas. And I went to Kansas from Toronto, I became certified as a professional developer. And I did these workshops. Nobody did anything. They all liked it. They gave good evaluations. But if I followed up, implementation was less than one 1%. There was no implementation.

So that's why I started to study with Michael Fullan. I wanted to understand change. And then when I went to Kansas, I was kind of obsessed with, what's it take? We have these things that work that make a difference. What's it take to get them in place?

And around 1996, I talked about them as people who would translate learning into action. I called them learning consultants, then instructional collaborator. And then around 2003, 2004, we started to use the term instructional coach. But it's really about helping people learn in ways that help students learn. That's really the heart of it.

Simone Eirth:

Is that how you would describe it to a novice that knew nothing about instructional coaching? What other details would you need to put around that to give them a picture of what that would look like?

Dr. Jim Knight:

Let's try to do it two different ways. So I'll give you a formal definition. But we all learn about coaches. We think about coaches. And so an athletic coach would be helping an athlete identify things they can do to improve, and might show them video of where they are, might teach them strategies, or help them refine what they do, so they can be more successful, so they can have more impact. So in that sense, I think instructional coaches are like athletic coaches. But usually, athletic coaches have more power over the player. And if you don't do what the coach says, they can sit you on the bench. And so instructional coaching is about peers talking, not one person who has power and one who doesn't. Coaching is a teacher conversation.

So the way, we have kind of a definition that it's a partnership. So instructional coaches partner with teachers. That means it's a teacher talking with a teacher to identify a clear picture of reality, to set a goal, to identify a pathway to the goal or a strategy you're going to use to hit the goal. And then once you start trying it out, to make adaptations until the goal gets hit.

So it could be that you pick the wrong strategy. It could be that this strategy is going to work, it makes some modifications. It could be the goal that's actually too conservative or too ambitious. It could be the way we're measuring progress needs to be changed, but you're going to do adaptations until the goal gets hit.

And so that's our sort of formal definition. They partner with teachers, get a clear picture of reality, set a goal, identify strategies, make adaptations until the goal gets hit.

Simone Eirth:

That sounds like a process that would make a real difference to students in the classroom and the students that the teachers are working with. In terms of that coaching process, how do you ensure that that focus is on the student, and that the teachers are really getting the impact that they want in the classroom?

Dr. Jim Knight:

Yeah, I think that's a great point. We would say instructional coaching should be student focused, which is to say the goals you set are student goals, not teacher goals. A teacher goal might be, "I want to try a different form of questioning. I want to try a cooperative learning. I want to do restorative justice." But a student focused goal is going to either be an engagement goal or an achievement goal.

So if a teacher comes to me and says, "I really want to change my questioning or I want to try out small group activities," my question would be, "Well, if you change your questioning, what's going to be different for the students?" And then we would set the goal about the change they want to see in the students.

Now, they may not know. They may not have a really clear idea in their mind about what it is. So then what I would say is, "Well, is it all right with you if I share some possibilities?" And I think there's a risk in having a teacher focus school. I want to try this new teaching practice, this graphic organizer, this way of having kids work together. Even something important like using feedback. If the focus is just on the strategy, it's not going to be as powerful as focusing in on the change in students. So if the teacher says, "I want to get better at feedback," I might say something like, "Well, what would be different for the kids if we do that? If it's successful, what will we see with the kids? And let's focus on that as our goal. And then once we've got that goal, we'll see if feedback takes us there, because we might have to use a different strategy to get there."

Simone Eirth:

Right. So really being clear about what we want to see in our students when we are setting the goals, and what we're trying to achieve in the coaching session is really critical in making sure that we're getting that student achievement that we're after as well.

Dr. Jim Knight:

Yeah, I think the goal can evolve over time. You can say, "I thought it was going to be this, but now it's going to be that." But I would say the clearer you are in the goal... It's just sort of common sense. The clearer my destination is in my mind, easier it is going to be for me to hit that destination. And so getting precise on the goal. It doesn't have to be a quantitative measurement, it could be qualitative measurement. But you have to know if I hit the goal, this is what it's going to look like. This is my finish line.

Simone Eirth:

We have learning specialists in Victoria, and they have a really important role. And quite often, they're employed to come into schools and lead the instructional coaching within the school, and really create that culture of learning and focus on coaching. If you were one of those learning specialists showing up to your new appointment, what would you be thinking about entering that school, and how would you go about achieving what you want to achieve?

