Regulation Matters:
a CLEAR conversation

Episode 104: Preparing for Portland – Regulatory Abundance and Crucial Conversations

August 11, 2026

Line Dempsey: Welcome back to our podcast, a CLEAR Conversation. Once again, I'm your host, Line Dempsey. I'm currently the Chief Compliance Officer with Riccobene Associates Family Dentistry with practices in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia. I've also been a board member and past president of CLEAR.

As many of you are aware, the Council on Licensure, Enforcement and Regulation, or CLEAR, is an association of individuals, agencies, and organizations that comprise the international community of professional and occupational regulation. This podcast is an opportunity for you to hear about important topics in our regulatory community.

Now, our August episode always features a conference preview. The keynote session at this year's annual education conference asks a very provocative question: Can regulation both protect the public and expand possibility? Our keynote speaker, Jay Chaudhary, has spent his career leading complex system change in law, public policy, and behavioral health. Today we'll explore some of the experiences and ideas that have shaped his thinking and give a sneak peek of the conference presentation. So welcome, Jay, and thank you for speaking with me today.

Jay Chaudhary: Yeah, thank you, Line. Great to be here.

Line: Well, I know your career has taken you from legal aid to mental health leadership to advising on systems change. What experiences most shaped the way you think about public systems and regulation today?

Jay: Yeah, so, you know, I jokingly call myself a recovering lawyer, but I think that's a little bit facetious, because I do think my time as a legal aid attorney fundamentally and profoundly shaped how I view everything I've done since then. So, I was in this field for 10 years, of which I was actively practicing as a lawyer representing clients in court for probably 5. And then that kind of started to wind down as I took on more of a management role there. But the thing about representing especially low-income folks and marginalized folks in a system that is not designed to make things easy on them is you understand really profoundly that most people don't care about the things that bureaucrats and regulators (and I can say that as a former bureaucrat and regulator), most people don't care about the things that bureaucrats and regulators care about at all. They just want a system that works for them. And even though it's really, really hard to do, and I didn't always… I've not always succeeded at this, I always try to keep in mind the perspective of the individual trying to navigate the system as the most important one. And that's, I think, something I've tried to take in through my whole career, whether it's as a legal aid attorney or, you know, running behavioral health for the state of Indiana, where, you know, I oversaw a gigantic bureaucratic system that fundamentally served people and families in great need. And, you know, whenever possible, our North Star would be what is best for the people and families that we serve. You know, did we always succeed? No, of course not. But I think that was an important throughline throughout my career.

Line: Right on. Well, I know the title of the keynote is Regulatory Abundance, Not an Oxymoron. What first led you to start thinking about regulation and abundance in the same conversation, if you would?

Jay: Yeah, of course, and I should probably maybe back up and say what I mean by abundance. I've been a proponent of, or a follower of, Derek Thompson, Ezra Klein, and that whole abundance movement since Derek's first abundance agenda article in The Atlantic in, like, 2021, where he talked about some of the failures of the pandemic era policies and how they… and so I should say I'm a fan of that. I am not in any way, shape, or form, you know, representing that; this is a separate conversation. Abundance now in 2026 is essentially, it seems like it's a policy movement that's associated with sort of changing the governance around housing and energy infrastructure. And that's stuff I support, but that's not what I'm talking about here. But I think if you look at the core of that movement, as well as what I'm talking about, is actually the same. And that is all about trade-offs, right? It's an old line in public policy, attributed to Thomas Sowell - There's no solutions, only trade-offs. Again, this is not news to anybody that has ever ran an agency or organization or had to make tough decisions in business, or anything like that. But I don't think we fully grapple with what that exactly means.

