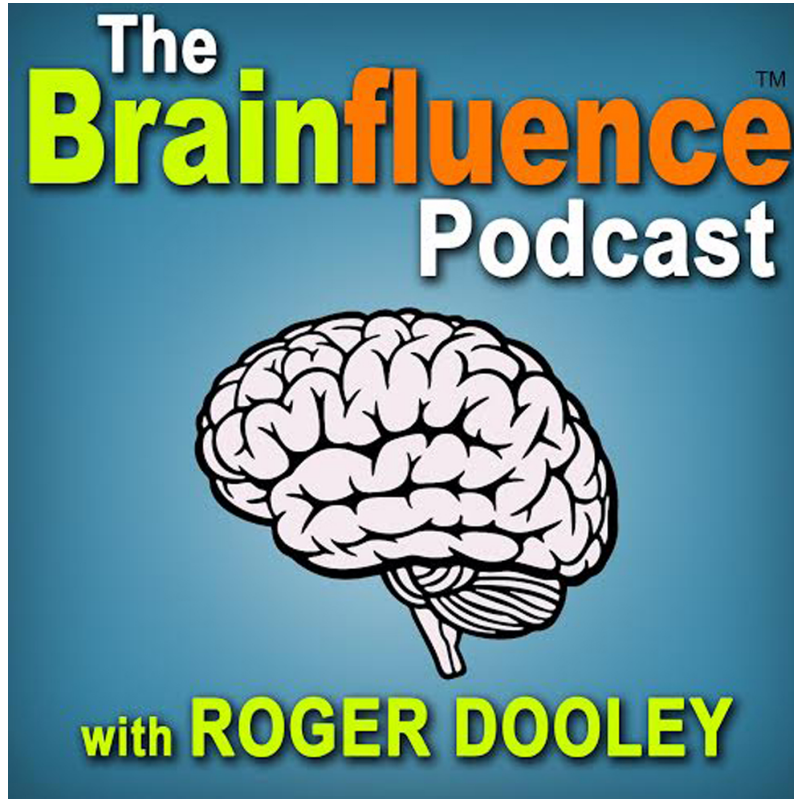


Create a Team Culture of High Performance with Mike Robbins

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Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host



Roger Dooley

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Welcome to Brainfluence, where author and international keynote speaker Roger Dooley has weekly conversations with thought leaders and world class experts. Every episode shows you how to improve your business with advice based on science or data.

Roger's new book, *Friction*, is published by McGraw Hill and is now available at Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and bookstores everywhere. Dr Robert Cialdini described the book as, "Blinding insight," and Nobel winner Dr. Richard Claimer said, "Reading Friction will arm any manager with a mental can of WD40."

To learn more, go to [RogerDooley.com/Friction](https://www.RogerDooley.com/Friction), or just visit the book seller of your choice.

Now, here's Roger.

Roger Dooley: Welcome to Brainfluence. I'm Roger Dooley. Today's guest has at least one unique element in his background. He's a former professional baseball player. He was drafted by the New York Yankees out of high school, but instead chose to attend Stanford and then pitched in the College World Series. He was drafted by the Kansas City Royals after that and played for various affiliated teams for several years before, sadly, elbow surgery cut short his career.

Roger Dooley: For the last 20 years, though, Mike Robbins has been an author, consultant, and keynote speaker. He's worked with major brands like Google, Microsoft, eBay, Harvard University, and many more. He's the author of five books including his new title, *We're All in This Together*:

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Creating a Team Culture of High Performance, Trust, and Belonging. Welcome to the show, Mike.

Mike Robbins: Hey, Roger. Thanks for having me.

Roger Dooley: Mike, about half our audience is outside the US and they may be familiar with major league baseball and some of the big team names, but probably don't know much about the minor leagues. Can you explain what it's like on a minor league team and maybe also about how they have to survive as businesses?

Mike Robbins: Yeah, well, I mean, for everybody listening, especially people outside the US who may not be familiar, all the major league teams in baseball, 29 of which are in the United States, one obviously is up in Canada in Toronto, there's like six different affiliated teams in the minor league system for each one of those 30 major league teams and they're different levels until you get all the way to the major leagues.

