

77. Reclaiming Empathy with Rana el Kaliouby – Transcript

Leah: Welcome to Her Story of Success, a podcast featuring stories from influential women trailblazers and business leaders who have defined & pursued their own versions of success and fulfillment. We hope these stories, lessons learned, and celebrations inspire you to believe in yourself and enjoy your own journey a little more. I'm Leah Glover Hayes, your host and CEO of Her Story of Success Women's Business Collective.

On today's show, I have the honor of speaking with Rana el Kaliouby. Rana is the co-founder and CEO of Affectiva, a company that works with human perception artificial intelligence. Rana is passionate about humanizing technology so it can better detect emotion and cognitive states. You'll hear more in the episode about some of the amazing ways she's applying her technology to help individuals with mental illness, Autism and more, so stay tuned! Rana is also the author of *Girl Decoded: A Scientist's Quest to Reclaim Our Humanity by Bringing Emotional Intelligence to Technology*.

I have so much respect for Rana and the amazing company she's built, especially because she broke down so many barriers as a woman from the Middle East who's working in tech. She holds a Ph.D. from the University of Cambridge, a Post Doctorate from MIT, and she's been honored for her work with recognition like Fortune's 40 under 40 List, Forbes' Top 50 Women in Tech, and so much more.

If you enjoy this conversation, I encourage you to share it with a friend or coworker who needs to be reminded of their own power and potential.

So welcome Rana to Her Story of Success. We are excited to have you today.

Rana: Thank you for having me.

Leah: Absolutely. Now I have heard you on multiple podcasts. I've heard your TEDx talk. I've a little bit consumed you and talk to you a little bit, but for those that might be a little bit newer to you, can you share with us, what does your company today do?

Rana: Yes. So I am the CEO and cofounder of Affectiva. We are an MIT spinout on a mission to humanize technology. And basically our thesis is, technology is fully ingrained in every aspect of our lives, changing the way we connect with one another — obviously, especially during this pandemic — changing how we go about our daily business, how we learn, how we go about becoming healthier and happier people. But the way we approach technology is all about efficiency and automation. And I'm saying, 'Well, hang on a second. We need this human element. We need to

bring humans, you know, at the center of this equation.' So we're all about building emotional intelligence and empathy into our machines, and that unlocks a whole variety of applications and use cases.

Leah: Absolutely. And I know that you grew up in a technology home, your dad is in IT, and actually your mom was one of the very first women in the middle East to be in computer science. So I want to talk about how it kind of came natural for you, but you also have your own personal passion, because a lot of times when people do the same thing that their parents did, it really came from them. But you really had this bred in your own life.

And I do want to talk about why we're going to talk about *Girl Decoded*, because it is a lot about the humanization of AI, but I love that you also get very honest and vulnerable about your own life. And that's what this whole podcast is about is saying, 'yes, you are like literally this most amazing woman that's successful in IT,' but you're also a woman and you have emotions and feelings and things that I'm very excited to dive into. But let's get started with, how you grew up and decided that you knew that you were going to go in to IT. And is it true that you were told you could not date until you were out of college?

Rana: Yes, that is. And I actually stuck with it. Right? I didn't even break that rule. Yeah, so I grew up in the Middle East. I was born in Cairo and then my parents both got jobs in the Middle East, so we moved to Kuwait. We were there until the first Gulf War, and then we had to evacuate, which was pretty traumatic, and ended up in Abu Dhabi. So I just grew up all over.

My parents, I would characterize our family as, in one sense, they're quite conservative and traditional, and in another they're quite liberal. So they were, I have two younger sisters and they were so pro-education, they supported us all the way through. They really wanted us to kind of grow up knowing that we can be whatever we want to be. But, as long as we abided by all these kinds of gender roles and cultural norms. So for instance, just to your note about dating, I was not allowed to date until after college. And so I, literally the first guy I dated and yeah. Ended up being my husband and I very little experience with that world. Right? So there were just a lot of things I was not allowed to do from a cultural and gender kind of norms.

It was interesting. Both my parents are technologists. They actually met in a programming class, which I think is really cute. My dad taught programming in the seventies and my mom signed up to take this, she was intrigued by technology. And so we grew up surrounded by technology, but for me, what was really fascinating, and it still really is the drive behind everything I do is how technology can unite or divide people. For me, like this ability for technology to bring people together is why I do what I do. And I, and I think there's so much potential to do even more.

