[00:00:04]

[MUSIC] You are listening to Tell Me Your Story, where we connect to HLS staff on a personal level. Hello everyone this is Edgar Kley Filho from HLS Human Resources department. My pronouns are he, him, his, and today, we are talking to Roxanne Armbruster from HR. Who you tell us about her life, how long she is in his position at HLS, and the work she does. Thank you for joining us, Roxanne, and please tell me your story.

[00:00:41]

[LAUGHTER] Happy too.

[00:00:45]

Your family all from New England area or what part of the country they are?

[00:00:50]

All from New England.

[00:00:52]

Really?

[00:00:52]

Yeap.

[00:00:53]

How many generations back are, as far as you know?

[00:00:56]

That a good question. I think there's some Dutch New York background there at some point, but Connecticut generally.

[00:01:06]

All of you? I usually always ask when having a conversation with our guests to tell a little bit about their background since childhood, if they can. How was growing up in Connecticut?

[00:01:21]

Connecticut is really boring.

[00:01:23]

Yeah [LAUGHTER].

[00:01:24]

I have to be honest. [LAUGHTER] I've lived in Massachusetts since 2000s and my first duty station and the military or technically my second duty station and I definitely prefer Massachusetts.

[00:01:39]

But you are right now are still living in?

[00:01:44]

Holden.

[00:01:45]

Oh, Holden?

[00:01:46]

Yeah.

[00:01:47]

Why do you have dozing person that always Wocester is close down?

[00:01:50]

I like a stone's throw from Wooster. When I say I live in Holden most people don't know what that means, but people generally know what Wocester means and around Cambridge the answer is far. [LAUGHTER]

[00:02:01]

Maybe that's what it is. But you are living in Massachusetts since 2000?

[00:02:05]

Yeah.

[00:02:06]

How was growing up? How was the school, how was your experience with all that part of life in terms of you start your steps outside home or in everything else or you can describe that.

[00:02:20]

Well, we're going to get right into the nitty-gritty then because my story to tell it fully gets into a lot about my childhood and how that set me up for the rest of the journey. I grew up in Connecticut. My mother is one of seven.

[00:02:37]

Seven?

[00:02:37]

Yeah. My dad was one of four. They were married for a hot minute before [LAUGHTER] they divorced, which would probably when I was about a year old. I lived with my mom and I saw my father every weekend.

[00:02:49]

You are the only child?

[00:02:51]

Yes, only child of both parents. The both parents later remarried and neither had children beyond me. So I'm an only child on both sides.

[00:03:04]

That's interesting.

[00:03:05]

Yeah.

[00:03:06]

That was their main projects. That was like, we did a great job here. [LAUGHTER].

[00:03:13]

Yeah, or they were terrified at the prospect of having another. [LAUGHTER] I'm not sure. I'll leave that for you to judge. [LAUGHTER]

[00:03:18]

Is this Wednesday? We're talking about the series on TV, it's okay. [LAUGHTER] I will think about it. I'll catch you up. But you were the only child and then they divorced, then how was life with a single man and going out, how was it?

[00:03:36]

It was hard. It was it was tough. I am leading off saying there was a lot of joy. I had really great family on both sides, but six aunts and uncles on one side and a whole complement on the other as well. But my mom had me very young and had a really challenging upbringing after she left home, or I should say a really challenging experience after she left home. She was an alcoholic, she couldn't hold a job. So my childhood up until pretty much my middle school years was essentially being moved from one place to another because it took about six months in the Connecticut system for an eviction to go through. It was very fragmented. I had didn't really have a home growing up. I remember being envious of all the friends I would make along the way who had a place to always go back to and I never really had that. At some point growing up, I realized, I can't even tell you how young I was. This was we're talking like before middle-school years. I realized that every other child and all of the classes I was jumping into and then getting pulled out of had more stability. So I asked my mom if we could at least stay in the same town when we moved every six months, so that I could at least begin to put down some roots and keep my friends and go from one place to another. She did that. At some point, I think probably around I want to say it was like fifth grade maybe, we settled in Rocky Hill. I spent the next all the way up through high school living in Rocky Hill and keeping my friends and going to school with the same people.

[00:05:22]

That's very touching moment when you say, and also from your mom, when she realized you asked a question and she figure out, I think this would be a good thing.

[00:05:35]

Yeah, she figured out how to make it work.

[00:05:41]

I have to ask this, if you have so many uncles and aunts, what was the support family support group not very much around to help with the situation that you're going through?

[00:05:52]

I don't know much about what was happening in those earlier years, but I know I saw my grandparents and my aunts and uncles regularly and it was a very loving and welcoming family. I know people were trying to help my mother. I could out of the 30 or so places I lived growing up many times was with an aunt or with grandparents. She had a support system in place, but I think she was trying to be [OVERLAPPING].

[00:06:23]

Find herself as well.

[00:06:24]

Yeah. But just not doing the greatest job of it.

[00:06:30]

