

Michael Port ([00:00:02](#)):

Gentlemen, welcome to the front row dad podcast. While it's common to hear men say family first, those guys are working long hours and finding it really difficult to juggle all the priorities on this show. You're going to hear unscripted conversations with guys who are as committed to winning at home as they are to winning at work. Each week we're going to share a new conversation digging into the strengths and the struggles of guys just like you and me, to help us level up our dad game, strengthen our marriage, succeed in business, and stay healthy along the way. If you're new to the show, I'm John Vroman, married to the free spirit known as Tatiana, father of two boys, tiger and ocean and living in Austin, Texas. Let's get right into our next conversation.

Michael Port ([00:00:47](#)):

Michael port, we're doing this man, welcome to the show.

Michael Port ([00:00:51](#)):

Thank you so much. I've been looking forward to this with a little bit of anxiety if I'm being candid.

Michael Port ([00:00:56](#)):

Is that because just opening up and talking about your family is something you don't do a lot?

Michael Port ([00:01:00](#)):

Correct

Michael Port ([00:01:01](#)):

on the mic.

Michael Port ([00:01:02](#)):

Yeah. It is a, and also this is such an unusual time for most all of us. That's the challenge is that we're facing are a little bit more vibrant. Yeah. Uh, so, uh, the timing of it of course has just made me a little bit more anxious and I love what you do and I love the community and I think it's such an incredibly important work. They're very often, if I'm going to do a podcast, I'm just going to talk about what I know how to do well and what I teach. And I've got language for all of that. But sometimes talking about things that are a little bit more personal and intimate and difficult, I don't have as much language already a formulated. Uh, so I think it just produces a little bit of anxiety.

Michael Port ([00:01:46](#)):

I agree, man. I think it's cool to be able to step into that uncomfortableness. You know what I think is cool about that for you, Michael, is like you get a chance to feel what your students feel all the time coming through grad program. That's where they are all the time.

Michael Port ([00:02:01](#)):

So true. Oh God. It's so true and I love them for it. It's funny, Amy and I were talking about this the other day. I have two very different perspectives on the different types of students I work with. You know, if I'm working with somebody who's a professional and they've been doing it for a long time and they come in with just a little bit too much pride and a little bit of a chip on their shoulder and they don't want to do the hard work, I can be a pretty tough and demanding teacher. Yeah, and sometimes I'll take

the approach of, look, that's your fricking job, so just do it. But for those folks who haven't built their identity around performing and speaking, Oh my God, I have so much empathy because, and experience that one had as a child or as in their twenties or even thirties that was traumatic when they tried to use some performance or, or speak in a way that was a fully self expressed and it didn't go as they, it might.

Michael Port ([00:03:00](#)):

That can present real significant trauma for many, many years to come. And so I've just got a huge bleeding heart, you know, for folks that have that kind of trauma and helping them work through that is really incredible opportunity and a gift. So I vacillate between the two. Yes, it's your job. It's just do it. And for the other folks, you know, I'll sit and talk with them for hours about it and how I understand so deeply how traumatic, you know, these kinds of experiences can be when I hear you say that I can't help it. Think about how this relates to my relationship with Tatiana. How does all that relate to my relationship and raising kids? So as tiger is now 10 oceans five this idea of people learning to use their voice, right? And the way in which we interact with that, how we share our ideas, what stories we're trying to communicate.

Michael Port ([00:03:53](#)):

I had this experience, Michael, you'll, I think you'll appreciate this one where it's maybe a year ago, Tatiana and I are with our counselor, right? And we're two years ago we went through a really rough spot and I think since then we've been like on an uphill climb. But I was explaining to the counselor, one of my frustrations, and I'll, I'll keep this story short just to get to the punchline, which the punchline was very simply this, she said, John, yes, consider that your world of words is no better than Tatiana's world of feelings. And you consider the fact that your wife came to the United States at 18 years old, not speaking a word of English. This is her second language. She is a full time mom and you have spent a lifetime trying to master the art of communication as a coach, as a speaker, as a copywriter.

Michael Port ([00:04:47](#)):

And you put all this value on being able to say things and save them the right way and all these skills, but yet just remember that that doesn't make you any better than she is because you've studied that, that as a human having a human experience that her world of feelings, it's just as valuable. Yeah. And I was like, okay. Yeah. I walked away a changed person from that day and looked at it very differently cause I did elevate myself because I was like better at that, you know? And so I think that's really interesting of having that both, you know, you want to challenge somebody to be a better communicator in your life and at the same time have compassion for the fact that they may be where they are in their journey and for likely a lot of good reasons. Everybody's got a story of course. Yeah. I think that would, that makes me think of is the concept of safety first. Hmm. Because one of the things that, that has become clear to me over time is that it's very hard. Four someone to here the content of our message if they don't safe

Michael Port ([00:05:58](#)):

when they're hearing it. So I'll give you an example. Let's say you have a teenage daughter and she was always very engaged in music. She plays the piano and she's always been engaged in her studies and her, uh, community activities. Uh, but she wasn't super social. And then she meets a guy and the guy is not your faith. I mean, he's, he's maybe just a couple of years away from doing something that's gonna landman juvie. Do you know, you're just not comfortable with this guy. But he's opened up a world of social, the experiences for her that it is exciting and new and for, you know, for better or worse that he

makes her feel special in some way. So if you just go to her and say, listen, this guy's a jerk. I don't want you to see this guy. You know, he's bad news.

Michael Port ([00:06:57](#)):

You're not doing anything you used to do or you're supposed to do. That's it. Well, she's not going to feel safe because something that she is excited about is being taken away from her. And so it's natural to expect that her response is going to be violent in some way, not physically violent, but she's going to rebel. Probably. She may get angry and next thing you know, you're in a significant conflict. But if you can get clear on an objective and you say, well, listen, obviously if I have my druthers, I don't want her going out with this guy, but is that really what my concern is or am I just concerned that she's losing touch with the things that have? Uh huh. Develop the character that she has now, her music, her studies or community involvement, et cetera. Well, how can I help protect her relationship with those things while still making her feel safe?