Leah: Something that you've kind of posted about and talked about recently is imposter syndrome and also representation and how that's so important. And so for you, as you are a young woman studying technology, talk to us about reading a book named, now that your company is, Affectiva, tell us about that experience and maybe did that prompt you to write your own book later in life?

Rana: Yeah, I think the mega kind of point you're making, is, I guess the importance of role models and people that look like you, that you can say, 'Oh, you know, if she's done it, then maybe I can too.' Right? And so representation becomes really important. So way back when, you know, I was a fresh graduate out of university back in Cairo. I was looking for a research topic to explore for my doctorate work at Cambridge. And I stumbled upon this book called *Affective Computing*. So affect is a synonym to the word emotion. And if you really don't want to use the word emotion for a whole variety of reasons, uh, affect is a good kind of more, you know, less than feminist word, I think. So I stumbled upon this book, it was written by this MIT professor called Rosalind Picard. I read the book and she posited in the book that technology needs to have emotional intelligence. I was just so fascinated. And literally this book changed the trajectory of my life, because I decided I wanted this to be my research focus.

And years later, I got to meet Roslyn in person. And she invited me to join her lab at MIT. And of course I was like, 'Oh, this is a dream come true.' And she became my role model. She became my mentor. She became my confidant. And I was, I think the thing that I loved the most about Roz is I could look at her and see a very successful scientist, innovator, thought leader, but she was also a mom. She was, she had, she has amazing three boys, and an incredible wife. And I could see her play all these different roles. And that really was, was amazing. And I think, you know, paying it forward now, I've realized in the last few years, in particular, as I embarked on this journey of writing a book and put myself out there, you know, I do have a role to play as a role model. And I hope, I think one of the reasons I wrote the book because I wanted people out there who may not believe in their ability to forge a path, to be able to look at me and say, 'Oh my God, she has such an unusual path. And yet she was able to break out of these cultural norms in the tech industry and create something different.' And I hope that my book gives people ammo to do the same.

Leah: Absolutely. And that's one of the things I wanted to dive into a little bit, because in one thing, like you had a mentor, you had this person that you looked up to and then you were able to meet her and she became your co-founder. And I think, what I want to encourage the person listening is it's important to find the mentors and to pursue that relationship, whatever that looks like. Like my goal is to meet Oprah one day. Like I want to meet her and Dolly Parton and Michelle Obama, because I know, that like there's aspects of them as a person human and their gifts that they give to the world have a role in my future, in what I have built in what I am building. And I love that you immediately turn it to, 'I need to do that for others.' And you see that

yourself as that role model. Sometimes I find women so often don't view themselves as successful yet. You would not believe the women that I have to be like, 'no, but you already are.' They forget that they can already give back no matter what. In college, I'm sure you could have like mentored other people. So it's like, always have someone that you look up to and understand that people are looking up to you, even if it's, you know, you now have a very large platform, but even when you were in university and had a few people looking up to you, that was just as important.

Rana: Yeah. I think that such an important message it's taken me years to believe that I, in fact, I have a funny story around that. I was approached basically by a friend of mine who I'd known for years. She's a kind of ghost writer, and in 2015 we reconnected and she said, you ought to write a book. And I was like, 'Carol nobody's gonna, well I don't have anything to say.' And she was like, 'are you kidding?' It was right after my Ted Talk.

Leah: So you had a lot to say!

Rana: And, then when I, when I met the publisher and the person who became my editor, I was very focused on the book being an emotion, AI like an emotion AI business book, and just over lunch, he was like, 'you know, I've actually kind of turned away this AI book. So I don't know if I'll take this book on, but why don't you share your story? And I just said, I grew up in the Middle East, I came to MIT and he was like, that's the book! That's the story.' And I, you know, talk about imposter syndrome. I was like, 'are you sure?'

Leah: But it's so real. And you share about your divorce and how hard it was. And the thing struck me is that you talk about that you allowed yourself to believe the narrative, that it was your fault. and then you learned to understand, like, no, there were two people and just because out of nowhere, he tells you like, 'Oh, I'm done this you've' you've not put me first.' That's what I really want to dive into a little bit is, you know, through this book, through writing your story. Anyone that's listening knows, like we all have a story and it's important. So I want you to share about going through that healing and decoding process after the divorce to realize, Oh wait, this wasn't all my fault, just because everyone else said that it was, that's not my truth.