The word interesting, and it should not be in this part, but because you are start triggers mine. I also come, my father was an alcoholic and for a period of time in my childhood was the strongest part when he was the most intense in his alcoholism was a phenomenal guy with the word new construction, made a lot of money. We had houses and cars, at least at that period of time when I was younger, I remember. Then everything is thrown away because of alcoholism. He didn't have, but I don't know in your experience and I'm opening up that because of the trigger that you brought here. I had the same experience in terms of the school. The family was out there. But because he had construction, he would be moving. You had a homestead in one place, but every six months it will be moving from one topic to another because that is construction there. My mom and dad would be the ones going. So I wouldn't be changing schools every six months and starting over. I didn't have that mindset of yours to say, hey, can I stay? Because I remember my older brother and my older sister would stay in homestead because they were going to high school or in a position that they could be alone. I could not maybe five or something into nine. Then we would be moving with mom. I don't know how much that helped with my introversion in that sense. Having to restart over again, getting to know people again in different towns and different backgrounds and kind of a situation. The worst for me was the violence at home, that's the one that, because whatever happens to him in his drinking outside, his anger would come towards mom. Never with any of the children. Never with any of us, he was the best father. But there was something about her that she was the target of his anger. There is too much to talk about to go to that lane in how many times I have to go outside. I asked her about the support group, family and friends around because how many times I went outside screaming for someone to come and help, and there was nobody there to. That's the interesting how relationships and things happened in your childhood and how you go for that. I completely understand in a way what you went through, but like your mom that a certain points settled in and said, I hear you and stayed. That also in late '70s, decided that he was going to stop and he really quits on his own. She called us in a New Year's Eve, '79-80 I believe, and got the family together and say, I'm just letting you know, he was completely drunk and I didn't trust that because he was drunk. But he got all of us together, the main family, the children and mom said, starting tomorrow, I won't drink anymore. I promise you that's over, and that's it. Then he stopped. That's incredible. Then he becomes the best husband because mom never could leave him. We always ask why because my brother was old enough to take care of us, but she loved him regardless. There was love there. That is nothing just PD. She said that she wouldn't survive because that won't always work so hard and did so much for us, and then he stopped and then later his smoking control, he has another rather I feel like he gave a great example. He quit smoke like he got out of the hospital. I took him because he was feeling something and was the beginning of a heart attack. I took him to the hos myself and the doctor told us that was there and said, if you don't quit smoking now, you're not going to last long because this is going to be much harder next time. I remember we live in the hospital and you're talk, can see here that you need to do something. He reached out to his pocket, took the pack of cigarettes, and just throw in the trash once and that's it, I'm done and stopped. Those examples were great. I had the hero the monster in the same part for a long time to figure it out but worked okay. I'm going to talk much in this talk, but just because of the relationship and everything else.

[00:11:16]

Thank you for sharing.

[00:11:17]

Thank you for sharing too. How was after the moving and when you got more stable in that part of going to school in one place only.

[00:11:31]

Was it okay going to school was challenging?

[00:11:33]

No, school was a good experience. I had this stability of being in the same town, but still not the stability of being in a home. Which I probably, when we get a little later in my story, you'll probably pick up on a lot of themes about trying to give my children little things that I did not have. Some stability in home is a very important thing hence, all the baked goods I bring the HR [LAUGHTER]. School was fine. It was a great experience. Very small school, very small population. We had the stability of being in the same town, but not in the same location. But what I recognize now is that I did not have the benefit of a parent and I saw my father every weekend, we have and always have had a fabulous relationship. Well, he lived about 45 minutes away and I think was very angry at my mother for whatever happened throughout the course of the divorce. So he's very removed from the day-to-day of my life, but a great grounding point and teacher over the weekends and I saw him every weekend until I went off and joined the military. I never broke. I didn't have the benefit of a parent who knew the value of an education like my mother didn't even finish high school. I mean, that's a whole other story. She ended up that my family moved to Hawaii and my understanding is she went to go see a boyfriend. She flew back from Hawaii and then refused to get back on the plane home. Didn't finish high school, I think eventually got a GED but if you picture me going through my schooling years, I'm not getting the reinforcement about doing your homework and making sure that you're taking honors classes, you're taking AP classes and that didn't hold me back. I did well enough in school. Somewhere near the top third, nothing excellent. No idea what I could have done if I had had more of a presence and a drive and someone saying, hey, these things are actually really important and you should pay attention and focus. But not having that actually came full circle when I went to put my oldest through the college application system and I had absolutely no idea what I was doing or what I should have been doing during her high school years for certain types of advanced courses and stuff like that. I of course, knew enough to make sure that they were all very focused on their studies and such. It's interesting how you don't realize the things that you don't know, that you don't gain through childhood. But in general school was great.

[00:14:19]

Even high school never had the problems? You were the popular or your how was that high school thing.

[00:14:28]

Looking back now, I feel like I was one of those people who could get along with everyone. But I was in a tight-knit group of seven or eight friends who we spent a lot of time together. I was a cheerleader. I was captain of my varsity cheerleading team, which I know sounds like a big, when you look back at all like the '90s movies, it was like the most popular girl in school is Captain. We didn't even have a football team, so chair leading was first soccer and basketball. So I do not want anyone to equate captain of the cheerleading team with some level of theory that they've seen in funny movies and what they like. Wish I looked like Kiersten Dunst in high school. [LAUGHTER] High school was great.

[00:15:12]

Nice. Because sometimes it is complicated. I want you to go back what you said in terms of family support and going to school or motivation for this or that and what people do and I still have a question why we are different in that way. Mom and dad were fourth-grade max in their lives? Simple, folks. Hard workers but simple folks. I remembered Dad. I think he saw in me that something was not okay like the other ones in terms of what I would expect for life because he always said, well, he told all of us, all the brothers and sister were in my relationship with them, mom and dad had six students, but the main group, because one died very young before I was born, we were five. I remember that saying the same to the others, like a go to school, do something with your life. You don't need to be having this hard time than we do about it. But there was always that conversation. But with me, he always had something to say if you don't want to do what I'm doing here, you better do well in school and trying to find a good job.

[00:16:26]

so he brought it up a notch.

[00:16:27]

Yes. Because I really didn't like that. I didn't like that. We always worked where there was home. Mom made sure that we all knew how to cook, how to do laundry, how to clean the house. All of us boys and we have just one syster, which I always say that's more of a man than any of us. [LAUGHTER].

[00:16:48]

Whatever that means.

