



THE PODCAST

S1: E 12 Kirk Vallis Creativity Problem Solving

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[00:00:00] **Beth Stallwood:** Welcome to the Work Joy Jam podcast. In this episode, my guest is the fabulous Kirk Vallis. Kirk is a creativity expert, a great thinker and great advisor on all things, creativity based and innovation. And in our conversation, we got into this idea about how you can actually build the practice of creativity in your life.

It's the idea that actually sometimes we're so set in our ways, you know, this is, this is how I usually approach my task versus actually all the different ways I could think about doing it that might give me a different insight, a different perspective, or help me have more impact. And also really interesting to me, the fact that, you know, important jobs, important things that people are working on serious jobs can actually be helped by having a little bit of fun.

And I think that's a really interesting point for us to think about just because it's serious doesn't mean it can't be fun. And Kirk was also saying that people who are in some of those big jobs, some of those important, scary, enormous jobs tend to actually be quite creative because they're naturally curious about other things.

[00:01:45] So I hope you really enjoy this episode.

[00:01:58] Hello, welcome to the work joy jam. This time we are joined by the fantastic Kirk Vallis, and I'm really looking forward to getting into our conversation today. I talked to Kirk a lot and I've had the pleasure of working with him on many occasion and I find his insights fascinating and interesting. And he's generally just a really cool person to have a conversation with.

[00:02:22] So Kirk is going to introduce himself in a moment and I'd love for him to tell us more about his story, what he does and his journey to get to where he is today. So Kirk welcome. And over to you.

[00:02:36] **Kirk Vallis:** So while it's, um, it used to be a measure of how, how clear your description of what you did for a living was when you sat at a dinner party and someone asked you, and as you, as you're telling them, you could just see them kind of starting to shift, looking in the other direction, talking to somebody else.

So luckily I haven't had many dinner parties this year for obvious reasons, but I, um, so let me have a go at the, the latest, uh, the latest version. I, I help people use creativity to solve problems, and that sounds a little bit negative problems or maximize opportunities, shall we say? Uh, I do it in two ways, uh, either projects so there's a project. A team is working on that they want to think differently around and want some movement in their thinking or to disrupt themselves a little bit. So I can help them on that to facilitate that with techniques and tricks and things like that. So an example might be, uh, Google. How, how do we help people have a better relationship with their tech. Digital wellbeing, um, is a big thing and we, you know, we take it seriously and the reality is it's hard. It's hard to move the needle there. So I've done a bit of work with that team on helping them to, just to think differently around that. Or it could be, uh, the England rugby team, senior men's side.

[00:03:52] How do we, out-think the opposition to have a competitive edge during the last world cup? I also spend a lot of my time most of my time designing and delivering training workshops or sessions or interactions, you know, where you're good at using multimodality now to give people the skills, techniques, approaches, and importantly, the mindset to help make that an everyday, everyday thing.

[00:04:16] It's no coincidence that people are, it's no coincidence that, um, the world economic forum, McKinsey, you know, everywhere you look, credible sources, citing creativity as being, you know, amongst the most, if not the most important skill required this year. So I think interestingly, the world economic forum forecasted that in 2015, that in 2020, it would be one of the most demanded skills in, um, in work.

[00:04:44] So they clearly had a good insight into the, into the pandemic that was heading now way.

[00:04:52] **Beth Stallwood:** their crystal ball worked quite well.

[00:04:53] **Kirk Vallis:** That, yeah, exactly. I think they were predicting it for a different reason technology, things like that, not a bloody massive pandemic that was going to mess up the entire world.

[00:05:05] So that's what I do. So listen, I, you know, if there's one good thing about this this year, It for me, it's the, I used to have to spend a disproportionate amount of time, especially new relationships having to help people almost like sell to people that the importance of creativity. But if there's one thing that's happened this year is that everybody has seen it.