Rana: Yeah. Yeah. I think this experience of writing the book, so it took me three and a half years to write it. Obviously I'm running a company at the same time, so then that's kind of the priority. But, you know, it's kind of interesting. I'm in the business of teaching machines emotional intelligence and how to read our emotions. And I think this whole process taught me a lot about my own emotions and embracing it and owning up to it. Not just to others, but even to myself. And so, as I reflect on, on my marriage, first of all, I, you know, I, as I said, I met my ex, he was the first guy I ever dated. We fell in love, we were best friends. And then I had this opportunity to go abroad and do my PhD, and he stayed in Egypt to run his company. So fast forward,

five years, two kids later, I think what happened is we just grew apart, right? But from a cultural standpoint, it was all my fault because why didn't I just stick back in Egypt and just be a good old housewife and just stop being ambitious. And my parents thought that by the way, both my parents. Especially my dad. At some point, my dad was like, 'Quit your company, quit what you're doing, just come back home, and like stay home.' And I, there's a chapter in the book called 'Grounded in Cairo,' where I talk about like, I was not allowed to travel for a full year, you know, and the mandate was, 'Go fix this. You're not getting divorced.' And it comes from a place of love. Like I know my parents, but it also underscores what in their eyes matters the most. Right. It was true for my inlaws. It was true for, you know, my, even my closest friends, they were like, 'why are you, why are you still trying to be a career woman? Just come back.' And so I took all of that for granted, but upon reflection, nobody ever asked him to move to MIT, you know.

Leah: That's what I was wondering. Why didn't he move?

Rana: Right? Like nobody ever thought of that. And there were a few scenarios where I got these awards. Like I received the Technology Review 35 under 35, which Mark Zuckerberg, and, you know, the Google founders had all received in previous years. And I just, I didn't want anybody to know about it because I felt like it would threaten my marriage. Because the more successful I became, the more, I felt like my marriage, it was at risk because I was becoming more and more successful. And so I underplayed all of that. I didn't go to the award ceremony. I didn't let my mom host a celebration party. I begged her. I was like, 'Mom, please don't do anything. Don't tell anyone.' So, you know, it shouldn't be like that.

Leah: Right. Well, and I think the words you use, you went from companion to competitor. And I think that your story is going to speak to so many women that have gone through something similar. I think a lot of times, and I don't know if it's necessarily imposter syndrome, but part of the things that we deal with is that we can't share it. And it's like, it's something that we deal with and we're trying to fix. And we're trying to like, do all of those things instead of being in this place where it's like, 'Oh no, like other people have dealt with this too.' And just being able to have that conversation with someone that doesn't judge you. So I know that this book is going to help so many women in that area.

One of the other things is, you've broken a lot of barriers and, from the cultural things with your family and where you're from to being a woman in technology, being a woman in AI, and to be a woman from Egypt in technology. So I want to talk a little bit about maybe some of the, either barriers or roadblocks that you came up against, if you could share some of those and what helped you push through? What helped you climb over it or break the damn thing down?

Rana: OK. And some of them are, it's all work in progress. Right?

Leah: Right.

Rana: I think the story I want to highlight is raising money as a female founder. I have now done this three or four times. The first time was over 10 years ago and we were spinning out of MIT. Roz, and I, through the MIT connections were able to line up really awesome meetings in the Bay Area, Sandhill Road. So we did a Sandhill Road show where you kind of jumped from one venture capitalist to the other. Their offices are all lined up on this very famous road. And I just want everybody listening to picture this. So you have two women scientists. We had never started a company before, although we had raised tons of money for MIT, but it was in a research context. I used to wear the hijab, so I was very clearly Muslim. Right? And we were pitching an emotion company.

Leah: Oh my gosh.

