

Janis Apted Yadiny tells a story about the Leadership Experience

Ms. Yadiny came to MD Anderson in 1999 to establish the new area of Faculty Development. She served as Associate Vice President of Faculty and Academic Development from 2008 until her retirement. In an interview conducted in 2016, she explains that taking on a new leadership role can have a dramatic impact on identity.



Stepping into a Leadership Role: the Personal Impact

You feel so uncomfortable, and you feel like you don't know what to do. Or you try things and they backfire or you create a problem for yourself, because you didn't have an appropriate conversation with someone. You mishandled it, so now you've got a problem on your hands. Or, you don't know how to develop the team. You just want to sit in your office and be the chair, but also just go to your lab and do the work you've always done. That's not leadership. Suddenly, you have people on your doorstep, if you're in a chair position for instance, who want your help and they want your guidance and they also want to politically maneuver you. There are all the power dynamics that become enlivened once you take that position. You don't know exactly which levers to pull, 'What should I do first,' not even knowing sometimes, how to run an effective meeting or how to manage people or how to get performance feedback, all of that.

It totally shatters their identity, they feel like they're on thin ice. They've never been on thin ice. They've been A students, they've been the best medical student, the most brilliant researcher, whatever, and something happens here, within a very short period of time, where they're doubting themselves. Who am I? Am I not good enough for this place, am I not the person I thought I was? Why am I not understanding the signals? What are these signals anyway? The signals seem to be you're really not good enough. Lucky you, that you're here.

It is really important for new leaders to understand that there are people here who get it. You're going to feel, at times, terribly unsupported, and come to us and talk to us about it.

About This Content

This interview clip was taken from an in-depth interview conducted for the Making Cancer History Voices Oral History Project. This ongoing project currently contains almost 500 interview hours with MD Anderson institution builders.

The transcript has been edited from the original.

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Interview link: <http://mdanderson.libguides.com/YadinyJ>

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