[00:05:25] Everybody has had to be created to flex, to do things a bit differently to have impact in whatever they do. Right. So, so that's been a massive, the acceleration, if you like, are people sitting there going, I value this. Now we still have to address what does it mean? That word, creativity and innovation and disruption.

[00:05:43] And they're all really loaded terms that often are used in context in business that doesn't help. But how do we, um, so we start to do a bit of that, but actually people are leaning in going I need, I recognize it's important that how we think and how we look at things differently is, is essential.

[00:06:01] **Beth Stallwood:** So interesting isn't it? I heard it called a lot of times the year of the pivot, where everyone's having to be creative and change and do things differently. So it gets people really

interested yet. And you talked to me about, about this. I know a lot of people, if you say the word creativity, that instant reaction is, but I'm not very creative.

[00:06:20] And I think it is a loaded word. And I I'd be really interested to hear from you around this term, creativity. How, how do you see it? How do you interpret it in the business, in the working context, versus some of the other things that people assume that creativity is you can draw, or you can play an instrument or it's very artistic in that way.

[00:06:39] So yeah unpick that a bit for us.

[00:06:42] **Kirk Vallis:** So my, um, my day job is I spend most of my time working for Google, which is, is brilliant. And, um, uh, it gives me an opportunity to go and play in other areas as well. But I, um, uh, Google, we kind of sort of lucky because, because what I not burdened with there is that is the relationship with the term creativity to you know, to the arts, right. Okay. People don't think that, but it's still loaded. I'm either creative or I'm not. So in an engineering context, it's still either people roll their eyes enough, you know, is it another offsite activity, you know, jazz hands and nothing happens as a result of that or it's a bit of fear.

[00:07:21] I can't be creative and I, you know, so you're right. And when I joined Google eight years ago to, to help drive the creative culture it was a specialism that I was in there as a real specialist. And, but what's, you know, over eight years. There's one thing that has happened is that I think everybody has spent a bit of time in some context or another, either in a training session or just in their career development, appraising their relationship with this term.

[00:07:47] So, so it's good. It's no longer I no longer niche or specialist it's part of just being a great leader or being a great colleague or, or operating whatever in whatever you do. But, but yeah, listen Sir Ken Robinson started to address this conversation, you know, a few years ago and it's, it's, it's not a hundred percent objective, so I recognize there's different perspectives here, but you know, in education, most education, um, platforms, uh, contexts in most of the parts of the world where many of us grew up is largely bias towards knowledge retention and recruiting. And so therefore that drives a, I bias of how we look at the world to be much more analytical judgmental. Decision-making the one right answer.

[00:08:36] Uh, so it's just, so actually I kind of say to people, give yourself a break. You're just not as practiced using options and possibility. Um, you know, I've developed a should very shorthand, given that a lot of online learning now needs to be a lot more punchy or we can't roll around for days in the topic.

[00:08:56] So my one slide version of creativity now is creativity equals options. That's all it is, is the ability to create an optional two more. That helps you make a better, a better decision in whatever you're doing. And there is a big thing now, actually as well, I'm, I'm a lot less wedded to the, or, you know, emotional around the word and it being an insistence that it being used.

[00:09:19] So for example, when I run workshops at Google, now a lot of the time don't even use the word creativity because we have to spend too much time having a debate about what it means. If I say to people, right, we're going to share some problem solving skills and approaches. Now people go, right. I me, yeah, that's it.

[00:09:35] That's what we do. That's business critical. So, so that'd be one piece of advice to anyone that's listening is. Don't feel like if even if you're sitting there going, I get it, how do I start to land creativity in my, in my organization, my team and myself, what you don't have to land is the title. You have to land the behaviors, the, the culture, the, the, the approaches that help you to look at things and approach things differently.

[00:09:57] What you don't need to be burdened by is does everybody love this word? Creativity? Cause some people won't and that's a harder thing to change overnight. Then actually the behaviors that we want them to, uh, to shift or adopt.

[00:10:12] **Beth Stallwood:** Yeah. So you don't have to say, we're going to do, we're going to start being really creative now, or we're going to do a whole session, just thinking creatively, you can just start thinking about what are the things that we need to do to use the behavioral.

