

Announcer ([00:02](#)):

You're listening to The Safety Moment Podcast by Utility Safety Partners. Safety is always a good conversation and it's a click away. Here's your host, Mike Sullivan.

Mike Sullivan ([00:16](#)):

Welcome to the Safety Moment Podcast. My guest today is Mr. Wylie Davidson, a motivational speaker that I've had the pleasure of working with. Only once. I hope we get the chance to do it again. Wylie, thanks for joining me today and for talking about what you do.

Wylie Davidson ([00:32](#)):

Yes, good morning. I'm happy to be part of this. I've been lurking, watching from the sides of you doing these things for a while now. And I said to myself, I need to get on there. I need to have a conversation with Mike. So again, I appreciate you having me.

Mike Sullivan ([00:47](#)):

Well, it's kind of cool. I mean, like so many of my friends and colleagues around the globe, but safety is such a broad topic. It's something that it's kind of like trying to nail jelly to a wall sometimes. You can't really nail it to the wall. And before we get into the meat of our talk today, tell me about yourself. Where are you today? Are you at home today?

Wylie Davidson ([01:11](#)):

Yes, I'm at home in Buffalo, New York, Grand Island, to be more specific for those folks that are more aware or know this part of the country. But yeah, that's where I'm calling from. I call it my speakeasy. It's our lounging area where we love to do things like this and just kind of kick back. It's also a nice place to just kind of let those creative juices flow. It

Mike Sullivan ([01:36](#)):

Kind of looks like you're in Scuttlebutt Lodge. I think you're an SCTV fan, so you'll probably get that you are

Wylie Davidson ([01:42](#)):

There. 100%. Doug and I are a production gentleman. We had a great conversation. We did soundcheck. It took about three minutes. And then the other 35 was just us talking about growing up in this area and being culturally cross-border from nothing. I always say I'm as much Canadian as I'm American when it comes to culture, just from what we grew up with, television, music. Yeah. But it is cozy, isn't it?

Mike Sullivan ([02:09](#)):

Oh, it is. Yeah, it is. And I'm from back East originally, so I grew up not too far from the US. Montreal. So I grew up very close to the ... Actually, I was in the south shore of Montreal, so even closer to the US border. Yeah, closer towards Messina,

Wylie Davidson ([02:23](#)):

Stuff like that.

Mike Sullivan ([02:24](#)):

Yeah. Plattsburgh type thing. Plattsburgh. Yeah. So we had all the American channels and we're very Americanized, even though I'm sure our friends in the East will say they're not, but it's very Americanized. But tell me about yourself. How did you get into this? How did you become a motivational speaker? Did you just wake up one morning and say, "I'm going to do this?" Or what was a catalyst for you?

Wylie Davidson ([02:45](#)):

That is such a great question and it's kind of a loaded question for me because there's so many different ways I can answer it. The small version is I had no idea I would ever be doing this for a living. Though my mother always said, "You're either going to be a politician or an actor because you never shut up." And I'm not much into politics. So this is as close I think as I'm going to get to acting, but my career started off in a totally different direction. I was in the retail industry. I sold products. I was a manager. I led teams and I've always had those, what I call the signs. It's actually, I'm kind of don't say anything, but I'm working on a book that kind of talks about looking for the signs. And there was always those indications

([03:33](#)):

That eventually I'd be doing this, but I never saw that path clear. How I did get into it, I worked for a safety supply company here in Buffalo. I sold safety supplies. I was also kind of their face. Whenever they would do something publicly, if it was a trade show, like we hosted an annual safety event, I was the MC. If you called the store and got put out the company and got put on hold, I was the guy talking about raincoats and gloves. So there was, again, those signs, but I never really kind of connected the dots until I got an opportunity to do this professionally. Our vice president created a message that originally was like a one hit wonder, like, okay, I'll do it because a client asked us, "Hey, I was at this really cool conference. They had this awesome presenter. We want one of those, but we don't have any money." So he said, "Okay, I'll put something together." And it literally caught fire to the point where he couldn't do both.

([04:32](#)):

He couldn't be the vice president and be that guy. So he's like, "Well, if we're going to get anybody to do it, it's going to be the guy that doesn't shut up." So that's kind of how I got into this. But it's interesting how it's really lit a fire within me to want to give back, to give more. When I created Legacy, leaving a safety legacy, for those of you that have never heard of me before, it was originally designed for the end user, the guys and gals doing the heavy lifting, doing the work. And then soon after I started presenting, I'm getting feedback from entry level employee to C-suite executive, how the message impacted them. And it's all different levels. It's not just on a work level, it's on a personal level. It's on a ... If you remember my presentation, I talk a lot about being safe off the job just as much as I do on the job.

([05:24](#)):

And I think those messages really resonate with my attendees. You had mentioned a few minutes ago how there's a lot of people in my industry, my colleagues, as I'll call them, that I classify as a victim story. Something traumatic happened to them. They talk about what led up to it,

([05:42](#)):

The event and the aftermath. And those messages that are important, don't ever think for a minute- They're powerful. They're very powerful. They're very important and they need to be told. But I have found that often they become acute, especially if you're not doing that work, if you're not in that industry. Now, a good presenter will not make it about the event. They'll make it about your actions, how you reacted to it before and after.

Mike Sullivan ([06:10](#)):

Almost like a postmortem, right?

Wylie Davidson ([06:13](#)):

Yes, right, right. And those messages are important, but I find so many times people have come up to me and said, "I missed the first five minutes of what you were saying because I was trying to figure out what was wrong with you. " You got both hands, you got both legs, you can string a sentence together, there must be something out of the surface. But that's the point of legacy is that it's not just a safety message. It's a culture message. And I'm at the point now where I'm modifying my presentations to better meet the client's needs. If they want it about safety, I can make it about safety. If they want to make it about culture, I can make it about culture. If they want to make it about leadership, I can make it about leadership. So I am loving every minute of what I do.

