

**Producer:**

Welcome to this episode of the BCEN podcast. We're excited to have with us today Dr. Kate Hixson. Dr. Hixson is an expert on what makes for extraordinary performance. Our hosts today are Bridget Flood, director of strategy and operations for the BCEN, and Janie Schumaker, executive director of the BCEN. Bridget and Janey, take it away.

**Brigid Flood:**

Hello and welcome to the BCEN and Friends podcast. I'm Brigid Flood, director of strategy and operations here at BCEN, and I'm joined by my co-host, Janie Schumaker, who is the executive director. Hey, Janie.

**Janie Schumaker:**

Hey Brigid.

**Brigid Flood:**

So today we have a really good episode. And as you know, the BCEN and Friends Podcast is an opportunity for us to have interesting conversations about learning with a wide range of thought leaders, BCEN certification holders, and industry professionals. And most importantly, to create value and insight for our professional nurses across the emergency spectrum. So, we hope you find our discussions interesting, informative, sometimes funny, sometimes serious, but always valuable.

Janie and I are so excited to have with us today Dr. Kate Hixson. Kate has earned her PhD studying team-based training concepts at NASA for the training of astronauts for deep space missions.

Kate has also worked in the tech industry, founded a bespoke furniture company with her husband, James, a mom to her daughter Lila, and has recently launched KateHixson.com where she shares her research and insights about what drives extraordinary performance through a series of stories and narratives. Kate, welcome.

**Dr. Kate Hixson:**

Thank you so much. And thank you so much for having me today.

**Brigid Flood:**

Oh, we are thrilled. And I think we'd like to get started is you know, hopefully my introduction did right by you. But I would love if you could tell us a little bit about yourself and about your journey from studying the astronaut, which intrigues me to your entrepreneurship and the launch of KateHixson.com. I mean, being fascinated by the extraordinary. So, if we could start there, that would be great.

**Dr. Kate Hixson:**

Absolutely. My pleasure. So, and yes, your intro was perfect. Absolutely synthesized and summarize what I've been up to. So, I

guess to give just a little bit more color, you know, as you were mentioning during my PhD, I was fortunate enough to be awarded a pre-doctorial research fellowship from NASA. So, I was able to spend summers down there at Johnson Space Center. And so, let me ask you guys real quick. When you think of Johnson Space Center. What's the first thing that pops in your head?

**Brigid Flood:**

I'm going to say just cool.

**Janie Schumaker:**

Me, too. I'm going to say that sounds absolutely amazing. Like a once in a lifetime opportunity. Sounds fabulous.

**Dr. Kate Hixson:**

Yes, well, they do. And you're right, it definitely was a once in a lifetime opportunity. And I learned so much. I was down there. So, I was working on my dissertation and as you mentioned, really focusing on team-based training for astronauts going, so, as we mentioned going all the way to Mars. Some pretty interesting stuff. So, what I ended up developing was a virtual teamwork training model. And I was so excited because it received excellent feedback from all of my rounds of testing from members of the astronaut training selection committee and members of the astronaut training course. It was just a really great experience to create something and then have it to be so well-received concurrently while I was doing that work. I also had an awesome job at Pearson, where I was working to develop technology solutions within the adult training, the human performance realm for organizations all over the world. And I love that so much. But I just had this itch, you know, scratching at me. I had this kind of entrepreneurial bug. But likewise, I just really wanted to take that the skills and expertise that I gained over almost a decade and apply it to a completely different field, because I just I loved being challenged. I love doing something completely new every couple of years. So, yeah, I went off and started a custom fabrication business with my husband and partner in crime. And it's just incredibly fun. You know, it never feels like work to me, although we work super, super hard, literally like blood, sweat and tears. Right. But even at that, as I mentioned, I love tackling new things. So, I wanted to kind of dip my toes back into the waters of human performance and adult learning, adult training. So hence why I launched my Web site. KateHixson.com. I also have a podcast coming soon which I'm really excited about. So essentially right now I'm just focusing on how to level up your life. So, I'm using research back strategies, interviews with extraordinary people to unlock the secrets of what makes the extraordinary tick.

