

Dancing with Words, Dancing with Wisdom (18)

Constance d'Angelis

Dr. Janet: Constance is a fascinating woman who has had her fingers in many, many different activities throughout her life. She is, like me, a fellow attorney. She, unlike me, played Women's Professional Football between 1970 and 1973 for the Toledo Troopers. Like me, she is an author. Unlike me, she is a producer of continuing legal education accredited courses. She wrote a book called *The 7 Laws of Inner Peace*.

Welcome, Constance. I'm delighted to have you on the show.

Constance: Well, Dr. Janet, thank you very much. I'm delighted to be here. What a pleasure.

Dr. Janet: Let's talk a little bit about your life path because it's such an interesting life path. How in the world did you ever get started playing professional football?

Constance: Well, I had always been an athlete. I grew up in a family and in a parochial system in Toledo, Ohio and in an era where punishment, corporal and otherwise, were the norm, and where shame and ridicule and that type of thing was the key to control.

I grew up believing that I was incompetent, in a sense. I was even told I wasn't very smart. So, I should work in a factory because I had good manual dexterity.

Well, when I went out to play sports, even though I'm really of very small stature, I found that I had a lot of ability, and I could focus. When I began to focus, then I could have things happen. I became an athlete, even at a time when there were very few women athletes that were around, but at least I had that opportunity. So that helped a lot.

At the time that the Women's Professional Football team was formed, I actually read about it in the Toledo Blade. It was some promoter out of Cleveland. I said, "I've got to give this a shot."

A friend of mine and I went out, and we went to practice, and I had more fun than I can tell you. Before we knew it, we were out playing football.

It was hard to find cleats. I had small feet. So, I had to buy boys' cleats for the field. It was quite hilarious.

Dr. Janet: Very interesting. I hear you mentioning three F's here, football, focus and fun. Let's talk about the focus and fun, which ended up supporting your ability to play professional football as a woman, back in the 1970s. It seems to me that focus and fun — and fascination could be another really good F word — it seems to me that they are all part of a spiritual path. At least they have been for me.

Of course, I hear you mention focus and fun. Of course, this is the positive side of a spiritual path. There are also some really scary and hard sides of a spiritual path.

But for the moment, let's just talk a little bit more, if you would, about the fascination. I'm sure you were fascinated with football, and you were able to focus on getting the ball, I assume, where it needed to be, and running where you needed to be.

It was also just fun for you to do it. It sounds as if it was a challenge. Do you have anything more you can add there?

Constance: Dr. Janet, talk about fascination. Being an athlete as a child, and again, we're talking affirmative action time; we're talking (about) when the laws were just beginning to be passed where women were going to be recognized. The Title IX had not even passed. That didn't even come into play, but it was being debated. A civil rights situation was going on. That's kind of what the atmosphere was like.

I was a fan of the Miami Dolphins and the Cleveland Browns. I would watch football, and I thought it was absolutely phenomenal. I just had the best time. But obviously, girls didn't do that.

When the opportunity came up, talk about fascination. Then I could focus the energy that I had cultivated without even realizing it. I had used it to avoid the negative parts of growing up, the difficulties and all of that, and had really enjoyed it and became quite adept at being a decent athlete.

I could move very quickly. I loved calisthenics and I could do all this stuff. We had to do a lot of running and all that kind of thing in our practices. They were arduous, let me tell you. Some of the girls were just — oh, my gosh. This was not fun for them. We had to work hard. There was no doubt about it. For me it was fun, because I'd been doing sit-ups and push-ups and running as fast as I could around the block.

Like I said, finding shoes — I think Nikes were the first ones I found — I don't know if it was Nikes or Adidas, that I could actually use. And they had to be children's — because I had small feet — to be able to do these things.

So now I got to push a sled with heaviness on it so that I became really strong. That was exciting for me. Because how often does a girl have a chance to do that? You're supposed to be cute and pretty and all that other kind of stuff. That's fine. But I preferred climbing trees. I was a tomboy. I loved it. That was what made it fun.