([07:00](#)):

It took me 50 something years to find my calling, but I definitely have.

Mike Sullivan ([07:05](#)):

Yeah. Well, you mentioned the victim stories and there's a couple of just great speakers and topics that I have been witness to over the years. One of them is Eric G. Gere, and I've had the opportunity to hear him speak a couple ... Yeah, and I've had the opportunity to hear him speak a few times. The other gentleman I heard once in person, and it was an awestruck type of presentation, was Charlie Moorcraft. Remember Charlie. We call

Wylie Davidson ([07:34](#)):

Him the godfather of motivational

Mike Sullivan ([07:36](#)):

Speaking. Well, and for good reason, right? Really? He

Wylie Davidson ([07:38](#)):

Started a movement. He really did.

Mike Sullivan ([07:42](#)):

Oh, for sure. And you haven't heard him speak for anybody listening, try and do that because it's an excellent, excellent speech. And what he kept coming back to in his talk was he kept saying, "For what? I cut these corners. I did this. I did." And for what?

Announcer ([08:01](#)):

And

Mike Sullivan ([08:02](#)):

Just those two words, for what? Why did I do that? It was so powerful. And then when I had the opportunity, you joined us for our 40th anniversary and safety conference here in BAMF when utility safety partners had our 40th. That was a fun time. There was no question about it. I love that

Wylie Davidson ([08:17](#)):

Part of the country. I absolutely

Mike Sullivan ([08:19](#)):

Do. We're proud of it. And to have that event in BAMF, Alberta, I mean, it's just the icing on the cake. We're spoiled because it's right here. I mean, it's down the road. And whereas there are people who plan their entire lives from another country, "I'm going to go to BAMF someday and we can go there for the afternoon."

Announcer ([08:40](#)):

So

Mike Sullivan ([08:40](#)):

We're spoiled that way, but to have the event there, it was a milestone event for sure. And the committee looked to a bunch of different speakers and they selected you. And to be honest, I hadn't heard of you beforehand. And like you said a few moments ago, I was like, "Okay, well, what's this guy's story?" Like you said, he has all his limbs, all his fingers and toes, and yet your talk that day was, it really hit and in all the right ways. And I was really glad to have met you that day. And so I was always curious, I never had the opportunity to ask, "How did you get into this?" So now you've answered that question. And it's interesting because everybody has a different path. How did you get to where you are? If somebody was to ask me, "Well, it wasn't a straight line.

([09:25](#)):

I'll tell you that. " And it often isn't. So I'm glad to hear that. But when you walk into a workplace for the first time, then somebody invites you to speak and you're going to start doing your homework. So whether you walk into figuratively or physically into a workplace for the first time, what are you looking for in terms of their safety culture and how do you prepare for this?

Wylie Davidson ([09:52](#)):

Yeah. So I've actually created, it's a document that I follow. It's a guideline for me, but it's bullet points to that key conversation that I have with a client. I want to know where's your culture at? What are you doing? What brought us together to talk? Did you see me speak or was I recommended by someone else? And more importantly or most importantly, how can I help? What do you want me to give to your team to make it move the needle? What are some of your pain points? And it's not always about

([10:32](#)):

These are the things that are wrong. A lot of clients that I work with have a great culture of safety, right? They want me to kind of keep it going. And I always say, we're all playing the same sheet music. I'm just spinning at a much faster RPM. So maybe the way I present it or I deliver it, it's not any different than what Mike's saying to his team, but it's just a different way of saying it. I used the analogy of like when we were kids, our parents would tell us things all the time. "Okay, mom, got it. Whatever, dad, right off our shoulder. "And then the neighbor or a family friend or a relative would say the exact same thing and it was crystal clear that I'm the neighbor, I'm the family friend. And what's really cool about what I do is that sometimes I can say things that maybe leadership can't or maybe the safety committee can't.

([11:27](#)):

Obviously there's limitations to what you want to say, but I can get my point across or your point across in a fun, energizing, humorous way. I mean, you've seen it. I love to add humor into my presentation. It's not just get up there and preach for an hour. I get in the audience. I love working with the audience members. It's good stuff.

Mike Sullivan ([11:50](#)):

When you go into, you're hired to do this, you come in to speak and leadership, people like me, they want you to come in. Maybe we're seeing something in our safety culture that needs a bit of a shot in the arm.

Announcer ([12:03](#)):

Maybe

Mike Sullivan ([12:04](#)):

We're seeing people take a little more chances, but why do you think experienced people take shortcuts?

Wylie Davidson ([12:12](#)):

Oh God, it comes down to our human nature. It really is. It comes down to our instinct, right? It's almost like we're wired to find an easier, quicker, shorter way to do things. And when it comes to like, I'll talk to people about what are the causes of injuries? Is it environment? Is it procedures? Is it training? Is it equipment? And all of them have the underlying connection. And it's our human nature. It's our behavior. It's why we do what we do. And I mean, we're always been taught to get it done. Nobody ever said, especially when we were younger, "Hey, hurry up and get that done, but get it done safely." It's just get it done and come to me when you're done, let me know because I've got nine other things for you to do kind of thing. So it's our human nature.

([13:02](#)):

That's why we take those shortcuts. And I've had the opportunity to utilize some of the experiences that I've had, both personally as well as working in that safety world for those years before I started talking about it professionally that are great examples. And every example that I share, you watch the audience and they're all like,

([13:23](#)):

"I've done that. I've totally done that. " Oh, for sure. Yeah. Yeah. That's me. Or they're like, "Hey, he's talking about you. " That kind of thing. And I think that's part of the success or the allure to legacy is that it's almost like we're ... I've been told so many times, it's like we're just talking. It's just like, I forgot that there were 300 people in the room. I felt like you and I were just talking and that's part of my, I guess, my persona, my delivery. I just ask Doug, he'll tell you, I love to talk.