Michael Port ([00:07:53](#)):

So if you can get clear on your objective, you say, all right, my objective is simply to help her stay engaged with the things that I know makes her who she is now. And so she doesn't lose sight of that and really recreate herself in a way that is maybe less sophisticated or mature. So you go to her and say, listen, my intention is not to break you up with this guy. Although honestly, if I'm being candid, he's not my favorite, but that's not my intention because I trust that you are making good decisions and if you want to spend time with this guy, then I want to help support that. My intention, however, is to help you feel and stay connected to the things that I know you love, like your music, your schoolwork, and your community activities. So my intention is not to break you guys up. My intention is to help you stay connected with those things. If they're still important to you and as a result in that moment she may feel much safer because you're not going to take anything away from her. Instead

Michael Port ([00:08:56](#)):

you're showing her that I trust that you're going to make good decisions and I want to help you stay connected with things that I know you love and as a result you may have a much more positive conversation and although yes, you may still date this guy, you may still be able to support her in staying engaged with the things. Okay. Do you think are also important to our development? Yeah, and that's safety first and so you know, during any period of life, but especially when we have high stakes situation, those are high stress situations. If we can, I'm going to safety first, likely to have much more connected conversations with the people that we care about and the outcomes of those conversations will likely be more productive and positive rather than conflict oriented or conflict. Phil? Yeah. Yeah. I want to connect a few dots here.

Michael Port ([00:09:45](#)):

Even for myself as I talk about all this, because we opened up by talking a little bit about this. There's a heightened emotion around all of what's happening in the world right now. I feel like that's consistent amongst a lot of the conversations I'm having with my friends and it's just a heightened level of like, Whoa, like this is intense, right? Yeah. You see videos where no police officer is telling somebody you have no rights anymore, your rights have been revoked, things like that that are just like, okay, I uh, I'm perked up when I hear stuff like that. Yeah. Right. And so there's a safety issue there. At least for me and my family, I've considered safety and protection at a level that I haven't before. Yesterday somebody

called me and said, Hey, let's talk about the psychological safety of groups brought up to me yesterday and then I think about what you're talking about right now.

Michael Port ([00:10:38](#)):

I think about the work you do with training people to be amazing speakers and that there has to be a psychological safety element there. For sure. For an audience to be able to really engage. And then I thought about, it's something that my buddy John Bergoff had brought to me recently, I'm loosely quoting this, but I think it was Google who their teams were deciding what elements allowed for us to be the most innovative, creative, collaborative as we move forward. And psychological safety for that group was at was paramount. Yeah. But without it, it doesn't move. So I want to stick in this wheelhouse for a minute. I'm not quite sure exactly where to take all that. Okay. Maybe what I could do is just, if we could go drill down into your home right now, I'm personally curious as to how is this showing up for you right now at home when it comes to protecting your family or creating a safe place to have dialogue and how is this manifesting at a very intimate level with you and your kids and Amy, et cetera. Sure. So I love how you were able to see the 30,000 foot perspective on safety and how it shows up in so many different areas of our life. And frankly, there are very few areas where I don't see it being

Michael Port ([00:11:53](#)):

the gateway to either a really positive

Michael Port ([00:11:56](#)):

Oh, productive relationships or but negative and potentially destructive relationships. Because you know, as you said right now, one of the reasons that our emotions feel so heightened is because we may feel a lack of safety in a number of different areas. So we may feel some financial insecurity, which means we don't feel safe. There are as many as one in five kids in New York city who have food insecurity, right? And if you have food insecurity, it's very hard to feel safe in any aspect of your life. And so there are many areas we're in the port, a family, we're very, very fortunate because we have a certain amount of security [inaudible] many others [inaudible] lucky enough to have. And so every day we make a connection together as a family to try to remember the amount of the security that we do have, even though there's insecurity in our business right now, because of course we can't run our programs or events.

Michael Port ([00:12:58](#)):

There's insecurity in our health because anytime we potentially face exposure, we could get sick. And that's for everybody in the world. And so there are, you know, in the kids have certain amount of insecurity that they're facing. For example, just today, literally right before this podcast, our youngest Ruby, who's 11 had a bit of a breakdown because her friend group is getting together for the first time since quarantine went into effect for us and their families. And she's been talking to them on zoom all day long, doing homework together, socializing together, playing games together. And it's been actually incredibly meaningful and she's been managing this situation wonderfully. But this was the first time, first time that they were getting together and we said, no, we're not ready. It's due soon. And we're very close and we've been talking about when and what the procedures might look like, but it was just a little too much for her 11 year old brain to handle.

Michael Port ([00:14:00](#)):

And she really broke down about it. And so the question is, well, what's the reason? Oh, there's probably a number of different reasons, but one of them is there's a certain amount of insecurity that a child may feel if they can't go and socialize as soon as their other friends are socializing. Because you may lose some social status, you may feel left out. And all of that is a significant insecurity for anyone at any age, let alone a young child. And she was at first inconsolable. And so you have to decide, well, what do you do? You can't just say, yes, okay, we're going to let you go do that because it feels so hard sometimes. One of the things that quarantine has felt like for us, and we've had many family discussions around it, is that it's an opportunity for us to lean into the concept of being able to sacrifice something in the moment for something better in the future, which is one of the most difficult things, four human beings to do, let alone for kids to do.

Michael Port ([00:15:02](#)):

And so even last night, uh, Jake wanted to place a door dash order for some junk food, which we don't do a lot of. But every once in a while, you know, we're very healthy, everybody exercises and, and we're okay with a little junk food for the kids here and there. But I said, no. I said, but I'm going to put in an order tomorrow. And so if you want to add it to the shopping list, I'll add it to the shopping list. She said, Oh yeah, but understand why can't I have it now? Rather than tomorrow is the same amount of money. It's the same amount of junk. It's not going to be better for me if you put it in tomorrow. I said, well sometimes parents just have the ability to say no because that's their right. But also because I want to make sure [inaudible] you have opportunities to delay gratification.