Dr. Jim Knight:

I think the first thing is what I would say about anybody in that kind of situation, is what would I want the coach to do if I was a teacher? How would I want them to interact with me? What would I want them to do? I would probably want them to treat me as someone who has expertise, and I would want them to treat me with respect. I would want them to listen to me. I want them to be open to hearing my opinions. In fact, I would hope they would encourage me to share my ideas.

So I think initially, to see the teacher as a professional, not as someone that I have to fix, but as a partner in the process. I think that's a really important part.

And then I would say we believe you don't motivate people. You create conditions so they can motivate themselves. Part of that's getting a clear picture of reality, however you might do that. Part of that is the kind of goals people set. But I really want to hold back on figuring, I'm kind of like the savior for this teacher, and rather help the teacher identify what they want to focus on, what their goal is they need to work on.

And that sometimes seems too slow and laborious, but I think what's slow and laborious is continually doing the same thing and having it not work, and telling people what to do, telling teachers what to do without giving them a voice. I think that's a poor use of resources, because usually you end up back at the problem and you haven't solved things, and with less likelihood that the person would want to tackle it.

So I think, we have a process we call the impact cycle. There's a way we work it through. There's probably other cycles you could use, but I think you really want to have a goal the teacher's excited about hitting where they say, "If we could focus on that, that'd be really important." And then you want to help them go after that goal.

I think coming in from outside is hard, because people might stereotype you, or they might see you as just one more person coming in, and they might not really listen to you. And I think the one thing I would add to it too is that when you are in that role as a change agent, and if they're not responding really warmly to you, it's not you that's the issue. It's the role you represent. If someone else was in that role coming in to talk to the teachers, and help them identify goals, and the teachers were... They would respond exactly the same way.

So I think you also need to take care of yourself if you're in that position, because it's not you. It's the role that's the issue. They'll have issues with the role, not with the person.

Simone Eirth:

Because some of the things that leaders quite often find challenging is the resistance that they face when they go into a school. So to really maximize the influence that you can have in the space, how do you think you need to show up as that leader and also coach?

Dr. Jim Knight:

So there's two things I want to say about that. First off in a book called the Influencer by Patterson and a bunch of other authors, they say, "When people embrace something, there have to be two things in place. It has to be worth it, and I have to believe I can do it."

So if what you offer to the person is something that's worth it and they can do it, they're probably going to embrace it. And I love what Miller and Rollnick say in Motivational Interviewing is they actually don't like the word resistance. They say, "There's a misalignment. And what I'm striving for isn't so much telling this person, a professional with degrees and years of experience what to do. I don't think treating teachers like unskilled laborers is a solution. I think it's helping them identify the thing they really are motivated to do, and then helping them go after it, and that's worth it and they can do it."

And the second thing is I think you have to be honest about what's possible given the time you've got. And real change doesn't happen in one conversation. I mean, it's conceivable that it could happen, but real change in terms of how I practice, and what I do, and the impact I have on kids, it probably takes time. So you have to figure out, if I'm not the one who has that time, who's going to be the one that provides that time? How can we build coaching into it? You just can't snap your fingers and have things transform. Real change takes time, I think. And you have to find a way to make that time possible.

So maybe you pick your people, you focus on a small number of people. Or maybe you start to find resources so you can have coaches who focus on helping teachers change. But I think it's important that we don't underestimate what's involved in really changing your practice. And one of the things that's involved is time.

Simone Eirth:

I think there's a couple of key points there for me. Just the treating teachers as professionals, which is absolutely so important in our climate today. And that's one of the key areas that the academy is developing, in really raising the status of our teaching profession. And I think respecting the voice that they have and allowing that choice in the work that they do can really make a difference to the commitment they have about the change they want to create.

And I think as a school leader, the work that you do around your school improvement goal, and really wanting to shift that student data, and then creating that alignment with the work that the teachers are doing in their classrooms, and building that connection so they can see themselves in the school improvement plan, but then there's that space for them to really reflect on their own practice and connect back to that agreement, as a school as what we have.

Can you talk to me a little bit as a school leader, how you might go about working with your staff to create that alignment between what's going on at the school improvement level, and that thread leading down to teacher classroom practice?

Dr. Jim Knight:

Well, I don't know if there's time enough to go into all the details, but I would like to talk about it, in sort of generalities, which is kind of funny because what I'm going to say is you need precision and clarity. But I think you can leave things to chance. You can't say, "We did a workshop, and probably that was really useful." You need to have really clear goals, and you need to have depth of understanding of the teaching strategies that help people hit those goals.