Mike Sullivan ([13:54](#)):

Well, and it's interesting. I mean, to have that one-on-one capacity in a room of hundreds of people, that's when you know you're connecting and you're not just doing it with one, you're doing it with individuals all across that room.

Announcer ([14:07](#)):

Yeah.

Mike Sullivan ([14:08](#)):

That's what I find hard today, a little harder today because since COVID, many organizations, mine included, utility safety partners included, we're completely remote now. We don't have an office. We don't have a place where we come in. And having that place where we would go every day or meet each other, that breeds culture. It certainly helps you to breed culture. I miss

([14:31](#)):

It. And I do too. I miss it. I mean, for a variety of reasons I do. For other reasons, I think that this is a way to go. I miss ... Well, I come from the age where I went to work. For the past 40 years, I went to work and now I don't. I walk into my office here at home and this is where I work. But to try and maintain that safety culture or culture of anything, it doesn't matter, in this case, it's safety. It's different today than I think than when you do have that remote work setting. And I talk with my colleagues and my senior leadership colleagues and say, "We have to address this." Saying we're ISO certified is great. That doesn't get into the deep dive here of maintaining a culture that we're trying to not only build, but maintain.

([15:27](#)):

And we had something happen recently where I thought, okay, we empower people to make the right decisions, but what compelled that person to do what they did? And they had every best intention, but it looks like maybe there was a risk that was taken that in hindsight wasn't necessary. And to me, that speaks more to the culture of what compelled them to feel that way. And I've been in that situation too many years ago. I was involved in an incident that

([16:04](#)):

Hindsight, I should never have done what I did, but I felt compelled to be somewhere at all costs. And why did I feel that way? Was that just me or was that the organization's pressure, the underlying pressure that was always there? And to this day, I'm not sure. I have a pretty good idea, but I'm not sure.

([16:26](#)):

And that's what I don't want to be. I don't want to be that organization that is imposing some kind of phantom pressure on employees that says, "At all costs, I need to do X, Y, Z." No, I want you to make the right call, but at the same time from the organization, if there's a situation that's unsafe or whatever, maybe it's weather, I don't know. Look, nobody's going anywhere today because the weather's horrible and I don't care if you had to be somewhere, that's just not happening. So when I look at that, I'm trying not to micromanage. So I'm not a micromanager, but at some point I'm going to have to step in. In that regard, and this is a long-winded diatribe to get to my question, but what's the most effective way that you think leaders like me can influence safety without micromanaging? It's a tough question.

Wylie Davidson ([17:23](#)):

Yeah. If I had to put one-

Mike Sullivan ([17:24](#)):

How can I do my job better, Wylie? How can I do my job better? That's

Wylie Davidson ([17:28](#)):

What I'm asking.

([17:29](#)):

If I could narrow it down to one word, which you know I'm not, but that one word would be sustainable, right? You need to make your message sustainable and it's got to be consistent, right? I had an old boss that said consistency wins championships, blocking and tackling, doing the not so fun things to make it a success. And that's a big pitfall with a lot of my clients, unfortunately. They'll spend all this time, energy, resources, funds, have me come out for a day and present and some will make the event very impactful. I always say stopping production is way more impactful than anything I can say because you're telling the employees, "Look, it's this important." Your safety is this important and there's nothing more important than that. I say in my presentation, "Is safety the number one priority or is it the bottom line?" Well, when it boils down to it, it's the bottom line.

[\(18:34\)](#):

That's why companies are in business, but good companies will only do that if they can do it safely. So being able to make that connection, being sustainable, succinct message, everyone's on the same page, but then what do you do with it

[\(18:49\)](#):

Tomorrow, next week, next month, three months from now? And in my previous life, I worked with a lot of companies that I helped them not only create that day, but create an outline so that they have an idea of what components go into making it sustainable, ultimately making it effective. And it could be as robust or as thin as maybe your budgets will allow, but there's a lot of things that you can do out there that have zero cost. It's just effort. So

[\(19:22\)](#):

Again, to answer your question, I think it's being sustainable, making sure that that message is not only impactful on that day, not just acute, like I used the definition before, but how do I keep it relative and in front of mind? Because when we get back to our jobs, what happens? Everything floods in. We start thinking about all the things that we didn't get a chance to do. Oh, we had the line down for three hours during that safety event, now all that work backed up. Or as professionals, as leaders, we go to a conference and it's great. We get all this awesome content and then we go back in that pile on your desk and where do you take the stuff that you just learned? Right to the bottom. I'll get to that when I get to

Mike Sullivan ([20:08](#)):

All of this. Yeah, the

Wylie Davidson ([20:09](#)):

Back corner. And then six months from now, you finally pull it out and you're like, "Who's Wylie Davidson?" "Oh yeah, I remember who that guy was." "And I say it all the time. Everything I talk about, every bullet point that I make, every reference, they are nothing more than tools. They're tools designed for you to do your job better, safer, more efficient, but you got to use them, right? You can build a shed or you can build a mansion, but if you don't use them, you're not building anything. Use the tools.

Mike Sullivan ([20:43](#)):

That's right. That's right. Yeah. So when you're out speaking and everybody's seeing you, but you're seeing everybody. And I've been in that situation too where I'm presenting to a group or whatever. And some people they're capturing every word, others might be preoccupied or whatever. How do you try to reach everybody? Do you take the time to sort of turn your body to this area where, "I don't think this guy's really hearing it. Maybe he needs to be." "Do you have this kind of vibe you're feeling when you're doing it?"