What's cool about the focus part is that when one is playing any sport, and I ended up being a starting middle linebacker, and I'm little. I had to focus. When I focused, I got through that line so quickly — by the time the ball was snapped. It was cool.

Dr. Janet: You made a couple of comments about the context, the culture in which you grew up, and what I heard you say was, it was a very strict Catholic, parochial, almost abusive upbringing. One thing that I'm wondering is: did that contribute at all — that hard, hard school context where you were more or less shamed and made to feel inadequate? Did that contribute at all, do you think, to your drive to do professional football, to be really good at focusing?

Constance: Dr. Janet, that is actually an extremely good question. I have cogitated on that question probably all of my life, because at the time it was occurring and probably up 'til I got out of the house and started making my own way, it was more of a negative effect. Pretty horrible things were going on. They weren't good. There was no hope. It was pretty depressing. I had a lot of physical response. I was nervous — all of those kinds of weird things.

But then there was a point — and I think that the sports and the focus that came — where I saw the difference. I felt the difference as to when I was climbing a tree, and being physically, emotionally, and mentally focused on what I was set out to accomplish, whatever that was that made the difference. That's the drive that I ended up using for the professional football, as well as getting enrolled in college when I was told I wasn't going to do well and it would be a waste of everything — all kinds of things. I just buckled down and said, "I'm focusing and I'm going to do this and that's that." And then, oh, my goodness, the kind of things that happened. So, yes, in a way it did.

There's going to be a film documentary on the Toledo Troopers. I would suggest to anyone who might be interested, it would be kind of fun to see it. It should be out. I was just in Toledo after 40 years or something.

Anyway, it will be very, very interesting because of the drive so many of the women had at that time, and all were different. It's really an incredible experience.

But then, when I started writing, and I was told I was no good in English and everything. I mean it's really interesting for a child to experience being told he or she is worthless, and then ultimately, to kind of pull oneself up by her bootstraps, in a sense, and say, "I'm going to work at this and I'm going to do well." That's where the focus comes in. So now I'm working with mindfulness because mindfulness is focus.

Dr. Janet: Yes, let's talk about mindfulness. What does that word mean to you?

Constance: Well, it has varied meanings, I will have to say. The word "mindful" can be used in almost any contexts where you're just paying attention. For example, I drove from Colorado to North Carolina. I'm in North Carolina right at the moment. There was one full day of rain from Arkansas to Smoky Mountains in North Carolina. It didn't let up, except maybe a little bit in volume. Windshield wipers all day long driving in that thing, in that kind of tiring situation, and I drove for about ten hours.

Had I not been able to focus on what I was doing only, and that was on driving for that period of time, there's no way it could have happened. That's how mindfulness can be used in a practical way.

That takes some energy and some effort. I had a German Shepherd Dog with me who had never traveled that far. So that was fascinating.

The other way that mindfulness can be used is to really go into the core of self. I'll call it "divine inspiration" because that's where the spiritual part of it starts happening.

Then one is looking at, at a minimum, biofeedback that would say, Drop blood pressure; drop galvanic skin response issues; drop heart rate. That's how one can test it. But the other thing that happens is the quieting within can allow inspiration and information, which I call downloads, to come in and with clarity. Those are two different ways of using it.

Once one is allowing the comfort of being, in a sense, you start with focus. You can do testing much more easily. You can read things, and you really get it. You don't have to read it three or four times. You can write. You can drive in difficult situations, but then you can take it further. Then you can start using it to set your affirmative intentions, and, therefore, shift whatever you want in your life. That's why I like it.

Dr. Janet: Shifting intentions or perhaps choosing your intentions is something that I find is really vital. What do I intend in this given situation with these people in this

environment? What is *my* intention? And how am I going to choose to position myself?

Before the break, we were talking a little bit about intention and intention really as it's related to focus and being able to get done exactly what you want to get done. This ties in too with that spiritual center and allowing oneself to be open enough to receive support from places where we would never figure out that support would be available.

For me, there's a real difference between setting an intention and setting a goal. Setting a goal is a very left-brain type of function, sort of a straight line. This is where I am, that's where I want to go, and these are the steps I have to take to get there.