[00:16:50]

She is tough and is my best friend. She's wonderful. She is very much my dad in personality, very strong opinionated and everything. I am mom. But the interesting is that my other brother and sister didn't care, we started going to school. They barely finished high school as well. I wanted more, but at certain point after all happen and Dad lost everything. I had to help to maintain the house and I always got a better job until the point that was spring water company manager before he came to US. I was taking care of the entire family, in terms of finance and everything else and I had deal with my baby brother to go to school, go to college, finish and then he would come and help and I would go to but of course he fell in love, married and the year and I was taking care of everyone. When I decided to come here, Dad was the one who said, go live, you'd have done enough here. We can take care of ourselves and go. My point is going through everything that you went through, you didn't have much of a support and people just say, no, you should do well, but you search that way. You went to that. I did the same. Why are we different? You think, what is this that make us look for something better than what you feel that environmental around is?

[00:18:20]

That's an excellent question and I have thought about that a lot because I've tried to give that to my kids. I can't give them. Thank heavens they experience on the background that I had in my childhood. I had a very loving group of aunts who spent a lot of time stepping in and providing me the things that I was not getting, whether it be like school clothes or money for a field trip or whatnot, as best they could without me actually living in their homes. Although that did happen occasionally. I definitely had there were other people in my life who tried to help. But even those people will say by all accounts and half said by all accounts, you should either be dead or in prison right now and the fact that you're not is about you. It's about, however I made my way through that journey. I don't know Edgar. It never occurred to me to not do more, it never occurred to me to not try. It never occurred to me to not do the very best that I could do and to keep working towards something.

[00:19:41]

When high school ended, I had applied to only one college. I had my first choice, my only choice. I applied early decision and I got accepted. I had a couple of shopping bags full of Bed Bath and Beyond, comforters for my dorm room. My cousin was going to the same school. One of my best friends was going to the same school. I was very, very, very excited. I was ready to go. I was also living in a complete dream world because I had hoped the financial aid package would come through reflecting the fact that my mother spent most of our lives unemployed. But our wonderful system, the year that my financial aid application was based on was the one year she remained fully employed and was actually making what this government considers to be decent money. And my financial aid was nothing. Now by the time I applied for and got into school, she'd already lost that job. It was back in unemployment. But it didn't matter for that first year. I will never forget the day that the tuition bill came in, I hadn't even left. I opened it up and looked at it. I think it was like $17,000 or something. I looked at her and I said, how are we going to pay this? She went, I don't know. We'll figure something out. I just closed my eyes and I had this running set of images of asking my grandparents. Maybe that's part of what it is, Edgar, I realized there was no one I could rely on or should rely on to make that happen. So I said I will have to rely on myself and I had been talking to a recruiter. I wanted to go into criminal justice law enforcement, and the Coast Guard was something my dad had mentioned because we grew up around like New London, Connecticut, home of the Coast Guard Academy. So it was something that was in the air in Connecticut. My dad had been talking about considering signing up as a reservist and I had looked into it and decided it was something I wanted to do. So I'd been talking to a coast guard recruiter about reserves, which is one weekend a month, two weeks a year commitment. You got a little bit of help in cash at the end of it from the GI bill to help pay for school. I figured it's good. I'll get some law enforcement experience, I'll go to school for criminal justice, learn why awful people do the worst possible things. Try to figure all that out because it's always fascinated me. Then if I myself on my merry way. When I realized that I was living in a dream world and that there was no one who is going to be able to pay that tuition bill, and I probably head off to Marist and go through semester's worth of fabulous classes. Then somebody would call me down into an office and say, no one's paid your tuition bill, you have to go home. I didn't want that. So I relied on myself and I called the recruiter and said, I can't go to college. I had no one can pay for it, so what can you offer me? He said I can offer you four years of active duty. And I said I am 17. I cannot sign away four years of my life right now. It just so happened that at that point, and I don't know if they do this regularly now, but they certainly didn't do it regularly then, they had a two year enlistment option, which meant that you served, it's always an eight-year contract. And usually it's four active and then I think four inactive reserves, which means you don't get called up unless the world's falling down. He said, well, I've got something that's a little bit different. It's two years active duty, four years active reserves and two years inactive reserves. I said I can do two years. And I joined the military at 17.

[00:23:22]

How was the experience?

[00:23:23]

Was traumatizing.

[00:23:25]

Was traumatized?

[00:23:26]

Oh my God, absolutely. Went to boot camp. It was literally probably nine months before I was in boot camp, I've been in cheer camp. I was 17, 120 pounds soaking wet and my steel toed boots with a pocket full of change and absolutely terrified.

[00:23:41]

I went to Army too. I also went to Army, I didn't want to go. In Brazil is mandatory to enlist, there's no choice. Everyone when they reach that 18, men in general, have to enlist one way or the other. The Army is going to decide who gets in and will gets out. I enlisted, I went to the selection. In my platoon that was the Army police, got into the decision about me and another boy. And Lieutenant to call and say, of course, they always call by your last name, Kley. And they say, Kley, unfortunately, you don't have any registration for college or anything. This gentleman here has. We're going to give him the opportunity to go to college and finish his studies. You have to stay. I remember that I didn't even protest or anything, I'm saying, okay. Because that was the only option. But I knew that I didn't want to. But for me it was a phenomenal experience. I think I learned a lot. I did everything and I don't know how much of that comes from the need to prove something. I learned a lot, I did everything. I left with honors, best soldier in the platoon. I had a great relationships and everything.

[00:25:05]

None of that surprises me.

[00:25:06]

[LAUGHTER] They wanted me to stay for seven years, but there was a difference in Brazil. That is, seven years temporary, when seven years is over, you will have to get out. Or you are try to go to the permanent military, which would be something that I would try but it's very hard. Then goes to the ranking, goes to the politics, and everything. So I told them, and I regret that later because I said, why I'm going to a seven years of my time here. What I didn't realize and he couldn't tell me was, you can have your college degree while you are here paid by the army, and I didn't.

[00:25:50]

Oh, goodness.