[00:10:25] **Kirk Vallis:** That's the point? Yeah. Like what do I do? I help people. So the point is we're using creativity to solve. We're not going to be creative because that's a jet. Like I say, it suggests when times are good or off sites or things like that, we're actually, now we've got, we've got a problem. You know, we've got a problem in our bottom line, we've got a code red, we got a user experience issue, whatever our world or context is.

[00:10:45] Um, it's the case is let's use creativity to think how we might do that a bit differently so that we can make some decisions that might, might be different to what we would have made if we just operated on the autopilot moment, which is our default.

[00:11:02] **Beth Stallwood:** Yeah, and we do the auto pilot, right. Because it's easier and we know it and we understand it.

[00:11:06] And we've built years and years of patterns. As you say, through education, through how we do things is what we do is we, we, we decided, and we need to get to the end. We need to find the finish point. We need to find the right thing, but the world doesn't really work with right or wrong, pure answers does it.

[00:11:22] It's not the world doesn't work like that. So we have to almost retrain ourselves.

[00:11:27] **Kirk Vallis:** [00:11:27] and whatever it does. I mean, and this is a, you can see it is scary, right? Isn't it, because lots of people have got to where they've got to in their career. All of us have to certain extent based on technical ability and knowledge-based skills.

[00:11:42] I know that I know the, I know the binary information for that question. Um, and the, I guess the watch out to that is that we are, um, the watch out to that is that Technology can do that very well as well. Right. So when, so when people feel threatened and I think a lot of people kind of awesome technology and automation, that's going to affect my job.

[00:12:07] I mean, but it's only going to affect the parts of our job that binary and get it done and repetition tasks, you know, machines don't need to take a break, um, if nothing else. But what it does then mean is that actually the parts of our job that are about looking for new or different answers or possibilities or options to solve a challenge.

[00:12:27] Yeah. That's one where we don't naturally lean, but it's also our unique opportunity in the world right now, because that's not what machine learning does very well. Um, or as well as human beings, you know, I haven't yet recreated the human brain and it's all, it's brilliant. So therefore, you know, that we should be seeing that as that is our USP to the world is our ability to think differently.

[00:12:52] And we should be leaning on that more and more because I see people who sit there and go, you know, like, Yeah, three days putting a deck together. Very soon, machine learning will learn how you, you actually put together your slides. You can press a button and it will do it for you. That's not that can't be that far away.

[00:13:08] I'm not, that's no inside knowledge. I just can't believe that that's not something that is around the corner. So if we're leaning in ourselves too much on our ability to do that, versus actually what's in that deck, you know, what's in those slides, what's the thinking that goes into it and, and valuing that more.

[00:13:24] I. I always say to people, I've sort of, you know, it was a bit, it's a bit of a playful provocation, but whenever I'm with teams, there's two questions. I ask them, I'll come back to the other one, I'm sure we'll touch on that one a bit later, but the, the, the, the, one of the questions is, or to two parts, do you have a, to do list?

[00:13:40] Everyone puts their hand up. So you do have to think about this and it's less hands, but less far less hands. I think that's a massive shift in our mindset is, you know, we are just not conditioned to, um, value the time that we spend just gestating around the stuff that we're working on, you know, our value comes when we feel like we're getting it done, um, or, you know, input equals output.

[00:14:06] **Beth Stallwood:** So interesting. And I'm going to pick on this point a bit more. One of the things that often mentioned around work joy is lots of people get lots of satisfaction from the ticking things off the, to do list from the achievement. And I, I think for many years as well, organizations have rewarded people based on how much time you spend getting stuff done.

[00:14:26] Just, just plowing through, you know, if you're a real work horse, it's brilliant and you get stuff done. And I remember a few years ago when we first met you, you asking that question to a group of people and I sat there and thought, oh, actually I don't think I spend enough time on my to think about list.