Mike Robbins: It's quite a unique experience. When I signed with the Kansas City Royals organization back in 1995 out of Stanford and went immediately to Spokane, Washington and then ended up over the next few years playing in town, Springfield, Illinois and Lansing, Michigan and Wilmington, Delaware before I ended up getting injured. Minor League Baseball is really a fascinating experience.

Mike Robbins: You and I were talking before we hit record that I used to live in South Bend, Indiana where there's a minor league team there in the Midwest League. It's a tricky business because they have to market their product in a way so it

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appeals to sports fans and baseball fans specifically in those communities where there aren't major league teams. On the one hand, they're the only game in town, but on the other hand, they don't have big-name stars on their teams and usually, their best players are there for a little bit of time and if they do well, they move on to the next level.

Mike Robbins: All of a sudden, it's like, "Hey, we're going to go watch Joe Smith because he's the great center fielder for the South Bend Silver Hawks," and then three months later, Joe's having such a great year or they move them up to the next level and you don't get to see him play anymore. It's tricky because they're competing with other things, but the product on the field is less about the individuals and it's more about the experience, if you will, of going to the ballpark and enjoying a baseball game.

Roger Dooley: Basically, just about every night, there's some kind of a giveaway or some special theme or there's always something because if you're going to go watch the Yankees play, you're probably going because you love the Yankees and you want to see those specific players, but in the minor leagues, it's all about the experience, having a fun night out with friends or family. In the time I spent there in South Bend, we saw quite a few games and it was always a fun experience.

Roger Dooley: Well, actually, I should add, too, that the minor league players are not flying in charter jets around either, are they?

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Mike Robbins: No. Well, that's the thing is in the minor leagues, you're not making much money as a ballplayer. You love the game. There's some really talented players and some people who are really big Minor League Baseball fans, they love to go out and watch the team because what you'll eventually see, especially if it's at the higher level of the minor leagues, you will see future major league stars come through both playing in the town where you live and the team that you watch, but also the opposing team, so that can be exciting if you're really a baseball purist.

Mike Robbins: The nice thing about Minor League Baseball, it's cheaper to go to the games, you're much closer to the action, you can talk to the players and get autographs and things like that. They try to leverage that. We used to notice because look, playing Minor League Baseball is an interesting experience because literally every day is like Groundhog Day. It's the same day over and over. We would literally lose track of time, lose track of what day of the week it was. You knew it was Sunday because we'd have a day game on Sunday. Every other game was at 7:00 at night.

Mike Robbins: The other thing that we would notice, we would notice the weekends because usually there were more fans, but every now and again, we would figure out, "Oh, it was Thursday night at some of these ballparks," and it would be Thirsty Thursday, meaning dollar beer night or something and the place would be packed because everyone would show up and then everyone would get really drunk and be incredibly obnoxious.

Mike Robbins: We would think they must know from a marketing standpoint, this obviously works and speaks to the

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community and gets people out there, but I never liked it as a pitcher, especially you're warming up down in the bullpen and some drunk guys trying to show off in front of his girlfriend, so of course, he's just going to heckle you to no end. I learned a lot of things about focus and about mindset in all my years playing baseball.

Roger Dooley: That's great. Some people might think that baseball is looks pretty easy if you watch it on TV, I mean, compared to other sports where it's short bursts of activity, but it's worth noting that a few of the greatest athletes in history, I'm thinking of Michael Jordan, basketball player, he struggled. He wanted to be a successful baseball player and he struggled in the minors, even though he was not only an incredible physical talent and an incredible athlete, but also had an amazing work ethic. I mean, he was probably the hardest working guy in basketball and I'm sure he applied that same drive to baseball.

Roger Dooley: Then Tim Tebow, I guess, more recently, a football quarterback who won the National Championship and played in the NFL for a bit, has tried his hand in the minor leagues and hasn't excelled. What do you think the secret sauce is? I mean, why do these really fantastic athletes never get out of the minors?