**Janie Schumaker:**

Wow. That's a really fascinating background, Kate. I love your focus on the extraordinary. And since our audience is largely made up of nursing professionals across the emergency spectrum who I would argue are all extraordinary.

**Dr. Kate Hixson:**

Absolutely.

**Janie Schumaker:**

We are just so excited to delve more into this with you. I would love to know from you, Kate, what is your goal for this podcast? Like, what are you looking to get out of this podcast today?

**Dr. Kate Hixson:**

Sure. Yeah. You know, I, I just have such tremendous respect for emergency nurses. I had several family members over the years who needed the services of flight nurses, transport nurses, trauma nurses. And these men and women just literally saved the lives of people that I love, that I care so deeply about. So, you know, first and foremost, I just want to show such tremendous gratitude towards this profession and to these folks. So, thank you. Thank you all so very much. Your work is so important and because I'm so grateful towards these people.

I'd also love to just impart one little nugget, one little, you know, tool, one tip if I can if I can help them. If I can help you at all, then. I mean, gosh, you all made my day. You made my month.

**Janie Schumaker:**

That's great. And so, thinking about this group of professionals in emergency trauma, transport, nursing and beyond, what lessons about team-based training or operating at a high performance do you think are most relevant for this group?

**Dr. Kate Hixson:**

You know, that's a great question.

So, I guess if you think about it, emergency nurses are working within teams all day, all night, you know, from the pilot flying the helicopter to the surgeon in the emergency department. You know, there's all sorts of different people that you have to work alongside every single day.

Likewise, these teams have to be exceptionally high performing because the work is so demanding and so stressful, it's so dangerous with incredibly high stakes. I mean, we're talking about people's lives, after all. So, when you think about team-based training, it's really just about gaining expert skills in teamwork processes. So, what are some of these skills?

It's things like group problem solving or consensus building and conflict management, you know, among others, of course. But all of these things really just boil down to interpersonal skills. So, for emergency nurses, I think about communication skills and how just truly paramount they are. So, when you look at the certification programs offered by the BCEN, then there's a great deal of emphasis on those communication skills. So, you think about radio operations

for a certified transport nurses or intake procedures for certified pediatric emergency nurses. Each program recognizes how vital communication skills are. And I just think it's so cool that by being certified, you're essentially telling the world that you excel at communicating, which is indispensable to effective teams, especially high performing ones. So, you know, hats off to the BCEN and all the emergency nurses. It's really, really cool stuff.

**Janie Schumaker:**

Thank you for that.

**Brigid Flood:**

I do love this. You know, the lessons we can learn about team-based training and communication. And I think it's very pertinent to our audience.

But I want to talk a little bit about this crush model that you've developed, kind of looking at these extraordinary performers and coming up with this model that, you know, they all seem to have in common.

And I'd love if you could talk to us a little bit more about that. How you developed it and how it applies to these high performers.

**Dr. Kate Hixson:**

Sure, I'd be happy to. So, the **CRUSH** Method...It's essentially a research back formula for short achieving extraordinary goals or I mean, really just any goal. So, I drew upon my work throughout my PhD and developing up high performing teams at NASA, as well as all of my research and work today. So, over the last five or ten years or so. And so, in other words, I've just really been like geeking out on study. What makes these high performers tick? And so, for the **CRUSH** Method, each letter of the word crush stands for a different distinct phase of goal achievement.

So, there's **C**atalyst, **R**esolution, **U**nwavering **S**tamina and **H**abit. So, by applying this blueprint to your life, you're given a roadmap to leveling up. It's something I'm just super excited and really passionate about, especially because in hard times like these, I think we all could use some positive forward movement.

**Brigid Flood:**

Yeah, I agree, and I when I was looking at **CRUSH**, the thing that really there were two things that intrigued me.