Michael Port ([00:15:48](#)):

And sometimes that's the only reason I'll say no. He's like, but it's not logical that, and he's 15 and very logical. I said, well, it depends on your perspective. Uh, you know, well now you see logic. But I completely understand that it doesn't seem logical. Maybe even seems nonsensical, but that is part of what we are doing now is continuing to work on our ability to say no to some immediate need in service of a larger, more important need down the road. And if we can do that, if we can develop that ability, Oh man, life is much easier. So he's been getting into reading about dopamine and how our bodies and our brain is affected by dopamine and he's, I've been realizing that if he can stop getting little dopamine hits by either just listen to some music or going on social or whatever before he does his homework, then he gets more dopamine hits from doing his homework because he's like accomplishes a really complicated or complex math problem that's going to give them a dopamine hit. But if he listens to the music beforehand, it won't be as big as the music and it won't feel as much. Yep.

Michael Port ([00:16:54](#)):

That's a huge aha for 15

Michael Port ([00:16:57](#)):

it's a huge offer. That's right. Exactly. So that's, but I think quarantine is, he's been giving us that opportunity or forcing us to [inaudible] to focus a little bit more on those things because sometimes to feel safe we just want to lean into the easy thing that gives us that dopamine hit in ordering the food or saying yes to going and seeing the friends or whatever it is, uh, that, uh, we have to delay that gratification to, uh, you know, both for our benefit in the future and also for the benefit of the people around us in the future. And that's sometimes challenging.

Michael Port ([00:17:34](#)):

Yeah, man, I have like eight directions that I want to take this conversation and about half that's this because it showed up in my heart when you were talking. I've had the privilege of working with you and your program, your grad programs killer. I've told you guys that a million times. I'm a huge fan.

Michael Port ([00:17:49](#)):

I tripled my speaking fee when I was there, like just really,

Michael Port ([00:17:53](#)):

and you delivered and I, I became a huge fan of yours during that time. I would say I was already a fan going into it. But when you spend 16 days with somebody and you see them interact with all different types of people and I walked away feeling like I was more dialed into who Michael port is. Thank you. You seem to be so cool, calm and collected. You seem to be, you seem to be really dialed in to your emotions and when you speak it's like every word matters, right? It's, it's every word matters. I'm just wondering like when you get your buttons pushed, cause I'm just guessing that you have to get your buttons pushed occasionally. Like what really rubs you the wrong way man. They can. How when you do get pushed and you start to sense that you might be getting triggered or annoyed or frustrated or whatever that word is.

Michael Port ([00:18:45](#)):

Like how do you deal in that space also? Like how do you keep those around you safe from your internal, and maybe I'm completely projecting my own past and my current problems onto this question. But, uh, yeah, I'm just, I guess I just have had enough dialogue with enough men to know. And even guys that I see on stages, like I get a lot of speakers that are like completely polished on stage, but I do know that they, I have moments behind the scenes that are very real. Oh gosh, well there are so many things that push my buttons and let's see, where did we start? I think it's different in different environments. One of the things that it pushes my buttons professionally is posturing. It drives me fucking nuts. Can I cry? I'm sorry. So yeah, whatever you want to say.

Michael Port ([00:19:35](#)):

And I've done it. Do you know, and so anytime I see myself doing it, I get nauseated and it's, I've always had this struggle of wanting to be this really super supportive of everyone kind of guy. But at the same time, I also want to be a really strong voice that stands up and fights against, you know, the posturing, the BS, the lies, the manipulation. Because it seems to me this could be, I'm just a nature of the world or just a factor of getting older. But your perspective may shift a little bit or mine maybe shifting a little bit, but I feel like I see so many more falsehoods than I did when I was younger and I have to check myself. Is it okay? I'm getting more set in my ways. So I think I believe that there are certain truths that are self evident but they may in fact not be true.

Michael Port ([00:20:28](#)):

They just be my truth that I've been developing over time and I've got to watch that. But also I do feel like I've learned a couple of things over the years and I feel like if people, if you learn something and you don't stand up and blend voice to it, yeah. You know you're kind of selling out and I don't like that feeling. And so I don't like conflict. So I guess this is where I remember I said at the beginning, like the things you said I might not normally talk about. I don't always have the language for right away. And this is one of those things where if I'm being really candid about it, I hate conflict, but I want to fight more

for what I believe in. But I still worry about creating conflict. I'll give you an example. This morning I read a great article, uh, or an opinion piece in the New York times about about meat.

Michael Port ([00:21:13](#)):

And, uh, I don't eat meat or dairy and I wanted to post the article, but I thought, Oh, I don't want to start anything with the people I know. They're like major carnivores in the thing. And it's not my, I don't want to be political and blah, blah, blah. But I was like, no, but, but maybe I could just get some folks to see that maybe if we just cut out a little bit of the meat, it'd be good for their health and for society and all this. But then I'm thinking, yeah, but it's not my job to tell them, wait, maybe it is because I'm a member of society and you know, I'm going through all that stuff is going on in my mind. I'm thinking, geez, I'm almost 50 years old. I'm a professional communicator and I still, and dealing with that, that script in my head and I didn't post it, instead just sent it to my wife.

Michael Port ([00:21:57](#)):

That was about all I did with it. And so that pushes my buttons then I haven't sort of solved for for that. Not yet. Yeah. And so that definitely pushes my buttons. I also, real bullying pushes my buttons like in a crazy way. When I was a teenager I was a little bit of a bully, I think. I never heard anybody but I was always bigger than everybody and a little insecure. I think I went into one of those private schools where everybody was getting, it felt like everybody was getting 1600 on their SATs and took French and Latin and I was in the Spanish class. Hmm. General. So meaning like usually they, we put the kids who can't handle the Latin in the Spanish. That's what I'm saying. And I was dyslexic and I always felt a little bit behind. So I think I used some of my size and my power.