[00:14:39] And I actually now do have that as a bit of a habit as something that I do more often give myself some thinking time. And I'm wondering how have you helped people? And how can people think about this in building that as a habit when everybody's lives seem to get busier and busier and busier and the time for.

[00:14:59] Doing things that aren't doing, things like getting stuff done seems to get smaller and smaller. What's the habit building thing that we can work with.

[00:15:07] **Kirk Vallis:** So I think the first, first thing is a mindset shift. So, so the point is it's, it's not in, it's not thinking time for thinking time sake, it's, in-service on something.

[00:15:18] So this thing, right. And I think that's, that's how we should think about using creativity or giving it a more credible home and the top table of our skillsets. Anyway, generally, generally creativity is, you know, the world isn't yet turning on a different axis where people are being paid, just to think, you know, um, um, you, you will know we are there when law firms and so on, uh, can charge clients for sleeping on their problem.

[00:15:43] You know, it's things like that, that won't be that far away, only needs the data to support it and it's coming. But anyway, but that's another, um, another thing, but, but I always, the first thing I say to people is. Don't sit and think I need to be creative this week. Right? It's what do I need to achieve this week?

[00:16:00] Right. I've got a massive project that I'm struggling to get buy-in and you know, and I've got to get that bolt bought in from some senior stakeholders. I don't know, you know, as an example, that's your task, that's still what you have to achieve. So don't think of creativity and thinking time as being a distraction from you achieving that task this week.

[00:16:22] Um, but seeing it as part of it, no one, and likewise just recognize at the moment you're, you're not going to, if you don't achieve that task of getting that buy-in on that project from senior stakeholders, no, one's going to go, no, one's going to pat on the back and go brilliant stuff. You were really creative and we value that.

[00:16:38] That's the, you know, we're not there yet, either in the world of work where failure is, is, is celebrated in the same way. So, so first thing is like, that's still my task, but my, my hope is that people start to recognize. The quality of that task or how we achieve that task i.e. in my ability to influence people, to persuade them, to communicate whatever it is that I think about doing will be better by me.

[00:17:06] One, just stepping back from it and going and allowing it to just stay in my head a bit, rather than always having to be like, I'm just doing, I'm just doing, I'm putting stuff down on slides or whatever that that looks like and I guess back to that point, more holistically that I see that there are two ways in which I can approach this task, how I've always approached it, or is there a way or two more, more different to this that I could explore that might help me to have more impact in that situation.

[00:17:37] So that's the first thing I always do for people is trying to help them to see the difference in the mindset shift that's required. And then, yeah. And then, and then some practical things like, do you just share, you know, share your time. I mean, that would be a first thing. Now don't get me wrong. There is something brilliant about our thinking time when it's just allowed to happen naturally ask people where they do their best thinking. They don't say when I've protected an hour to go for it for a thing, they say it's when I'm exercising or walking or in the shower, number one, answer in the world by the way, the shower. So, so they, um, so, so it's, it's not you, you are sacrificing a little bit of your brains, brilliant, um, task, negative state it's called when your brain naturally gestates and starts to make fresh connections but the best thing we can do is just to protect that time and go, right.

[00:18:30] You know, I've just been given this brief, I've just been given this project to do, I've just knowledge that I've got this meeting coming up at the end of the week that I need to have impact

with I'm in the same way that I would put in two hours to write the deck or whatever the output is that it's needed to be.

[00:18:44] I'm also going to schedule time to have a think about it and seeing that value. And then there's things you can do to fill that time. So who could I fund during that couple of hours that going to spend thinking about this? Who. Who might have a different perspective on it now that can be relatively close to my world, but you know, Beth there many times we've, we've just applied it around some stuff that we're working on, uh, away from each other, but just to get a different perspective from someone that you trust, who are actually you value, you know, a value, the fact that they, you see the world differently.