The first one was, is that aha moment in the beginning, right, where you think, "Oh, I need to do this." And, you know, typically I've always thought those aha moments were big moments, but I think there's a lot of little aha moments that come across our path all the time that we may miss because we're too busy doing other things. They don't always have to be big things. Right.

**Dr. Kate Hixson:**

Yeah, you're absolutely right, and to speak to that for a second. And I've studied that pretty extensively where it's really just about having your eyes open. Right. It's about going through life with a curiosity, having that lifelong learner mentality where you're always looking for something new to where it might not be an earth-shattering idea that you have. You know, it could be a small goal and there's nothing wrong with that. You know, small goals eventually equal really big goals, too.

**Brigid Flood:**

Right. And I think that's really important with our nurses who make that decision to become certified.

**Dr. Kate Hixson:**

Right.

**Brigid Flood:**

And just want to become, you know, the elite of their profession.

And there's that aha moment that says, "I believe I could do this. I believe I could achieve this." So, I was really intrigued with that first one.

And then the second one that I personally kept thinking about was the H of the **CRUSH**, which was habit.

**Dr. Kate Hixson:**

Right.

**Brigid Flood:**

And from a personal aspect, I'm really good at doing bad habits.

**Dr. Kate Hixson:**

We all are! (laughter ensues)

**Brigid Flood:**

I'm really bad at coming up with good habits. And so, I've been thinking about that a lot of like can I just switch that equation around and be good at good habits? But I think habits are really important.

**Dr. Kate Hixson:**

Yeah, absolutely. It all boils down to a mind shift, right? Like none of this is insurmountable. Just simply have to set your mind to it. As you said, switch around that pattern and suddenly, you know, the world just opens up to you just by viewing things through a different lens.

**Brigid Flood:**

Janie, I don't know if you had a favorite out of the **CRUSH** model or not. And don't worry, Kate. I'm going to get to your favorite later on.

**Dr. Kate Hixson:**

Oh, no, no problem.

**Janie Schumaker:**

Yeah. Bridget, I'm with you on the habit.

I thought a lot about that one as well, because it is so easy to just do your bad habits. And when you're trying, like I'm trying right now in my life to change to some good habits with some personal things. And you really do have to be quite thoughtful about it. And so, I like this **CRUSH** model. And I'm thinking about how to better apply that to my own changes and habits that I'm trying to make myself. So, I, too, really got hung up on that on the habit, one quoted, because it's just so easy to either starting a new good habit or then fall right back into your old one.

I think this **CRUSH** model really does give us the blueprint for what Kate talked about for how can we turn that bad habit into the good one that we so need to do to achieve that extraordinary lifestyle or accomplishment that we are looking for.

**Brigid Flood:**

Right. And the other thing I love about this model is it really applies to anyone who decides "I want to become certified."

**Janie Schumaker:**

Right.

**Brigid Flood:**

You can use every single one of those things to kind of map out, how am I going to get there? And so, I just love it.

**Dr. Kate Hixson:**

And I'm so happy to hear that. That truly makes my heart feel very full today.

**Brigid Flood:**

Good, we like full hearts. So, I think, Janie, you had another question?

**Janie Schumaker:**

Yeah. Well, yes. Thank you, Brigid.

So when we're thinking about being extraordinary and I know so many nurses across the country and actually a little bit internationally, too, and I really do see them as extraordinary, but I'm not sure they ever see themselves that way because they think, "Oh, well, this is just my job." But they are extraordinary at the job that they have been called to do. And so not just nurses, but I think also people in other roles. I read a lot, Kate, about this notion of the imposter syndrome where maybe you are pretty extraordinary and you're really good at your job, but you don't see it that way. You think, "Oh, well, I just got lucky there or well, yeah, that presentation went pretty well. But, you know, again, that must have been luck."

And it's sometimes I think it's hard for some of us to recognize that we really are very good at what we're doing. Maybe even extraordinary, because there's this imposter syndrome thing that's lurking around and we just don't want to let ourselves believe, "Hey, I am extraordinary, or I am really good at that." Have you had any dealings with that kind of thought process?