Mike Robbins: Well, I mean, baseball is a weird game. Look, again, a lot of people listening, if you live in a part of the world where there's not a lot of baseball, it's like us here in the US trying to understand cricket. We just don't get it. Even if you do live in a place, even here in the US or elsewhere, places in Latin America or in Asia where there is a lot of baseball, baseball is also, a lot of people especially

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nowadays think it's pretty boring to watch. Relative to some other sports like basketball, it can be. I never get offended when people don't particularly like baseball.

Mike Robbins: From the playing side of it, it helps to be athletic and have some athleticism, particularly with certain positions, but you can be an incredible athlete and still not be very good at baseball because baseball has a very specific set of skills. Hitting a baseball, people argue, is the hardest thing to do in sports. I mean, you're trying to hit a round ball coming in at 95 miles an hour with a round bat and you have a very, very short amount of time to decide, "Can I hit this pitch? What pitch is coming? Where's it going to be?" I mean, it's very difficult.

Mike Robbins: I actually think, though, as hard as baseball is physically, even though it's not physical like American football is per se, you're not banging up against other people, the hardest part of baseball is the mental side of it because there's so many games, there's so much time, and whether you're a position player, you play center field or second base or a pitcher like I was, you have a ton of time to think in-between games, in-between at-bats, in-between times playing.

Mike Robbins: As a starting pitcher, I would pitch once every five days. While again, that seems like, "Oh, you don't have that much to do," there's a lot to do in-between starts. Let's say I went out and I gave up seven runs in the third inning and I got pulled out of the game, then I'd have five days to think about how bad I pitched and then I pitched the next game and I have another bad game and then another one

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and maybe they pull me out of the starting rotation and put me in the bullpen.

Mike Robbins: I mean, I could go for a month where I don't have a good game and now, even though I'm a pretty good pitcher and I've done it for most of my life, I'm now thinking that I'm terrible and everybody hates me. The hardest part is getting back out on the mound and doing it again when I'm struggling mentally or emotionally. You see a pitcher sometimes who can't throw a strike. It's not because he doesn't know what he's doing, it's because he's now in his head and he literally can't get out of whatever negative thought pattern that he's in.

Roger Dooley: Almost like golf in that respect. I guess when you think about it, where golf is also a sport that has a lot of variability in it. You've got a little round ball that you're trying to hit with a fast-moving club very precisely. A huge mental game there, too. We've seen players who have pretty much fallen apart, apparently mentally. I mean, it manifests itself in their physical game, but it does seem to be more driven by their state of mind.

Mike Robbins: Well, for me, Roger, I mean, I learned a lot as an athlete that I've carried over into my life professionally, both in terms of how I operate, but also a lot of the things that I write about and speak about and teach because one of the things that I remember figuring out many years ago as I was thinking about the connection between the sports world and the business world, a lot of things are very different, but there are some similarities.

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Mike Robbins: One of the things I realized was we live in a world where we focus a lot on mastery of task or mastery of skill or, right, if you're really good at sports, you're really good at the arts, you're really good in business, you're really smart and creative and you can build or create something that has some value, that's what gets rewarded, right? I mean, that's how we make money. That's how we're successful in business, right? What we don't focus a lot on, I don't think nearly enough, particularly in our Western American culture here, maybe in other parts of the world a little bit more, it's we don't really focus a lot on mastery of self, meaning how do we tap into the power of our mind? How do we tap into our emotions and use them in a positive way that what it takes to be successful?

Mike Robbins: Again, a sport like baseball is a perfect example. Every baseball game comes down to, unless it's a blowout one way or the other, it's literally two or three pitches in a baseball game that determine the whole game. If I'm a pitcher, if I win that spot, I throw a strike and get the guy out right in that moment, we're going to win the game. If I lose that spot, like I walk him or he hits a double off the wall, that scores three runs, we lose that game. The moments of "Can I master myself enough that I can be focused and present in that moment so that I can be successful?"