Wylie Davidson ([21:19](#)):

That's a really interesting question. And I've been doing this for a long time and I learned quickly that A, not everyone's going to give you the same reaction back. I would take it personally when people weren't listening or I felt they weren't listening or you read those, what I call the smile sheets, the responses on the feedback to the conference and there's all these ones that, " Oh my gosh, he was great, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And then there's that one that was like, he didn't do this. "And that's the one that I hang on. I'm like, " Well, why? Well, no, let me talk to that guy or that gal. Let me explain. "I realized that you're not going to get the reaction from everyone the way you would love to, right? But I even preach it in legacy, you never know the impact you're making.

([22:09](#)):

And I used the story about, I did two presentations a morning and an afternoon at an old coal burning power plant, Southern Pennsylvania, and the morning presentation was awesome. Standing room only. The guys and gals were totally engaged. I'm like, " Dude, you got a great culture of safety. "We went to lunch, I walked back in and there's one young man at the table all by himself, one. And I'm like, " Hey man, you're the early bird. "He's like, " Nope, I'm the only bird. "He quickly tried to say, " I don't want to waste your time. If you got other things to do, I get it. "And I'm like, " Now hold on, we're here. Let's do this. "And it went from a presentation to a conversation and I love to tell that story because his name was Josh and early on in that conversation, I realized how young this guy looked.

([22:56](#)):

And I'm like, " Can I ask you a personal

Announcer ([22:57](#)):

Question?

Wylie Davidson ([22:58](#)):

"And he's like, " Yeah, 21 just turned it. "And what hit me was that was my son's age at the time. And I thought to myself of that was Colin sitting there instead of Josh. I'd want whoever was playing the part of me to give that young man just as much love and attention like I gave those folks that morning like I do on stage every single time. And Mike, that became a watershed moment in my speaking career because it was

([23:24](#)):

Not even during the conversation, it was on that car ride home, I realized I could have mailed that in, couldn't I have? I could have easily turned to the safety manager and said, " I'm not doing a presentation for one. You're on the hook for the payment. Honey, I'll be home for dinner. "But that's not doing the right thing every single time, whether it's a class of one or a thousand and one. And I've been on both ends of those spectrum. So I tell myself, when I see those people that maybe I don't feel like I'm connecting, they're still listening, right? There's still those Joshes in the audience that I'm impacting. I mean, I talk a lot about personality assessments. I do workshops on this personality styles. And that's a great example of that for me to, in the moment, check down and say, " Not everyone's a D or not everyone's an I.

([24:12](#)):

"Like, I'm an I, I'm an extrovert. I love that. And my fiance, who's a great presenter, is the polar opposite. At the end of a one hour presentation, I'm here and she's here. Her tank is empty. She did a great job, but it's just a different personality. So that's kind of how I

Mike Sullivan ([24:32](#)):

Address it. Is she presenting sort of the same topics though? I mean, is she

Wylie Davidson ([24:36](#)):

Also- Yeah, so she's got a real job. She does training from entry level employee to C-suite executives at a group of hospitals in the greater Buffalo area. She's at the brink of wanting to look at retirement. So she moonlights with me from time to time. She does about five or six presentations a year where I'll go and speak leading the event and then she'll talk about the, let's talk about what Wylie, which is great because historically production and safety never really talked. There's always been that disconnect. And so she kind of brings it full circle, different voice, a different perspective, and she's phenomenal. I just watch her on stage and I'm like, " I got so much work to do. She's so good.

Mike Sullivan ([25:22](#)):

"How many years have you been doing this now, Wylie?

Wylie Davidson ([25:24](#)):

I celebrated my 10th year two weeks ago.

Mike Sullivan ([25:30](#)):

Oh, congratulations.

Wylie Davidson ([25:31](#)):

Two weeks ago it came up.

([25:35](#)):

Yeah, two weeks ago. And it's funny because I was in Texas working with a electric co-op down there and in my Facebook memories, it came up 10 years ago, first presentation. And so I commented 10 years ago was the first time and this presentation tomorrow is going to hit a little different. And it really did. And it's great because that was the second time they had me back. I came back this most recent time to do my follow up to my legacy message. It's more of a, how do I unleash that energy that we all have that we sometimes choose not to give, discretionary energy. And it was great. It was great to be able to come back and the audience was fantastic. I had some of the same people that I chatted with three years ago come back up and saw when I saw you were on the bill.

([26:20](#)):

I was so happy. So it's cool. It's cool that we have that kind of relationship. Hopefully you and I can work together again at some point. Well,

Mike Sullivan ([26:27](#)):

I hope so. And I'm just curious, so how many presentations are you doing a year roughly now?

Wylie Davidson ([26:34](#)):

So conferences-

Mike Sullivan ([26:34](#)):

Nature varies.

Wylie Davidson ([26:36](#)):

It does. It varies. Last year was a phenomenal year. And it's funny, in my previous life, I said when I worked with that safety supply company doing this, I also worked with a lot of other ... Eric Duger is a great example, right? Eric's another New York boy, lives a couple hours down the street in Waterloo. We've been friends forever. And I would work with other presenters. We would have people come in and speak at our conference or our event. And I would tell those people that are just starting, it takes three years. It takes three years of planting seeds, watering

Announcer ([27:11](#)):

Them,

Wylie Davidson ([27:12](#)):

And then walking away. Some spread up quick, some sprout up after a couple of years, but they all come to fruition at some point. And last year was that for legacy at least was that turning point. It was a phenomenal year. So to answer your question, conferences, 20 to 25, but then there are so many, what I classify as end users, those clients that go to your event that say, "I want my team to hear this too." And I don't know what I love more. I mean, I love the conferences because everybody's already drinking from the fountain, right? We're all like- They're

Mike Sullivan ([27:49](#)):

All jacked up anyway. Yeah.

