

Rock Thomas.com: Welcome back to another session of the #IAMMovement podcast where we are constantly bringing new perspectives on how you can change your story.

Rock Thomas.com: Look at life through a different lens and enhance the results in your life. And we're the perfect person on today's podcast. Danessa is an executive coach dedicated to shifting global conversations on leadership.

Rock Thomas.com: She's also a shameless failure. She has supported executives across every major industry. She's worked with a ton of different fortune 500 companies. I'm not going to list them all.

Rock Thomas.com: But Hilton KPMG, MasterCard, Black Rock, Nordstrom, just to mention a few. And she really believes that each and every one of us is uniquely qualified

Rock Thomas.com: To lead and to live a full life and her goal is to help you discover what is the story that you are currently telling yourself.

Rock Thomas.com: How can you change that by perhaps looking at things through a different lens.

Rock Thomas.com: And she's just authored a book called naked at work where she helps people really lean into being vulnerable and authentic in the workplace, so that they can get the most out of themselves.

Rock Thomas.com: I think you're going to really enjoy this conversation if you're somebody that's looking for a little bit of an edge and you run a small or medium sized or even large organization.

Rock Thomas.com: Because she's got experience in that realm and you're going to see she's very, very sharp and she's got some some beautiful little sentences that

Rock Thomas.com: For me after doing personal development for so long, really capture the essence.

Rock Thomas.com: Of some of the training and learnings that we're trying to achieve by communicating with you all out there. So let's go to my conversation with Danessa Knaupp on this version and this episode of the #IAMMovement podcast.

Danessa Knaupp: Thanks so much Rock . I'm glad to be here.

Rock Thomas.com: So as you know, we talked about before the show we like to talk in terms of identity and how you shift identity because

Rock Thomas.com: There's this force within us that we want to remain the way we are. We're a non smoker, we remain a non smoker. We're a nice room, nice until something shifts us and gives us a new opportunity.

Rock Thomas.com: And in your work. You're really helping people do a lot of that. So let's talk a little bit about how that works in your world.

Danessa Knaupp: Sure. So we spend time really focused on what's the story you're telling yourself about you.

Danessa Knaupp: And to be clear, we've talked before Rock , as you know, I work in big organizations and small with people at all levels of self awareness. So we don't sometimes jump into it. Hey, what's the story you're telling about yourself in the first one right

Danessa Knaupp: But for your listeners. I think we can start there, which is we're all in a story about who we are and what we believe, what we don't believe, what we should do and what we do.

Danessa Knaupp: And that story we've crafted over a long time, and some of it. We've picked up and carried, even if we don't want it.

Danessa Knaupp: And so I start with, let's look objectively at the story and then how is that story, both serving you and limiting you

Danessa Knaupp: Because all stories do right they both serve and limit us. And so our job is to choose what serves us most in the moment and benefit from that without limiting us too much.

Rock Thomas.com: That's really good. Well framed. I love the fact that you use the word story because again that's a phrase that people in personal development are quite aware of

Rock Thomas.com: Yeah I know there was a time in my life when I thought I just was the way I was.

Rock Thomas.com: Yeah. And I talked to myself. And I was like, I hope I wake up tomorrow feeling good. I hope I have a good day. And I hope people are nice to me because I feel like there's nothing I can do about it.

Rock Thomas.com: But that changed when I went into personal development. So how do you get people first of all to realize their own story and then invite them to make a shift?

Danessa Knaupp: So part is through asking them the question. And what else could be true.

Danessa Knaupp: Nice. So you have this assessment. This person didn't tell you, you know, didn't update you after the meeting. So you think they're an ass trying to cut you out of what's next.

Danessa Knaupp: Okay, totally valid could be true. What are five other things that could be true. They could have forgotten. They could have thought there was nothing much that happened in that meeting.

Danessa Knaupp: They could have thought they already did tell you right and so just opening ourselves up to the universe of possibilities of what. What else could be true. And then returning

Danessa Knaupp: Sometimes people worry that they've got to give up their story and that feels insecure and scary, like you said in the beginning, we like to be really comfortable and stories make us comfortable

Danessa Knaupp: So what I tell people is, you don't have to give up that story. You are allowed to hold tight to it. Let's just make room for other ones. Let's acknowledge this is the story that I've chosen

Rock Thomas.com: I'm guessing you're really effective at what you do. Because first of all, as you say, and I'm thinking, okay, yeah, I'll be open to that. I like that. That's cool. Right.