Mike Robbins: Again, business and life isn't necessarily like that, but there are moments that we have in our lives and in our businesses that what we really need to do, right, is show up. I mean, when we're dealing with a crisis, when we're dealing with like what we're going through in the world right now, it's like, "Can I show up in this moment? Can I

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lead? Can I connect? Can I create a message that's going to resonate with people in a way?" That's what it really takes ultimately for us to be successful. We're so focused on an outcome and we're so focused on performance that sometimes, we forget to focus on ourselves.

Mike Robbins: I'm not talking about being self-absorbed or obnoxious or just... I'm talking about actually mastering ourselves and even with our teams, can we master the skills that are necessary for us to be successful as opposed to simply just reacting to the outcome or the result?

Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm (affirmative). That's really important. I know my friend, Ryan Holiday, who's been on the show, too, has written a few books. The Obstacle is the Way comes to mind and some of his stoic writings that are really all about that mindset and mental mastery, but I do want to get to your new book, Mike. In particular, there is a similarity here, a sports parallel, so we can do this really nice segue. Just as teamwork is important on sports, it's even more important in business. I'm curious, what is the secret sauce for building teams in business?

Mike Robbins: Well, my interest and fascination in team performance and team culture came from my years as an athlete because Roger, what was fascinating to me all those years playing baseball was you would think in sports, right, if you have the best players, you should have the best team. That is definitely not the case. It helps to have good players, clearly, but if you follow any sport, you might have noticed there are times when the team that you root for, you love this team, "Oh, my gosh, we have the best roster we've ever had. We're going to be the

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best," and it doesn't always turn into a championship. Often, it doesn't because there's this other quality that in sports we call "chemistry," in business we call "culture." It's really that thing, that secret sauce.

Mike Robbins: The truth of the matter is, from what I've seen and experienced and researched over the years, there's not just one thing that creates that, but there are a certain set of things that I've learned over and over again from great teams over the last number of years that really differentiate great teams.

Mike Robbins: One of the first things that we know and have learned more recently and the research of Professor Amy Edmondson at Harvard Business School has been really influential in this regard is something that we now call "psychological safety." What's psychological safety? Psychological safety is basically group trust. It means the group is safe enough. To do what? To speak up, to disagree, to take a risk, to fail. Not that we want to, but I know that if I'm part of a team, a part of a group that has psychological safety, I can do all of those things. If I do fail, if I am bold, if I'm the one outlier that says, "I think this is a terrible idea," I know I'm not going to be shamed, ridiculed, or somehow literally kicked out of the group. It's safe, right?

Mike Robbins: There was a study that Google did a few years ago that got a lot of attention called Project Aristotle. Google's been a client of ours for years and they're an interesting company and they spend a lot of time looking at data analysis of everything, right? Even with respect to something a little bit softer like team performance, they said, "We want to study this, we want to figure this out."

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Mike Robbins: They brought in a bunch of researchers, a bunch of scientists. They spent three years and didn't just do studying and researching within the company, although they did a ton of that, they also looked at what else is going on in Silicon Valley and in the tech world. They looked at what are some of the trends across the world with respect to performance team performance these days. After three years of studying, they came back with some findings and the number one, by far, most important element that was necessary for teams to perform at a high level was psychological safety.

Mike Robbins: When I talked to Karen Mae, who at the time was the head of learning at Google when they did the study, I said, "Were you surprised by any of the findings?" and she said, "We weren't surprised that psychological safety was important. What we were surprised by was how important it was." Basically, what we found and what the research showed us was if a team had psychological safety, they had a chance to really be successful and to thrive. If they didn't, almost no chance. It was just going to be a group of individuals working really, really hard to produce results, but the team collectively wasn't really going to be able to thrive and sustain that success over time.

Roger Dooley: What does that look like and how do you change that? If you think maybe you are a fairly typical company where a lot of the managers are looking out for their own interests, perhaps, they are perhaps afraid to take risks themselves because the easiest path to promotion is to just please the boss and stay out of trouble. How do you change that

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kind of culture? What are the specific behaviors that you're trying to get to?