Wylie Davidson ([27:50](#)):

They're excited to be there. And from that point, I'm like, "Okay, cool. I'm going to give you some tools to make your program better." But I love talking to the end user. Two weeks ago, I was

Announcer ([28:01](#)):

Doing

Wylie Davidson ([28:01](#)):

An event local and I had an attendee member come up and literally hugged me, just came up, gave me a big, huge hug. And he's like, "Brother, man, this is exactly what we need to hear." And they have a great culture of safety. They already are drinking from the fountain. Again, just a different perspective. I'll saying the same thing, different delivery. And I never get tired of having those conversations. I will never run out of an event. I will wait until everyone I've had an opportunity to interact with. I can, because I love it. I love hearing what my thoughts and ideas and how they impact them. It's good stuff.

Mike Sullivan ([28:40](#)):

It's

Wylie Davidson ([28:40](#)):

Very

Mike Sullivan ([28:40](#)):

Blessed. What's one venue that, besides BAMF, of course, which had to be the best ever, no. What's one venue that sticks out in your mind?

Wylie Davidson ([28:50](#)):

You joke, but Lake Louise, since I was a kid, was on my bucket list of places to visit in my lifetime. And I apologize, I interrupted. What was one of the most memorable ones?

Mike Sullivan ([29:04](#)):

Yeah. Well, what's one that sticks out in your mind, whether it was a venue or just the people, the sheer number of people, there's got to be a couple that stick out in your mind.

Wylie Davidson ([29:12](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. Well, obviously the conversation of one with Josh is probably one of my most impactful ones. I recently did an event for a group of crane operators, riggers, guys that are working in outdoor environment. And I did fostering, which again, a lot of it is, it's emotional intelligence. It's your discretionary energy. It's, why do I do what I do? And me and the contact were both the like, we're like, "Let's see how this goes." And it was great. And it was great. Every one of them leaning in, heads going up and down and conversations afterwards. So that was another one to me that told me personally, "You're doing the right thing. Just keep doing what you're doing. You're hitting your mark."

Mike Sullivan ([29:59](#)):

So you've You've been doing this for 10 years, but how do you not get complacent?

Wylie Davidson ([30:05](#)):

One thing that I do is I'm always trying to make my message better. I'm always coming up with a different way, a more unique way, a different presentation. As funny you asked this question, yesterday morning I was having a conversation with one of the guys that I play hockey with. We were talking about our routines in the morning. I said, I usually get up around this time and that time that I give to myself every morning, I use it to energize my day. I use it to use it for creativity. I listen to podcasts. I read books. There's all these different things that I do to charge my batteries. And it's funny because when I first started this process, I had this notebook and I would write down all these thoughts and ideas and I'm like, okay, some way I'm going to use that. And some of these books are three, four, five years old, but I keep filling up these notebooks.

([31:04](#)):

And I'm like, wait a minute, I wrote something about that. So I go back.

Announcer ([31:10](#)):

It's my

Wylie Davidson ([31:10](#)):

Process of just finding it. So I don't get complacent because even if it's a place or I've already been to. I'm so fortunate to do what I do for a living. If you would've told me when I graduated high school that I would travel North America, including some beautiful places in Canada, the world, I've been to Denmark delivering safety messages to a group of eight different nations all in one room. I mean, incredible. I would've told you you were crazy. You know what I wanted to

do? I wanted to be a radio DJ. Put me in a little room with some records and away I go. WYLO radio, that kind of thing. But I've been so blessed to be able to do what I do. And I think about some of those moments. Another great one is, again, in Canada, maybe it is Canadian that I'm missing the most, but I was in Vernon, British Columbia.

[\(32:10\)](#):

I was working for a client that had sites all over North America and we flew into Kelowna, drove up to Vernon. And I remember asking the hotel guy, "This is a beautiful part of the country. Give me a hike. Don't kill me, but don't give me a walk in the park either." And he said to me, he goes, "You take this road. Road goes from blacktop to gravel to dirt. You're going to think you're lost. Keep going. And then eventually you'll get to this spot." And it led me to the end of this, like a park where there was only one other car in the parking lot, never saw that person. We must have walked in different paths around the path, but it led me to one of those beautiful lakes that look off as far as the eye can see kind of thing. And I remember sitting down and thinking to myself, how did I get here?

[\(33:00\)](#):

Just some kid from Tanawan to New York with a high school diploma, how did I get to where I'm at? So I get a little emotional just telling that story. It never gets old for me. I never take a presentation for granted. I never take a location for granted. I'm fortunate enough to be going back again this year up to Erst, Ontario. And I called it Hurst. And then Doug said, "Oh no, it's Earst." Earst. And I've never been that far north until last year. And the joke was between Doug and I ... The morning of the presentation, it was May 1st and I came out to get in my vehicle and it was covered in like five inches of snow. And even from Buffalo, I'm like, "Seriously? Right? It's May. You're ways

Mike Sullivan ([33:50](#)):

North.

Wylie Davidson ([33:50](#)):

Yeah,

Mike Sullivan ([33:50](#)):

You're ways north." What a

Wylie Davidson ([33:52](#)):

Great group though. They're having me back again this year to do fostering, to keep that. Again, a great example of a company that gets it, that has a great culture of safety and they just want to keep moving that needle. Fantastic. So yeah, it never gets old for me.

Mike Sullivan ([34:08](#)):

That's good. And you're talking about stuff, I mean safety, which can be emotional, it can be heavy. And to hear that you'd be able to stay grounded by taking in the local environment or whatever and absorbing what's going on, I think that's probably one of those things you're doing, you're not even realizing. This is how I maintain that equilibrium because when you're talking safety, sometimes you're being pulled into a site or a location to give a talk because something happened. And it's probably very hard not to get too far into that, but you got to keep that equilibrium, that level. I know for myself, if I'm listening to a speaker, and it is one of the, as we

said earlier, perhaps a victim presentation, it's really hard for me not to feel that emotion. Again, Charlie Moorcraft, for what? Why did I do this?