Setting an intention, to me, seems to be a much broader focus and allowing support to come in, in almost miraculous ways, that my left brain never could have figured out. Do you have anything you want to add to that, Constance?

Constance: Yes, your point is very well taken. When one is working with affirming something that is important that one may want to accomplish, and I'm talking now in a way of saying, "Let's look at what's going on within."

Let's just take this whole idea of inner peace, the quietness of being comfortable with oneself. How many times do we actually just rely on an external stimulation, for example? How many people can really sit quietly, breathe and allow the quietness of an awareness of the physical body? Can you feel how your lungs are breathing? Can one feel the heart beating?

Can one notice the operation of the intestines and the colon and how it's moving? Can one feel what's going on in the neurology? Can you notice that all these thoughts are going up and down and up and down, and this thought from here and this thought from there?

Instead of latching on to that thought, we just watch it go by and go, "Oh, I'm having a thought." Can we do that? Because it takes some skill. We get caught up.

Then what happens is, if something that you don't want happens, I'm not going to say it's negative, but it's just "Oh, boy, that's just rotten. I wish that wouldn't have happened," one takes responsibility for it, but yet doesn't find fault with the self. In other words, you take that as a way of making the choice of saying, "Aha, I can maybe make a change there. I can shift something within my own mind." Then we drop into that quietness again and have great love and respect for the self.

I'm not talking selfishness. I'm not talking ego. I'm talking "feeling that Higher Power." It's an incredible Power.

Yes, I believe it's critical. We get out of being followers. We don't just be like little lemmings, the old lemming story where the lemming goes off the cliff. You just follow along with the crowd, and before you know it, you're in trouble and you do what people tell you to do, and you give in to fear. There's a lot of fear and separation and conflict going on right now within our society.

Focusing on that, that is "not that," the opposite of "that," what do we want to feel inside? And then honor the self. We're using both sides of the brain there, because our logic can come up with the plan, but our intuitive self can come up with a feeling, and we can allow them to come together. When we do that, then all that external conflict that might be actually created by others in order to get us off balance just goes out the window. You say, "Forget this noise. I ain't going there. I'm in charge of me."

Dr. Janet: I think that is such an important point. I am in charge of me in each and every moment. I am in choice.

It goes together with the mindfulness because the mindfulness is an observation, as you say, of both my internal state, which to me is not only my body, but it's also my emotions. How am I feeling? How am I reacting to what's going on? What thoughts are going through my head? What kind of people am I with?

If I observe other people, not to believe the truth of their words, but just to notice their effect on my own body and emotions, that's really valuable information. Then I can ask myself, "Well, do I want to sit here and be abused by another person? I don't think so."

So, how can I protect myself against that kind of desecrating conduct on the part of another person without judgment? It's more a discernment, a noticing. It's not making somebody else wrong, because they are what they are, for whatever their own reasons are, but it is not my issue and I don't need to get sucked into another person's chaos unless I want to. Most of the time, I don't want to. I want to hold my own center and my own balance.

Constance, before the break, I was talking a little bit about the difference between discernment and judgment, which are two different processes. The focus is different. It seems to me that discernment is a passive observation, whereas focus often shifts into judgment and self-righteousness and making somebody else wrong. Do you have any comments about that? Anything you want to add to that discussion?

Constance: Yes, I do. Thank you for bringing it up, because it's extremely important. When we are in discernment or taking charge, or I call it actually (and it comes up in the Seven Laws work as Law Number Four), the law of alignment, we're in alignment. We're following our path of integrity or our path of essence or our Soul's path, the thing that's within us.

Now, we get there as human beings by using, again, as I've said before, both sides of the brain. We use our intellectual side, our left brain, and then we go ahead and we allow ourselves to feel what we're feeling. That's how we intuit or pick up what's going on with another person who's manipulating us or with some propaganda we're hearing, and we're falling in line with that propaganda.

Well, how does that feel within? Logically, we can go with it and then we've got judgment. You see what happens?