Michael Port ([00:22:45](#)):

And one of the things that I've noticed as I've gotten older is I do not do that, that at all except in my family life. Meaning I feel like I don't use any of that power for bullying purposes out in the world. But every once in a while when I lose my cool with my kids, then I feel like I use my power, my size, my strain in a way that they, that's unfair to them because they don't have that much physical power or emotional power. And so I immediately just flipped the tables where they can't compete. So that's really unfair and I've maybe done it a handful of times, but those handful of times feel pretty significant. You know, like I remember the few times my dad sort of shook his fist at me when I was a kid and it still stays with me. And so I know I've done things like that. Yeah. To my kids that are going to stay with them too. And, and I don't want to do that. So I think that pushes my buttons. What gets me to that often

Michael Port ([00:23:46](#)):

is unreasonable behavior. Hmm. Which is kind of unreasonable on my part, frankly, because I need to open up and sort of broaden my scope of acceptance for what's reasonable behavior. That makes sense. Yeah. Yeah. I feel it all man. And God, I especially feel when you're talking about like your father shaking his fist. I had two experiences that immediately shot into my head when you said that one, I was probably 10, nine my dad was out knowing the lawn and um, he, you know, yeah, this gas can and this [inaudible] and I picked up the funnel to use it as like a megaphone. And I just said, right. And he saw me do this and must have, I know now that he must have been panicking that he saw his son sticking this gasoline filled funnel into his mouth and just, but I remember him shutting off lawn mower and shouting at me to put it down.

Michael Port ([00:24:42](#)):

Yeah. And that was like a, for whatever reason, man. I mean now I look at it and go, Oh, he just, you just gelled, put it down. You know, like what are you doing? Boy? Particular moment is one that was seared into my psyche and I remember it to this day. And I now know that I have some of those moments with tiger and it's not nearly as dramatic for me as I know it is going to be for tiger that one day that's going to be the thing he's talking about on a podcast interview is when it's dead. His dad did something just like that. So I really feel all that. And also if I rewind even a little bit further, I really feel you on the what to share and what to bring up in, in which situations. I think this is actually a hat tip to you a little bit buddy, because I want to read you something that I just posted last night in front row dads.

Michael Port ([00:25:34](#)):

So you're going to really laugh about this and there's something in here that I learned at your training at the grad program. You probably will see what it is right away. I'll put it up. So it's, um, I wrote this, it's probably a 62nd read here. All right. This is first of all context. This is to our brothers, our members, only about 140 guys. Okay? I said, I realized that by sharing content around Kovac can really spark emotions and that's exactly what I'm hoping for in this brotherhood. I didn't start this group so that we could all bite our tongues. I want us to have bold conversations and create a place where members feel empowered to post about the things they consider important. Everyone here is committed to leading, loving, and looking out for their family. And that said, I want to invite the type of questions, shares, et cetera, that you've been questioning whether or not you should post them on your personal Facebook page. Put them here. This brotherhood is a place for you to share openly. It's a yes and style conversation. There you go, man. So that's still playing a role in my life, Michael. Yes. I said, yes, I hear you. And here are my thoughts. So much better than saying, well, you're an idiot. Here's why. So earlier today I saw a video from my friend JP Sears.

Speaker 3 ([00:26:44](#)):

I thought I'd share it with you guys because it could spark some cool conversation or maybe provide just a little comic relief. But then I questioned would people be offended? How might they react? You know? Then I decided that this group is about being bold, speaking up, taking risks. You hit the nail on the head sometimes and other times you're humble enough to maybe change your mind. I also want to practice here what I want my boys to practice in life. And that is, and this has really come, I think this is like, you know, a feeling that I got from your program. If that is confident enough to speak, calm enough to listen and curious enough to grow, so confident enough to speak, calm enough to listen and curious enough to grow. So that's it, man. I just, this has been something I've wrestled with a lot lately and you know, uh, Holland, I talk about this quite a bit because he's got such influence and such reach and a huge email list and this massive community and he has all these thoughts around what's going on right now. And he's, you know, we debate about how much should he share and how much should he try to voice his opinion. Because a couple of times that he's done that like, well he's kicked up some dust.

Speaker 3 ([00:27:47](#)):

What's up guys? I want to take a quick break to talk to you about our private mastermind that we call the brotherhood. Now. We created this unique community for a very specific type of man and you may just have found your tribe. If you believe in the power of relationships and perhaps you're always trying to out-give everyone around you. You crave ideas that make you effective and efficient in all areas of life. You resonate with the idea of being a family man with a business, not a businessman with a family. By joining our brotherhood, you'll have access to weekly interactive training calls. You get to join as many or as few as you like. Our guys commit to one of these each month. Optional small groups designed to create meaningful connections and higher accountability, a private resource library

accessible to only our members and we have challenges throughout the year to help you push your limits.

Speaker 3 ([00:28:28](#)):

And we even involve your family and a few of them. The brotherhood is where I'm connecting every day. I'm asking questions when I need help and giving support wherever I can. Our brotherhood was created for men with wisdom, but also those who are wise enough to know there's more to learn and the guys who value investing time to work on their families so they can make the best of their time when they are with their families. No, of course you're a badass. You can do a lot on your own. You likely have for many years and yeah, you probably don't need front row dads to have a great family to love on your kids and have a great relationship. The one thing I know for certain is that men for years have done better in tribes versus trying to brave the world in their own.

Speaker 3 ([00:29:05](#)):

Here's what one of our members has to say about the brotherhood. The message of what you're doing and putting out there resonated with me. That's such a high level. I knew I had to be a part of it and because I didn't know that this existed. I didn't know that front row dads was there and that community existed in that way. I mean family, men with businesses, not business men with families. That changed everything. That one line shifted my entire thought on what you're about, what this community is about, what brotherhood is about and what this group is about and I would say if you are a dad or an entrepreneur or a father or a husband and that resonates with you, this is a great community to be a part of because it's unlike anything else I've seen have. We want our kids to have great relationships and learn from others.

