

THE Hearing Journal

THE MOST RESPECTED PUBLICATION IN HEARING HEALTH CARE

HJ PODCAST- DEC 2020 : Dr. Lana-Joseph Ford

MAIN SHOW

In 2012, I was wandering around the grounds of Omega Institute, a retreat center in New York, during a month-long yoga teacher training when I stumbled upon a magnet that read, “Don’t believe everything you think”.

I absolutely loved that because, so many times, what we think, especially of our own ideas and creative solutions are critical or super judge-y!

If you are anything like me, when I start to get creative or look at jumping outside of my own box, I am usually hit with a variety of “what-ifs” and all kinds of irrational thoughts for why this will never work or why I am totally out of my mind or most commonly, the imposter syndrome starts kicking into high gear.

But these thoughts are, as Brene Brown would say, “the stories I tell myself.” When I get into this mindset, I’m usually fixated on just how BIG those goals feel instead of working toward the steps needed to create the right circumstances to achieve them in the first place. And balancing the creation of detailed plans without trying to control EVERY SINGLE VARIABLE. Well, if we have learned nothing else from 2020, it’s that there is no such control. Uncertainty is the norm.

When you get behind the scenes and talk to the high-level achievers and the high-level thinkers, they exist perpetually only in uncertainty and are extremely comfortable in uncertainty. These people don’t wake up each day worried they don’t know everything. They have a plan. They have a process for dealing with the next unexpected. Because there’s always going to be another unexpected. Often, I have heard this statement, “Oh, that person is so successful because he/she really thinks outside the box.”

Therefore, we are encouraged to follow that example to ensure our success.

Are successful people just living a life outside of all boundaries, rules, and constraints? Is that the meaning of “thinking outside the box?”

Nothing could be further from the truth!

In reality, the life of no rules or constraints, doing whatever you want whenever you want is the definition of an unsuccessful, frustrated, and unhappy person.

Successful people do not think outside the box.

Successful people just make a bigger box.

One of our own who doesn’t hesitate to make a bigger box is Founder and CEO of Joseph-Ford Enterprises and High-Level Speech & Hearing Center, **Dr. Lana Joseph-Ford.**

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Dr. Ford is an entrepreneur in the healthcare industry. She has served as an advocate for musicians' health throughout New Orleans. Among her most notable clients are world-renowned music artists, Drake and musical group Tank and the Bangas. As a young girl, Dr. Joseph-Ford suffered from hearing difficulties and was bullied because of her speech impediment. Now, she uses her resilience to help others by offering early intervention strategies for individuals with communication disorders.

As a philanthropist, Dr. Joseph-Ford has played a significant role in supporting youth in underserved communities. As an advocate for economic development, she founded Joseph-Ford Enterprises, a global economic development firm that invests in real estate, small businesses, health, and technology.

Currently, Dr. Joseph-Ford has a news segment called "[Healthy Habits with Dr. J](#)" which airs on WWLTV's [Great Day Louisiana](#) every Friday at 9 am. Thank you Dr. Joseph-Ford for taking time out of your crazy, busy schedule to join us on the podcast today.

04:38 Dr. D' Anne Rudden: I touched a little bit on your Audiology origin story in the introduction, but you weren't just content to "help people with hearing loss", you have created a new lane for yourself to literally "help people" with a wide variety of ways and issues.

Tell us about your evolution as a care provider and entrepreneur. Did you just come out of the box that way? How can each of us learn to craft a unique but broader message?

Dr. Lana-Joseph Ford: It is not just to find solutions to hearing loss or find solutions to communication disorders, but to help. I crafted my entire brand and company on finding a problem and then finding a solution to the problem. For example, I remember when I first decided I wanted to go into private practice. I started by saying, "Nobody knows who I am". I need to be able to be in a space where I can aim to help people and reach as many people as I possibly can. The thing about our city and our community in New Orleans, even though it's a small city, we see a lot of issues with access to transportation, access to medical services. My goal was never to set-up a shop and expect people to come to me who don't have any idea who I am. I wanted to make sure that I am providing a solution where I could go to them. That is how I started—creating a system where we would have a company, the brick and mortars are important for credibility and also for credential purposes. But, we wanted to make sure that even though we have the brick and mortar set-up, we still go to our own patients. We created a plan and a method to be able to reach them by any means necessary. Honestly, that ability to do so or the plan to help people is by providing them access to medical services, access to hearing services, and access to speech services. We helped them, and by helping them, we become very successful today.

07:40 Dr. D' Anne Rudden: What I am hearing you say, you are looking at it from a much larger lens. Sometimes, we get myopic in how we view ourselves and how we view what we do. While you are doing this initial outreach and probably continuing to do this outreach, are you partnering with other healthcare providers or other generalized providers like transportation providers for that matter?