And I think going deep is a really important way of putting it. You have to say, "This is the process that we're going to follow. Here's how we're going to measure progress. Here's the goal." And I think imposing that on someone isn't probably going to be that effective. I think it's something you work out in partnership with the other person. The impact cycle is our way of doing that.

But I think in general, we make a mistake if we think that change can happen superficially, and we just talk about it in generalities. This is the goal, this is the strategy, here's a checklist for the strategy. How do you want to modify it? How will we know if we've hit the goal? How can we sustain the use? I mean, those questions have to be answered precisely and not superficially.

Simone Eirth:

So really, delving into those conversations that we have as leaders with our staff and the way that we create that shared vision is really where we begin?

Dr. Jim Knight:

Yeah, well, I think we begin with a clear picture of reality, however you get it. The teacher has to know what's happening in the classroom. We believe in video. We think video is free and it's really powerful. But it could be, we list a number of different ways of getting a clear picture of current reality.

I think too often, school improvement goals... We work with schools where they can't even find the school improvement plan in the school. And it becomes something you have to do. It's a ritual. And I say let's get rid of the things that are rituals. Let's focus on real change, really measurable change that the person wants to hit.

And it's hard to talk about this without going into a lot of detail, but if you say our broad range of goals are around these things, then your coaching should help teachers identify the thing within that range that they really want to focus on. And there's a set of questions, there's getting a clear picture of reality, there's having a playbook of teaching practices to help people do it. The specifics are really, really important in terms of making it happen.

So I think I don't ever want somebody to be sitting with me in a meeting or in a one-to-one conversation going through the motions. Life's too short. I want us to be focused on something that matters. And you need processes and depth of knowledge to make that happen.

Simone Eirth:

Can you give me some specifics about that, Jim, how you go about it?

Dr. Jim Knight:

So I would ask you to visualize a Venn diagram. We're talking education. There's got to be a Venn diagram somewhere.

Simone Eirth:

Definitely.

Dr. Jim Knight:

Okay, so it has four circles. So one of the circles is a set of beliefs that guide you. And we talk about the partnership principles, but I think you need to think deeply about your beliefs. And if you think your beliefs are what's good for me is what's going to fly, then it's going to be hard to be a motivational leader or to have people want to follow you.

So I think we would say a big part of our belief is positioning ourselves as partners with the people we work with, engaging, being open to their opinions, engaging our will for the good of the other person, have an attitude of benevolence, seeing the strengths in them. We call that the partnership way.

The second thing is to have a framework for the conversation you're going to have. Ours is the impact cycle. I don't want to go into all the details, but Growth Coaching International, they have a conversational framework called growth. It grew out of Sir John Whitmore's framework, which is GROW. What's the goal? What's reality? What are my options? What's my way forward? So you need a structure for your conversation that's going to lead to a really clear outcome that's measurable.

The third thing is you need some skills, some coaching skills. And at the heart of it, it's probably listening and questioning, and maybe how to engage in a dialogical conversation that's back and forth.

And I don't want to overstate listening and questioning. People talk about that all the time, but we live in a world where people are rarely good listeners. And I love the question I learned from Amanda Ripley, after you listen to a person sort of paraphrase what they said and say, "Do I have that right?" Let them know you've listened, and confirm that you're with them. When you're really listening... Kate Murphy says in a book on listening, she called, You're Not Listening. She says, "When you're really listening, what research says is your brainwaves are in alignment." And so having the skills to ask questions... A good question, it's like flicking the light on in a dark room. It opens up the conversation, and then listening afterwards.

And then the fourth thing is strategic knowledge. What do I need to know? And we would say coaches need to understand effective instruction really well, and that's developing a playbook. You have to have a depth of knowledge. If my knowledge of what effective instruction looks like is superficial, I'm going to get superficial implementation. It's not to say it's going to be done the way I describe it, but I need to have depth of knowledge that's nuanced so people can make it fit their classroom, meet their kids. And then I need to be able to set goals. So I need to understand data well enough to make it happen.

And when we talk about instructional coaching in those four circles, what are my beliefs? What's my conversational framework? What are my coaching skills? And what knowledge do I need to know to make it happen?