[00:25:51]

That was my mistake at that time. Because if I had to stay for those seven years, I would leave and they still had already my college degree. When I left and straight to the care of the family, having a job and I couldn't finish. I had to pay, work all day paying all the bills in my family and then pay for a private college to be able to do, which I was two years before I came here. Then I finished my college degree after working in Facilities.

[00:26:22]

A lot of similarities.

[00:26:23]

Isn't that amazing?

[00:26:25]

When I say traumatizing, I boot camp going the transition from I was about to go to college and then ended up in boot camp and all my friends were going off to college. Then all the way through to my first duty station, was a buoy tender in Northern Maine, which I reported two weeks after my 18th birthday. That was all very traumatizing. It was not the life I had thought I was going to live, but the only thing that ever occurred to me was to just rely on myself and to try to do what made the most sense. This was what made the most sense. I ended up serving for eight years, and it was an incredible and exceptional formative experience. That's how I got into human resources. That's how I met my husband. That ended up being a huge transition point in my life.

[00:27:18]

Where is the decision when you realize that the comparison, but you brought that the same situation you are living a life being a cheerleader, having dreams and going to college and everything. Having a traumatizing first experience with the coast guard, but then end up staying for eight years. What changed? And why did you stay for eight? Was need of something that was something else that you could have from there and you said, I know the outcome and you're going to get there to know more about your husband. But what changed in your mind that you stayed for eight years?

[00:27:58]

It was the right decision. It was the right thing for me. Picture it coming out of high school and thinking you're going to college and then finding that the only option you really have available is going into the military. As you said, you don't really want to be there, but it's what's available to you with our socioeconomic backgrounds, what else did we have got my right. So we both go into the military. Because in part you were required to by your country's laws. But me because I had nothing else I could possibly do. What was I going to do? Stick around and continue to pay the bills at home and be responsible for me and my mother at 17. That wasn't how I wanted to live my life. But once I got into the military and went through boot camp, I came out with sharpshooter ribbons. I came out with I was the yeoman for my company, which was [OVERLAPPING] something of an honor I guess. I think they were just doing it because I was 17 and they wanted to torture me more directly. When you do the arms, you know how you see the soldiers with the rifles, that's very, I forget I what to call it. They're twirling around the rifles, and it's all a big show and very ceremonial. There's a competition in the company and I won the competition and I was the best in my company, twirling around my life. [LAUGHTER]

[00:29:17]

I found a place where I was doing really well. I was excelling, I was right and I was doing it myself and I was responsible for me and I was achieving and I had a paycheck, I had opportunity. I reported to my first duty station typically there for like 2-4 years, but I had been there for about six months. Then a job opening came up at the First Coast Guard district headquarters in Boston, there's an admiral that runs the First Coast Guard district. He has an enlisted insistent and a non-enlisted insistent and officer, he has a bunch of assistance. The job as his assistant is not ability job or the detailer like it selects you and incense you. It's one that he gets to interview for and select his person. I interviewed for it and before I had even made it back from Boston to Maine, they had dispatched orders and within two weeks I had moved from Rockland, Maine to Boston and got to work in the First Coast Guard district and be the admiral's assistant. At the time it was Admiral George Naccara who, I don't think you hear it anymore, but he ended up becoming the Head of the TSA. Every time I walk through Boston Logan Airport, [LAUGHTER] it would be like welcome to Boston Logan Airport. I am George Naccara and I go like, oh my God. [LAUGHTER].

[00:30:37]

Should have taken notes.

[00:30:38]

I remember him.

[00:30:39]

Wow, that's amazing.

[00:30:41]

While I was at that duty station, obviously at this point, I'm still thinking I want to learn about human behavior, but I start to grow up a little and it's a little less Mulder and Scully and a little more, well, just real people, and why do we do the things we do? How do I get closer to being someone who can help people? I was trying to form what that was for me and I had to pick a specialty in the military and the human resources function existed at. District 1, so I ended up striking, which means learning on the job, human resources in my first year in the military. Then once I started doing that, I found my space. I was good at it and I enjoyed it. Every time re-enlistment came up, I'd say yes. I managed to basically move myself between three units in Boston, which is unheard of in a military career. But because I was the enlisted assistant, I got first pick-up my next spot. I went to the personnel reporting unit and worked my way up there and then I ended up at a maritime safety and security team as my last duty station. Then at some point the detail are called then said, hey, your job is moving. I have to transfer you early. There was like we were already 80% of the way through the assignments season. I was pregnant I had an end of enlistment coming up in eight months, so I was able to say no. That was it. I just literally got a phone call and one minute was probably going to re-enlist for four more years because I have three more years of that duty station. Why not? The next minute was getting out of the Coast Guard in eight months. It was a pretty shocking transition, but an incredible experience.

[00:32:27]

I think is similar thinking about this that we don't want to go is not our thing, is not something that you were envisioned for yourself, but suddenly whatever is that is in front of you, you give your a hundred percent there. Not just because we wanted to show off anybody, but look like we have to prove yourself that once I am here and I need to do something, let's do the best or I can see how far or how much I can achieve and how far it can go.

[00:32:57]

Why would you let yourself down?

[00:33:00]

Then you see people around you doing this or that or complain about this or that, and you keep thinking why? What the difference is going to make. You are here. For us, for example, you have to stay there for a year and something? What choice to have to be in trouble just because you have this mentality.