And what I mean by abundance and regulation is just creating a culture and philosophy of continually evaluating those trade-offs, right? So, like. not, you know, are we striking the right balance between public protection and access and workforce innovation and affordability and opportunity. And so that's really the whole central idea of the talk, or what I'm here to talk about today, is that every single regulatory decision creates trade-offs. And the challenge is that nearly every single institutional incentive pushes us towards safety, right? Safetyism, and restriction, and a safeguard. And sometimes that's the right answer, and a lot of times that is the right answer, right? But sometimes it isn't, and the most important thing is having a commitment and courage to continually revisit those trade-offs, rather than just assuming that the balance of those trade-offs never changes. If that makes sense.
Line: Yeah, absolutely. Well, you kind of mentioned it there, and I'm a what I call myself a recovering regulator, right? I'm not working in regulation at the moment, but you know, regulators have been trained for so long to just focus on public protection and risk reduction, right? Risk management and that.

Jay: That's right.

Line: You know, this idea of abundance can feel, I guess, counterintuitive in the regulatory context. How can we understand that better?

Jay: Yeah, of course. And so, I think it's worth acknowledging, also, the limits on regulators. In the American context, for example, with separation of powers, you know, the legislature creates the laws and generally provides the umbrella for regulations. And regulators or administrators or bureaucrats or whatever you want to call folks, the public servants, you know, is probably, I think, actually the right way to put it. These are actually wonderful and dedicated folks who choose sometimes to forego more lucrative opportunities to remain in the public sector, and yeah, that's worth acknowledging. But it's also worth acknowledging that many of these issues are not directly within the authority of regulators. Regulators only are able to operate under the guidelines or scaffolding that's set for them by legislators, or governors, or agencies, or universities, or employers, or insurers, or a whole bunch of other folks that implicate this. And so, I think I want to acknowledge that, because I think a lot of your audience might think, we'd love to do this, but, you know, the legislature has made it really hard for us to do it, and our hands are tied, right? Which is, like, a common… I mean, you hear it, and it's both an excuse and also true a lot of times, right? It's both of those things at the same time.

But, you know, I think that the reason I was excited about this talk was I do think that it's true that regulatory boards are almost always in the room where it happens, right? At the very least, they can help shape the culture, help shape the philosophy, and they can influence their conversations kind of far beyond the formal authority, and so I just wanted to have that disclaimer up front.

I think it's really important to hone in on this notion. There's two notions I think it's really important to hone in on, and we can get to some examples of my experience, maybe, of how this kind of first came to light. There's two concepts I think are really important. Number one is that I mentioned this earlier, this notion of safetyism, that safety is the paramount virtue, or the cardinal virtue of regulation, which, again, sometimes might be true And regulatory systems naturally focus on preventing visible harms, but this is where that second concept comes in, which is the idea of opportunity cost, right? There's other harms to the public that are not visible, that are more invisible, and that's about what didn't or never happened. Right? And so, if you think about, for example, childcare, which is, I know, a hot topic right now in the regulatory space, you know, situations of neglect or abuse or substandard care, or whatever. They get headlines, they get regulators yelled at, they get a lot of attention. Nobody ever talks about, at least in this particular space, people tend not to talk about. What about the centers that never opened because the regulations were too onerous. That's not the only reason, but that's definitely a reason. It's a high bar; there's a big moat. There's a big regulatory moat around opening a child care center, and you can argue that there should be one, because these are taking care of children, but you have a ton of areas in this country right now where child care access is very scarce, and that has all kinds of downstream negative effects on our economy, on families, on people, and on children. And that is a cost and a harm, too. And I think the way to kind of maybe get around the counterintuition here is to remember that harms, whether they're visible or invisible, all matter. If

that makes sense.
Line: Yeah, absolutely. So, you know, obviously this is the first time that you and I have had an opportunity to speak, but I know I looked at your session description and you describe a tension between protection and possibility. Have you seen that tension play out in your own experience?