Speaker 3 ([00:29:48](#)):

We should lead the way and model the behavior we want to pass along. Look guys, the time is now to pour into your family. I read an article by Tim Urban that put everything into perspective for me about how important it is for me to get parenting right. Right now. He wrote that 93% of all the time he'd ever spent with his mom and dad happened before he was 18 years old and it's crazy to think that I've got only eight more years before my oldest son is an adult. I feel confident saying that no matter how old your kids are, the time to go all in on your family is right now we have members with newborns and we've got guys with kids that are grown adults members with only one child and guys with 10 people with blended families and everything in between. But by joining our brotherhood and choosing to invest one to two hours each month, we can help you make the most of your time that you do have with your kids. So no matter how great you are at fatherhood, marriage, juggling your work and your personal life calendar, we can help you be better. If you're ready to take the next step, go to [front row dads.com](#) and click join the brotherhood today.

Michael Port ([00:30:50](#)):

It really, really is very, very tricky. You know, we're never going to be able to control how people respond to what we say. We can do our best to try to communicate it in a way that we think leaves space for other perspectives. And I think that's really critical. You know, for us at HPS, we don't think there is any one way to do any of the work that we teach. You know, it's a creative art. So we're always just looking for, well, how can we help that particular individual express themselves in a way, yeah is impactful for them and also for the people we serve. But there isn't only one way to do it. And at the same time, when you're in a position of leadership, often the people that you're serving are looking to

you for some sort of answers. And of course, one of the most challenging aspects of a new crisis situation is that you may not have the answers.

Michael Port ([00:31:48](#)):

So if you're used to supplying answers and you have scripts that you've developed over years that answer those questions, you may be in a place where you really don't know how to behave. Jerry Seinfeld was interviewed in the New York times recently around his new Netflix special. And one of the things he said when he was asked if he feels funny right now was an, of course I'm paraphrasing, he said, no, I don't feel I'm funny now. The special was recorded prior to the pandemic. He says that, and I'm not exactly sure essentially how to be right now as a performing artist. He said, it feels a little bit like I was a bird in a cage and now they just changed my cage and I don't know where I am. Yeah. And I thought, well that's interesting cause I remember at the beginning of this crisis there was a lot of people that came out really, really quickly to try to tell everybody else what to do.

Michael Port ([00:32:38](#)):

You know, not people who were in roles that interestingly enough, we have people who are in roles where they're supposed to be giving us guidance, but we're not getting it. And then we have people who are not necessarily enrolls where there, it's supposed to give us guidance around these things and they're giving us a lot of guidance. And so I remember saying to my team, I said, I'm not sure. I don't want any of us to try to be the covert 19 whisper. We don't have those answers right now. We need to focus on what we know how to do. But as we've been moving farther into this, well, what I've realized is that since we do have a responsibility for the community that we serve, instead of seeing ourselves as being required to have the answers for folks, rather, our job is to create a space where we can encourage conversation, discourse, and support around the questions.

Michael Port ([00:33:31](#)):

Because what I found is that this situation and this pandemic to a certain degree has neutralized some of the previous hierarchies in place. So for example, in our HBS community, I don't have any more information or answers than any of my students do about how one should be behaving during a pandemic. I have no more information than that. In fact, some of them may have much more because we've got doctors and senators and astronauts and Navy seals and they might be actually much better equipped but to answer questions or even, yeah, create the space to raise them. So I'm trying to call on those folks to come in and help service leaders. And when we took the pressure off ourselves for having to have the answers, but instead focused on, uh, being comfortable creating the space for the people that we serve to be able to voice their questions, concerns, thoughts, et cetera.

Michael Port ([00:34:34](#)):

Well then it actually got easier to serve as a leader for our students. But at the beginning it was a little bit confusing because I wasn't sure what role I was supposed to play anymore. And then even in our family, our roles changed a bit here in the house. And so we had to be even more protective than we might normally be because now we've got kids who want to go out and we've got to keep them in. And that's a challenging dynamic. But that wasn't an issue that we had to face prior. But we've had to adjust all of our roles. And as you know, one of the things that I've, I've studied for years is, is this idea of playing lots of different roles in different situations so that you can be as connected to and effective in that particular situation. Because if we have a very rigidly fixed view of who we are, can we say, well, this is that I have one way of being, this is me.

Michael Port ([00:35:32](#)):

That's not me. This is me. That's not me. This is me. That's not me. If we are, then when the world around us changes and it is constantly changing, uh, but sometimes it's more extreme than others, then we don't know how to adapt. And so adaptability, fluidity is actually and incredibly powerful skill to develop. And even for people like Amy and I who are naturally inclined to be fluid, it's been really challenging. So I got to imagine that if somebody [inaudible] not quite as a fluid in their roleplaying, this might, yeah, even more challenging and psychologically provoking anxiety provoking than it has been for us. And it's been tough. I'm not going to lie to you. [inaudible] you may have just answered this next question. When you think about all the skills that you've been developing over a lifetime, which ones have been most beneficial over the last eight weeks?

Michael Port ([00:36:34](#)):

I would say the ability to focus on and get clear about what other people. Neat. Now I'm not always right. You know, sometimes I'm wrong, but I think that has been probably the most important because at first I was thinking, well, maybe it's, you know, being able to communicate, but it's very, very difficult to communicate unless you can get a clear sense of what somebody else actually needs in any given moment. And so that's been really helpful. The thing that's been more challenging is to remember to care a lot about it because then speaking for myself, when I feel at risk, I am less inclined to be worried about what somebody else needs. And so this situation has put so much more risk. I have felt so much more risk and so much more instability that I'm used to feeling. I've had to work harder to remember to focus on do the needs that other people have.