[00:19:15] To me, that's brilliant. That's competent diversity and that's great. So that's one technique you can do is who can I just pick up the phone to? There's a brilliant, um, uh, there's a brilliant bit in the book by Brene Brown, "Rising strong", where she talks about the inch square and, um, and this there's just this principle of like always having four people in your mind, in your network, who you celebrate, the fact that they look at the world dramatically different to you, and I will reach out to them for different perspectives.

[00:19:42] So that's, you know, that's a structure I could put in place during that time now, right my push to people is how crazy can you go there? Aren't you know, we talk about work joy. How much fun can you have doing that? Cause it's one thing for me to go, okay, I'm going to pick up the phones to Beth, she works in a similar world to me, that looks at the world a bit differently. But what if I was like right? What other worlds look at this, this, this essence of this challenge that I've got in a totally different way. You know, so let's say the core of my challenge this week is persuasion, but the stakeholders I need to get both actually that, that there's an element of that.

[00:20:15] That's about persuasion, where else in the world, can I go for a totally different perspective on, on persuasion, maybe it's people who ask, you know, who propose to somebody else for marriage, maybe that's, um, I might get a perspective and maybe it's, um, you know, kids like looking at the world of children and how they're brilliantly persuasive and, uh, and so on.

[00:20:35] So, so that's where the fun comes as well. So that's an example of one of the one or two of the techniques that I might use. So I'm not just going around going, okay, I'm going to walk around the park five times and have a think, although that is really powerful, but for people that aren't there yet, or it just like, yeah.

[00:20:51] Feels like a little bit of a, I'm really busy. I've got a lot going on. I get that. I need to step away, never think, but I still need it to feel productive and then give yourself some structures, um, like that.

[00:21:03] **Beth Stallwood:** Yeah. So that, so this is the thing, isn't it like the idea of just giving yourself some thinking time in some people's heads. And I know sometimes it does in mind, if I try and overthink it is I just need to sit and think, but assessing and thinking, doesn't always give me a different perspective or idea or I'm, I'm so stuck in my own ways, in my own, um, way of thinking in my own patterns, in my own behaviors, but trying to think about doing it differently is actually really hard sometimes.

[00:21:33] So having a conversation or researching someone who thinks differently or, you know, finding out from someone else, and I have to say, I personally think I'm quite creative when I'm with other people. I find being creative on my own, not so easy.

[00:21:49] **Kirk Vallis:** Yeah. And it's, it's two different. I mean, often it comes down to how people interpret that word, creativity again.

[00:21:57] And, um, and most people do automatically suggest that they're creative in a place where they're on their own, but that is because the brain science says that you're you're in that mind, wandering state often when you're doing a solo task, that doesn't require too much brain power, washing up during the, uh, during the garden, um, cooking, uh, walking, exercising, you know, on the running machine or just going for a walk, driving.

[00:22:25] So, so you see why people automatically do that and that's really valuable, but yeah, as well, we, I always just think about the fact that the fact of the matter is that Steve jobs was right. There is no such thing as a new idea out of the ether ideas aren't sitting in the ether and you just have to grab one with a net or something.

[00:22:44] It's it is, it's about making fresh connections between the ingredients that already exist in your head. And so if that's the case and you buy that premise, well, then two brains will always be better than one because you've just got the, sorry, I'm overplaying the food and the cooking metaphor here, but you've got two pantries full of full of ingredients then.

[00:23:03] Right. And so you've just got more stuff to, uh, to play with. So absolutely this doesn't have to be a suffer alone. I'm going to, I'm going to do that in, um, I'm going to spend my time on my own actually often it's how can I collide with other people and to be fair more and more now, when I ask people, where do you do your best thinking?

[00:23:21] Um, they, I do now hear people saying, oh, you know, just over a coffee with somebody, like we've, we've actually somebody in my team, but when we're not. We haven't got the laptop open and it fills up, we've got to commit to a slide, you know, we're just kicking it around. I see engineers at Google all the time, doing their best, work over a coffee after lunch, when their laptops aren't there and that's their expansive moment.