Mike Robbins: Well, there's a couple of things. I mean, first you have to tell the truth right about yourself if you're in a leadership management position, the team that you're on, not from a judgmental place, but like, "Okay, look. Do we have psychological safety or not?" Right? Ask some questions about that.

Mike Robbins: Again, to some degree, it's a living, breathing experience if you will. Again, it's like trust in a relationship. You and I could know each other for years, right, and have a ton of trust, but we have to nurture the relationship because I could violate your trust or I could do something weird and all of a sudden, it's like, well, there's less trust. We have to keep working on it. I say to people all the time, "Look, team health is an ongoing thing, just like personal health is. You don't all of a sudden declare yourself healthy after a really good workout or after eating well for a month and say, 'I'm good.' No, you have to keep doing it."

Mike Robbins: With that said, I think it's also looking at every team has its own culture inside of the larger culture of the organization. If you're someone who manages a group of people and you're also someone who's a member of a team, which everybody who works inside of an organization of any size is, even if you don't have management responsibilities, understanding the difference between your first team and your second team is a really good distinction. Your first team is the team you're a member of. Your second team is the team that you manage, if you happen to manage people.

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Mike Robbins: What that means is that teams, right, really, how peers start to look at "How do we create connection and trust with each other individually?" because individual trust ultimately will start to lead to that group trust, that psychological safety, and for the manager of the team to realize "My job is to make sure that this team really bonds with each other. My other job also is to make sure that I bond with my peers who are other managers at the same level that I am." If you start creating an organization all the way up to an executive team where the focus is on the teams of peers, the first teams to really be connected with each other and interested in each other's success, now you can start to create a more healthy organization.

Mike Robbins: The other thing, though, as a manager, if you find yourself in the role of management, which many people do, the best way to influence the psychological safety of the team, your second team, the team that reports to you is to show up authentically. I define authenticity this way: It's honesty without self-righteousness and with vulnerability, which is not the easiest thing in the world to do, to just have the courage to be honest, to have the self-awareness, to remove the self-righteousness, that "I'm right and you're wrong" dynamic that often we have unconsciously, and to bring in a sense of vulnerability, which is really about, as Brené Brown at the University of Houston says, "Vulnerability is risk, emotional exposure, and uncertainty."

Roger Dooley: Do you have to balance that? I mean, certainly, some people think, "Well, a leader should have the answers." At some point, perhaps you risk, actually, your status as a leader if you don't seem to have the level of confidence in

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your decisions and having the answers. How do you get to that balance point where you are being authentic and vulnerable, but at the same time, you are perceived as somebody who can lead the group?

Mike Robbins: I look at it like this: Here's the example I like to use a lot of times when I think about leadership, particularly leadership in moments of challenge and how do you balance how authentic you can be, imagine being an airline pilot. Now, I don't know how to fly an airplane, but I've been on a lot of planes. You're sitting on the plane, and this has all happened to us on a plane, pilot comes on and says, "Ladies and gentlemen, this is your captain speaking. We're about to hit some bumps up ahead. I've told the flight attendants, too, we've asked them to take a seat. We're going to discontinue service. We're going to get through the bumps. We're going to try to find some better air." Right?

Mike Robbins: If the pilot does that, I don't particularly like turbulence, but if he does that or she does that, I feel better knowing, "Okay, they know what's going on. They've told me what's coming. They're in charge, right? They were honest. They didn't try to hide it. They said, 'We're going to hit some bumps. We've tried to figure out, but we can't. Here's what's going to happen. I'm going to do this.'" Then we hit the bumps and it feels okay.

Mike Robbins: Now, let's just imagine you're the pilot and the pilot turns off the microphone and then says inside the cockpit, "This is rough. This is bad. I'm not sure exactly how we're going to get through this. We're going to have to maneuver." We

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don't all need to know that in the plane, but the people up in... You see what I mean?