Rana: So can you imagine that? And our audience was exclusively, you know, older white guys. So they were gracious enough to take the meeting. They were always fascinated by our technology, cause we would do these like demos and you could see, you know, I do facial expressions for a living so I could tell that they were engaged. But I also, you could tell, like we were so not like what they were used to seeing, and what they were used to funding. It was, it was an uphill battle to get this initial check. We persisted. So you asked about like, how did we overcome this? And for me, and this was a lesson I learned from Roz, **you don't take no for an answer. If you have conviction, you just keep going and eventually you'll run into somebody that believes in your story believes in your mission, believes in, shares your core values. That was really important for us. So in total, we've raised over \$53 million in venture capital. It's still hard for female founders, but there's definitely a path to, and it's changing.** Right? I'm part of an organization called All Raise. So again, if any of your audience members are either entrepreneurs or investors, it's an amazing organization. It supports female founders and partners. And it's, it's my way again of kind of trying to give back and elevate everybody. We need the whole ecosystem.

Leah: Absolutely. I mean, there's groups like Woman 2.0, there's Hello Alice, there's She-EO. There's all that these organizations popping up that are helping women founders. I mean, now that all these things pop up, I think the thing that I'm seeing, I'm like, 'How do we continue to get them all together?' Cause I mean, I do this for a living and I still am finding people that are either in VC or they're like trying to help like more women become angel investors, but everyone's still doesn't know each other. So what do you think that we need to do as women to continue to learn about it? Cause I don't want just women that could potentially be angel investors. But we do need more women that can be angel investors, right? Like the representation, like what if we had as many female investors as we had male investors? And I think that debunking, the scariness of it is, is an important piece.

So one of the other things I wanted to chat about is just, I know we talked about humanizing technology before it dehumanizes us is something that you're passionate about. So when you say that, what does that mean that we want to humanize technology before it dehumanizes us? What was kind of your focus when you said that?

Rana: Yeah, a few things. So at the core of how we build our connections and how we build trust and loyalty and how, how we make decisions on a day to day basis is empathy. Right? Empathy is so critical. And if you look at how we communicate, like when we're face to face, which was not what we're doing during this pandemic, 90% of how we communicate is nonverbal. It's a mix of your facial expressions, your body and hand gestures, your vocal intonations, and we're all kind of really attuned into that. Now look at how we communicate digitally, online. And the vast majority of it is text-based, especially on social media platforms where you miss out on all of these nuance, nonverbal signals. So you, we dehumanize each other. I can tweet out to you this really mean thing. I have no idea how it falls on you right now. Whereas if we were in the same room or even in a Zoom call, like this, I would probably think twice before I'm really mean or decide to like be a bully or whatever. So I do think the way our technology is being designed right now is not human-centric in how we think about it. And it does not consider all of these rich nonverbal signals. And so I think what I'm calling for is kind of a reimagination of what our devices and our social platforms look like, where we really consider that and put empathy at the center of how we can connect and communicate, because that's how we bring people together again.

Leah: Why are we still not there yet with putting emotional intelligence into, um, all of these things? And not to like bash men, but like, do you think it's because we don't have as many women leading the charge? I mean, we have you and a few others, but do you think that that plays a role into it?

Rana: I think it's combination of factors. I think first of all, first and foremost, the original thesis of a computer is to automate, right? It's efficiency, productivity. Like we want to like automate all these tasks. And I think we underestimated how ingrained technology would be in our lives and the role it would play on a day-to-day basis, whether it's human machine interface or human-to-human compute-mediated interactions. So. I think the original, almost the original hypothesis of AI in particular, was this the idea of automation and efficiency. And so it's almost counterintuitive. I mean, if you look at psychology actually, and are a science. We all we've known for years that it's not just your IQ, your EQ really matters. And people who don't have for whatever reason, they're not as persuasive, they're not as successful in their professional personal lives. They can't really often keep a job, they can't keep a relationship together. So I think that's true for technology and, and that kind of thinking hasn't been the default, I mean, I know we have a diversity problem in technology, right? So only one kind of brain is designing all of these systems and just

needs an alternative brain or an alternative perspective around the table. And so, you know, I'm very passionate about highlighting the importance of having diverse voices and points of views in the design process of our technology.

Leah: So what does that look like for your company? Like what is it that your company is doing to answer this issue?