Michael Port ([00:37:35](#)):

Yeah. So I think, I think that's probably the answer. I'll tell you what, it's very, very clear what skills or I have not developed meaning I think one of the things that happens as you become more affluent, unless you're intentional about it not happening, is you often either lose or do not develop the kind of life skills or survival skills that are more basic. For example, if someone said, go start a fire, I would say, well, do you have a lighter? I wouldn't know how to start a fire without some sort of device, so do it. And now that's obviously, it seems really quite basic, but I have, you know, I've been keeping a mental list of all of these different things that I do not know how to do. Yeah. Because I haven't had to do anything other than spend money and creating safety. Exactly. And that feels pretty insecure and weak and slightly pathetic.

Michael Port ([00:38:35](#)):

Yeah. That's a wake up call as well. Yeah. This has shown up a lot in our group. Here's what's fun. Exactly what you just said about building a fire. I started posting all these pictures every day of our family building a fire. So we made a fire pit out back and we were like, we were building fires every day. And part of it was just rekindling, not, no pun intended there this idea of like, you know, taking a moment to ask ourselves how capable are we of, I don't know, survival sounds a little dramatic based on the fact that I still shop at whole foods, but, but, but dialing in. Yeah, there's incompetence there. There's, there's a confidence, there's a competence. There's something about like, Hey, you know, I even used to say in the past that I'm not the build a bunker type of guy.

Michael Port ([00:39:27](#)):

And I kind of would smirk at that and laugh at that and be like, I don't, no, I don't need a gun and I don't need to learn how to hunt. And I don't like, cause I was more evolved as a person than I was evolved

past that. And I understand that. I don't want to live in a primal situation because I'm, I'm existing in a modern day culture. However, I also believe in feeling completely self-reliant or the bill, a bill, the ability to take care of my family. You know, and this is where we could go down a real rabbit hole with this whole conversation, of course, about trying to predict the future or what could happen. But there's a couple of truths that I've landed on during this whole thing for me personally. And that is one I just never, you know, I always knew that whatever you build, if you build something up and it's built by humans, [inaudible] of course, has the possibility of collapsing everything.

Michael Port ([00:40:18](#)):

You know, the whole thing could collapse. It's possible. It's just how likely is it to collapse. Right. And to what degree would that collapse send some type of ripple out into society? Like how stable is the building if there's an earthquake type of concept. But playing in this space has been very beneficial for my family. I just got off the phone with my buddy Ryan Mickler. Do you know Ryan? He runs order of man. Oh, hugely popular community. I mean massively popular podcast and I think I've seen his podcast. Yeah, he's got a beard and he's always like, he's shooting his bow and he's got, you know, I used to think like that's just not my space until I just got off the phone with them and I'm like, Hey buddy, I bought a bow. I'm learning how to like, write like I'm like way more, uh, you know, tipping my hat to Ryan and what he's done. But anyway, so I just shared a little, for me, one of my truths has been that taking a moment and seeing the world retreat into their homes has caused me to pause and ask the question, what does protecting my family really look like? What skills do we want to develop? And I know that I'm not alone here. There's no, so many people have started the garden. So many people have asked that same question. And I'm just wondering for you,

Michael Port ([00:41:33](#)):

maybe

Michael Port ([00:41:34](#)):

it's a two part question and that is what truths or what have you landed on that's like, you know, I don't know everything. I don't know all the answers. I don't know all the stats, but there are a few things I've kind of dialed in on that I feel I'm holding as treats in my life. I'm curious about that over the last eight weeks and then also, is there anything else that you wanted to add to the protect my family? Really what it means, how exposed are you? Like did you go down the road of, and are you still going down the road of how much food do we need? What would happen if the water supply systems were cut off? I know that maybe they were a little late to that conversation. That might've been a little more of a hot topic four weeks ago or whatever, but it's still playing out in my mind.

Michael Port ([00:42:16](#)):

So, yeah. And take that wherever you want. Well, I have been somebody who is been inclined two, the bunker building. Yeah. Over the years, but not done it because of that same concern of, well, what's the message that I'm sending? Right. Yup. And I think that, I think the learning is at some point we've just got to trust our intuition. Yeah. And pursue the things that we think are going to be meaningful for us now and into the future regardless of whether or not, you know, other people are going to give us a thumbs up for it. So I think yes, we will certainly, uh, continue to make sure that we've got what we need for longer term issues that may come up. Nothing. Most people, well not everybody, but certainly, uh, but many people will, I should say. But at the same time, it's also important to us to not adjust our values in a way that is reactionary.

Michael Port ([00:43:27](#)):

Oh. Only. So for example, I was, I used to do competition, handgun shooting, and it's not something I know. I know. Yeah. And I was at a master's level in IDPA hand gun shooting and I did some unlimited type of shooting and sort of custom hand guns, but I did mostly stock handguns. And, uh, I did it in part because I was really bored and I needed something to learn. That was a skill that I could focus on really intense sleep. That's my nature. My nature is to just to get curious about something and then go as deep as I possibly can until I feel like I've achieved a certain level of proficiency and I understand what it feels like to be very connected, uh, to that skill. So I no longer have to think about it, but it now just lives in my body.

Michael Port ([00:44:19](#)):

And I've done that with a number of different things over the years. So I did that with competition and gun shooting. But I come from New York city, pretty progressive liberal kind of environment. And we live out in Pennsylvania now, which is less. So of course it's a little bit more conservative. And so I wasn't, that's something that I would share because it's so charged. And so I bring this up because when Amy and I, but when Amy first moved in, I did not have any handguns in the house for my own reasons. And then she said, I don't want any handguns in the house. And here's why. We decided from a value perspective, that's what we wanted mostly from a safety perspective, just because when you have the teenagers in the house, there's just a higher risk of something going wrong. Even if you do a great job of keeping those a firearms secured, our kids are smart kids, my kids can crack most of my passwords, you know?