Mike Robbins: The difference, sometimes what we need to do, is we can communicate honestly with our team or with a larger group or if you think of this from a marketing standpoint, you communicate the message you want to communicate. You want to be honest, you want to be forthright, you want to be real about it, because people will resonate with that realness.

Mike Robbins: Now, that doesn't mean you share every single thought and feeling and insecurity and doubt that you have, but hopefully you have a place where you feel safe enough that you can do that. That's why that first team/second team thing I was talking about is so important. If my first team is my peers, I can go to my peers and say, "I'm really struggling with this decision," or "with this dynamic," or again, right now, "I'm really struggling with how to connect with the team virtually and everyone's freaked out and I could really use some support," you get that support there. You go back to the team and you're not sugarcoating it or spinning it, but you're able to authentically and confidently express to them, "Here's what I'm going to do, or here's what we're going to do, or here's what I've decided or what I think is a good idea," right?

Mike Robbins: Those things can happen at the same time. They're both authentic. We're just also aware of who am I talking to. Again, the message internally is often different than the message externally. That doesn't mean the external message is BS. It just means it's an external message, so

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we're going to do it for that particular audience versus the internal audience, which we can do in a bit of a different way.

Roger Dooley: Yeah. To use your pilot analogy, that there's one other failure that I see often in business that is to say nothing if a company is in trouble rather than being frank about the problem and that this is a serious issue that could threaten the company, your jobs. There's a tendency to just cover it up. As a passenger in that plane, if you were experiencing all these bumps and turns and the pilot wasn't saying anything at all, that would be very disconcerting, too.

Mike Robbins: Absolutely. Well, you're right. I'm glad you said that because that's the other side. If they don't say anything, or even worse is they come on and try to downplay it, "Oh, it's no big deal. Oh, it's nothing," and then you're like, "No, this is a big deal. I'm not comfortable here and you're either not saying something or you're trying to talk me out of my experience. Now, I'm more upset. I'm more concerned."

Mike Robbins: That's the thing. That's why leadership is so important. Again, communicating with people in a way that, look, bad news does not age well, so you want to share bad news as soon as you possibly can. There's a tendency we have, understandably, "I don't want to share that or that's going to freak people out or that's going to upset them." More often than not, people can handle it.

Mike Robbins: It goes back to, again, it's a chicken-and-egg thing, but how do you create that psychological safety? You tell the

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truth, you show up authentically. Then when we don't, it actually makes that more detrimental. Which comes first? If I have psychological safety, well, it's easier for me to do that, of course, but the paradox is the more I do that, the more psychological safety we'll have, the better the team can communicate and ultimately perform.

Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm (affirmative). You mentioned bonding with your peer group, but in some companies, at least, they have a competitive culture that doesn't necessarily openly pit one person against another, but in effect, that's kind of what happens. People see it, to some degree, as a zero-sum game. There's one promotion and there's six people who might be possibilities for that, so I've got to make sure that I shine and maybe that they don't shine. How do you build that trust when you could be theoretically elevating your competitor?

Mike Robbins: Look, it's tricky, I mean, but again, I go back to my baseball career: I learned the difference between positive and negative competition when I was playing baseball. There's a ton of internal competition, Roger, on a baseball team, as you can imagine. In pro baseball, right, in the minor leagues, when I was at my first spring training with the Kansas City Royals, there were 75 pitchers in camp just in minor league camp and another 25 pitchers across the street in major league camp. 100 pitchers in camp with the Kansas City Royals and over the span of about three or four weeks, they were going to cut about 30 or 35 of us. That was my first spring training, March of 1996.

Mike Robbins: I remember I'd been in some competitive environments before, but I remember thinking to myself, "These dudes

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are not my friends," right? I was a team-oriented guy in general, but I'm like, "It's either me or him." I spent that whole spring training miserable: stomachaches and hard to sleep and I wasn't performing well. I didn't get cut. I'd been drafted the year before and had a decent summer when I first signed, so I mean, I don't think they were going to cut me no matter what happened, but I just...