Rana: Yeah, we have a very diverse team, although I'm not happy with where we are. I think we're more diverse than, than a lot of tech teams, but we still have work to do. For me, diversity, isn't just gender diversity, right? It's not just ethnic diversity or racial diversity. I think age diversity is really important, so I try to include youth and really young people, including high school kids in how we think about what we do. And we have an amazing training summer training program where these kids are just so, A) they're so committed to social justice in a way I think some adults are not, many adults are not. So it's great to have that perspective, but also the perspectives of even backgrounds. It's not just that we hire computer scientists on our team. We have art historians and right? Like, I think, diverse voices really matter. So, um, yeah, we have to lower the barrier to entry into tech and also socioeconomic is a big problem too. Like even when we draw on talent to hire people on our team, they usually come from a certain background and they're privileged in one way or another. And I've been really adamant to expand that. And so our training program the summer, because it was virtual allowed us to really tap into young people who would not have been able to travel to Boston or would not have had access to these opportunities.

Leah: I'm glad that you're addressing that. That's a really big thing, because it's easy to say, 'Oh, we can give kids opportunity,' but what's the cost to them to accept that opportunity? Like even for you, when you were given the opportunity or earned the opportunity to go to Cambridge, you had an opportunity cost, right? Like you were newly married and, and were gone for five years of your marriage visiting some. And, and then when you got the opportunity to go to MIT, there was opportunity costs, but you were in a place that you could say yes. And you were allowed to say yes. Um, I love that you've acknowledged that, that not everyone has the privilege or the ability to go. I mean, you think about a young person who is from a very not wealthy area. It might not even be an option for them to move, because they're the sole provider or taking care of their family, or, you know, there's, there's a thousand things that could keep someone from being able to travel or move. Privilege can mean a lot of different things. And so how do you reach people that maybe aren't privileged in other ways?

So one of the things I was really interested in in listening to some of your talks and interviews is talking about how you've used this with autism and teaching people. And so, um, I want to talk a little bit about what your company has done, that's like futuristic and I'm like, I feel like I'm in the Jetsons listening to you talk. I'm like, 'wow,

you're this person that's creating this new way.' And I know that Tim asked you, like when you created this ability for, maybe someone that doesn't understand social cues for them to be able to learn and develop through this technology that you've created. I mean, literally like my heart was beating out of my chest. I'm like, 'Oh my gosh. Like when we talk about people that are passionate and on a mission to change the world, like you're literally doing it.' And like, you didn't have to do that. Right? Like a lot of times people will create a company because something in their life had a need. You have emotional intelligence, you, you are gifted with that already. So why did you create this to help other people when you didn't have that direct need anywhere in yourself or your family? And just thank you for being an amazing human. It really is what I want to say.

Rana: Thank you. Thank you. Yeah. Yeah, I'm very early on in my, in my research. Yeah. I was at Cambridge and I was giving a talk about like my research and I was saying, 'Oh, I'm trying to teach computers to read emotions.' And somebody in the audience said, 'You know, my brother really struggles with autism.' And so that got me curious and I started looking into it because, to your point, I don't have anybody in my immediate family that is on the autism spectrum. But the more I learned about it, the more I realized that the work I was doing had an opportunity to really be impactful and change people's lives for the better. And that was in fact, the project that brought me over to MIT into the United States with withdraws, the very first project we worked on together.

Individuals on the autism spectrum struggle with nonverbal cues. They find the face so overwhelming that they often will just even avoid it altogether. They won't even look at you. Right? Cause it's just that overwhelming and anxiety inducing. So what we did is we built these Google-like glasses. This was way before Google Glass existed and we stuck a camera on, and we had these kids kind of run around, interacting with each other. We game-ified it. So every time I looked you in the face, I would get like brownie points. Right? And every time I was able to identify that, 'Oh, you're smiling,' I got another extra points. So the kids loved it, because a lot of, a lot of these kids love technology, obviously. And we were seeing that the kids were improving really quickly. And then fast forward, you know, a number of years, we're now partnered with a company called Brain Power, and they specialize in that, they do use Google Glass, so we don't have to build specialized hardware and they use our technology in combination to bring these to families. I believe they have deployed it in about 400 families in the U.S. And they're, you know, in the midst of a clinical trial to measure the efficacy of it. So that's one, you know, that's one application that I feel is just so powerful. You know, I often get asked like, 'Oh, this is, you know, this can be really creepy. Like, why are you building this?' And, and this is one example of a way this technology can really help people.

Leah: I love that, that you were on this path of, 'I want to teach computers how to read emotions.' And it was actually because you, when you traveled or when you

were in Cambridge at university, and I think you talked about, you know, you had one little sad face to share when you had like a hundred ranges of emotions of like being homesick and actually crying and all of those things. So you go from, it was this one need that you have of like, 'I need this computer to understand my depth of emotions,' but along the way you learned how, what you were trying to create in the world actually had another use.