Jay: Oh, yeah, totally. There's two examples I'll give from my time at the state, running the mental health system. I should say, in this capacity, I was both a regulator - we oversaw recovery residences and treatment providers, and my signature was literally on the certification of the facility - And then also, we also had to work with regulators, like, whether it's a licensing board. Two examples. So, one involves recovery residences. These are recovery housing, so these are for folks usually in recovery from substance use disorder, is generally what these houses exist for, and these are relatively new in terms of being regulated. This world has existed forever, but it's relatively new, you know, last 10-15 years, where this has fallen under the purview of the state largely because a lot of these places have started to accept Medicaid over the last decade or so, which is wonderful. So many lives have been saved because of this development, but it also means all of a sudden you have to grapple with the regulation of this and the conversation that came up. And I say this because this is, I think, a great illustration example of this tension. As we were drafting these regulations, some folks really wanted to pursue the best practice of requiring a full-time addiction psychiatrist on staff at every single one of these residences because a lot of these people have co-occurring mental health issues and are on the sort of polypharmacy of medicines and it is a best practice for a reason. You do ideally, in an ideal world, you would want that. But then you think about residences in rural Indiana, where there's not a psychiatrist within 150, 200 miles, right? And if you impose this requirement on rural Indiana recovery residences, at the end of the day, there are not going to be rural Indiana recovery residences. And so, we ended up arriving at a good compromise where we required contracting and telehealth and there had to be coverage within, sort of, a reasonable amount of time. But the phrase we hit on was, it's not about best practice; it's about best possible practice, right? So how do we preserve the spirit and the intent of the rule while recognizing the reality of the actual circumstances on the ground? So that's like one example.

The other one, this came up way more than you would think. At least maybe it won't surprise you, but it surprised me how often this came up. It was about sprinkler systems. There were all these requirements of having of sort of fire suppression requirements for facilities that we oversaw. And long story short, what ended up happening was these were written with urban buildings in mind, and as it turns out, there was a lot of places in rural Indiana where there were no buildings that met these requirements and would have required really expensive retrofits in order to. It would have made it cost prohibitive to even open one of these centers, and we had to say no because there was no wiggle room in the regulation. We had to say, ‘Oh, actually we you know you can't. Sorry you've gotten the financing and the staffing and the plan and you're dedicated and passionate wants to serve a community but because you have you know two less sprinklers than are required for your square footage, you know, like, sorry, we can't, we can't do that.’ Ultimately what I pushed for, I never really got, was I wanted the ability for us to be able to waive it, essentially. Those are two specific examples from my experience. The question is not about, is fire suppression important? The question is, is it better to have perfect fire suppression, or no facility at all? And it's not an easy question, but it's the type of decision that regulators have to make every single day.

Line: Yeah, of course. Expanding on that, obviously, you led some significant changes in Indiana's behavioral health system. What lessons from that experience might resonate with regulatory leaders across different professions and industries that maybe don't have exactly the same outlook?

Jay: Yeah, I mean, the key to the changes we led in Indiana was alignment, like sort of cross stakeholder alignment and people making the decision to maybe put aside their narrow parochial interest and getting on the same page to make the case to the legislature and to the governor, and to all the people that control the purse strings, that, you know, hey, we need a new system, and we need more money, as well, to put this new system into place. And I think that applies regardless of the field you're talking about, and that alignment is the key. Like, you can't have intra-advocate sniping; that will destroy any kind of a movement or attempt, and that very, very much includes regulators. Regulators, regardless of the field, are an integral part of the broader ecosystem within that field, and you know, thankfully, we had at least alignment and neutrality from our licensing boards. And then the specific case we made, which may be relevant or not to other fields, was, you know, we asked the legislature for more money, right? And we got it. We got a significant investment infusion from the legislature, which allowed us to leverage a whole lot more federal money and, you know, ended up… bottom line is we ended up with probably $250 million extra dollars a year in Indiana's treatment system because of these changes that were made. But our promise to them was we're gonna be really good stewards of the money that you were giving us, and we already have. And that required, I think, taking a look at the way we designed our new system, and making sure we weren't just imposing the dozens and dozens of new requirements, but we were being smart about the reality on the ground because, the worst thing that could have happened was we got this money, we tried to put the systems in place, and the results weren't there, and the legislature felt like they had wasted this money. Thankfully, and most of this happened after I left, you know, I kind of put it into place and then left. The results are really, really good about better outcomes, less money, more access, better care. But that's because we tried to bake in a dose of reality into the system that we were designing.

Line: Well, you know, I feel like I can speak for many regulators in that they're currently grappling with issues such as workforce shortages. Access challenges seem to always be coming up, and then it costs dealing with increasing public expectations on what they're doing. What do you think is often missing from those conversations that they're having?