Michael Port ([00:45:13](#)):

So like if they, someone wanted to get into my safe, one of the kids could probably figure out how to do it. So I say that because when this started happening, that conversation came up again. Well, so do we want to keep a firearm in the house because I am trained and competent to handle a firearm? Probably with all due respect and most law enforcement probably better than most cops are if we're being candid about it. And uh, we decided not to because we said just because there's something going on right now that seems unsafe. There's nothing actually right now that has changed in a way that puts us at risk in a significant way. We're going to stick with the values that we had set and hopefully the value system that we've already gotten placed, he's going to support us moving forward rather than all of a sudden changing who we are.

Michael Port ([00:46:07](#)):

Because there's a big difference between changing your way of being in order to help people feel safe, be effective in different situations from a communications perspective and from a productivity perspective and adjusting your value system in a way where you have no value system anymore, but rather, uh, you're only responding to external stimuli. And those are two very different things for us. And so I feel like the value system that we had in place as a family, it's still supporting us in the world in which we live today. And if for some reason that world changes so dramatically that we do need to change the value system in order to actually be safe, not just in our heads, but literally, yeah, then maybe we make a change on that front. But I think that's been important. And we've had those discussions like what if anything of our value system needs to change? And thus far most stays the same. The only thing I would say is that we're looking at, there's different ways of organizing the work in the business in part for ourselves and in part for our team so that when we do come back, they have

even more opportunity to be more present for their families and their hobbies and their, uh, interests out [inaudible] of work.

Michael Port ([00:47:28](#)):

Yeah. So I want to get into that as kind of a closing piece. Do we have another five minutes or so? Because I want to talk about a lot of people are looking at what's next and where do I put my attention and

Michael Port ([00:47:44](#)):

what am I shifting away from or towards? And I want to talk a little bit about what you do because I've benefited from it so greatly and I think that a lot of people might be interested in that options. So I'd love to hear what you're doing in your business, how you're helping people possibly virtually or the future holds and when you might be back in person, any of that. So yeah, we'll get to that in just a second. I had to tell you, first of all, grateful for what you just shared because that is really powerful for people to think about application of their values and whether they're doing it from what yeah. Are they acting upon their values? Right. And uh, is it reactionary? How has the environment shifted the way that you're applying your values and is it a needs, you remember Tony Robbins teaching years ago that people will often compromise their values to meet their needs?

Michael Port ([00:48:33](#)):

No. And it's so you have a need for let's say safety and security and you compromise one of your values in order to meet that need. And that just to me, it's just about the awareness of how we navigate this time that you created a, a light in a place that could use some illumination. So thank you man. I appreciate that. I also had this funny image that is you're saying like, so we don't have any guns in the house. I was like, but Michael's not telling us about the backyard bunker. That's, Hey K 47 I just had this vision of like you opening this secret hatch in your backyard. You're like not in the house. They're not in the house.

Michael Port ([00:49:14](#)):

So anyway. Uh, all right, let's on a serious note. Let's quickly talk about your business because, and let me just be clear for everybody out there listening. So I was already a speaker, I was, this was my profession. I was making money taking care of my family, traveling. And I went to one of Michael's events and I heard about grad program, which was a more in depth or focus training program. And I remember walking up to Michael, I don't know if you remember this, but I do man. I walked right up to you at stage. And I said, Hey, I speak, this is what's happening in my life. And I said, is it a good idea to come through your program? And I don't remember exactly what you said, but it was something to the effect of where I said, Hey know I'm like a 10 K speaker and you might've said something to the effect of would you like to be a 20 K speaker? And I was like, okay, sign it up right now. And it was just, it was that easy. So I went through the program. It was remarkable. Such a classy organization you have all together, you and Amy together, man. It was like not only was it a masterclass and how to be a speaker, but it was also masterclass. How to collaborate with someone you love and work like watching

Michael Port ([00:50:28](#)):

YouTube as fun as learning how to improve my speaking skills, things that would allow me to grow my business. So props to you and just wanted to give context for everybody out there listening. I'll let you take as long as you want to answer this last question. If you got to go, we can wrap like I said, but I've

got a little time here also and I really want to know personally for the people that are interested in this, what does your program look like now if somebody wants to get into speaking, if somebody wants to do stuff virtually, if they're looking to build a skill, if they're in between, you know, and have time and energy and want to learn how the art of communication, uh, in the ways that you teach the floor is yours. Tell us anything you want about that program.

Michael Port ([00:51:12](#)):

Well thanks. First of all, one of the things that people often ask me, which I don't love answering, but I understand why they ask is who are your favorite speakers? Who do you think are the best is usually what they say. Cause people tend to put things in, in terms of, uh, good or bad or best or worst as opposed to, you know, who do you find is doing interesting things or is challenging the status quo? You know, I don't get a lot of those kinds of questions. I just get the best speakers. Who do you think are the best? Uh, so I think probably 9.9 times out of it 10, uh, in the list of speakers that I share, you are always up there. I think you are absolutely tremendous at what you do. I think you have a lot of natural talent, that's for sure.

Michael Port ([00:51:57](#)):

You're just gifted with a lot of natural talent. The talent is overrated and it really only takes you so far. I would say that I've worked with more talented speakers who have not been able to connect with audiences then, uh, people who might not be gifted with a lot of talent, who learn how to connect with audiences in a really impactful way. So you've taking the talent that you have and have also spent years focusing on how to connect and serve audiences. And I just think you do it brilliantly and I could listen to you speak all day long, so I just want to put that on the record. Thank you, brother. Yeah, of course. Look at heroic public speaking. Our focuses has always been on being able to create a transformational experience for people in a room. That's what we love doing. It's what we feel we do quite well and we can see the results, any of that.

Michael Port ([00:52:53](#)):

When we shifted and now we've got to do a lot more virtual. You know, we had a lot of long conversations about, well, how much time do we want to spend focus on teaching virtual communication. And ultimately we decided not to, to go down the route of trying to be opportunistic and selling, you know, here's how to be a certified virtual speaker. You know, what are we even focusing on? Here's the techniques that you can use to be better at virtual communications. Certainly we have the, uh, the that can do that and we're doing as much as our current students need us to in order to pivot during this time. Uh, but we are staying true two our core competencies, which is being the best in the world at actually working with people on stage so that they can create really, uh, both educational and theatrical experiences for audiences that help them change the way they see the world, change the way they think, change the way they feel and of course changed the way they behave.