08:15 Dr. Lana-Joseph Ford: Instead of building a partnership with them, what we've done is we made

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sure that we have the mind-set or the folks that we connect with have the same mission and vision as we do which is to help people. We are very careful about partnerships. However, we do provide our patients with access to resources and created manual resource logs and online resources for them to figure out exactly what they need.

One of the greatest partnerships that we have had, was with the insurance companies. The insurance company in Louisiana is very similar in other states as well. They will provide transportation services to patients at no cost. All the patients have to do is to reach out to them, and if they are members of that particular insurance company, they will go out and get them. Some insurances depending on what they are, they provide these credits to different patient populations for coming to their appointment. In a demographic that we deal with, our population has a tendency of becoming no-shows. We hate talking about no-shows because it could be the death of the business. We love the fact that these insurance companies have created a system where they are encouraging and incentivizing the patients to come out and receive the services we have. We try our best again to try to open up opportunities for access. Access to transportation, access to insurance groups. We still have so many patients in our demographic, the population we serve, who do not have any insurance at all. It is not because they are of a certain status, or they don't have access to the insurance but more so because they don't know how to apply. They don't know they are eligible for these types of insurances that have incentives that offer hearing aids at no cost. These are things that our patient population still struggles with.

11:09 Dr. D' Anne Rudden: I'm going to shift gears a little bit. You were one of the three visionary Audiologists on a panel for the recent Academy of Doctors of Audiology virtual meeting on Design Thinking. What I love about you and what you bring to the table is the ability to think bigger or to think in a different more creative way. Tell people more about how you use design thinking to forward some of your big ideas?

12:04 Dr. Lana-Joseph Ford: One of the things I have done with my practice is created access. For example, here's the problem, which is transportation. How to solve the problem? It was the solution. I need to create a system where my company can go out to other people to provide services. Again, it helps language foster in any kind of way. Another method was mostly about how my company has taken and utilized social media such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter as a platform to help even more people. Help language is more about helping as many people as possible.

I've seen a lot of audiologists say hearing aid devices are the bread and butter of what we provide—this is how we survive. But if you are only providing hearing aid devices to a certain population that can afford it, then it cuts the potential you have to serve the community down to 15 percent. The majority of the people out there who really need your services can't necessarily afford the hearing aid devices. I understand other states or cities are different, but if you are in a larger city more likely than not then this is the case for you and the population you are servicing. If you can't provide them with hearing aids, what else can you do for these people? Are you going to provide them with a hearing test? Maybe, the answer is an amplifier after that, better than nothing. Maybe, the answer is to put together a community on social media and begins to share information with people. We need to identify different ways and methods of helping people outside by not just selling them a hearing aid. There is so much

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more than we can do as audiologists to help them and spread awareness about what we do.

17:14 Dr. D' Anne Rudden: Those people know people who may need things. The ripple effect is the best place to be in business. If you focus on providing such great care, then they will not hesitate to tell every person they know, "Hey, this person did everything he can to help me," the rest will just follow along, that you don't have to try.

17:47 Dr. Lana-Joseph Ford: Hopping-on utilizing the help language, having a help mentality, having a help mindset, creating a business and a system within your business that's around helping people will generate the exact results that you are looking for.

AFTERSHOW

18:45 Dr. D' Anne Rudden: We are back on *The Hearing Journal* Podcast Aftershow with Dr. Lana-Joseph Ford. We have been talking about Design Thinking, Help Language, and how to reach your communities in ways that are not just about hearing aids. Talk a little bit about you.

21:40 Dr. Lana-Joseph Ford: I've always been the person who's thinking outside the box or does something like, "Go on the path less traveled." A couple of things people don't know about me is when I was a student at Washington University, I started the Audiologist To-Be blog. As a student, I also started writing for Starkey in the past, writing for Hearing Health Matters, and some work for Gyl Kasewurm. I am always that person who knew that social media would be the way for the future of audiology. Everyone else has already jumped on it. I think the audiology took a little bit longer to get there, but I am glad we are almost there now.

I started my audiology journey at Lamar University, and had written my first blog post. I heard that one of the professors has seen it and stated to someone else that it will never work, that it wasn't good. It is so interesting to think about it back in 2011, when I was saying it in the same blog. I started the base of my experience with a professor who didn't believe in what I was saying. She thought social media wasn't going to be the way. It is the way of the world right now. I've been saying this since 2011. Dr. AU Bankaitis, Dr. Gyl Kasewurm, and yourself—all of you guys who jumped on it, you are successful today. And we are seeing you, and we are hearing you, and I love it.