Mike Robbins: I realized, I remember thinking to myself, "I don't know if I'm going to make it to the big leagues. I don't know how my whole career is going to. I want to, it's like the most important thing in my life, but I don't think I'm going to get there by rooting against guys and hoping other people fail," which is what I started to do instinctively.

Mike Robbins: Again, negative competition is when we root against each other. Positive competition is when we compete in a way that, "Yeah, look, I want to win. I'm going to push you. I'm going to give it everything I got," but knowing that ultimately, the goal of competing is really to make us all better because that's what it does.

Mike Robbins: If you can create on your team and environment where yes, there's competition but it's out in the open, people are honest about it, yeah, you and I are going for the same thing, at the end of it, you might get it and I might not, but again, we don't turn it into this backstabbing, everyone-out-for-themselves thing because what we know, and there's so much research that shows this, is that you create environments like that and people literally, not only can they not thrive, they leave, they don't want to be there. It's just not conducive to the kind of working environment that we ultimately want.

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Mike Robbins: I think part of what we have to also do, there's a distinction that I talk about in the book that's a really simple but important distinction, the distinction between your role in your job. People use those words interchangeably, but they're different. Our role is what we do. It's our title. Most of us, myself included, and everybody I work with, especially in the business and the corporate world, role matters. "I'm a vice president of this," "I'm a director of that," right? It's like we want to do our role really well and if you do your role well and you produce results in that role, you often, not always, but often get an opportunity to get the next role or the next thing or next opportunity. Everybody, most people have some level of ambition around that, some more than others.

Mike Robbins: But our role is not our job and our job on a team that really thrives, on a team that wins, on a championship team, everyone knows that we all have the same job. Your job is to help the team win. That's your job. Now, look, there are some roles that are sexier than others. People make more money than other people. People get more opportunities than other. It's not a perfect system and sometimes it can look like, "Hey, he or she's getting an opportunity that I'm not getting," but if you focus on your job, helping the team win, it actually ultimately is in your best interest.

Mike Robbins: I know I go back to sports a lot, too, but I think about this: It's like a mediocre player on a championship team is more valuable than a mediocre player on a mediocre team, right? Literally, those guys end up making more money on their next contract because, hey, you know

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what? He knows how to win. He's been on a championship team. It becomes more valuable. I say to people all there, even if you're only out for yourself, you literally don't care about anybody around you, "It's always in your best interest to be on a successful team because it'll make you better." It makes you more valuable, right?

Mike Robbins: You think about this in the marketplace, you think of brands, companies. You go work for a company that has a really strong reputation. People are, "Oh, well, that person, they've worked there or they did this," right? All of a sudden, you become more valuable, more marketable, even if you have the same set of skills as the next person, but you happen to work in a place or, right, even inside of companies: This division, this department, this group really had a great quarter, had a great year, or whatever, everybody then becomes more valuable, even internally, for whatever the next job or the next opportunity is.

Roger Dooley: That's a great point. People often don't recognize, I think, the importance of just being on that a winning team. I mean, I would guess, thinking of companies that have had rough times, Wells Fargo is one that went through a real rough patch, you could have been just totally blameless in everything, but if you have Wells Fargo on your resume, you're probably not going to do as well as somebody from an organization that has a more positive reputation, had better financial results.

Mike Robbins: Well, it's true. Wells is an interesting example because I've actually, Wells Fargo has been a client of ours for 17, 18 years. I know a ton of people at Wells Fargo. You think about companies like Facebook, you think about the

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Houston Astros. I mean, there are where it goes from being like, "Hey, you're the best," to, "Ooh, I'm not so sure." Then you become both successful and or guilty by association, which look, if we really break it down, that's not fair.

Mike Robbins: If you take Wells as an example, and I'm not apologizing for any of the things that they did, but there's literally 270,000 employees at Wells Fargo. What's the percentage you think were involved in the things that got them into trouble? A relatively small number of people, right? Now, that said, again, you're right, if that's on your resume, or just think about sitting on airplanes, right? "Hey, where do you work?" "Wells Fargo." "Oh, boy." Right? All of a sudden, it becomes companies get in the news for certain things or do certain things and now all of a sudden, what looked like an asset now becomes a liability. This is where our association then does matter a lot.