Simone Eirth:

So one of the things that I'm making lots of links here with is that the academies has basically created it in conjunction and in collaboration with professor, I have to get... Viviane Robinson. And our framework has been very much around those dispositions as a leader that we bring. And I hear so much of that in there, that open-mindedness that we have. As well as, that interpersonal courage is a big one as well, the way that we are willing to question, and ask questions, and delve deeper into things that just don't seem to fit with what our morals and values are, and how we go about doing that.

And as a coach, I think that's pretty important in terms of just the way that you show up when you're having those conversations with people. If you were thinking about really getting the best out of someone, what are the things that you think about and bring to that conversation?

Dr. Jim Knight:

Yeah, I think the important thing is to let go of control and to let go of the idea that I have the solution for this teacher. And to start with listening. I love Michael Bungay Stanier's question. "You've probably thought a lot about this. What are you thinking you might do?" And often, the teacher will tell you just about what you're just ready to tell them. And I think as a way of thinking, is that I see this person as a professional.

Now as an administrator, you have say an inexperienced teacher. Sometimes what you have to do is think about where is that teacher going to be in five, 10 years, and what can I do to help them grow, instead of, "I just have to fix this problem right now." Coaching or in all of its manifestations, it's about now and it's about not yet. And sometimes, the way we solve the problem now interferes with the person to achieve the goal, the not yet.

And I think we have to be really careful not to fix this immediate problem, but inhibit the growth. Or even worse, lose teachers because they don't feel they've had the chance to grow and move forward.

So I think we have to, sometimes referred to as strength-based. I don't think you avoid reality. I think you have to get a clear picture of reality. That's why we believe in video. But I think to really be thinking about how can my interaction help this person become the person they have the potential to be, to unleash... Sir John Whitmore said, "Coaching is about unleashing the potential in people." And I think that's a good way to think about these kinds of interactions.

Simone Eirth:

One of the other things that sometimes coaches, leaders can tend to do is want to give advice. And sometimes, thinking about that advice monster that I've heard many times, how do you approach that?

Dr. Jim Knight:

Yeah, I love Michael's phrase, Michael Bungay Stanier. He says, "Our advice isn't as good as we think. And people don't want it as much as we think." I think he's probably right.

But the thing is, I don't know why. I just did this study this year where I had people around the world. One was in Bangkok, one was in Berlin, and one was in Abu Dhabi, and three were in the United States. And they were reporting to me every week what they were doing. They were always wrestling with the temptation to tell the person what to do.

And there are some times when I think you can do that. If what you're describing is a technical solution to a technical problem, why wouldn't you explain, "Well, this is how you use this software, this is what you do."

But too often, the classroom is so complex. I mean, it's really easy to sit on the outside and say, "Here's what the teacher should do." It's a whole different story when you stand in front of the students.

So I think it's better to engage in a conversation where you can make adaptations and you share things. My phrase is precisely, but provisionally. You say, "Let me go through it, and you tell me how you want to try it." And if the teacher has a goal, then the goal becomes the standard for excellence. It doesn't have to be my opinion. We have a goal. Let's keep going until we hit the goal. And that allows you a way to... The measure of success of good coaching should be changes in what happens with students. And having those goals gives you a way to do that. And that's where I would put the focus not so much on, let me share my wisdom. Let's focus on the goal and help the teacher hit the goal. And that means the students are improving.

Simone Eirth:

How do we go about making sure that we do continue to do that so the teachers do hit the goals, and they do feel that empowerment that they have?

Dr. Jim Knight:

Yeah, I mean all these things, we've sort of worked out a process for doing them. But I think first off, to get really clear on what the goal is. It's probably going to be an engagement goal, which is either behavior, or cognitive or emotional engagement. Emotional engagement is the kids have hope, they feel like they belong in school, they have a connection with the school, they have positive experiences. Cognitive end goal is they're getting out of the activity, what we want to get out of it. A behavioral goal is they're behaving. So they're on task, they're responding to questions, they're not disruptive.

And without going into all the details, we have similar kinds of... And I should say about engagement, we have pretty precise ways of measuring those things. How do we measure time on task? Or maybe we just give exit tickets to gather feedback from kids about their emotional status. But lots of ways of gathering that data.

And same thing for achievement. And the first question would be, what do we want to learn here, or what do we want the kids to learn here? Do we want to focus on acquisition, or connection, or transfer? And then what level of learning do we have? And there's any number of different ways of looking at levels, and what are our measures? And so we have a variety of measures.