Rock Thomas.com: So where did you get this kind of intuition or knowledge or skill set to be able to help people navigate through this and become a better version of themselves?

Danessa Knaupp: So for a long time Rock . It was my side gig, sort of like you before. You know when you were in real estate and building the empire. This was a thing you were doing really well, but didn't know that.

Danessa Knaupp: This is a whole thing. So I was a leader in corporate America and I left for a while and started a business and in retail and came back.

Danessa Knaupp: And the story that I kept hearing about myself was hey you know you're, you're a good leader I had people who wanted to follow me, who would come join my team, even if I was doing a start up and they'd make less money.

Danessa Knaupp: And I was really interested in how people think in how we work through things for myself, personally, right. I was in a bunch of stories and still am.

Danessa Knaupp: That served me or didn't. And so I was noticing those and this started in school. I studied psychology and sociology, but for a long time. It was my side gig and then I came up on a point in my 30s, where everything that I had so carefully put together in my life blew up.

Danessa Knaupp: And the lesson I walked away from in that moment was hmm I invested a lot of energy in building this thing then in the end, it doesn't really matter so much to me that it's gone. And so what if I invested the energy in something I really wanted

Danessa Knaupp: And so that led to me leaving corporate america and going to study this actually didn't even want to be a coach necessarily I enrolled in Georgetown's coaching program. And it's this

Danessa Knaupp: You know a prestigious program and it's day one and everybody is standing up talking about their big plans Rock on. You know how they're going to build it, where they're going to take it and it came to me and I stood up and I said, I'm just kind of interested in how this works.

Danessa Knaupp: Just want to learn about it and I don't have a big plan. And that, for me, was the moment where I started becoming this person.

Danessa Knaupp: Is just being open to what was next and figuring well I trust myself enough that I got here and I'll trust myself to figure out what the next step is, but I'm going to follow my curiosity.

Rock Thomas.com: How important do you think first of all having a good work ethic. I mean it is universal. If you can't show up and put

Danessa Knaupp: In

Rock Thomas.com: Time and effort is. Did you know

Rock Thomas.com: But there are degrees. There's a Michael Jordan work ethic and a Kobe Bryant work ethic and then there's a trickle down from there.

Danessa Knaupp: Right.

Rock Thomas.com: Would you talk a lot about curiosity and about being open. How important is that to success in the people you've witnessed

Danessa Knaupp: Man, it is so important and ironically Rock it is when people align. Yes, this is a misuse of irony like the lettuce Morissette Song, but it was when people aligned their natural interests, their work ethic, if you will. Looks like it grows exponentially.

Danessa Knaupp: Mm hmm. So there were times in my corporate career where I was just trying to make it work. I had young kids, I was clocking out as soon as I could.

Danessa Knaupp: I was mailing in things that I could still do a good job. Right. But they didn't get the full benefit of what I call clients , sort of the magic of me.

Danessa Knaupp: Because I didn't have the energy to do it, man. I love this work I do now. And so it consumes me I think about it all the time. My team started laughing at me because I was talking to them.

Danessa Knaupp: About what we can learn about leadership from the three most stream shows on netflix and they were like, are you serious, this isn't normal.

Danessa Knaupp: Said, yeah. This is a nerdy about this. So if you find the thing you're nerdy about the thing that you'll follow internet wormholes about right that you're really naturally curious about, you're likely to have a lot of innate energy for it.

Rock Thomas.com: I love that. I love that great reframe, let's talk about your book naked at work, what are people going to get when they get that book. What are they going to learn? What are some of the tips and principles in that book?

Danessa Knaupp: Yes, so I wrote it rolling my eyes at how much we talked about authenticity.

Danessa Knaupp: And the reason I was rolling my eyes Rock is I was saying, you know, we talk all the time about it, but it's sort of like a hashtag authentic hashtag no filter. What does it really mean? And oh, by the way, I spent years in finance.

Danessa Knaupp: What's the business case for authenticity. Like, it takes a lot of energy and effort to show up as your real self. It takes some courage and so you better be able to show me that I'm going to get a different result. Because otherwise I'll just keep concealing that's

Rock Thomas.com: My investment.