Jay: Yeah, I mean, look, workforce… So, and then, bringing the broad brush here, but generally speaking, licensing boards regulate service professions, where the actual product that is being offered is somebody's talent and time. And that's a really important distinction between other types of products that are more about a thing, right? Like, the product here is somebody's talent and time. And the issue with service industries is that they don't scale. Like, they don't scale efficiently, right? Because for every additional person you bring on, you gotta pay them, you gotta pay them benefits; you know, their time is their time, there's no way to compress or magically multiply it. And this is a preview of the talk a little bit - there is a name for this phenomenon. And it was coined by an economist named William Baumol. It's called Baumol's cost disease. And the idea of cost disease is that, while a lot of other sectors get more efficient, right, so manufacturing, you know, all these sectors get more efficient, technology gets more efficient within time. Service sectors do not, which means that costs will keep rising, but what you get for those costs will stay relatively flat. And it's the fundamental constraint of service sectors. And then you layer on to that, a lot of these service sectors are funded partially or primarily by public dollars that require investment from legislatures and tax increases and states that have balanced budget requirements. And you get this constant scarcity because you're always catching up. Even as you increase supply, that supply gets more expensive. And then you layer on the notion of, with mental health and other areas, demand is going up too. And so there's this constant structural scarcity within this system that you're actually never going to be able to close that gap. And so that requires you to look at every single aspect of the system. Can we make that funnel into that workforce as efficient as possible, because there's these fundamental structural problems within the overall system. And so, that's something I think from a regulatory board standpoint is almost like a 180. Right? How do you widen the funnel? And how do you in some ways trust the institutions or infrastructures in place to a certain extent to police or regulate themselves? You know, because you can't keep bad actors out, necessarily. I mean, you can put safeguards in place that might nod towards that. At the end of the day, you know, there's a heavy level of, sort of, trust and pray that folks don't do something wrong, and also, I think, trust that the people in the fields are going to be able to exercise a level of oversight to address these things on the back end.

Line: Yeah, that seems to be always a challenge. You've written about the importance of, I think you call it the common good and the role of communities and institutions in helping people thrive. How does that perspective influence the way you think about regulation?

Jay: Yeah, I mean, this is heady stuff, right, for a regulatory podcast. I'll use mental health, because that's, I think, the thing I know most about, right? So, a common good to me is this notion of how it applies to mental health is, like, mental health is not just about the assembly line of treatment, right? You know, you're having some distress, and you get diagnosed with a condition, and then there's a prescribed treatment for that condition, and you go get that treatment, and then you end up better. Like, that's just not how human beings operate, especially in the realm of something as complicated as mental health. There's your family environment, there's your job situation, there's your community around you, there's the institutions you belong to, there's all these other factors that layer on to the question of, is somebody mentally healthy? And, you know, because there's been this push to essentially graft mental health onto the overall healthcare system, which is, in a lot of ways, this assembly line system. You know, where it's a sequence of diagnosis, and prior authorization, and approval, and treatment, and then, you know, rinse and repeat, essentially. A lot of that kind of ineffable but really important stuff about community and purpose and connection gets lost.

The former head of the National Institutes of Mental Health is a guy by the name of Dr. Tom Insel, and he spent his whole career overseeing the science and the research into brain health as the answer for mental health issues and his late career turn essentially was to raise his hand and say I sort of wasted the last 20 years of my life because people, place, and purpose (the three P's as he calls them) people, place, and purpose are actually much more influential on a person's mental health than any of the science, any of the treatment, than any of the other stuff. And that's a view I generally agree with, and that's what we mean by, like, a common good approach to mental health. And so, how a regulator could intersect with this is a much harder question, but I do think there are some ways that you can do that. Because if you think about what this means, okay, this means a much, much stronger role for non-clinical, non-expert "patients workforce," right? I'm using that in quotes, but, how do you equip pastors and coaches and teachers and other folks, you know, to serve and not as mental health professionals, but at least as mental health champions. And there could be, and you're seeing this, I think right now the place you're seeing it the most, the closest intersection with regulation right now is the peer recovery space.

