



Dr. Judith Richter, Global Business & Interfaith Peace Award Gold Medalist, delivered a keynote address at the 2022 Dare to Overcome National Faith ERG Conference in Washington DC. Dr. Judith Richter is an accomplished entrepreneur and among Israel's most distinguished business leaders. In 1993, Dr. Richter co-founded Medinol, a global medical device company that acquired a significant international position in the Interventional Cardiology and stenting industry. She has served as the company's Chief Executive Officer since its founding.

Keynote Address, May 24, 2022, Washington DC

Ladies and Gentlemen, leaders of the Religious Freedom & Business Foundation, distinctive participants, it is a great honor to be here tonight, and take part in this year's magnificent "Dare to Overcome" event.

Let me start by sharing this photo with you. I just got back from a family trip to the safari in Tanzania, when a friend sent it to me.

When I saw it, I smiled. This image captures something dear to my heart: Crossing boundaries. Here, the elephant, big and strong, is helping the weaker baby cub. And the lioness is walking side-by-side with both. A representation of an ideal, plural and inclusive community, overcoming differences, benefiting from mutual respect, support and peace. It reminds me of a phrase from the bible. Isaiah 11:6:

"The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together..."

But how do we have the wolf live with the lamb, and the goat and leopard lie down together? How do we bring the lion and the calf together? How can we build bridges for a better world in our real life, and not just in such an edited photo? These are all questions that have become increasingly relevant in today's world.

I have had a lifelong interest in crossing boundaries. Crossing boundaries of hate, crossing boundaries of ignorance, crossing boundaries of misunderstanding.

For the past two decades, my inter-connected work in the medical and the education fields has been my bridge in crossing boundaries, across religious, ethnic and national walls, which divide so many of us around the globe.

Twenty-five years ago, my husband and I founded Medinol, a stent company that is tasked with the mission of opening blocked arteries in the heart. Every stent opens up arteries so blood can flow and nourish the heart. Every stent design is the same – for all patients around the world. Every heart beats the same way.

I am deeply grateful that our innovative technology has saved millions of hearts and lives.

But not less important I've learned that the heart is a common symbol across all religions and cultures of our shared humanity. In working to open hearts, I was inspired by the legacy of my father, a survivor of the holocaust, one of the darkest times in human history.

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Through his heroic life story – risking his own life to save the lives of others – my father taught me that while one’s possessions, friends and even family can be ripped away, the single asset that no one can take away from you is knowledge.

Knowledge empowers. Knowledge humanizes. Knowledge is the foundation upon which respect and peace are built.

My dream of sharing knowledge became a reality over two decades ago, when I established the NIR School of the Heart – an education program aimed at empowering young people to evolve as ambassadors for health and peace.

I set out, with the assistance of distinguished professors and physicians from around the world, to cultivate the power of young people in the Middle East: Jordanians, Palestinians and Israelis, Jews, Muslims, Christians and Druze, to come together and learn about the heart, but perhaps more importantly, to learn about themselves and about each other.

For over twenty years, the NIR School students have come together to learn through medical science, about the humanity we all share – and in so doing – open their hearts, uplifting their souls toward greater understanding. Their newfound knowledge has served to empower and humanize them.

Even at times of increased tension in the region, we have made the NIR School a place of discovery. Where through the process of learning, they discover the truth: that despite the different religious and national backgrounds, we all share the most basic expressions of humanity; that knowledge and understanding of each other’s uniqueness – religiously, culturally, and spiritually – are keys to building bridges; That embracing diversity is the basis upon which tolerance, generosity and mutual respect can be achieved; That differences are an asset to be cultivated and celebrated, rather than a reason for confrontation

The young people of the NIR School have proven that change and understanding are possible.

Studying and living together, our students learn to rely on each other, forming strong bonds that go beyond the academic program, turning walls of anxiety and suspicion into life-long bridges of friendship and hope. Through communication and cooperation, our students experience how we all become stronger and more impactful, when acting together.

Ladies and Gentlemen, over the years, I have come to learn that there are moments in life when one has to go above and beyond the call of duty, follow his/her personal values, and stretch a hand to those in danger and need.

In these troubling times, the agony of the Ukrainian people is calling upon humanity to take action and help save lives. I am proud that we – management and employees at Medinol – can take part in this global noble front. On the Israeli Holocaust Remembrance Day, which was marked last month, our company - Medinol - shipped stents as a donation to Ukraine.

On a personal level I note that our donation was sent to the very same area, which was part of Hungary during World War II, where all four of my grandparents were sent to Auschwitz to die. Their lives were taken. We give lives back. This is the legacy in memory of those who perished.

I would like to use this occasion to call upon you too, leaders in the corporate world, in the business sector, and in the halls of power. To inspire others to open their hearts, break down

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barriers allow friendship and creativity to flow across borders, and help build bridges between hearts, over and through walls.

We should all appeal to our common humanity and the parts of religion that call upon each of us to take a greater human responsibility – doing good for a better world.

We have proven it at Medinol and in the NIR School. We can do it anywhere. Thank you very much for the recognition as the Gold Medalist of the 2021 “Dare to Overcome” Awards, and for this incredible honor.