Danessa Knaupp: Right. And so I started looking for the sort of ways the data on authenticity that builds the business case. And how do you really move people from A to B.

Danessa Knaupp: And what I found was there wasn't that answer anywhere.

Danessa Knaupp: And so I went through. I read all the leadership journals and I mean I was deep and researched for about 18 months and built the business case for authenticity. Spoiler alert authentic leaders are far more effective and you can measure it.

Danessa Knaupp: And then I thought, well, I know this step by step transformation. I've lived it myself. I get to watch clients live it, and let me articulate the steps and show people how to do that. And I just really

Danessa Knaupp: Wanted to approach it as really a manual or a handbook for if you feel like there's a better version of yourself and you're not sure how to get there. I can help you. And that's really how naked at work was born.

Rock Thomas.com: Alright, so I know it's a political or a moral question for you. But we're able to draw the line at work. And if they're going to come in example using a

Rock Thomas.com: Kind of an extreme case, somebody comes and says, Listen, you know, I'm having a rough time. I'm being beaten by my husband at work at home.

Rock Thomas.com: And they want to bring that nakedly vulnerability to the workplace. Like, when is that a human resource, kind of conversation or not, like, where do you draw the line because sometimes getting too personal fudges the business aspects.

Danessa Knaupp: Yeah, absolutely. And there's a line I'm pretty proud of in the book that says essentially what I'll say here, which is if you think managing people's humanity is going to take more time than you don't understand how much time you're already spending managing it.

Danessa Knaupp: So there are safety issues and dependency issues. Those things are HR things right because people need resources and need them quickly. But things where people allow you more information.

Danessa Knaupp: Where they allow you insight into who they are or how they're thinking about something are really powerful.

Danessa Knaupp: So if somebody says, Hey, man, I can't get to work on time, because I'm really distracted. If someone's sick at home.

Danessa Knaupp: You might have one path that is the HR path. Can we adjust your schedule? Can we put you on some kind of leave

Danessa Knaupp: But as a leader. You see, okay, maybe really detailed tasks aren't the right thing for this person now maybe this is an opportunity to give them something else.

Danessa Knaupp: There are authentic things that happen that totally misfire and I'll give you an example Rock .

Danessa Knaupp: So I am a strong proponent of freedom of the rights, we have in this country in the US and in general and individual freedom. I am not a proponent of automatic weapons and had a conversation with someone on zoom recently and they showed up with an AK 47 as their background.

Danessa Knaupp: Fully authentic to him, I said, Hey, tell me about your background and he said, I'm a boy scout leader and I wanted to show the kids something cool.

Danessa Knaupp: Well, so that was really authentic for him and he didn't get my business.

Danessa Knaupp: I'm not suggesting he should have done that differently, right. That's his choice. It's his choice to be authentic in that way.

Danessa Knaupp: But understand that your choice about authenticity may have ramifications. I personally don't think it's cool to show little boys a weapon that is designed to kill people.

Danessa Knaupp: You know, if you're in the military, I can understand how you might honor that a different way.

Danessa Knaupp: But as we think about it. That's a great example of him choosing to be authentic, it had repercussions. And sometimes that's just fine. Right. I could do the same thing and listening to this podcast and saying that

Danessa Knaupp: There are listeners who might say, you know what she's not for me. We don't agree on that, and that's their choice.

Danessa Knaupp: So you need to sort of hold the space for your authentic self. Which one you want to be bringing forward and service to others. So that limits. Some of these sort of

Danessa Knaupp: Dropping of emotional bombs, if you will, you're bringing forward your authentic self and service to others. But in doing that, you need to understand that that means you may not be for all people, you know, I'm an acquired taste. That's okay.

Rock Thomas.com: You know what I hear you saying is I think it's not so much about divulging maybe some of the things that are are really personal because

Rock Thomas.com: Sometimes you can be going through a divorce or something. You don't need to discuss that at work at the time, you can discuss it later maybe when you person. We have to process the emotions, but to be able to be vulnerable and say, you know what

Rock Thomas.com: I just got a promotion to, you know, manager of this division and I'm a little bit concerned because I'm not very good at leading small groups or public speaking, we are nervous.

Rock Thomas.com: And then your boss, maybe says you will listen. Why don't you, why don't we sign you up for this. Dale. Dale Carnegie effective speaking course yeah office will pay for it and let's grow you together. Is that a little bit more what you know you're kind of leading toward

Danessa Knaupp: Exactly. Because that's in service to your effectiveness with your team. Right, right. I have this thing in the way of me being able to effectively communicate. Can you help me? Yeah.