Announcer ([35:06](#)):

And

Mike Sullivan ([35:07](#)):

Very powerful and it stayed with me. And when I had a situation that happened to me years ago and I thought, what the hell did I do this for? And it really made me ask the question. And to this day, I'm not really quite sure, but I know what I did wasn't the right choice. I made the wrong choice at some point. And I put myself, it was only me, but I put myself at serious risk. And thankfully, I live to tell the tale. But when I think back and you can almost get yourself into a sweat. For what? Why did this happen? So I'm glad to hear that you're able to find those moments that keep you grounded because it's not easy because you're taking on a very emotional task.

Wylie Davidson ([35:45](#)):

Yeah. And I'll be honest with you, I've had many occurrences where somebody would come up to me after a presentation in tears, right? I talk about our family, our parents, and are they proud of you and what you do? And maybe I talk about how COVID impacted us. I lost both of my in-laws due to COVID, two relatively healthy people for their age taking from us like that. And so the point, the takeaway from that is there's a lot of things out there that still can take us down, regardless of what we do for a living.

([36:19](#)):

So why not control what you can control, right? Do the right things, be part of the program, follow the procedures, have the right mindset. But there's those times where, for example, I worked with the Department of Transportation in Tennessee a few years ago, and they were coming off to fatalities. And when we first started working with them, it was still raw. They weren't done processing. And here we are talking about growing a culture of safety and they're like, "Could we talk about the elephant in the room kind of thing?" And it took some really hard conversations, some raw conversations to kind of connect that. And from that point on, oh my gosh, it was one of my favorite clients I've ever worked with. I still work with them in different capacities like we're doing an event. We're actually talking about my role in their culture journey at a conference where all the DOTs in the entire country of the United States are meeting.

([37:22](#)):

So I'm excited to just share my perspective. It's not to talk ... I'm not doing my presentation. I'm more talking about the sustainability, the nuts and bolts to it. So it's pretty cool.

Mike Sullivan ([37:33](#)):

So you've been doing ... Again, going back to you, I've been doing this for 10 years, you're busy, you're going all over the North America predominantly, but you've been to other places in the world. What's something that you've learned that has been a predominant message back to you that just came from your experiences? What's something that's shaping you?

Wylie Davidson ([37:53](#)):

I've learned that we are all the same when you boil it down. We might wear different masks, we may wear different clothes, we may have different personas, but at the end of the day, we're all

the same. And I'm finding that my message would resonate just as effectively with, again, that entry level employee to that C-suite executive. And I guess the big takeaway for me from that is, is I use the analogy a lot of, if we treated everyone like we did when we were in elementary school, how much easier would it be? The things we learned in elementary school are the foundation and the fundamentals that we should continue to move on. Now, if you use a tree analogy, we're in the trunk, right? We're all the same. And then as we get older, junior high, high school, graduation, college, we all branch off and we become different parts of the tree, but we're all from the same spot.

[\(38:48\)](#):

And I've always treated my friends like that. I've got friends that have gone on to do great things. I've had things that maybe bad times have fallen on them, but I treat them all the same. And probably a little bit more harsh to the people that have done great things because I'll check you down like, "Oh, no, no, you're not that person. You're not Esquire. Dude, you're Jeff that I went to junior high with. " That kind of thing. And it's great because if we all did that, if we all just looked at each other in that same light, how much easier would it be? And so to answer your question, what have I learned? What I've learned is that we're all the same and that for me personally, I've learned that I've got a purpose, right? I've got a calling. We've all got a calling in life.

[\(39:36\)](#):

It sounds hokey to some, but I truly believe that I was meant to do this. Just lucky enough

Mike Sullivan ([39:43](#)):

To be able to do it. Well, and that's something that I don't think a lot of people can say, right? We're always searching- I

Wylie Davidson ([39:50](#)):

Feel guilty

Mike Sullivan ([39:50](#)):

Sometimes. I really do. I really do. Yeah. Am I doing what I meant to do? Am I making the impact I need to impact? And I love to hear what you're saying. When we boil it all down, we're all the same. And I've always felt that. I've had the opportunity to see and be part of organizations that had tremendous leaders. And I've also been unfortunate to see some of those organizations shift to a leader that was absolutely horrible.

[\(40:18\)](#):

And then you see the leadership beneath that, that was so enamored by this great leader before. And now we have this other leader that is just like, "Where did you come from? Under which rock did you crawl?" And all those same people are just holding that person up and thinking, "Do you not see what I'm seeing?" And this is going to diminish this culture we have at this great organization, this great company. And I had that opportunity to see that. And for this little organization of utility safety partners, I mean, it's not a massive corporation, but it's a little corporation that I have the ability to influence. And then my colleagues who I work with every day, they have the ability to influence and it has to be meaningful. It has to be real. I don't want to ... Okay, yeah, Mike, you're president. Oh, that's for out there.

[\(41:13\)](#):

Internal, I'm Mike Sullivan, you're Cher Kirk, you're Gary, you're Travis. We're all people. We all have a job to do and we got to work together. I don't care. Titles, whatever. We have to be held

ourselves accountable and we have to hold each other accountable. And that's how I've always tried to approach my role here because I've seen how that can work so effectively

[\(41:39\)](#):

Elsewhere. And I've seen how quickly that can erode and disappear and disintegrate in mere moments in an organization. And so one of the things, and this is, again, a long-winded diatribe to get to the question, when you see change, when you see a change, like you've had clients where you've been once, twice, maybe three times, have you ever seen that experience that, wow, this isn't the same place I came to three years ago, five years ago. What's changed? And how does that motivate you to really impose here? And this message is important.

