

# 100%Future Pilot Episode Transcript

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## WELCOME

**Intro** [00:00:01] There's no reason for people in a society as wealthy, resourced and technologically advanced as this one to not be thriving. Every crisis we are exposed to hourly is completely predictable and preventable if we connect to a shared vision of everyone thriving. Surviving the day is just not acceptable anymore when we know that thriving is actually possible. Welcome to the 100% Future podcast, where Dr. Katherine Ortega Courtney, Dominic Cappello and me Rubina Cohen as your host, share insights, action plans and inspire you weekly to take bold action in designing thriving communities for all.

**Rubina Cohen** [00:00:49] Welcome, everybody. Thank you for joining us on our pilot episode of 100% Future podcast. And I am joined today by my esteemed colleagues, Dr. Katherine Ortega Courtney and Dominic Cappello. Welcome, guys.

**Dr. Katherine Ortega Courtney** [00:01:07] Hi.

**Dominic Cappello** [00:01:08] Hello.

**Rubina Cohen** [00:01:09] We are pumped, right? We're pumped to do this podcast.

**Dr. Katherine Ortega Courtney** [00:01:14] Very excited.

**Dominic Cappello** [00:01:16] Yeah, we've been really looking forward to this.

**Rubina Cohen** [00:01:19] I want to jump into your backgrounds and why you are motivated more than ever to put this information out into the world. And you've been doing it in a variety of different ways. This is another amazing channel to get information out to the world. And we find or I find that this is incredible information that everybody needs, and we all find that this is information that we need to get out. So I want to pitch it over to Kat as I like to call her. But Dr. Katherine, will you please share some of why you are doing this work today? Go back for us a little bit.

**Dr. Katherine Ortega Courtney** [00:02:06] I grew up in Española, New Mexico, which if you're from New Mexico, you probably are familiar with some of the struggles that that town has historically dealt with, which basically boil down to everything the 100% New Mexico initiative is trying to address and prevent. I saw a lot of my classmates struggle with substance abuse as I was growing up. A lot of my classmates are sadly no longer with us growing up in a place like that (with) a lot of adversity. And I grew up wondering why? Why does this town struggle? Why are the people in this town facing so many hardships? That's been my motivator (ever since I was) a child. I went on to study psychology, trying to figure out what's the root cause of some of these problems. And then through my work at CYFD (New Mexico's child welfare system), it became so clear that access to resources makes a huge difference and access to opportunities which some towns and

some communities just don't have. And to me, it's very important to make sure that everybody has sort of a fair shot, equal access to opportunities, equal chances. Because I know growing up where I grew up that kids there are just as smart, just as amazing as kids growing up in wealthy communities. They just do not have the same opportunities.

**Rubina Cohen** [00:03:38] Yeah. Thank you. So, Dom?

**Dominic Cappello** [00:03:44] I grew up in working-class Costa Mesa, California. This is below Los Angeles. And it was a very sleepy little city for a long time. And then the engineering industry came in and suddenly there were a lot of wealthy people coming in and they built a brand new high school for the wealthier people. My apartment was on the border of the school (border lines) so the school had to let in a few people from the working-class side of town. And our apartment was on the working-class side of town. I was able to go to Estancia High School, a brand new high school, and it was there that I met students who had very different lives and very different lifestyles. I was really intrigued and baffled, especially when someone said to me when they learned where I live, they said, "Oh, that's the poor part of town." And I had never, ever considered myself poor or living in a poor part of town. It really got me thinking a lot in high school about what that meant as my friends that I made were talking about going on vacations to Hawaii and Lake Tahoe and my friends and I on my side of town weren't having those conversations. I learned about socio-economic class in high school, not in class, but by just talking to people. From there, I've always been very aware of the haves and the have nots. That led me on a journey to move into the arena of communications and training in the realms of health, education and social work, and eventually brought me to child welfare, where I met Dr. Katherine Ortega Courtney and where some pretty big things happened that changed our lives.

**Rubina Cohen** [00:06:01] Thanks, Dom, for your background there. I'm going to share a little bit about the background I had initially before I read your books, took the adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) survey, (part of the work focused on) adverse childhood experiences. The ACEs survey (that asks about ten forms of adversity, neglect and abuse one endured as a child in the home) had been put out.

**Dominic Cappello** [00:06:24] (The ACEs survey was published) by researchers Dr. Filetti and team) two decades ago in the 1990s.

**Dr. Katherine Ortega Courtney** [00:06:31] 1998 is when it came out.

**Dominic Cappello** [00:06:32] And it's the adverse childhood experiences survey of ten questions about what happened in your childhood.

**Rubina Cohen** [00:06:41] Exactly. That's a great background. So I took that (survey) because I was doing my own work. I was going through some trauma healing and took the survey) and I had checked off nine of the ten boxes. Yes, nine.