[00:23:44] And then don't get me wrong. They then go, right. What does that all mean? How am I going to boil it down, make some decisions, get reductive. And then I go and implement it into whatever I'm doing. But you know, you do hear people say when I'm whiteboarding and there's something about whiteboarding in that allows that gives you, you know subconscious permission to be scrappy, to make mistakes.

[00:24:03] If there's one thing about. PowerPoint, Google slides. They don't give you, they don't naturally give you permission in your mind to make a mistake. And of course you're always deleting and editing and so on, but, but you get my point here. It's it's it just, isn't something that we've kind of grown up with.

[00:24:19] It's a finished product, um, a tool. So, so, but, but what I would say to you is that, um, I would always say to people, something, you know, extroverts love to think out loud with, with

somebody else, right. With other people. And I often fall into that love kicking stuff about, but I do force myself for some moments of reflection as well.

[00:24:41] And this comes up, you know, and apologies. I'm sure you're gonna drill me down into some cognitive clarity in a moment. But I always, you know, I did, I do a lot of work with teams where we're trying to sort of work...it's, it's a bit crude, but you know, when people are going well, we've got introverts and extroverts, how do they work together?

[00:25:01] The fact of the matter is. We, we will, we will need a bit of both. So we might have a natural leaning. So if my natural lean is, I love to talk things out loud, but then I just have to work a little bit harder about allowing reflection time and a bit of time on my own to gestate. And if I'm the opposite where then I might just have to work a little bit harder to pick up the phone to somebody or drop an email and go, can we just kick this around?

[00:25:23] You know, so I don't see it as binary. It almost suggests that there. Either is a disability that, you know, that needs to be just, um, respected and left alone. I, I believe that they are natural things and it doesn't make it mean that it's easy to do the opposite, but that's what I certainly strive for is to, is to push myself, to do the opposite of whatever I'm naturally inclined I'm inclined to do.

[00:25:47] So we would have to do a little, a little bit of that bit of thing. You know, I would say time to talk time to think in any project I have, I, and when I say project, it might be, I've got an hour before a meeting. And you know in that time I'm like, right, how can I spend 20 minutes just thinking about it?

[00:26:03] And then some time talking it out or getting it done, should we, should we say so? And we have to force a bit of both. There's a great book. He's quite old, but now by a guy called Steven Johnson, where good ideas come from and he kind of coined this expression, the slow hunch. And there is a, there is a science in that just letting stuff.

[00:26:22] gestate in the back of your mind. So to your point there, if you don't like, you know, you find it hard when you are deliberately going, right. I've got an hour to think this through. So it's not work for you. Don't, don't force that. But what you, you can do is go, most people when I coach leaders and so on.

[00:26:37] And I look at them, we talk about this stuff and they go, yeah. Yeah. But I don't have the time to think about that. Or they'll say the same as you, you know, it just doesn't work for me to sit there and go back. But now to think about this, I've got, I've got this big presentation coming up on Friday. Like when did you first know about this presentation?

[00:26:54] Again, it happens every three months and I go, right. Okay. So three months ago you knew about [00:27:00] this. So you can, but what we don't is we're all working to the next deadline, the next deadline, whereas actually stepped back. If I spend half an hour. But, you know, on, on this, this presentation, that's three months away.

[00:27:14] I, um, my, and then I don't have to solve it, but just get my brain into gear, get it engaging with the challenge and then leave it, just leave it alone for a couple of months. My brain, my subconscious brain will work on it in the background. Right. Proven right. There is, you will get some, if you're, if you, if you, if you set yourself the challenge of how do I solve this, you might be

disappointed if you set yourself the challenge of, can I get some movement in my thinking by just letting it gestate in the background without any agenda or fixed, fixed time.

[00:27:47] Um, other than when I next sit down to think about it or to do something with it, the answer is almost always, yes, I'll have some movement in my thinking. So, you know, sometimes again, we're probably sort of circling around a theme, which is how we [00:28:00] frame it, how we talk about it to ourselves, if not others.