Rock Thomas.com: And the other thing I was going to add to that, or ask you is

Rock Thomas.com: We're a society that's really generous with labels. Yeah.

Danessa Knaupp: We sure are.

Rock Thomas.com: So, for instance I talked to a lot of people and they're like, Yeah, I was going to do that, but I'm dyslexic, and I'm adding I'm this mat and they say it with the tonality of shame and I for one thing. There are many roles, for instance, that have

Rock Thomas.com: A fire. Man, it might be good to be add

Danessa Knaupp: Right, you'd notice something. Yeah.

Rock Thomas.com: We'd move quickly and you respond to stuff right

Rock Thomas.com: The ceilings falling and boom, you're out of there. So maybe there's these labels that traditionally are considered a sickness, you know i i think is the real way to when people take on a label to empower them or to offer to them. How does that come up in your work at all?

Danessa Knaupp: Yeah. So one of the things that I remind clients when we start working together.

Danessa Knaupp: Is that where I started? And if I can't start from this place. I don't take Rock . So this is how important it is to me. I start from a place of believing that you are capable, resourceful and whole as you are. Okay.

Rock Thomas.com: Like it

Danessa Knaupp: And you may have a series of lenses through which you view the world.

Danessa Knaupp: And that may make you better or worse at other things. And so my job as your partner is to help you see the lens and help you decide if that's the lens. You want to choose.

Danessa Knaupp: And so in that way we can turn labels into helpers right into a way to talk about it. In fact, I do a ton of assessments with people. Right.

Danessa Knaupp: And they always sort of take it and they want to apply the title of this podcast.
Right. I am well no

Danessa Knaupp: That's a preference. That's a predilection, a predilection, if you will. Right.
And that just means I show up and I'm on this end of the spectrum. So I know that about me and
I can choose how I want to move

Danessa Knaupp: So choice for me is critically important when we're working together and your
listeners can think about all of the real choices you have, you tell yourself, you might not have a
choice.

Danessa Knaupp: You might not be able to leave the marriage, you might not be able to leave
the job. That's not true. The choice has repercussions or consequences and you're not willing to
pay those yet.

Danessa Knaupp: Yes. So there's a great quote about change, which is how much are you
willing to suffer for this outcome.

Danessa Knaupp: And that's, that's a critical answer when we talk about change.

Rock Thomas.com: Yes. And what's the flip side to that is I often think that

Rock Thomas.com: There are people that, let's say, are not where they want to be financially
and they don't want to be saving physically that are suffering. But in micro doses every day.

Rock Thomas.com: I have trouble tying their shoe.

Rock Thomas.com: Yeah, tablet, taking the stairs, because they're out of breath, they're not
willing to or can't or won't go in and do the exercise or change their eating habits or save money
because they're too lazy to cook so they want to work out all the time, whatever. Yeah.

Rock Thomas.com: Yeah, and so they're suffering but they're not suffering in an intense jolt,
they're just kind of slowly suffering all along. Now, how do people change that? What, what do
they have to get to the threshold where the pain is so bad that they both make a big change.

Danessa Knaupp: There's two ways. Yes, you could get to that threshold of pain. I wouldn't wish
that on anyone, though, right, because we've all been there.

Danessa Knaupp: Where we look at what's happening around us and big. This is the moment it
has to change. And that's painful.

Danessa Knaupp: The other is to really make sure you understand the upside of the other
choice.

Danessa Knaupp: So so often we're thinking about, Oh, that feels hard to change or but I wouldn't want to do that. And we're focused on the change. We're not focused on if I could do that successfully, what would be possible for me.

Danessa Knaupp: And making that the true north or the goal. Yeah.

Danessa Knaupp: So, you know, like many of us I have, I have teenagers and I have a teenage son who's just found out that because of the environment in the world his summer camp job where he was head counselor has been canceled.

Danessa Knaupp: And he's heartbroken. He loves that place and he would have been terrific, but as Mother, I'm saying, you might want to find another job.