What else have you maybe learned along your journey, whether it be, um, through your company or anything else? Like what's been some of the greatest lessons that you didn't know that you needed to learn on this journey of decoding yourself and decoding emotions?

Rana: Yeah, I think, I think a few things, well, a lot of things. So I'm going to try and organize my thoughts, like the top three, maybe. I think the first thing is, I kind of mentioned this in the book, I didn't set out to move to the United States. I had no idea I would end up being an entrepreneur. It's not like I crafted this career path and I'm on it. Like, I think I grew my dreams, right? Like my dream was to graduate top of my class, which I did, go to Cambridge, get a PhD, come back to Egypt and teach. Like, that was my dream. But then I got to Cambridge and I was like, 'Ooh, now I have a new dream. I want to now go to MIT and become a researcher, you know, world-class researcher.' And then I got to MIT and I was like, 'Ooh, now I want to start a company. And I want to be the CEO of that company.' **You know, we talk about like pursuing your dreams, but we don't often talk about outgrowing your dreams and having new dreams. I found that to be really interesting. I also think, whatever your dream is or whatever path you're on, it often takes a leap of faith. And that's been certainly true, both for the technology and building, but also for the path I've taken.** Often it's, it's been new, like nobody's built emotion AI before. And you know, we were one of the very early companies to do this, and it requires a lot of faith because you're jumping into the unknown, but you're also like taking people with you on that journey. So you have to like paint a vision of the future and be excited and have conviction and then energize people to join you on that journey, and whatever that journey is, whatever that cause is that you believe in. I found that to be really interesting, like the intersection of faith and entrepreneurship.

Leah: Um, absolutely. Paul Sarvadi, who's the CEO of Insperity — he built it from two people to it's like a \$4 billion publicly traded company now — and he talks about that a lot that, you know, it is a faith journey. No matter what your faith is, you have to have faith in yourself. And that, especially when you start a company and you have like employees, like your faith has to be big enough for all of them to believe in. Right? Because it is on you. So I love that. And it is a series of faith. It's not like you took one leap and then you're done. So I want to talk about that a little bit. So you've had this company for quite a few years now. And you've had some iterations, now you're working with Brain Power. What are maybe some of the lessons that you've learned along the way? Cause it just sounds like, like you've just achieved everything you've

ever wanted. It sounds like you just, yeah, you work hard, but maybe what are some of the things that you've tried that didn't work and how did you deal with that?

Rana: Yeah, this is actually something that, again, something I really wanted to achieve with the book, I wanted to be vulnerable. Cause often like entrepreneurship is glamorized, right? You look, you often hear about my company when we just raised around of funding and it's so exciting or we just closed a really big deal, but you don't see that it's an emotional roller coaster. And on many days it's like an existential threat. Like some days we're on top of the world, and on some other days it feels like it's the end. Right? And you have to navigate that day in, day out. And I don't think people see that. And I feel it's important that we're able to talk about that as a society. And so absolutely there were, there are — there were and are days where it's really challenging.

Um, for me, there was one particular time where it was really tough. We had two core technologies. One was a wearable device, which was kind of Roz's baby. And then we have like the facial expression, core technology, which is my baby. And we made a really tough decision in 2013 to kill the wearable device, killed that baby, which was really hard because you know, it, it created a lot of tension between me and Roz. It was the right thing to do for the company, but it really hurt our relationship. And that was really tough. We're rebuilding it, but I don't think it'll, it'll be the same. Right? Yeah. So I do think there are a lot of hard decisions you have to make. I mean, even with this pandemic, we've had to cut down like really cut down expenses, and we had to let some people on my team go at the beginning of the pandemic. They're all, they've all landed in jobs and they're actually doing well. So that's important, but it was tough, right? Like it's tough! So I often say like, I'm very, I'm a very empathetic leader. But to be a successful leader, you have to also be willing to make these hard decisions and be decisive. And I think people sometimes mistake the fact that I'm nice with maybe that I'm weak and I'm like, no, 'I'm nice, but I'm not weak.'