Peers are people who have lived experience with addiction or mental health issues and they raise their hands and say, 'I want to help people that are in my position.' And that's a very powerful thing of being able to say, 'I've been where you've been, and trust me - this can get better and you know I'm proof of that.' But peers need to be paid generally because the volunteer peer workforce can only get you so far. Peers need to be paid. Peers are not clinical, but if they need to be paid through Medicaid, they generally need to be accredited or regulated somehow. How do you do that? How do you accredit or certify peers without grafting on this whole kind of clinical focused, regulatory lens on it. How do you maintain quality control of somebody where the most important thing that they have is not anything about what they've learned, or what their education is, or what their skills are, but quite literally who they are and how they approach people. That's an open question. I have no idea. But that's, I think, probably the closest intersection with regulation.

Line: I like that a lot. Well, without giving too much away from the keynote, what's one idea or question that you're hoping that attendees, after hearing your talk, will continue discussing after they leave the session?

Jay: Yeah, I think what excites me, and this hopefully will preview without giving it away, is I'm not a sort of no-regulation, deregulate, you know, raging libertarian, like all government's bad, like, you know, the whole Ronald Reagan, like… The scariest words in the English language are 'I'm here from the government,' and you're here to help. I don't believe that. I think government regulation and oversight has resulted in some of the greatest developments of the last 150 years, whether you think about in labor or occupational contexts or food safety or health care. And so, to be very clear - I am not about deregulation. What I think is interesting is this idea of regulatory precision, right? Keep the safeguards that matter, remove redundancy, and be intentional about trade-offs, right? And constantly think, like, if we were designing the system today from scratch, would we, in fact, build it this way? And I think you'll find there's a lot of places where the answer is no.

Line: Right. Great. I like that. Well, I think this has been an excellent talk, and I really appreciate you giving us some background and kind of a preview, if you would, of the conference keynote. We definitely look forward to seeing you and hearing your presentation in September. So again, thank you for speaking with me today.

Jay: Yeah, thanks for having me. This has been great.

Line: Yeah, it's definitely been a pleasure. And we have another conference sneak peek for our listeners. Now, as you just heard, Jay's keynote is going to ask us to consider, or at least reconsider, what's possible through regulation. But bringing new ideas to life requires another essential leadership skill, and that's the ability to have productive conversations when the stakes are high. And that's exactly what our next guest, Jillian Morenz, will be exploring in her conference plenary. Now, Jillian started her career in data analysis, planning, and distribution. From there, she moved into training. She has presented on a variety of professional development and leadership topics over the years, focusing on interpersonal communication, individual and team accountability, and organizational change. So, Jillian, we are glad to have you with us today. Welcome.

Jillian Morenz: Thank you, happy to be here! Excited for the upcoming conference as well!

Line: Yes, it's gonna be a blast. Now, I know you have spent many years helping leaders navigate, you know, difficult conversations. I had a couple difficult conversations last week, so I know that there can be a challenge. What first drew you into this work, and I guess, what continues to fascinate you about it?

Jillian: Yeah, well, I think, like so many out there, it started with just getting tapped on the shoulder. The organization that you work with says, 'hey, we need you to step into this role.' At that time, it was, we need somebody who knows processes to work with vendors to design new processes that work with the new systems that we're bringing in, and as we had these beautiful standard operating procedures. The realization that the procedures aren't enough for success. It's people who make or break this. I started really kind of getting in front of anything communication, accountability, influence, and then writing articles on that for the organization. At the end of the day, I think people have the capacity for greatness, or to get in our own way. And so, what continues to fascinate me is just how hard people work and how much they care and want things to be right. They just don't always have the mechanism for the voice to be able to do that effectively. So I get to partner with individuals all over the world to help them build the skills, have the confidence, bring the voice in a way that gets the best ideas on the table, that gets things moving in a productive way, no matter how complex what we're talking about is.

Line: That's fantastic. So, I've had an opportunity to look at the materials for the conference coming up. I know the title of your plenary is Tools for Talking When the Stakes Are High. What makes conversations crucial, and why do so many of us struggle with it when we're in those types of moments?