**Dominic Cappello** [00:06:56] On the survey.

**Rubina Cohen** [00:06:57] Nine on the survey.

**Dominic Cappello** [00:06:58] Happening in your home. Oh, my gosh.

**Rubina Cohen** [00:07:02] Yes. And that's when a light bulb went off, because I also grew up in a poor town. We had a sick mom growing up, we had cultural differences in the community that we grew up in because my parents were immigrants. All of that... I (was) trying to deal with (ACEs) as

an adult, took the (survey), found out I checked nine of them, and I was like, “Oh my God.” And then I came across the book *Anna, Age Eight* and I had known and been in touch with Katherine over work that we had done together, and when she had posted that she had done this book with you, I went and got it immediately. I read the book and was just blown away, not just the story of Anna, but how much I related to it, and then how the solutions seemed just completely relevant and important. Why we didn't have (the solutions) already, was one of the questions that came to me. And so then diving into other books, it was clear to me. It's so clear that we don't have to, one, not just survive, but we can thrive on this planet. And there is a pathway to getting there, which is why we started this podcast. Right? So tell me about when the work started with the two of you, because I'm new to our group here, but you two have been doing this work, so tell me about that meeting and what brought you to the place that we are today.

**Dr. Katherine Ortega Courtney** [00:08:51] I think we're close to our ten-year anniversary, if not already past, of meeting each other and connecting. We both worked for Child Welfare Protective Services Division, and I think we bonded over both seeing that things could be different and struggling in a system that was so hard to change. We collaborated on various initiatives. We worked in the same unit and we did some amazing things with child welfare. We met some amazing people. I always say the people who work in that system are incredible. They are wonderful people, and it really makes me upset that they get such a bad reputation. They're working in a system that's not set up to support them. It's not set up to support the families that they work with. And, I think we saw that very clearly while we were working there. But there was one case in particular that happened. It was a fatality that eight-year-old Anna is based on. She's kind of a composite, if you will, of many cases we saw while we were there. This was one case in particular that happened and it was a wake up call. We couldn't let things keep going the way they were going. Because not only was this child fatality preventable, but the response to it was very based on gut reactions and trying to do things that didn't necessarily make sense within the system when there were solutions out there that could have really helped. This was our drive to start the book *Anna, Age Eight*.

**Dominic Cappello** [00:10:36] I remember the day when we heard about this case that would go on to become the story of Anna. When you work in child welfare, even though Katherine and I did not work in the field, just working in child welfare... it's tough. You're hearing all the time about abuse and neglect. It's just really tough, but it's also a place you go when you want to do really important work. But this case was unlike anything we had ever heard. This was the story of a child who had been in and out of child welfare eight times. To pull a child out of their family, there's a lot that goes on there. A lot of assessments are made of the child and the parent or the family. And to have a child go back and forth eight times was unheard of. And of course, when the child went back (home) after eight times of being in custody with child welfare, the child was kicked to death by the mother. And as Katherine said, there was uproar. It was, “How could this happen?” The governor, the state lawmakers, everybody was pointing fingers to blame. “We have to blame someone!” (was in the headlines). Katherine and I were appalled and said, “Enough is enough. Everybody can share in this blame, not just child welfare. There's public health, there's public education. There are health care providers. There's local government.” We wanted to develop a model or a framework that would allow every county to finally acknowledge that (it's) not only the child maltreatment that is seen by child welfare, but all adverse childhood experiences, are happening everywhere. All of that could be addressed.

**Rubina Cohen** [00:12:41] When I hear that story there's a pit in my stomach. Anything we can do to avoid that situation and even anything close to that (is needed) because (cases like this) are unheard of. It was just one of those circumstances (with people asking,) “How could this happen?” But then there's so many other cases, and I'm sure you guys can speak to this where they're not that bad, but they're still bad. It shouldn't be like this.

**Dr. Katherine Ortega Courtney** [00:13:14] Exactly. And I think one of the things that really struck us was the mother that ended up kicking her child to death had grown up in the system as well. She had all the ACEs as well. To us (we asked), “Why aren't we addressing adverse childhood experiences as a nation, as a state, as communities?” If we do that, we can prevent so many bad things that happen, all the way up to fatalities. Adverse childhood experiences lead to all kinds of bad stuff... substance abuse, poor educational outcomes, all of the things that we struggle with in the state. And when the (ACEs) Study that came out in the nineties, nothing happened. Why, when it's so obvious that if we fix this, we fix everything, right?

**Dominic Cappello** [00:14:10] In the (ACEs) study, two decades ago they had recommendations that were focused on providing services to families. Let's make sure they're wrapped around. Right? (Families need to) feel supported. And as Katherine said, deafening silence (was the response to the ACEs Survey). Two decades later, people talk about ACEs and they throw up their hands. “We don't know what to do.” Or “Maybe we should just talk about it some more,” or “Maybe we should keep blaming child welfare.” We realized at the end of the day, every community needs to have ten vital services available. It's really as simple as that, right? And we don't know why this is so hard for people to understand. But if you have these services for surviving and thriving, you just do better and you do better at everything. And if you don't have these services, then that's when all the bad stuff arrives.