[00:33:19]

There was also a big shift and I think about it too. This might have had a little bit to do with my sense of prolonged commitment. I was on active duty when 911 hit. Obviously that was an incredible experience. It was awful to be in the armed forces when something like that happens and then to watch and help as the Coast Guard re-mobilized every hand within it. It was a lot. As a result of 911, they be in Congress, changed the Montgomery GI Bill, which is how they help soldiers get a college education either during or after service. It had gone from something where I think, I want to say that the Chapter 30 benefits were like $1,000 a month, which maybe even less, which really especially considering how are we all live, it's not going to pay for all of an education, but it was a help and it was part of the reason why I joined initially. But they passed what they called the Post-9/11 GI Bill. That GI Bill aimed to pay for the full college education as best it could and provide support for the veteran to live while pursuing that education at that time. Because of that change, I was able to get an associate's or bachelor's and then a master's without ever spending a penny at Northeastern University because in recognition of my service, I was eligible for the GI Bill, which was incredible. It's incredibly life-changing. When I joined, I had no idea that that would be the outcome.

[00:35:11]

Yes. My point is I don't want to bring the mysticism or mystical or a spiritual process and days of life.

[00:35:19]

No. Something is looking out for sure. I've always felt like that

[00:35:24]

You didn't have a choice. You said or I stay here and my life is going to be something completely different, or I will try this way at least to give myself an opportunity, not even think because I didn't think through like you did or plan in a better way, maybe because my support system was a still in place and I had nowhere to go. But you didn't think, oh I'm going through the course guide because I can have a college degree. There was no option there, but it was issued the best option.

[00:36:00]

I thought it would help.

[00:36:01]

Yes.

[00:36:01]

But it was the most I was going to get. There wasn't going to do it all, but it was the most I was going to get.

[00:36:07]

But in the end after all that you were able to be here.

[00:36:12]

Could never even dreamed of that.

[00:36:14]

Exactly. How long you were in the Coast Guard that you met your husband?

[00:36:21]

Well, we met in 2000. Oh God who ever listens to this, there's been a lot. [LAUGHTER]. I'm so back. He says, I'm really good with details. I am not really good with details. I can never remember my age until someone [LAUGHTER] reminds me of my age. The most reliable people who know my age are my children and my husband, I'm usually off by a year.

[00:36:40]

God's sake. I'd probably brought it because Brian and I are the same story. [LAUGHTER].

[00:36:45]

Don't ask me dates or this or that.

[00:36:47]

I'm lucky to remember my children's birthday. I'm better with their birthdays than their age because their age changes.

[00:36:55]

Yes.

[00:36:57]

Well, I should back up. We worked together before we became a couple, so I honestly couldn't tell you when he got transferred to my unit. He was in Miami, gets transferred to my unit. I can tell you that we got married in 2007.

[00:37:14]

That's good.

[00:37:15]

I hope that's good. [LAUGHTER] I'm going to be so crucified. I probably wouldn't even tell him that we did this, I'll just leave it at that.

[00:37:21]

Just take that off. Brian and I, in our immigration process, I remember the lawyer saying for me because I know a lot of the story in the environment that you are all that I remember is in my memory. Dates, I don't.

[00:37:36]

It's the texture for me, it's not the fine edges.

[00:37:40]

Then the Dias told me hold on in your yard explanation about everything around and details of that and for Brian, hold on on precise dates that can complicate the two of you

[00:37:52]

Because the editor is not going to remember. [LAUGHTER]

[00:37:55]

There you are, but you have to do a better job and now you're saying that's okay, My God, that's another similarity. Then you have your first child, Emma. Since then you had other two children?

[00:38:09]

Yeah Noah and Addison

[00:38:11]

How do you see because you went there, you mentioned that earlier in terms of who you became as a mom and how important that was, even before you say about taking care of your kids. That feeling about helping others already show up in your human resources experience. Because I think that's the initial part of taking care of people. I think we project, I can see myself in your story as well. When you have these upbringings that a little bit rougher in certain aspects or if you felt lonely and if you felt like we tend to go there and it's easier for us to empathize and read people around us in their needs and their emotions and everything else.

[00:38:55]

Taking care of yourself only is too selfish.

[00:38:59]

Yes.

[00:38:59]

You have to protect that outwards. Just the way [OVERLAPPING]

[00:39:05]

The human resources already was a sign of you doing that part of the job and I think the kids then is everything that you try when you think I'm not going to do this. I'm going to try to have this, is almost fulfilling your own desires to have that.

[00:39:23]

Not always healthily, it's never good to live your early adulthood by a measure of not doing what someone else did with their earlier life. It took me time and I'm probably still working on that to get away from doing things differently than I experienced rather than just doing them the way that I think they should be done. Early years looked like a lot of needing to have nice things or anything because I did not have any. Leading to have stability in my home life, even to the point where I probably should have moved. Just some irrational impulses to just do things as differently as possible. That over time, I think eroded and softened into authentic me, and not just me not trying to give my children the parts of the upbringing that I value because they've made me who I am and I think they're important part of my journey. But I wouldn't want to turn around and give those to my children.

[00:40:28]

Your relationship with them?

[00:40:31]

They are my sunshine. They are my light. They are my joy. My kids are fake kids. [LAUGHTER] You probably heard me say that since you've worked with me a lot. I have fake children, they were and are the most incredible human beings I have ever encountered in my life and that is not just me saying that because they are my children. Independently, I believe an independent analysis would say that I have fabulously wonderful and adorable children who did things like sleep through the night. I think between the three of them, there were like maybe a total of two temper tantrums. One in a Jordan's furniture and another in a Target, and I can't remember anymore. They slept. They were polite, they asked to be excused from the table. They are helpful. They're kind. They will look in adult in the eye and have a conversation.

[00:41:23]

That's incredible.

[00:41:26]

They are the absolute best thing that I have ever done in my life.

[00:41:30]

That's wonderful.

[00:41:31]

They are fake, absolutely.

[00:41:34]

There is nothing that you did to make that happen?

[00:41:37]

I have no idea.

[00:41:39]

How about Joe, your partnership with Joe fits well with all the work that you do?

[00:41:46]

Yeah.

[00:41:47]

Are you opposite like me and Brian?