Wylie Davidson [\(42:19\)](#):

Well, before I answer that question, I want to just comment about what the beginning part of your diatribe, I believe you used is.

Mike Sullivan [\(42:27\)](#):

Yeah, my soliloquy.

Wylie Davidson [\(42:28\)](#):

Yeah, right. To capsulize that, and it's something I firmly believe in is you never make it about you, right? It's about them. That's

Mike Sullivan [\(42:37\)](#):

Right.

Wylie Davidson [\(42:38\)](#):

It's about us, right? And a true testament to that type of leader are the people you surround yourself with, people like Cher, Kirk, that you mentioned, right? Phenomenal. She saw me a thousand years ago in Phoenix, Arizona, and she's like, "Someday, someday you're going to be on my stage." And thank you, Cher, for doing that, being diligent, but it's those like-minded individuals that we surround ourselves. That's what makes a team effective and productive in work. It's not ever about me, it's about us. I've had, like you said, some good bosses and bad bosses. Right. Yeah. Excellence breeds excellence is one of my favorite lines. And like I said, we've had good bosses, leaders that you would run through a wall for, and then you work for guys that you're like, "How did you ever get in a position to lead others?" You're doing more damages.

[\(43:30\)](#):

How did you get there? Good. And man, I can think of a handful of them that I've unfortunately had, but I could also think of a lot of people that have impacted me positively. So to answer your question, I don't see that very often when I go back, but I do see it when I initially have that conversation I talked about in the beginning of this conversation, that checklist qualifying, "Why are you asking me to come and talk? How do you see me helping?" Because there are a lot of times we're out there where they talk a good game, but then when you scratch the surface, you got some issues. And a lot of that, I pick up unspoken cues in the audience, right? I pick it up in conversations afterwards. I talk in my legacy message about the sniper, how I had a guy in my audience that was ... And we all have them.

[\(44:21\)](#):

We all know who that person is. It's a guy or gal that this is stupid, don't need to be here, don't pay attention. But at one point, that guy flipped and he went from being disgruntled to grunted, right? Head bobbing up and down. And he was picking up and I'm laying down. And afterwards, I had a conversation with him and he was very brutally honest. He's like, "Wylie, there is no culture of safety here. It's me watching on for myself because

(44:46):

Nobody else is buying into it. " But

Announcer (44:48):

If

Wylie Davidson (44:48):

You remember in that story, I had another phone call a couple days later and the safety manager says, "You're not going to believe who just joined my safety committee." And he brought some buddies with them.

(45:01):

That right there, even your reaction, I always say it's like finding money in your winter coat doesn't happen all the time, but man, when it does, doesn't that feel good? So if it's just one person that sniper that was like the total epitome of negativity, got it, man, I'm doing the right thing. I'm doing the right thing. This message is working. And again, I don't want to make it sound like every client I work with is a dumpster fire, right? They're not all hot messes. A lot of people, like I mentioned earlier, there's already people that are already getting it. And those people use this message to keep that fire going, right? To keep it stoked. But there are those people

(45:50):

Where you have a conversation with them and you're like, "Yeah, there's some work to be done." And so then I approach it differently. There's a lot of ... I have an initial conversation with the client to kind of get the five W's out of the way, who, what, where, when, why, right? And then I'll have another follow-up and say, "Let's talk about how you visualize this event going. How can I be as beneficial as I can for you? My goal is to make you look good." And then what do you want to take away with? What are the tools that I could leave you with to help keeping this move forward? And there's even a little bit of a marketing approach to it all. And something simple as just having a banner for them all to sign or a giveaway. We all give away things, nitcaps, t-shirts.

(46:40):

I mean, how many, I can't tell you how many hoodies I have with clients' names on them, and I love every one of them, and I try to wear them all the time. But what else are you giving back to your employer that they can use that's not a knit cap, that's not a sticker to put on their hard hat. It's something they could use every day, and that's part of what I try to provide.

Mike Sullivan (47:03):

So what's next for you, Wylie? Where are you off to next, and what does

Wylie Davidson (47:07):

This look like to you? Oh, gosh. Where am I at next? I'm back out to Oklahoma in a couple of weeks. We're doing an event out there, and then I'd have to look at the calendar. There is so much ... It's funny because from January to June, it's just go, go, go, go, go. And

[\(47:24\)](#):

Fortunately, unfortunately, it's great January, February, and March, because let's face it, weather in Buffalo, not so great, right? Yeah. Yeah. So you love getting out and everybody wants to have a meeting and a nice warm client or a climate, right? We're going to Tampa, we're going to Orlando, Phoenix, California. I always joke and said, my old boss, he never went to Awatana, Minnesota. He went to Orlando. I went to the middle of Michigan or whatever. Weird hell that is, isn't it? Yes. Yes. Right. Well, with privilege comes, it's a reward. But again, I never take those. I always ask my client two very important questions when we're in the setting up process. I ask them, "Where should I eat when I'm there? And don't tell me Applebee's. I want to know where would you take your family?" And I may have asked you the same question because we stayed in Calgary the first night and what should I see in your city or your town?

[\(48:23\)](#):

What are you proud of? I've had so many cool experiences just by asking that second question. I grew up in a town between Buffalo and Igor Falls called Tanawanda, New York. Our sister city is North Tanawanda, very creative. And there's also a town of Tanawanda too, right? Let's figure that out. But North Tanawanda was also the home of the original carousel. You would go to an amusement park and the horses that went up and down. It was built in my hometown. And I was in Awatana, Minnesota, I think it was. I can't remember now for sure, but their zoo had a carousel and they didn't

Announcer [\(49:07\)](#):

Know

Wylie Davidson [\(49:08\)](#):

The backstory. And they were so proud of this carousel. They're like, "Oh my gosh, we had it imported from an amusement park back east." And I'm like, "Really? And tell me more about it. " And sure enough, built in my hometown. When they found that out, the zoo was closed. It was wintertime, at least during the day. And they literally opened it up, fired it up, got a chance to ride on it. They were so happy with the fact that someone from their hometown was linked to their proud pride and joy part of their environment. That's cool. So yes, it's great getting on stage and making a difference, but I love those, like that Vernon story. I love doing those things too. So it's just-

Mike Sullivan [\(49:53\)](#):

A personal experience.