But if we are also feeling, "What does that feel like to me?" and we know how to sense our feelings, then we can combine the two of them and go, "Wait a minute here. If I do this kind of behavior, if I'm angry, if I'm hostile, if I'm shaming, if I'm frustrated, if I'm guilty, if I'm doubting, if I'm all of those things, or I'm experiencing that, I'm either doing it or I'm experiencing it from other sources, if I'm there, I'm distracted from my own integrity. I'm out of there. I'm not making my own choice. I'm not being discerning."

If we're judging another, we've taken our power and put it over into somebody else. Bring it in, keep it in. Know when you are doing this.

Now, do we all have this happen occasionally? You bet. Of course, we do. But when we recognize it, we know we've got the power to go back into our own integrity and make our own decisions, think for ourselves, and we're whole. We're complete. Again, I believe it's a spiritual kind of thing where we're divinely inspired.

Dr. Janet: And we are connected then to, it seems to me, a "Power greater than ourselves," which cannot be defined or articulated or conceptualized. Because to define means to limit, and this Power is not limited; but we can choose to allow it to flow through us and direct our own thoughts, our own emotions, our own conduct, and how we want to position ourselves in the world to co-create the things that really matter to each and every one of us.

I'd like to go back to something that we were talking about at the beginning of this show. You had mentioned that you grew up in a period, as I did, when affirmative action was just beginning to be on the table, become transparent, civil rights. But we were probably both conditioned to some extent into "girls

don't do that." Or, more specifically, girls don't play professional football. Girls don't climb trees. Girls wear pretty little dresses, paint their fingernails, wear jewelry, smile, and God forbid that they should think for themselves. No, they ought to be taking instruction either from their father whose surname they bear or from their husband whose surname they have taken, which is a whole patriarchal structure.

You and I have violated that rule of "girls don't do that," just by becoming attorneys, for example. But it's a challenge, it seems to me, a cultural challenge that is imposed on women that men don't need to struggle with. It's an extra burden or an extra challenge or an extra overcoming for a woman to step fully into her own personal power. Comments on that?

Constance: It is the kind of thing — I see it all today. I was the first woman to be hired by a major Fortune 500 company, and the reason is I was in the right place at the right time and they had to hire a woman. They never hired women except in support roles.

Again, it's still going on today. We give away our personal power, however you want to define that, and we give it away and, in our society, maybe less so than even in many of the other societies that we know about around the world, we let the man make the decisions. We're programmed for that.

I didn't like wearing dresses. I liked climbing trees. I loved playing football. I was a great scuba diver, a competitive swimmer. I ran every day — all kinds of things that girls didn't do. It's important to recognize what's really within the person and get off of the societal stuff.

Dr. Janet: Before the break, we were talking about "girls don't do that" and how girls are so culturally conditioned to be certain ways. They probably, for 2000 years, have been culturally conditioned by men.

I was fortunate because I was the daughter of two schoolteachers, so they always encouraged me to go out into the street and play baseball, to climb trees, to do whatever I wanted to do. I was really comfortable with myself. I was a good student, too, because I had all that support at home.

But then I hit junior high school and high school. My discernment or my observation was that the boys in my class didn't want to ask me out on dates, and it felt as if there must be something wrong with me. I was so accomplished in so many ways. Why didn't they want to date me?

Well, now I know it was probably because they were looking for sex or maybe because they felt intimidated by me. I often think, "Is this whole sexual drive in

men a controlling factor on why women are expected to be certain ways and do certain things, so that they are available as a sexual supply to men?

Constance: Actually, that whole subject of that whole sexual drive stuff, I'm single, and I've noticed as I've gotten older, I might be talking with a gentleman, and there still will be a focus on his end of having sex. I look at that and, of course, I get bored with it. If we can have a really interesting conversation, because I really want to have fun and fascination and focus and talk about interesting things, experiences, adventure, expanding one's intellect, as well as consciousness, that's my objective, expanding my consciousness, and then offering what I can to others who are interested in it, too. When we have to go back to the animalistic "Gee, we got to have sex," it's like, "Okay, well, that's nice."

In my undergrad biology, I studied animals. I would like to transcend my animal nature to a certain degree. I think that's really interesting.

But, I think there are some other motives. They're ulterior motives. In other words, somebody wants something from us that they don't acknowledge. It's this undercurrent that may be creating fear, creating something within us.