Jillian: Yeah, so, three elements converging is really when you're going to see a conversation turn crucial. It's opposing opinions, high stakes, and strong emotions. That becomes the stopping point.

Now, as long as we're dealing with other human beings, we're gonna find ourselves in moments where we disagree, or in moments where we feel passionately about something, or we feel that stomach churn in our stomach, right? The challenge is, what is our natural reaction to those moments? It's not to be logical. It's not to be our most influential selves. It's actually to go into that fight or flight. So we go into that reptilian brain, and that's what makes it so difficult. Because we're not our most logical, we're not our most influential, we're not the best versions of us, and yet we care so deeply, we're trying to solve for things. So what we're looking at is, how can we do less of that? How can we show up, no matter how crucial the moment is, as our best selves, so they don't become stopping points, so that we can effectively and efficiently navigate these moments and get where we need to get in the time we need to get there.

Line: That makes sense. You know, the regulatory environment is full of conversations where the stakes are legitimately high, right? Whether it's with licensees, their colleagues, maybe board members, or even the public, what is it about high-pressure situations that changes the way we communicate? And before you answer that, I mean, I know from my perspective, right, military, my parents were both military. In high-stress situations, I tend to want to bark orders, and let me just tell you, after being married now for almost 19 years, Terry does not like that approach. So I've had to change things, but, you know, when we're dealing with these really high-pressure situations, what's the best way, or what is going on that's helping us to communicate in a better way?

Jillian: Yeah, so Line, I can completely relate. My dad was career Navy, my mom did two tours. I grew up in a household where you do it the right way. It's not right until it's done right, and it is completely done right. There are definitely some standards that I developed at an early age. Sounds like the same goes for you, and guess what? The same goes for all of us. So I think one of the challenges is by age 2, about 80% of our personality is formulated. Now, with children, we call it personality, but in adult circles, we call it communication, how we connect with one another, how we relate, how we influence, how we hold each other accountable. So same idea, just different terminology. And so, most of us don't realize that a lot of our knee-jerk reactions have been established at an early age, and refined, of course, to fit in our current circumstances. So I'm not saying my 4-year-old's temper tantrum looks the same as a 44-year-old's temper tantrum, but I am saying what worked for us early on when we go into that reptilian brain, when we go into immediate reaction mode, that's where we tend to lean, and then we scratch our heads. Why is the situation getting exasperated? Why are they reacting or responding this way? Because I care, and I think they care as well. You know, having a systematic approach. And the beauty of these crucial conversation skills, these mastering dialogue skills, is they're rooted in over 30 years of ongoing observational research. So these are the best practices. Having a systematic process that's simple, that you can lean on in the moment to keep your brain engaged so you're showing up as your smartest self, to replace the reactionary behaviors that you've had a lifetime of leaning on, even when you realize that doesn't always work with this person, or that doesn't always work in this situation. Being very deliberate in how you handle these moments, it makes you more effective. It makes it not only easier for you, but for everybody around you, which is a big deal.

Line: Well, speaking of communication… I guess, mistakes, you know, which I kind of alluded to, I've done my share with Terry. In your experience, what are some of the most common communication mistakes that folks are making when emotions are starting to get high?

Jillian: Yeah. I mean, number one mistake, and this is not new in 2026, but I will tell you, over the last few years, this has become more and more prevalent: not speaking up, or not speaking up to the right individual, to the right group. Getting the right parties involved the moment we sense or we know that there is a rub or there is a potential issue. And it's not just not involving the right people early on, but it's what we do in place of that, the workaround where we take on more than we should. This is not a sustainable pattern of behavior, and it's leading to so much burnout, so much resentment and frustration. So that's kind of number one.