**Dr. Kate Hixson:**

Oh, of course. Of course. I mean, almost on a daily basis. And to your point, though, going back to the emergency nurses, I mean, you're absolutely right. They are undoubtedly, unquestionably extraordinary men and women. So, you know what? When you think about it, for so many people, there is something holding them back. You know, it could be impostor syndrome, as you were mentioning. It could be fear. It could be some other negative force that's at play. And so, what I've learned through my research and through my work is that essentially, we just have to channel that anxiety or channel that fear into a source of fuel.

So, we have to flip it on its head. So rather than just succumbing to toxic thoughts or toxic fears, we just have to overcome it. But so how do you how do you actually do that? Because it sounds so simple, but it's definitely not. So, one way to do this is to just simply arm yourself with as much knowledge and experience as you possibly can.

So you have to cultivate all those necessary skills, all of that expertise along the way, so that when it comes time to step up and perform or, you know, tackle another goal, when it comes time to **CRUSH** it, you then have full confidence in your abilities, you know, without a shadow of doubt that you are fully prepared and you belong there and you can own that moment.

And so that's why lifelong learning, constant skill refreshment is so tremendously important, because when you get rusty or when you start to doubt your abilities, that's when you let fear or imposter syndrome overtake you. You don't move forward in your life because you're just lacking confidence in yourself.

But instead, by just constantly adding to your toolkit, you then get that unshakeable belief in yourself. And that's when you can make incredible things happen in your life.

**Janie Schumaker:**

Wow. I really love that, Kate, and that is so applicable to our audience because they are lifelong learners and many of them have achieved board certification and they do have to prepare quite rigorously for that.

And I remember back in 1996 when I first achieved my certified emergency nurse credential, when I was working in the emergency department, I felt so much more confident and unshakable in my

knowledge. Now I'm never going to know everything. I'm always learning. But boy, that did give me a confidence boost. And I felt a lot like, a lot less like that impostor. Like, I was just my dream job. And I just I just pinch myself every day to go to work, like, am I really going to go get to work in the emergency department? This is so cool. And so, I can so relate to that.

And I'm sure our audience can to just arming yourself with that knowledge and pushing through it does give you a lot more confidence and it helps you face some of those imposter syndromes or fears. I think. I think that is great advice.

**Dr. Kate Hixson:**

Love it. Love it.

**Brigid Flood:**

It really is. And I think that was one of the best ways we could start to wind down this podcast is something so motivating. So. Kate, thank you for that answer. That was perfect. So, now there's time for what we do on our podcast is what we call rapid fire questions.

**Dr. Kate Hixson:**

Oh boy.

**Brigid Flood:**

Kate, I just have a couple. They're pretty easy. But the first one is you take NASA as is. What was the coolest thing about studying astronauts?

And did you get to wear one of the uniforms?

**Dr. Kate Hixson:**

You know, I actually was able to try on a spacesuit, which was really cool.

Gosh, you did that. There was so much. There was so much that was just undeniably amazing about it. But, you know, I guess like a personal level. So around 4 p.m. or so every Friday, you could go to this little hole in the wall bar near the entrance or the exit of Johnson Space Center. You know, they're serving beers in little plastic cups and you're eating popcorn out of the little tiny, you know, paper dish. And it is just filled with astronauts or, you know, the chief of the International Space Station or the engineer who's working on the lunar rover, you know, and all these folks are just hanging out, you know, having a beer or two after a long work week. And, you know, just to be able to kind of shoot the breeze on a more intimate level, a more personal level with people of that caliber and that that lifestyle, that work was just so, so, so neat. So, I'll never forget those days. Certainly.

**Brigid Flood:**

It sounds like a lot of fun.



**Dr. Kate Hixson:**

It was.

**Brigid Flood:**

So, switching gears a little bit. What was your biggest lesson you've learned from your daughter?