The fact that we have these divisions, a girl does this, a woman does that. Or a race division. If you're black, or if you're Hispanic, or if you're this or that or whatever you may be. Or if you're this religion or that religion or whatever, then you're different from me. Well, let's go to the base here. We're all human beings. We all come from the Earth. We can define our neurology, our central nervous system, our musculature. We have all the same things.

This is where use of words is important. What's the point in fighting anything? Let's go with what we want, what we love, what we know. Go with the opposite of what fighting something might be.

Using language, for example, that is all negative. Don't do this. Don't do that. Here's a good one. Don't think of pink elephants. Right now, don't think of pink elephants. What do you see in your mind?

Dr. Janet: Of course, you see a pink elephant.

Constance: Absolutely. If I say, "Focus on green grass, the smoothness of it, the color of it, focus on green, how does it feel?" that is a completely different way of approaching the same thing.

Why in the English language do two negatives make a positive? We can get into some real discernment around language here.

Accents. Accents in different parts of the world, different parts of this country, how words are pronounced, the different words that are used.

Driving here from Colorado, I saw so many negative things. "Don't hit our workers. Fine. Penalty." We're really big on penalties.

What if we focus on the positive? Probably the use of the word "positive" and "negative" is inappropriate, but focus on that which we want. "Keep our workers safe."

That's what I see really big time right now, and that fits in with the whole idea of whether or not girls or women or the color of your skin or "your whatever it may be" is going to make a difference with separation and conflict. Because people have a perception that is unreal. It's an illusion. It's silly and it creates chaos, conflict, separation.

The type of thing that we're seeing now with the violence out there almost at home. And domestic violence has been around, there's no doubt about that one. But, when we focus on it, rather than communion between us, that's the problem.

Dr. Janet: Yes, that communion is so important, the connection, as opposed to the judgment and putting other people down.

We could talk so much more about this whole business of women stepping into their power and their own identity; but Constance, I'd like to give you a little time, if you'd like, to talk about your book, *The 7 Laws of Inner Peace*, or your workbook, *Mindfulness Magnetizes Success*.

You're also in the process of writing a book called *Lost*. We haven't even talked about that horrible experience you had a year ago where you thought you might die.

Constance: Oh, my goodness, we didn't talk about that. That would be a good one. I've been doing a lot of research on concussions now. Because you would think playing three years of middle linebacker that if I were having concussions and all the diving and all of the hiking. Anyway, I don't even want to get into all the sports I've done, but the canoeing and the water safety stuff and all that.

But anyway, you would think I'd have a concussion some other time, right? No, I get to have it in Colorado. It's really affected a lot. We could do a whole show on traumatic brain injury. Oh, my goodness, it's really interesting.

But I think the thing that is important is, first, we have to believe that we can do something. I shouldn't probably use the word "do." That we ARE something, something more than just skin and bones and something that society told us about.

And then we have to know it. We have to bring it home. We have to build that last part and we have to affirm it within our own minds. Again, my mind is really important here. We have to coordinate.

In the books that I'm writing, and I'm writing a book called *Lost* which is the time when I played Women's Professional Football, which was really a dramatic time period, because there were a lot of other things going on. I finally got to college. I had had a child who died. I was in a domestic violence situation that I got out of. I had to raise a child on my own with no child support. I mean all kinds of things. We got some drama here, people. We have some drama.

The whole idea then of *The 7 Laws of Inner Peace*: this is when I was in a quiet time, and all of a sudden, I get these seven laws coming into me. I'm writing so darn fast because it's like, "Where did this come from? Boy, this is really cool stuff." That's what gave rise, in a sense, to *The 7 Laws of Inner Peace*.

I'm using those "Seven Laws" now for *Mindfulness Magnetizes Success*, and that would be success in anything one wants to accomplish. I'm going to do a sequel to *The 7 Laws of Inner Peace*, because we have stories in there of things that happened at that time, and that was a number of years ago.

Dr. Janet: Constance, do you have a website you can refer people to for more information?

Constance: It's constancedangelis.com. I've got resources there, too.