But it is also closely followed by the number two mistake, which is, okay, I go in hot. I go in, and I've psyched myself up, and I go in ready to take everybody down, because in my head, that's the only way I can be seen, that's the only way I can be heard. The truth is, we don't have all the information all the time. And sometimes, what we have is enough to figure out what do we need to address? What do we need to get more information on? But sometimes the other people in the room are the ones who have that information, and when you go in hot, them being willing to let their guard down, them being willing to stay calm and stay productive in this conversation, it goes down exponentially. Everything just gets harder. So again, it goes back to a little bit of balance between, okay, if I say nothing, what's the downside? If I go in hot, what's the downside? Because that's where our brain always goes, right? We do this risk-reward kind of evaluation in our head. But what's the risk of staying calm and going in? What's the risk of laying out a clear case and then building upon that with additional information before we go into our problem solving, or our planning, or involve who we need to involve? And I think a lot of times, when you add in that third element, what you find is I'm more inclined to go that path, with the skill, with minimal mistakes. So, it's a package, right? Minimal mistakes and skills, making that choice.

Line: I really like that. What's the risk of going in calm? Because that's just, again, maybe I can use that as a little mantra, even just in the workspace, to make sure that I reset before I go in. Because there is no risk of doing that, right? Are they still going to get the message? Are they still going to understand that you're not happy with whatever the outcome is, or whatever? Absolutely. But I don't have to be yelling or… I don't yell, but, you know, in that type of angst to get that information across, so I like that a lot. One of the ideas behind the crucial conversations is that people often choose between speaking too forcefully or staying silent. And we tend to fall into those patterns, and this certainly is not going to become a marriage therapy experience between you and I, but that's the exact same thing that it is with myself and my wife. She is the quiet type, and I am the loud type, and everybody that's listening to this knows that I'm the loud type. But, talk to me a little bit about that.

Jillian: So, let me just say, you're right, this is not going to be marriage counseling, not today, not on the 16th. However, the beauty of these skills is they are human skills. So, use it with your partner. I use it with my husband. He is ready to get in and solve problems immediately. But I'm more quiet. And so, I lean on these skills to trust that my voice can be heard and is valid and valuable and a part of the conversation, a necessary part of the conversation. You ask, why do we get into these patterns, whether it's at work or at home. Again, we already talked a little bit about how early of an age some of these knee-jerk reactions form. But I think, you know, as a kid, having to make a choice between telling the truth and keeping a friend is very real. But it's pretty low stakes, right? So, somebody does something I don't like. But, you know, it's not that big of a deal, and if I tell them, they'll be mad at me. I'd rather just kind of let it roll off my back and be chill about it, right? Like, these are the types of choices we make as kids. Low risk, low cost, low consequence. But taking that as a foundation of how we handle interpersonal communications as adults, there are consequences. There are consequences to keeping quiet. There are consequences to not involving certain individuals because you're worried about how they will react or respond. And so, finding a way to have that voice, balance that with what needs to be heard and who needs to hear it, you know, it's about where we currently are and where we need to get. And if we're trying to do things right in a regulatory environment, I don't think there's anything more important than truth and fairness and honesty, right? Like, that's the lens you're looking through - getting the right people in the right place, and having the right conversation, so we can work through what we need to, to get the end result that should be happening. It's even more important in this space.

Line: Well, I appreciate you pointing out, you know, regulatory, obviously that's what we are about. I know you have worked with organizations across all kinds of different industries, and I'm sure that you have learned, and I would like to hear maybe about what you've learned about the connection between these healthy communication things, as well as how it works with high-performing organizations, because that's the goal that we all want to be, is high-performing.