But I think you can pretty quickly say, "Well, I'm really interested in whether or not the kids can transfer this concept, and we're going to measure it through exit tickets," or, "We're going to measure it through a rubric when we look at their writing." And so I think helping people get really clear on the goal is critical in terms of moving it forward, but there needs to be an understanding of what those tools are.

I'm working on a book now called Data Rules where we're going to spell it all out. But the simplest way, and I'm trying to promote the book or anything, but the simplest way to find it is there's a chapter in The Definitive Guide to Instructional Coaching that talks about how to gather that data.

Simone Eirth:

And then using that data to really understand what you've achieved, and maybe what direction you need to go to next.

Dr. Jim Knight:

Yeah. I mean, I'd like to run the Boston Marathon. And right now, I couldn't run the Boston one mile. I mean, I'm a long way away from where I want to be, but it is truly a goal of mine. I'd like to be able to run the Boston Marathon. But I know where I am. I know what my weight is more or less. I've got it in kilometers... Or not in kilometers. I've got it in a kilograms here, as opposed to pounds. And I know how far I can walk and how fast I go. And if I really want to hit the goal, I have to keep track of the data that shows me where I am, and I keep improving. So I think we have to develop a better understanding of effective data.

And then I have an article called Data Rules, but I would say used effectively, data should foster hope. It shouldn't diminish you. You should say, "I can see I'm making progress, and this is a goal that matters to me." Sometimes, data makes people feel less than. But I think really used effectively, it can foster hope and growth.

Simone Eirth:

Jim, thanks so much for the chat today. It's been fantastic. And just in terms of the privilege that I'm having being a part of the five-day intensive instructional coaching course at the Academy, it's been absolutely brilliant. And I'm still so excited. I've got three days left to go. But there is no way in this world I'm letting you go anywhere until I know how a Canadian develops an acquired taste for Vegemite.

Dr. Jim Knight:

Okay. Well, this goes back to my... Well, I've been here many times. I've been here maybe 12 times. And I made the classic mistake the first time I tried Vegemite. I thought it was like peanut butter, and I just poured it all over my bread, and I thought, "Well, this does not taste very good."

But my friend Jason Kane, who I'm going to meet for dinner tonight, he was my coach. He was my Vegemite coach. He said, "No Jim, you take a warm piece of sourdough, you put warm butter on it, and so it melts into it before it gets cold. And then you put the smallest possible amount of Vegemite you can on the toast, and then you're in." And I do have right now, two jars. I'm looking for this squeeze tubes. I can't find those. You can't get those in North America, but I haven't seen them. I went to Woolworths and came up empty. So that's my goal is to find that.

But I am very committed to Vegemite. It's my daily routine. Even here, I'm getting it every day. And very committed to AFL too. I'm tied for first place in my pool with 30 other people. So I'm excited about the game coming up this weekend. So I feel like I'm half Australian, because Canada is almost like Australia. Just a slightly different accent.

Simone Eirth:

So many similarities. But I just couldn't put the maple syrup and the Vegemite together.

Dr. Jim Knight:

Well, I wouldn't do that.

Simone Eirth:

No. And my last inquiry is into Richmond. Why Richmond? Why not Carlton? Why not Sydney?

Dr. Jim Knight:

Well, I watched Jason, who taught me about Vegemite. My good friend here. We were in Hunter Valley doing a workshop, and he worked for Corwin, and that was one of my publishers. And so we were doing a workshop there, and we were watching the Dream at the 'G, which is Essendon plays Richmond. And I didn't really have a team I was cheering for. And I said, "Well, let's watch this game. I'd love to watch it."

So we watched the game and he said, "Richmond," he said, "They might win. I don't know. They're doing a little better. We have a good coach." And he said, "But we'll see what happens." And so I watched the game and they won, and he said, "They haven't won the championship, the premiership for 36 years." I said, "Well, that sounds like my team, so I'm going to cheer for them." But then they won that year, and they won for three of the last five years if I've got it right. And so once you see your team win, it's really hard to resist. Now, they might not win for another 36, but I'm loyal. I'm in, no matter what.

Simone Eirth:

You are loyal. Well, we are very lucky to have you as an honorary Australian, Jim. And thank you so much for your time today. It has been extremely insightful, and I hope people listening out there have taken away some things and look more for you on the internet, and definitely listen to the Coaching Conversations podcast that you have going.

Dr. Jim Knight:

Honored to be a part of it. I'm grateful for the conversation. Thank you.

Simone Eirth:

Thanks, Jim.

Outro:

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