Mike Robbins: We can't control that completely. You could have worked for 25 years at Wells Fargo and done a really great job and operated with integrity, and then the company does something and you're like, "Now, I'm associated with that." What's important about that is to remember that there's something in our self-interest to pay attention to other people. Right now, more than ever, it's so important that we do this.

Mike Robbins: I heard a parable just recently that really resonated with me with some of what's going on in the world right now and just in general. I may screw it up, but basically, it's the story of the six-foot spoons. It's supposed to be about the

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afterlife and someone goes to the afterlife and they go into this room and there they are and there's this beautiful feast and it smells wonderful and they walk into the room and they look around, but everyone in the room is miserable. They're morose.

Mike Robbins: He's like, "What's the matter? What? There's this beautiful feast, why don't we ...?" But they have these six-foot spoons, so you literally can't eat the food. There's no way to eat it and you have to eat it with the spoon, you can't pick it up, and so everyone's miserable because you're so close to this feast, right?

Mike Robbins: Then he goes into another room and that that room is like basically hell. Goes into another room: Same food, same everything, smells the same, but everyone is joyous in there. Why? Because they figured out, "Oh, the spoons are still six feet long, but guess what? We can feed each other," and it become, "Oh." It's like, "Wow, that's what great teams do is they figure out, 'Oh. Yes, there's challenges. Yes, everything doesn't work out perfectly. Yes, sometimes I do a little more work and you do a little less. Sometimes I'm really good at something and you're not so good or vice versa,' but we help each other out. We don't keep score and we..." Look, at the end of the day, if we're focused on the bigger goal, which is winning whatever winning looks like, then in the process, if we all focus on winning, we're going to be better in the process.

Mike Robbins: Every single person listening right now, whatever team experiences you've ever had in your life, you've been in an environment where that happened. Maybe not that often, because it is more the exception than the rule, but

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everyone has touched that sense of something bigger going on here: "I got past my own ego. I got past my own ambition. I got past my own desire for credit." There was something larger happening that I wanted to be a part of. Not only was it more fun, but it ended up being that not only were we successful...

Mike Robbins: It was always easier for me to play well personally, Roger, when I was on a team with good chemistry and baseball, I performed better by osmosis or something. When I was on the team with bad chemistry, it wasn't like I never had a good season or a good game on a team of bad chemistry, but it was way harder. I was swimming upstream the whole time.

Roger Dooley: Mm-hmm (affirmative). I think that is probably... I really like that parable, Mike. I hadn't heard that one before, so when you get to the punchline it's like, "Oh, yeah." That's really great. A good place to wrap up. There's a lot of material we didn't get to cover, but people will just have to get your book for that, I guess.

Roger Dooley: Let me remind our listeners that today we are speaking with Mike Robbins, author of the new book, *We're All in This Together: Creating a Team Culture of High Performance, Trust, and Belonging*. Mike, how can people find you and your ideas?

Mike Robbins: Well, the best place is actually on our website. We have a specific page for the book. It's mike-robbins.com/together.

Roger Dooley: Okay. Well, we will link there and to your book and any other places that we talked about on the show notes page

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at rogerdooley.com/podcast. By the way, that is Mike Robbins with a hyphen between "Mike" and "Robbins" and there's two B's in "Robbins" if you're trying to find Mike's site. We'll have a text version of our conversation on the show notes page as well. Mike, thanks for being on the show.

Mike Robbins: Thanks for having me, Roger.

Thank you for tuning into this episode of Brainfluence. To find more episodes like this one, and to access all of Roger's online writing and resources, the best starting point is RogerDooley.com.

And remember, Roger's new book, *Friction*, is now available at Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and book sellers everywhere. Bestselling author Dan Pink calls it, "An important read," and Wharton Professor Dr. Joana Berger said, "You'll understand Friction's power and how to harness it."

For more information or for links to Amazon and other sellers, go to RogerDooley.com/Friction.

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