Wylie Davidson [\(49:54\)](#):

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Mike Sullivan [\(49:55\)](#):

So where can people find you, Wylie?

Wylie Davidson [\(49:58\)](#):

Yeah. Well, the internet is always the easiest way. Leavingasafetylegacy.com is the website. Once you click on, you'll see this big head, you can't mistake it. But either that, I have my link to my personal phone number right there on the link. I don't go through any type of firm or handling

bureaus or anything like that. It's just me. I try to keep my head in my, what's the word I'm looking

Mike Sullivan ([50:27](#)):

For? Your humble beginnings?

Wylie Davidson ([50:28](#)):

Yes. Yeah. I try to keep that intact. Yeah, right. When you do call, I answer the phone. When you email, I'm the one answering. Maybe that's part of just the business practice I believe in, but I've, like I said before, when I had these conversations, people tell me, it's like, I feel like I've known you forever. You're just a guy. You're just a guy that happens to sell what I'm buying kind of thing. So it's good stuff. It's good stuff. But yeah, the internet through this, through channels, right? So yeah.

Mike Sullivan ([51:02](#)):

Yep. Well, Wylie, thanks for doing this. Oh, my pleasure. When you came and you presented at our 40th anniversary three years ago now, I mean, that was a celebration for us. It was not just a safety conference. It was a party. We were celebrating our forefathers that took the time, the shareholders to say, "We need to do something here in this province." And where we've come, we've come a long way since then, and there's a long way to go. I mean, the baton will be passing- Never ends. ... to others. Yeah. But for that moment, we were going to enjoy us. We were going to celebrate us and celebrate everybody who came before us. And you were part of that.

Wylie Davidson ([51:43](#)):

Yeah. If I could cheeky insert, you were celebrating your legacy.

Mike Sullivan ([51:48](#)):

Yeah, exactly. We really were. And you were part of that. And it was great. I'm so glad Cher suggested you. And she was pretty firm on that. And I think we both know Cher that when she's firm, that's pretty much it. That's where we're going.

Wylie Davidson ([52:05](#)):

But

Mike Sullivan ([52:05](#)):

No, thanks for doing this.

Wylie Davidson ([52:06](#)):

Yeah. Those relationships that you make, I had the opportunity to meet Cliff Midel, that same event. I did my first podcast with Jim and James, coffee with Jim and James. Those guys, I've become good friends with. Side note, my fiance turned 60 yesterday and I bought her one of those blow up things. And if you've ever seen his Jimmy Shimmy, right? And so I did a video and I sent it to him and I'm like, "It's catching on. " So the point I'm making is you create those relationships that linger long after the interaction, right?

Announcer ([52:43](#)):

Yep.

Wylie Davidson ([52:43](#)):

Yeah. I always like to say my presentation isn't transactional, it's transitional. It's just a way for you to take it from one point and carry it to the next.

Mike Sullivan ([52:53](#)):

Well, again, thanks for doing this. Good luck to you. Thank you. And I do hope our paths cross again and happy birthday to your fiancé. She and I are Aries. She and I are Aries. We're two days apart, so there you go. Oh,

Wylie Davidson ([53:05](#)):

No kidding. Are you coming up or just celebrated? Coming up?

Mike Sullivan ([53:08](#)):

Just celebrated. Yeah, a few days before her. Nice. Thank you. It was a milestone one for me. So I just turned 60.

Wylie Davidson ([53:14](#)):

Her as well. Her as well.

Mike Sullivan ([53:16](#)):

You

Wylie Davidson ([53:17](#)):

Guys are like spirit animals.

Mike Sullivan ([53:19](#)):

I think so. That's got to be what it is. I'm both from back East.

Wylie Davidson ([53:23](#)):

And you'll probably agree, and she says all the time, it's probably the worst time of year to have a birthday because it's not nice outside. You can't go outside. So we always make it ... Normally we make it her birthday month and we try to go away. We try to do nice things, but her turning 60, it's now the year of Amy. So all year long we've got things planned. I jokingly say that the Chinese have been notified. They realize it's the year of Amy. They're trying to decide what animal best represents her, but no, it's all good stuff. So happy birthday to you as well. Well,

Mike Sullivan ([53:58](#)):

Thank you very much. And I look forward to seeing you again soon. Yeah,

Wylie Davidson ([54:02](#)):

I appreciate the opportunity. Thank you.

Mike Sullivan ([54:08](#)):

Thanks so much for joining me on the podcast today, and I want to thank my guest, Wylie Davidson, for joining me. He was fantastic when he came out to our event, as I mentioned, during the podcast in BAMF a couple of years back. And if you're looking for somebody who's a great speaker and provide that motivational message, he's somebody should seriously look at. I also want to thank our producers, stories and strategies, and I hope you choose to follow this podcast on any directory you're listing on. Please do leave a rating. It means a lot to us. You can follow us on X@utility_safety. We're also big on LinkedIn, Instagram, and Facebook. If you'd like to leave us a note, maybe you have an episode idea. You can email us at info@utilitysafety.ca and just put podcast in the subject header and it'll get to us. I'm Mike Sullivan.

[\(54:59\)](#):

I am the president of Utility Safety Partners. Click to know what's above and below because one click costs you nothing and not clicking that could cost you everything.