Danessa Knaupp: He's saying, I don't think I want to work. And so what I said to him, is what would be possible if you were working all summer. Look at that. What would be possible if you're not

Danessa Knaupp: And he says, Mom. I don't want to work. I said, great don't work. Let's envision that, what does that look like, how does that feel when you're back at school and your fraternity. Did you do this or do

Danessa Knaupp: Because I don't pay that. How about the 20% of your education? You're accountable for how you are going to do that.

Danessa Knaupp: And so really thinking about what is the outcome of both of these choices, rather than hey in the moment, it feels fine to tie my shoe. This way, but you don't realize you're making tiny accommodations across

Rock Thomas.com: So you're kind of like a consequence counselor.

Danessa Knaupp: Yeah, I think I would say I'm a

Danessa Knaupp: I'm a reality checker.

Danessa Knaupp: So what is, what are we telling ourselves we're telling ourselves. We're just going to chill out all summer and end up back at school and things are going to be fine. What are we missing in that story?

Yeah.

Rock Thomas.com: I've said to some people in my world. I said, If you could pay today's bills with tomorrow's

Danessa Knaupp: Intention

Rock Thomas.com: You'll be fine. Right.

Danessa Knaupp: Exactly. That's a currency. I want right

Rock Thomas.com: So it's like, oh no, I'll make the bed. Tomorrow I'll feel like it, then I don't feel like it now. No, you won't feel like it tomorrow, even more difficult and I have a term that I learned from somebody called front loading.

Rock Thomas.com: get things done in advance. Yeah. So that just in the off chance I have another option or opportunity or I'm not in the mood. Yeah, that's made the boxes packed in the suitcases in advance.

Rock Thomas.com: And off we go. I don't want to have to fill my car with gas in the middle of a snowstorm with everybody else because gas prices went up because I waited till I had no choice and was empty.

Rock Thomas.com: Yeah.

Danessa Knaupp: I think that lives. You're living ready right you're living ready for the next option. You're living ready for the door that opens. That's really powerful. Yeah.

Danessa Knaupp: I love that. Yeah.

Rock Thomas.com: You have such great terms living ready. I love that one. Also, I'm taking a lot of notes here. For those of you that are listening. You should read. Listen to this, because she's dropping bombs. I love it.

Rock Thomas.com: Love it.

Rock Thomas.com: So we have a short time together. We're coming close to the end, I want to ask you, who is your ideal client, because you have worked with some of the best companies in the world KPMG MasterCard Nordstrom

Rock Thomas.com: Which may go bankrupt. Now, that's another story. Capital One Comcast who is who is the individual that gets the most of your work.

Danessa Knaupp: Yeah. And to be clear, Rock . You know, I work with lots of big companies, but I love to work with small entrepreneurs to I work across the board, you have to

Danessa Knaupp: Be ready to do something different to work with me or my team.

Danessa Knaupp: If you're hoping that you're going to come in and tell us about all the reasons you can't do the things and look for someone to say, Oh, man. Yeah. That sucks. That's really hard. Why don't you call your buddy and go get a beer. That's not a coach conversation.

Danessa Knaupp: My job is to help you see things differently. Look at things differently. And sometimes people come to me Rock with really clear goals like here's the business. I want to build or here's the next level. I want to get to

Danessa Knaupp: And sometimes they come to me and they just say there is something in my way.

Danessa Knaupp: I can't name it, and I need you to help me name it so you don't have to have really crystal hard core goals to come to a coach.

Danessa Knaupp: But you do have to be ready to kind of lay it open and say, I'm ready to do some stuff differently and see what I can get. And that's why, whether clients. Work with me or anyone else, it's so important to pick a coach that you can emotionally stand naked in front of us.

Danessa Knaupp: And because then they can help you work through it.

Danessa Knaupp: That's

Rock Thomas.com: Awesome. I think that there's a lot of people that would feel comfortable and confident to have that conversation with you. I'm glad that you joined us today on the I am moving podcasts. Let's give people a few words that you use to describe yourself as we head off.

Danessa Knaupp: So I am candid

Danessa Knaupp: I am compassionate.

Danessa Knaupp: And I am learning to be courageous.

Beautiful.

Rock Thomas.com: And there you have it, ladies and gentlemen, the I Am movement podcast always trying to bring value to you. And today, we had an executive coach on today, and I'll tell you what I'm thrilled about. Maybe we'll have a conversation. Maybe I'll hire you.

Danessa Knaupp: I'd love that Rock . Take care. Thank you so much for having me.