24:27 Dr. D' Anne Rudden: Not even from a business standpoint here in my office, but the people I meet and connect with, and the opportunities that I've had I can point directly to social media on how that avenue was created.

25:20 Dr. Lana-Joseph Ford: It is unfortunate when you are someone like we are and you do think outside the box, and you create your own box that people will discourage you so much from it because they are uncomfortable with it. Don't let anyone put their fears on me; allow me to explore that opportunity so that I can come back and tell you how it was. Unfortunately, another thing I've seen in our profession, whenever we have anything that does seem outside of the box and expose it and bring it to our peers, it always gets knocked down. More so because of ADA, who has done a great job of

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reaching out to audiologists who are in private practice and looking for opportunities to grow and expand—now that we have them advocating and pushing for these new, and more efficient ways to divide thinking and strategies, we are seeing more people to hop on board and more open to new opportunities.

26:35 Dr. D' Anne Rudden: At the end of the day, it's another opportunity to dance with change, so let's get at it. We have the great flexibility of being able to change on a dime. It's what I love about the topic of design thinking because it gives you a little bit of a format, but it also gives you a little flexibility. It is not a step-by-step cookbook but a pathway.

28:09 Dr. Lana-Joseph Ford: I agree. One of the things I always tell younger audiologists who are interested in private practice is that there is no book—no matter what—for creating your own private practice. There can be guides that tell you what you need to do, but there is nothing that is giving away the secret sauce. You are the secret sauce. It is innate. It is important to be flexible and to see things in that perspective.

I saw many practices go out of business during COVID, however, in my practice, we have the best summer that we ever have this year. We ended up making more money this year than we ever have before. Again, how do we do it? Well, we can't see people in person anymore. How can we create a system to be able to reach them in a way that doesn't depend on access? That doesn't depend on a face-to-face encounter? How can we still maintain the quality of in-person appointments without being in person? These are the "Why not?" questions that we see go unanswered all the time, or, like you mentioned before, will be looked down on for considering this. I had a conversation with an audiologist when Oticon first came out with the remote fitting. I asked her if she was doing it, and she looked down on it so much. How can we expect to move forward as a single industry if every single new technology that is introduced, the first thing we tell people is, will never work? A lot of times there are so many people in our industry who are so quick to jump to a conclusion who has never even tried it. My advice to those people, if you don't want to try it and you don't want to do it, then allow that out-of-the-box thinker to try it. If it works, then it is an opportunity for you. We can't afford to turn down those opportunities and expect to grow.

31:01 Dr. D' Anne Rudden: I agree. You are so inspirational. You are one of these budding icons in the profession. But, I want to get a glimpse of you. Who are your mentors and gurus? Who inspires you?

31:46 Dr. Lana-Joseph Ford: I have had so many people over the past several years even prior to becoming an Audiologist or even prior to starting my bachelor's degree. I've had so many people that have served as great advisers, as great inspiration, great advocates, and supporters. A list would go on and on. The biggest inspiration I have comes from my mother because she for me serves as a reminder of where we've come from. My mom raised us alone. She was a single parent. A lot of people in audiology don't know my father was on drugs, and we weren't around. He wasn't in our lives. We were some of those children who depended on the surrounding village. My mom retired this year and now she works for me, and for her, that was her greatest joy to be able to do that. She is the best worker I've ever had. She serves as my inspiration not because she was able to overcome her own adversities to

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raise my sister and I to help us become a good citizen, but also she is a reminder of anything is possible.

34:18 Dr. D' Anne Rudden: What a better advocate could you possibly have in your office and in your team? Good on you for bringing your mom to work for you. Mothers have your back regardless.

35:04 Dr. Lana-Joseph Ford: One of the things she mentioned is that people don't know you. Your employees don't know you, your colleagues don't know you. They only know one part of you, and that's the part that shows up every day to work. They know the entrepreneur, the ambitious side of you, but they don't know who you are. They don't know who you were and how you've transformed from who you were to who you've become. All of those go to understanding where a person is coming from when making a decision. Having someone who can be an advocate and remind people that you are human just like they are, is an awesome thing.

36:08 Dr. D' Anne Rudden: We touched on so many great areas, and I am grateful not only I have gotten a dose of your wisdom, but I haven't gotten to know a little bit of the personal side of you because you are such a powerhouse. I appreciate that you are more willing to share a little bit of the tender side of your heart because your heart is huge for your community, for audiology, for women in the profession, and for women of color. I am so glad that you keep using your voice and putting yourself out there. Thank you so much for sharing your time with us.

36:58 Dr. Lana-Joseph Ford: Thank you so much.

37:11 END