Leah: Right. I love that that is getting debunked more. I'm so glad that being a nice person and having empathy is now the new standard of leadership. Right? I love that. I just feel like all of these CEOs, you think about Bob Iger with Disney and what a caring and loving, and you're just seeing the rise of empathetic, caring leadership. And I for one, I'm so grateful that that's happening. And I know that your technology is going to aid in that also. But I think the other thing that I'm so excited about is, you know, You just said, so you're working with the Brain Power and this device is with 400 families. But tell me like the vision of when this device is across the world. Tell me like what you're envisioning, what's that feeling going to be? Or what are you most excited about for this to be something standard that, that people have and, and have ability to use?

Rana: Yeah. I do think that kind of the grand vision here, if you like, is that ultimately we want machines to interact with us just the way we interact with one another.

Through empathy, through conversation, through perception. We're already seeing it with conversational interfaces like Alexa and Siri and Google Home. But these devices right now, they might be conversational, but they have zero empathy. And I think it'll, it'll take all of these technologies to a next level if we're able to add that element. For me, I'm excited about, so we do a lot of work in the office motive industry to help our cars be safer on the road. So, you know, if we can detect if a driver is distracted or drowsy or, uh, enraged or distraught, like if you can detect all of these things and have the car intervene, that could really be helpful. Ultimately, one other scenario use case that I'm very excited about is mental health. Mental health is kind of a silent, because it doesn't, it's not necessarily always. Yeah, so obvious, but we do know that there are facial and vocal biomarkers of depression, anxiety, other diseases like Parkinson's, and pair that with the fact that we spend so much time in front of our devices, you now have an ability to capture a person's baseline and then be able to say, 'Oh, you're not yourself today.'

Leah: Well, I love that you said, 'you know, when you go to a doctor, they can take your temperature, they can check your weight, they can do these things that have this marker.' And that's really what you're wanting to provide for the, you know, mental health is these markers that say, okay, I see the baseline. And here's what that looks like. So maybe what's your vision for that going forward? Like how do you believe that that's going to help our world, our greater community dealing with mental health?

Rana: Yeah, I think, I think having the data can be really powerful because it can bring this kind of objectivity to this problem that is right now, very subjective and unreliable. And again, if you, just for the sake of it, imagine if this technology was integrated into some of our video conferencing platforms or an app that you use every day, right? Maybe it's your calendaring and every time you are online, it can get a sense of your emotion. Like think of it as your emotional Fitbit, right? It gets a sense of your emotional wellbeing. And so it knows you really well. Right? It knows what you're like. And if it sees a trend where you are, you know, it can raise flags if it sees kind of these signals of depression, and it can raise it to you or with your permission, maybe it can raise it to a family member, maybe even your psychologist or doctor. Privacy becomes a really big issue because right, because you don't want this data out there. Right? But I think with the right privacy and kind of ownership of the data, it becomes really powerful. Because sometimes people don't even notice that they're on the slippery slope. Right?

Leah: Yeah. I could talk to you for about three more hours. I'm hoping that we just became friends out of this because I'm so inspired by you. But the last question I always ask is, um, we're in a world that changes all the time, but what does success for you today mean?

Rana: For me, the ability, like being able to inspire a young person, not just young, or again, a woman, you know, connect with a woman who has inner doubt or didn't think she could do this. And if, if I leave the conversation, having kind of inspired that person that just re-energizes me, and I feel like I'm being impactful.

Leah: Well you've done that for me today. So you are successful. And I'm so honored to be able to, to share this because you are one of those women that I've looked up to, I've known about you for a while. So it's truly an honor, and I'm so grateful that you are who you are and that you do what you do, and you find a way to decode yourself and believe in yourself because what you're sharing with the world, but also your children. Like, I can't imagine how great that they're going to be in the things that they're going to achieve in their life, because they have you to say, 'Oh my gosh, did you see all the things that my mom has done? That means that I get to stand on her shoulders and go further.' So I can't wait to see what your children are also going to do in this world. Cause I know that they'll be great also.

Rana: Thank you for having me. Thank you.

Today's non-profit spotlight is the National Ovarian Cancer Coalition. September is National Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month, and this is extremely important because 1 in 78 women will develop ovarian cancer in her lifetime. Fortunately, ovarian cancer has a survival rate of 90% when it is caught and treated in its early stages. That's why the NOCC is working to spread awareness to women across the country. You can learn more and also find out how you can get involved in the fight against ovarian cancer at ovarian.org.

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