[00:41:49]

Yes. Absolutely.

[00:41:50]

Which is fascinating.

[00:41:52]

We are absolutely opposites, which means we come together and explode and all of the ways that I think a couple of should. We balance each other. We both get set off by different things. He is just he's incredible. He's always been so supportive of my journey. Always been so supportive of my journey. He's a wonderful partner and a wonderful father. I'm incredibly lucky.

[00:42:18]

This are things that are in our relationships that I always feel like sometimes we all had the vision and the aspiration and oh my God, beautiful, whatever it is that we dreamed off. Not saying that we don't have. It's a different relationship though, because I think we learned that that is more of a friendship and it's challenging all around because you need to tame yourself a little bit in terms of I have a temper, I have a personality. The other person also has but you meet somehow halfway. You are going to have some serious arguments. But there is still so much more in terms of respect and love to each other that those moments is necessary because you need to build up, you need to keep going and grow with that one. I think we change each other in the process a little bit to be better.

[00:43:12]

Everyone changes in a relationship. It's two people living one life together and you can't just be exactly who you were when you came into it because that's you before then. You after then has to be different. You're folding your life over into someone else's.

[00:43:29]

In that sense, I believe it doesn't happen because sometimes people are true whatever reason that they decided.

[00:43:37]

They keep the walls out.

[00:43:38]

Exactly, the walls just keep going and then they're never going to have that chance. Is it just because you are seeing something? We just had the panel for mothers at work and a lot of conversations were to raising kids and how for some people are so difficult because it is and for others, Lakshmi is a good example that everything for her happened in a way that was kind of a natural and great partnership because her husband is hands-on help in everything. I love Lakshmi the way that she says in her patience that she said, well, I could do but if he's doing if he want to who I am going to interfere let him do it. I love that. He can he can take over. I'm fine just watching them for everything. Which is pretty much Brian too, I cook, I do this and that when people ask, he say well, I think he likes to do these things. Not that I have to be and I think it is part of that. More and more I feel like I'm coming more and more my mom and how I watched her taking care of my dad and everything else is really interesting.[OVERLAPPING]

[00:44:47]

She's a very strong caregiver model?

[00:44:51]

We'll keep going in that direction. But we have, Emma, let's talk a little bit about this because this is very interesting, part of it is a story. Who now is gone to college.

[00:45:09]

University.

[00:45:10]

University?

[00:45:12]

In England it's university. [LAUGHTER]

[00:45:17]

Make sure that you're distinguish it. But do you know [OVERLAPPING]

[00:45:20]

Well, actually I think they call it at college. I think their high school years are college. [OVERLAPPING]

[00:45:25]

In Brazil, there's a different school, now in Brazil is the same.

[00:45:30]

Its UNI.

[00:45:31]

Yeah, [LAUGHTER] UNI. How was the preparation? How are you feeling tell us.

[00:45:36]

I was completely unprepared. I had no idea how completely unprepared I was. Remember, I apply for one college. Early acceptance. Somehow managed to secure a place early acceptance and then ended up not going. A side from my time spent here, I've had absolutely, and well obviously I went to college, but I was working full time raising 1, 2 and 3 children. Basically shuttling myself from work to class, or taking an online class. I mean, I barely even remember it. It was a fever dream but I didn't walk, I didn't engage in the community. I was too busy raising kids and trying to keep my jobs. It was building a career at the same time too. I was already in the HR space. I was doing very well. I was progressing through every two-and-a-half years, a new job or a promotion. I was focused. I think fever dream is really the right explanation for it. Anyway, my interaction with the higher education system is very very small, because of that. When it comes time for Emma to begin her search, I of course want to be active and helpful and makes sure she's got everything she needs and she's prepared. Then we go into ski trip to France and we stop over on our way back to break up the travel a little bit in London, which is one of my favorite places in the entire world for four days. This is her junior year 2022. She goes, I would love to go to school here. I go, well, why couldn't you? She goes, what? I'm American, I'm like, well they do let us study in other countries, we're not completely banned. Of course, we start looking into it and, we find that it's actually a really incredibly interesting option.

[00:47:23]

Wow.

[00:47:24]

We find that there's a whole bunch of requirements that given the pandemic. You don't have a lot of higher-education institutions in the US dropped that requirement for SAT. The buzz around the inadequacies of standardized testing to really assess a student's ability to be so great. All of that in the water. When the SAT has come up during the pandemic, were like, doesn't really seem like it's something that she really needs to do right now all of a sudden, she starts to craft this vision, this future, that is based upon the English or the UK system trying to replicate their own system, which is a series of standardized tests. Now she needs an SAT score and ACT score and she needs AP scores.

[00:48:04]

Wow.

[00:48:05]

This goes back to that piece that I was missing in high school. I probably could have taken an honors or an AP course, but it would have never occurred to me or my parents to think that there was anything other than the course I was in.

[00:48:17]

Yeah, exactly.

[00:48:18]

I don't even know if my school district offered them, to be honest, I have no idea, but nobody in my family interacted with the school, just dropped on my behalf to find out what my opportunities were, I didn't know what I didn't know. All of a sudden I've got this daughter who wants to go off to England, to go to study. She needs all of these things that I don't even know how to secure and we just go through this year long process of getting her everything she needs and, she's signed up for the AP courses. She needed a perfect score on two AP exams, and she got them, and she made her dreams come true and she's off as of last week.

[00:49:01]

Wow.

[00:49:02]

She's off about to begin her UNI journey of the class to start on the 26th.

[00:49:06]

Well, how was for you to see all of this process going? Because I think mothers always wish the best for the kids. They wanted to go this and that. But that is always that feeling like no, she will stay a little bit. If I can have a little bit arms reach a situation. How was going to see her going to this process? Feeling motivated to be there in far from here, at least for five hours flight and leaving her there. How you see this? How you feel? And how you see her feeling? How she is? Are your perception of what it is?

