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If you have a pen, you can pick it up and you have a piece of paper, just a piece of scrap paper. If you don't, that's okay. Just keep this in mind. I'm going to give you some letters. I want you to keep those letters just in your mind. One by one. I'm going to give you a series of letters and then I'm going to say, okay, go. And I say go. I want you to unscramble those letters or scramble them to find an English word as fast as you can. So when you find that word, I want you to shout it out. Barry and Julie. Okay. For shouting in here? Yes. Okay. Permission granted. So shout that word out when you know what, I'm going to give you the series of letters and then I say, okay, go. And then you figure it out. Ready? Ready? Yeah. Great. E,

Y. S. yes. Very good. Very good. So the word is yes, the word is yes. What is the word? All right. So a number of years ago I worked for an ordeal musician

called the Vermont youth conservation Corps. Uh, this is in Vermont obviously, and it's based on the old conservation Corps in the 30s and forties. So it's a youth leadership empowerment service organization that works with youth and uses conservation and agriculture to, bring youth into first employment opportunities. So it's a great organization. It's, you know, my wheelhouse. It's what I love. I love to serve. I love education. So, and I, and I'm from Vermont. It was a great place to be. I landed there and I met a leader named Tom Hart. Tom is the founder of this organization 30 years ago. Incredibly charismatic, visionary, passionate about what he does. And he started the organization with the legislature in Vermont with \$1, and this is the kind of guy that sinks his teeth into something and just does not let it go. And I love those kinds of people.

And his world was all about youth. And he could look ahead and he knew where he wanted to be, but it was way out there. He was the kinda guy that just would not give up. He was mission-driven. The organization had a great mission. He was passionate and he just knew if he surrounded himself with the right people, he brought the rest of the package to the table. So I met Tom immediately liked him and he hired me. And I worked in a program called the high school leadership program. We took kids in, in public school, for whom regular public school education classroom-based did not work for them. We created a work-based experiential, project-based conservation



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agriculture curriculum for them year long that would gain them school credit and get them through high school.

These are kids, a lot of them were underserved populations living in Vermont, you know, not maybe the typical kids you think of when you think of a public school. These are kids that have struggled. And so we gave them an opportunity. So we worked on that in a farmhouse, a on campus that had no curtains and have no furniture. So for me that was a bit of an issue. It's kind of an old farm house and that was our classroom space that we used. So I'd gone through some regular channels to try to think about, you know, how can we get some furniture? We have 18 kids in my crew, my class, we needed to furniture and curtains. So I was kind of striking. I went to Thomas and I said, Thomas, you know, I explained the problem to him and without even skipping a beat, he got to yes.

Now I said, really? Yes, yes. Anyway, you said, well, let's just hold on for a second. And then we kind of started to have a conversation about how are we gonna make these things happen. Budgets were tight. We couldn't just go out and buy these things. By the end of the conversation a week later we had brand new curtains that were sewn by somebody local and brand new furniture that was donated. So the Pearl is think about getting to yes as often as you can. He tries to get to yes as often as you can. Now he's an intelligent man and he knows that in reality you can't always get to yes, yes. Doesn't always work. You know you hit that wall of no, but he doesn't accept that. So if he hits that wall and he's with you and collaborating with you, you know, he'll pivot one direction, he'll throw out an idea, he'll sit and wait and ask you a question and wait kind of uncomfortably to the sort of weight and have you think of an idea.

So at, you know, I worked for this organization for a while and I went from an instructor up to a director level at this. And every time that I went to Thomas, I noticed that more and more people did the same thing. They brought issues to him. They brought ideas to him. They, they brought sort of, uh, what they normally wouldn't do. They wouldn't go to the top of the founding president to maybe bring these ideas, but they began to realize the Thomas was the guy that would try to get to, yes. Not always, but most of the time and kind of the genius behind this. So this continued for, for years and the organization grew, it's about a \$2 million organization now serves three to 500 youth, uh, every year in Vermont. And what I realized probably six months ago was that, that Thomas's genius behind this Pearl was, it wasn't a popularity contest for him to get to.



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Yes. It didn't really matter to him because it wasn't about him. The work that was done was way bigger than he was. And he knew that and he held that kind of close to his heart. So by getting to yes all the time, he realized that he was creating a culture of trust, a culture of transparency, a culture of innovation, and a culture of safety that everybody from an AmeriCorps Vista who worked on the farm that got paid a tiny stipend to a director or the COO could go to him with an idea that maybe seemed a little farfetched. Knowing the predictability and that word comes from a conversation we had with the head of school or with a principal yesterday. That predictability, Tom would always try to get to. Yes. And that was a pretty incredible feeling to have to work in an organization that, that had that momentum rolling forward, that the organization would grow, it would innovate, it would evolve all based on somebody sitting in his office just trying to give you a yes. So that's my pearl for all this morning."