Michael Port ([00:54:00](#)):

So with that said, know we have a 10,000 square foot headquarters in New Jersey and of course as our, you know, we can, that run program is there at present. We are continuing to serve students who are in our longer term training programs and we postponed our ongoing monthly events and we'll bring them back when it's safe to bring them back or when we feel it's safe and our students who want to come feel it safe. Um, in the meantime, probably in July we will do a larger virtual event, uh, because we've started to get, you know, hundreds of people stacked up. We're waiting to come into these programs so we feel

that's better than not being able to okay, be in service to them. But for 2020 we'll really focus on content so that we can work with our students on developing their content during this time when we're at a distance because our programs are already designed to do that work at a distance.

Michael Port ([00:54:55](#)):

Our writing coaches do it at a distance. So that's really what we're focusing on. And then as we get towards 2021 hopefully we'll, it will be more comfortable to get back and safer to get back in the space because as we did at the very, very beginning of this conversation, we started talking about safety. If people in the room, I don't feel safe sitting next to somebody else, then the experience is not an HBS experience. That's not an experience we have. Our, our focus is on creating an environment where every single person, it feels so safe that they can take bigger risks than they even imagined they would be willing to take. And if you, the person next to you, you think is a threat because you know, maybe they can get you sick, then that is going to really negatively interfere with that culture and that environment.

Michael Port ([00:55:43](#)):

So that's what we're going to focus on. So for folks who are interested in doing that work, you know, [inaudible] please, you know, if they get in touch and yeah. You know, say that they're a member of, uh, front row dads, you know, we're happy to tell them about what we're doing, but we're not out there aggressively promoting marketing, selling in any way, shape or form. We said let's use our fiscal responsibility to try to a give, uh, our community time. It's a process and to see where they are, you know, as they start to come out of this cause it's gonna be different for different people. But the speaking, uh, industry just closed right now and yeah, there are definitely virtual opportunities, no doubt about it. And virtual learning is, was here

Michael Port ([00:56:24](#)):

before the pandemic. It's here now and it'll be here afterwards, but our focus is still on creating transformational experiences. The rule. Yeah. Wonderful. Michael, thank you for sharing all that man. And uh, act so tempted to just, I got a hundred more questions to ask you, but I think that as I feel that I'm like, Oh, I want to ask Michael a hundred more questions. I'm like, that's good. I think it's great when people can talk for an hour, walk away hungry, you know, versus like, man, I hope we don't have to do that again anytime soon.

Michael Port ([00:56:58](#)):

Yeah, I had a few of those episodes. I really appreciate it man. Thanks for the impact you've made on my life personally and as a result directly to my family. Michael, thanks for being a great role model. Always a classy individual. Thanks for introducing me to some people that I've, I've now become great friends with. You introduced me to Mike Metallo. It's, we've become friends and I went to his author up event, he supported front row foundation and we've, you know, just talked about his new book. Fix this next. So shout out to the Callow. It's out there and all the work he's doing, but you made those introductions happen. You've been a great support. Your belief in me and my, my abilities has meant a lot to me. So thanks for all that. I know that, uh, it is, it in some ways it's very direct to my children.

Michael Port ([00:57:44](#)):

You know, and you could argue it's a little indirect, but you've had an impact on my kids' lives and any time somebody has an impact on my family, boy they get a straight shot right to my heart. So appreciate you very much man. I'm a raving fan. Will always promote your work, sending your family lots of love

during this time and if I can ever be supportive to you, say the word. Thank you brother. I appreciate that guys. We'll link up a everything to get to Michael's goods in the show notes@frontrowdads.com and if you guys have any questions about Michael's program, email me directly and I will talk to you about it. Jon jon@frontrowdads.com it's an amazing investment, one of the best moves I'd ever made for my career. And if your career is thriving, that certainly helps your family. So not hard to make that connect those dots. So thanks again Michael.

Speaker 3 ([00:58:32](#)):

Thank you. Hey guys, thanks for listening to the show and if you enjoyed this one, consider what other dad out there would enjoy it also and pass this episode along and guys make sure you're subscribed to the podcast so that you get notified whenever. Release the latest episodes and if you could, would you leave us a quick review if you haven't already done so and if you have thanks because not only do I read every one, but tons of other people are reading them too in the more of those reviews we have and the better they are, the more chance we have to get other guys to say yes to checking this out and we can help them in their journey to fatherhood and having a great marriage and just kicking ass family life. And also before we go, would you like to get a short weekly email with a timely insight?

Speaker 3 ([00:59:10](#)):

And every Thursday I send out this super short three minute read with a personal photo from my own experiences as I try to go all in on family life. So if you want to get some recent relevant and real of my failures and the few of my wins, then text front row dads to three one four six six five one seven six, seven and you'll get our weekly insights email last on the list. Guys, if you're still looking at whether or not you should join the brotherhood, then I want to leave you with a few comments from guys who are part of our tribe and here's what they have to say about why they joined, what value they're getting out of our brotherhood. So if you're ready to say yes, just go to front road ads.com and click join the brotherhood. I'm super grateful. I was just at an event and I wore my front row dad's hat. I can't tell you how many people ask me like, what's that all about? And it's just so easy for me to talk about it because it's had such a big impact on me. That's a group that I'd been looking for for a long time, and I love what you're all about and I'm really grateful that you created that group. I think

Speaker 4 ([01:00:08](#)):

there's this whole other level that is there that's like Epic that you can reach if you're listening to this, you already care about your family and your kids and your wife and growing. So I just challenge everyone that's hearing this to take it to the next level, whether that's joining this group or some other group, but just take it to the next level to take your family to the next level.

Speaker 5 ([01:00:39](#)):

[inaudible].