[00:49:48]

When she first said, I told her she was looking at New York, she was looking at California. She was looking Vermont. I mean, she was all over the place. I said I need you to focus on a region. She said, on folks I'm in England and I said, but we'll focus on England.

[00:50:03]

Wow.

[00:50:04]

It never occurred to me to be scared or upset or sad that she'd be that far away.

[00:50:09]

I just wanted her to takeoff and spread your wings and find her path and what her journey was. If she found any one thing she was passionate about and fixated on and focused on. I was just back there going, Okay, what do we need to do? How do we get this moving? I am here to support you and go off. I mean, it was obviously very challenging to turn around and get it over and take that train ride back to London and not have her with me.

[00:50:39]

It feels like you are doing a long ride that you on leaving or something. It's just a process. [OVERLAPPING]

[00:50:45]

Yeah, It's for the poor Uber driver turns around to ask, just verify my destination and I'm like literally like, Oh my gosh, are you? Yes. I'm like, no, it's fine. It's my daughter. She's going to university and he goes, Oh, she'll be fine. I'm like, I'm not worried about her. This is about me.

[00:51:03]

Look at me right now. Look at this face.

[00:51:05]

She is fabulous. She found back in there to go hang out with her. Are you kidding? She's going to England for three years. She's fine. I on the other hand, I'm not fine.

[00:51:16]

Because they cannot stay here. I still have two more and Joe at home too, together. I had a chance to talk to Emma in our picnic here. It's so interesting when you're talking to someone and I'm pretty good talking to teenagers are, because of nafta is and isn't everything else.

[00:51:33]

You good talking to everyone.

[00:51:35]

Thank you. But it is one thing that I can tell her. She's old. She is a old person there.

[00:51:42]

She's such a strong girl.

[00:51:43]

Because it's things that she told me, and I was looking at Harrison is not someone trying to impress you. There's not that conversation. Teenagers trying to say, I'm talking to an old person here and I'm going to try to, now wasn't natural conversation. [OVERLAPPING]. and then we're talking about drinking and about this, about that. She never reached the point that was it now, I never drink or nothing like that. But it was a very.

[00:52:12]

Level headed.

[00:52:14]

Awareness of I don't know, it's not my thing right now. I feel like maybe they're with friends. I'm going to get to understand better. But this is some that so far I don't enjoy as much.

[00:52:25]

I just tell you if she was sitting here right now, she would tell you that every time we sat down at a pub out there, it'd be like, would you like an alcoholic [LAUGHTER] beverages? She'd be like, Nope, and I'd be like, Oh, come on, just have one. It really takes a lot for a mom to be. I trust her in her judgment so much. I'd be like, You know, it's okay, and she be like, No, that's fine. I don't want anything and I'll be like, all right, that is your choice. You do you? But you can, and you are strong and smart and trustworthy enough and I have absolutely no doubt that you will make good decisions. You'll make your fair share of bad ones. But we all do. You learn from that?

[00:53:01]

The reason that I trust her in what she said is because I relate to that exactly. I had my moments in my youth, drinking and everything that I need to do since I met Brian I stopped, I quit drinking. But not because it was a sacrifice or because of Brian doesn't drink. I cannot drink nothing like that because it scared him saying, you're not doing this for me. I say, I'm not doing that for you. Was never a pleasure. Drinking was never something that made me feel… my brother drunk and was the happiest and funniest person. I drink and go down. I become more introverted. People drink for social reasons should be more… is the opposite for me, works like a de-escalating thing and I'd be like okay.

[00:53:50]

In Edgar, alcohol obviously also has significant baggage for both of us. Anyone who comes from a household that was ravaged by this disease understands the danger. We all have to engage with it in a way that we're comfortable with.

[00:54:09]

I wonder if that also played a role in terms of, I hate you alcohol, whatever it was, whatever it is, for that matter. Going back through HR, a little bit. How long you are experienced with HR working with HR folks?

[00:54:25]

I started Human Resources on active duty in the year 2000.

[00:54:32]

What's that now?

[00:54:33]

[OVERLAPPING] Was it always something that you've enjoyed? Taking care of folks?

[00:54:38]

As soon as I found that space, as soon as I got out of the, let's think about humans and how they interact in behavior, and what drives behavior and predicting behavior, as soon as I stepped away from doing it, from applying those skills to criminals.

[00:54:55]

[LAUGHTER].

[00:54:56]

What I wanted to be was a criminal profiler for the FBI.

[00:54:59]

Oh yes.

[00:55:00]

It was always about the behavioral analysis.

[00:55:02]

Yeah.

[00:55:03]

Once I stepped away from that, the next safest or the next most logical place is human resources. It's really about behavior, it's about people, it's about how they come together and operate within a unit, within a team. How they focus on their work or don't focus on their work, how they interact with other people, how the whole organism comes together to produce something, and what drives that and what makes that a positive experience.

[00:55:32]

Yes.

[00:55:32]

What makes that a positive outcome for the organization? Once I settled into it, it was just, this is where I'm meant to be and what I'm meant to be doing.

[00:55:44]

The question I'm asking is because we know each other directly and working closely for the past two years, not even two years, full two years, it's going to be in November. But that's something that I can tell you. The way that you relate to folks, the way that you relate to us, some people when they listen to this besides are going to say now, you are saying all this because of the cookies and baking goods that you bring to the office all the time, which is awesome. [LAUGHTER].

[00:56:19]

I buy you a little sugar? I'm okay with that really. I mean it's fine.

[00:56:23]

Because it is, they are amazing. Whatever you call them, if you were experiments or you just saw something new you brought and he brought to the office, they were really awesome.

[00:56:33]

[LAUGHTER] Thank you.