**Rubina Cohen** [00:15:14] We have in our intro what we're standing for and what we're saying is unacceptable anymore, and how simple it is to actually (build services so people can) get to those ten vital services in communities. And the beautiful part is you all are already doing some of this work. And I want the community to hear, like some sneak peek, information of some communities that you've already gone into and have created partners to bring these ten vital services into those communities. Let's give the audience a little sneak peek of these communities and the work that's going on there.

**Dr. Katherine Ortega Courtney** [00:15:59] It's a fun story. When we started this institute, the Anna Age Eight Institute, we were originally going to work with three counties, we're now working in 20 (out of 33).

**Dominic Cappello** [00:16:10] I think 20.

**Dr. Katherine Ortega Courtney** [00:16:12] Now, well over half of the state is involved in these initiatives. And what's great about it is that it is 100% community-driven. We don't reach out to the counties, they reach out to us and say, “How do we get started?” And that is the way it works. And that is why it works, because it's driven by people like us who are just passionate about making real change.

**Dominic Cappello** [00:16:39] I remember we got a call, we were in our office in Santa Fe and it was from Taos Pueblo, and they wanted to come visit us in our office. They said, “We're going to come down. We want to talk to you about *Anna, Age Eight*.” We said, “That would be great.” And so two representatives from the pueblo came and said that they were very interested in the book and wanted to know what the next steps were. And we said, “Well, we think a book club with *Anna, Age Eight* would be a really good place to start.” (They responded”, “We can do that.” And so it wasn't very long and then they asked us on a Zoom call, “Can you talk to our book club members?” Which we did. And then they said, “What's our next step?” And we said, “Well, we have another book called *100% Community*, which is the blueprint for doing the initiative, and that could be a book club. And they said, “We'll do that” And then they read that and then they asked us to come back

and they said, “Okay, we've done that. Now what do we do?” And we said, “Well, this model that we have requires that you are engaging with all the stakeholders in the county.” And they said, “Well, you're right, because we may be the Pueblo, but we need services from the county and we need services from the city. Why don't we just sponsor a series of book clubs?” And so they started sponsoring book clubs right and left. As a matter of fact, Kathrine, I think they did more book clubs (than any other county) and they're still doing them.

**Rubina Cohen** [00:18:12] Amazing.

**Dominic Cappello** [00:18:14] That's the power of a book. That's the power of dialogue and that's the power of different entities coming together, a Pueblo, a city, a county, and with their elected officials. That's how the model grows. But it really comes back to that little book, *Anna*.

**Rubina Cohen** [00:18:34] That's beautiful. I love that. It's a book. It was a book club-driven initiative. It's so grassroots and it's so empowering because it's in their hands, right? And they came to you. You aren't pushing it. And it's lovely that people read these books and they just get it, right? Because you guys just made it so simple because it is simple. I'm really excited because we are all advocating for and championing this 100% future, which is why we call this podcast 100% Future, because we can see it and we're starting to see it. You both are starting to see it. So kudos to both of you. Congratulations for launching this initiative. And I'm just in so much honor and pleasure to participate and get the word out because it's so necessary. We want people to start taking bold, beautiful action towards bringing these vital services to their communities and we'll continue to inspire everybody weekly! We are going to be dropping weekly episodes, sharing inspiration, sharing tidbits from the books, sharing information, and how you can start your own initiatives and start a book club in your community as well. Any last words from both of you before we say bye-bye to our audience? Until next time?

**Dominic Cappello** [00:19:52] This is fantastic. And we know the importance of getting the word out there. So we are. I think we are incredibly thrilled to be part of this dialog, part of a big conversation.

**Rubina Cohen** [00:20:04] Yeah.

**Dr. Katherine Ortega Courtney** [00:20:05] I think that that's really the reason this is so important and this podcast is important is because this is a model that is driven by real people who are in the community and not necessarily in huge positions of power. It's all up to, individuals who are just passionate about doing something.

**Rubina Cohen** [00:20:24] Excellent. All right. Well, I'm excited to get back here with you next week and everybody can get more information on our website. Dom, what is our website?

**Dominic Cappello** [00:20:37] That would be [www.100nm.org](http://www.100nm.org)

**Rubina Cohen** [00:20:44] Perfect. All right. We'll see you all next time.

**Dominic Cappello** [00:20:49] See ya.

**Outro** [00:20:53] Join us on the road to the 100% New Mexico initiative at [100nm.org](http://100nm.org) to learn more and get access to the podcast dose. Want to stay more actively engaged with the movement then follow us on Facebook at [100PercentNewMexico](https://www.facebook.com/100PercentNewMexico) and on Instagram at [100percentnm](https://www.instagram.com/100percentnm). And until next time, let's take bold action to create a 100% future for all.