**Dr. Kate Hixson:**

Well, so it took me a very long time to conceive. I had some health issues and things, and it was just a very, very long journey for me. And then when I was finally able to get pregnant and gave birth to a healthy, beautiful baby girl, I was just filled with such indescribable gratitude. And I felt that every day since, you know, it's just made me view my life through a lens of gratitude to where now, you know, every day that I'm able to spend time with her. I'm so grateful. I'm so appreciative. And that's permeated throughout my entire world view. And it's just truly made me a better, more humble, more grateful person overall.

**Brigid Flood:**

That's an amazing lesson. So, I told you, when we get to this part. But what was your favorite part of the **CRUSH** model?

**Dr. Kate Hixson:**

Yes. No, you know, I could I could talk probably at length, you know, about the different phases, the different letters. But, you know, I think a big takeaway for me is just simply like I've had to practice what I preach. You know, this was never about me. Like, I just genuinely am fascinated by people who can achieve great things and, you know, take on these big goals and, you know, do something positive forward in their life. And I just wanted to study that. Right. They could get it wasn't ever about me, but because I study it. Because I talk about it. Because I write about it. Because I, you know, just constantly thinking about this. It's made me then approach my life differently to where, you know, when I'm having a really bad day or I don't feel well or I'm nervous about something or whatever it might be, I'm able to then draw upon the **CRUSH** Method and apply it myself. So, I've noticed a big positive change in my own life just since I've started working on this, which is really an unexpected but really cool outcome.

**Brigid Flood:**

It's very it's very cool, too. And they think the last one is: what's your favorite book on leadership?

**Dr. Kate Hixson:**

Hm gosh. So, I was recently reading a book by Edgar Shine. Peter Shine. I believe that's how you pronounce your last name. I think it's a father son relationship. And so, their book was called something to the effect of *Humble Leadership*. So. And what I loved about this was that it really just focuses on relationships and trust with the leadership in it.

It's kind of it's a different philosophy on leadership because it doesn't put leaders on a pedestal. You know, so many books, so many theories, philosophies about leadership. It's all about the person, the leader, you know, be the sage on the stage, if you will. Whereas this particular book is all about drawing people together and working within those teams and again, cultivating relationships and leading more naturally. And of course, with, you know, my background in studying team-based training and teamwork training, this book just really resonated with me is like highly recommend it.

**Janie Schumaker:**

And what was the name again?

**Dr. Kate Hixson:**

*Humble Leadership*

**Brigid Flood:**

I'm going to put that on my list. So, I think it's the end of the record for your question. Janie, anything from you?

**Janie Schumaker:**

Yes, Kate. I have so enjoyed talking with you today and I feel so inspired by your teachings and your messages. And I am sure that our audience is feeling the same way. And I'm wondering about if our audience would like to follow you and get more of this great stuff. Where can they find you online or on social media?

**Dr. Kate Hixson:**

Oh, sure. Yeah. So, on Instagram and Twitter, my handles the same. So, it's @KateHixsonPhD. So, Kate H-i-x-s-o-n-PHD and then my Web site, KateHixson.com and as mentioned, I'm about to launch a podcast of my own called *Dauntless*, where I'm sharing insights from some of the world's preeminent overachievers. So, I'm really excited to get out there in the community. And I would just love to interact with and meet any of the fine folks that are associated with the BCEN. You all are truly, truly amazing.

**Janie Schumaker:**

Thank you so much. I love the name of that podcast, *Dauntless*. That just sounds like something you definitely want to listen to. I love words and hearing that myself.

**Brigid Flood:**

Yeah, me too. And I also want to take this moment to thank you for joining us on this episode of BCEN and Friends. Kate, thank you so much. And we hope to our listeners that you'll continue to tune in. As we move forward with this series and bring you fresh and impactful content and perspectives.

If you have a suggestion for one of our episode topics, please, please email us at [BCEN@BCEN.org](mailto:BCEN@BCEN.org). I'm Brigid Flood here with Janie Schumaker and on behalf of the entire team, we thank you. We

celebrate you for all that you are doing as professional nurses across this emergency spectrum. And until next time.