[00:56:34]

But for someone like me, and here we are going to talk about, we all know my story a little bit, also being an immigrant and becoming an American citizen and with all the processes going between. But at same time, talking about impostor syndrome that kicks in.

[00:56:52]

Yeah.

[00:56:52]

So strongly for someone that comes from a different place and feel like we're still trying to prove something to get right?

[00:56:59]

Yeah.

[00:57:01]

To be in a place when you are managing that, you're still not sure if I would be capable to do everything that was expected of me but have the environment that we have at HR is something really strange for us to experience that you don't expect. Do you know any of it's too suspicious, [OVERLAPPING] is this real? I think it's the same thing that you say about your fake kids.

[00:57:31]

My fake kids?

[00:57:32]

Yeah, fake kids.

[00:57:33]

I definitely had Imposter Syndrome when I started this job, it was no question.

[00:57:38]

Is what our students also feel is, I think the brand is too strong and always. But that is a difference in terms of environment, which I think, and I have mentioned that before for our group and for other folks, what do we have in HR in terms of relationship with the group that's working there right now, it is something different. You have a special bond, a special connection that is a level of care for each other that's fantastic. But I have to say that you're vision in supporting ideas that I brought that put them even trouble. I joke with people and say one thing that I came and talked to you, you have a phenomenal way to say no, that doesn't diminish the no. You explain that maybe this could be done better in this way instead of saying, oh, no, let's not even go there. That is not a shut door in your face, that is a learning process in that one. That happened once and I wasn't thinking she's saying no that way. [LAUGHTER] But the things that I brought to you, I felt like I was venting it out. I have a wish, not sure, and without much, you analyze that idea and said okay, I like it, go ahead. Then I said, okay I'm screwed.

[00:59:04]

[LAUGHTER] Here we are recording episode what? [LAUGHTER]

[00:59:10]

That's exactly the point.

[00:59:11]

It was a good idea.

[00:59:13]

Because you didn't say, oh, you have to do this, you have to do that, be careful with this, be careful that. You just said, go for it, let's do it, let's see. Then we put together and went after whatever was necessary to and this is such a strong vision. It is so important for someone to have a chance to grow, to develop, and look for. I'm not the one that I can tell you that I'm always going to be grateful and thank you for that, is the work that the students are trying to do in terms of bringing [BACKGROUND] the custodial together for an award. How many difficult process that has to be because there are so many.

[00:59:56]

The Reciprocity Event.

[00:59:56]

That is it, yeah The Reciprocity Event. Many people involved, so many parts of the university, and you just took it over and went to talk to people, and when you realize it was done and the people were so happy with that. So far, a group of folks that are also so special for us as well. Just to say that you have that vision, you have that respect for the human being, for the professional, looking through the development of everyone and that's not very common and I think should it be more of a routine.

[01:00:31]

Well, we were human resources?

[01:00:34]

Yeah.

[01:00:35]

I believe we're responsible for making sure that this is a safe, fair, and rewarding environment for people to work in. It should be more than work, because if it's just work to you, then you're not going to put in that discretionary effort. You're not going to give your heart and soul as best you should.

[01:00:55]

Yeah.

[01:00:55]

Obviously, you can't give the whole thing, otherwise, you don't have enough left for the other things that are important in your life, but it should be a place that you want to be, you should value your time at work, it should feed your soul just as much as it feeds your bank account and your resume. I believe that HR needs to model the way on that. [OVERLAPPING] We're not existing in an ecosystem or if we're not modeling an ecosystem of honesty, trust, transparency, smart risk-taking, and investment in this community, which starts with investment in people and trust in people and letting people move with ideas and I see my job as a leader, as breaking down. I'm here to just say, okay, you see that over there, that's where we're headed, you tell me what you need, what trees you need me to take down along the way and I'm just going to ask you to sprint as fast as you can. Obviously, there's a lot more to it than that, but it's all about you and what you can accomplish and what you can achieve and I'm just here to help you channel that into something productive for the community or something that I think is going to move the institution forward or make us better some way.

[01:02:06]

That really is what happened.

[01:02:07]

You have always done that so it's easy.

[01:02:10]

Thank you. It is very, I would say the word empowering and it is a good feeling when you have that doubt, that self-doubt that's always there somewhere telling you, are you sure, are you good enough and that kind of thing. When you have people in that level of administration, that responsibility to look at you and say, yeah, I trust you, go for it. One thing that they tell about when you're talking about diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging, that my story in this institution is a reflection of that. I think since I started working at HLS, the growing diversity that you have in our campus is spectacular compared to places that are still struggling to try to figure it out.

[01:03:03]

We have made incredibly meaningful improvements [OVERLAPPING] in our metrics, and the talent acquisition team should be forever proud of themselves.

[01:03:15]

I really agree. I think you have done a phenomenal job and I have talked to someone before from the other department that's here for a long time comparing for early stage when you start working to where we are now, it's such a difference, you can feel it, we can see it, and that's a great thing.

[01:03:38]

Thank you.

[01:03:38]

That’s it Roxanne, [LAUGHTER] this is awesome. Thank you very much for doing this, for meeting me, and being part of this project that you let me start and is now more than 50 episodes that, altogether is going to be 50 episodes into the end of the season with other people, in other plans and other projects that would come. I just wanted to thank you for everything, for accepting just to come here, sit down with me and talk a little bit, and be part of this too.

[01:04:18]

It's been my pleasure. These are stories that deserve to be told and we have such an incredible staff community here. Every time you release a podcast, it brings me joy to hear a little bit more about someone that you pass in the hallway, so you sit in a meeting with or exchange ideas with.

[01:04:34]

To have the story shared with all of us and you can listen to the way that you choose to, but at least you have staff being heard too and come and telling everything. Yes. That's it. Thank you. Thank you very much. For everybody listening. I will see you soon, have a great time. Bye bye. [MUSIC]