Jillian: Yeah. You know, we're always looking at how's the organization performing, what's not being said, what's not being heard, what could we have gotten in front of, but we didn't? And so often, it goes down to people not speaking up. It so often goes down to, we could have gotten in front of this. You know, I think years ago, and I don't know if you remember, when the Toyota brakes were going out, and cars were going uncontrollably on the highway. Now, I did not work directly with Toyota, but I've worked with other car manufacturers, and I know from my work with them, so many people touch the process. So many people touch the process before the first part goes on the manufacturing line. So many people touch the car on the manufacturing line, and before it gets over to where it can be sold to consumers. And you're telling me that not one person said something looked off, said something was questionable, said a spec wasn't right? I don't believe it. I don't believe that people didn't see it. Do I believe they didn't say it? Actually, yeah, I do. And it comes down to emotional safety, psychological safety. It's not the organizations that have the least amount of problems that are the most successful. It's the organizations that don't get stuck because of the problems. It's the organizations that, when there's a hint of an issue coming, people speak up. People go into that problem-solving mode. It starts on an individual level. It's very grassroots, right? If individuals are speaking up, are working through problems, and not brushing them under the table, we have strong partnerships. If we have strong partnerships, we have strong teams. If we have strong teams, we have strong divisions and organizations, and it's so much easier to not only accomplish goals, but that's where you're seeing groups superseding what was planned, what was expected. That's where the dream team comes into play, and so many organizations have these little pockets of dream teams. What you want is to be able to spread it across the organization, duplicate that. So creating enough safety, creating enough space that people can say, here's a problem. Here's the risk. Here's where maybe we should gather more information. Here's where we should loop these guys in. Now you're lowering risk, and we're working through those key things that are going to be make-or-break down the road.

Line: So, I'm excited about your plenary presentation. Without giving away any tools that I'm sure you're going to talk to us about on that day, what mindset shift do you hope that our attendees will take away from your session?

Jillian: My biggest hope is that what we do in that session, the skills that I share, some of the big ideas, everybody walks away saying, 'I can do that. I can literally turn around and do that.' Because I know these skills make a difference. I know for an individual, it brings confidence that I can speak up, and it can go well. No matter how difficult, how touchy, how uncomfortable the conversation is, I will have the confidence that it can go well. I know that the skills are simple enough, that they are usable. They are memorable, so that when you're in that moment, it's something you can hold on to. What we know is one of the fastest ways to, let's say, stave off that fight-or-flight response is to give your brain a complex problem to solve. Because what that does is it sends a message to your body, 'I want higher thinking.' I don't want fight-or-flight right now. And these skills - they're simple enough that they're memorable, but they can act as that complex thought, that thing you can focus on, so when you open your mouth, you don't have to insert some shoe leather into it. You're gonna be good. You're gonna open your mouth, you're gonna be composed, you're going to be clear, and you've now just set yourself and those around you up for a productive conversation with a focus on results. Where do we go from here?

Line: Oh, that's excellent. Well, I definitely want to thank you for sharing that background with us, and we definitely look forward to your presentation in September. So again, thank you for speaking with me today. This has been a great conversation.

Jillian: Thanks for having me. I had fun, too.

Line: Absolutely. And, you know, for our listeners, there's still time to register for the CLEAR Annual Educational Conference to hear more from Jillian and Jay, as well as the numerous sessions and networking opportunities on offer. Please go to www.clearhq.org/AEC (that's for the Annual Educational Conference) for all the conference details, and to register to join us in Portland next month. But before we meet in Portland, there's plenty of opportunity for online discussion. I invite CLEAR members to head to the CLEAR Regulatory Network to connect with regulatory colleagues worldwide. This podcast episode will be posted there, and we love your feedback. Here's a couple of questions that I want you to think about when you're going to the regulatory network. What are you most looking forward to at the upcoming conference, and what topics or burning questions do you hope will be answered in the keynotes and sessions?

We greatly appreciate and thank our members for your discussion and feedback in the CLEAR Regulatory Network. If you haven't already, we invite and encourage you to join and take part in these online discussions. I also want to thank our listeners for tuning in for this episode. We'll be back with another episode of Regulation Matters, a CLEAR conversation very soon. And if you're new to this CLEAR podcast, please subscribe to us. You can find us on Podbean or any of your favorite podcast services. If you've enjoyed this podcast episode, please leave a rating or comment in the app. Those reviews help us to improve our ranking and make it easier for new listeners to find us. Feel free to visit our website at www.clearhq.org for additional resources and a calendar of upcoming programs and events. Finally, I'd like to thank CLEAR staff, specifically Stephanie Thompson. She is our content coordinator and editor for this program. Once again, I'm Line Dempsey, and I hope to be speaking to you again very soon.

The audio version of this podcast episode is available at https://podcast.clearhq.org/e/keynote2026/.