[00:28:03] **Beth Stallwood:** Yeah, I'm, I'm going to pull a few things that I wrote down while you were talking. Cause there were some things that really landed for me and really important things I think around how we do this, but also how we find some joy within the process. Because for me, if you want to get a bit creative or whatever language you want to use around it, if you want to solve problems, actually trying to do it when I'm trying to do it, if I try and do it too seriously, I lose some of that inspiration.

[00:28:28] I lose that ability to reach out and find people and to get interested in it. And two words really came to mind when you were talking about people grabbing a coffee and they were where I get that fresh connection stuff, where I start to see the benefit of other people. And it is that informal space.

[00:28:45] It's that let's have a casual conversation. It is grab a coffee is do that side of things. And then I find the inspiration comes from the conversations. And then almost what I have to do is then go away and do my thinking when I've had the inspiration. So it's that. And I do need to [00:29:00] do that on my own.

[00:29:01] And I am probably nearer to more often being drawn to the extroverted stuff. But when I've got to actually get down and do something, I need to go into my own space with my own calmness and that having had all that inspiration, those connections really helps. And you're right. If I have those connections and then I don't think about it for a while.

[00:29:20] Somehow when I sit down to write something or to create something or to think in a different way, it's all sorts of happened for me. Because I've allowed it to do that gestating thing. And for me, that, that those two bits of advice, make sure you've got time to talk and time to think. And maybe if you do have more of the extroverted tendencies, I mean, I know I do.

[00:29:45] I tend to have less time to think and I probably need a bit more of it. So I have to, I have to make myself do that, but find a fun way of doing it. And perhaps if you are in the more introverted world, what do you need to make a little bit more time to talk about some stuff and to reach out. And I totally believe that in the same way that you do that, we're not all one or the other.

[00:30:05] And we can't all live in a world which has one or the other, and do it exactly as we will want to do at the same time. So, yeah, I'm really, really keen to think about where we're here with, you know, with the joyfulness. And I know we've talked about this before, is how we can have some fun with this stuff and how having fun can help create new, different connections, different ways of thinking different patterns.

[00:30:31] **Kirk Vallis:** So we're, um, so there's a brilliant and, um, one of the founders of Google Larry Page, he, he's sort of famous for sort of sharing a line and I'm paraphrasing it a little bit, but he

always talks about you don't have to be serious to solve serious problems. And I don't know if he, if he, if he, if he had a deep understanding of the science, when he, when he first said that many years ago, but there's a real science in that the moment you allow the severity or importance of the challenge or the thing that you're [00:31:00] working on, all the deadline that goes with it to take hold of your mental state, your ability for your brain to make any fresh connections at all disappears.

[00:31:09] I mean, it's, you know, that's that science is how your brain works. There's no more, you know, the neuro pathways or the reticular activating system that connects the conscious to the subconscious. You know, is, is closed. That doorways is closed. So he, he always says to people we're working on important stuff.

[00:31:27] And I think, you know, give yourself a break in the context of your job and paying your mortgage and all the things that are important. We're working on important stuff. Our job is important to us. So, um, so, so, and he always says we're working on important stuff. It doesn't mean we can't enjoy working on it.

[00:31:44] And that's, I think that's a lovely reframe you go in. And especially when it's like a, a bit of troubleshooting, you know, we've got a code red, I've got a short form, the number, whatever that is, you know, we, we've got some, we've got to fix it now, which is a, you know, a common part of most of our kind of working [00:32:00] cadence at some point it's actually the, the best thing we can do is like, Laugh at it, you know, and it's, I think a lot of the time people don't do that because they feel like it's dismissing or belittling the significance of the situation, but not at all, like, you know, brilliant warm up to any conversation where you want to solve a, um, a really important thing is what would be the worst idea we could have right now and laugh, because if nothing else just gets you laughing about some stuff, although actually then there's also a science that if you and a practice, if you build up a practice of, you know, um, of looking at the, audacious and ridiculous, but sit with those, with those initial thoughts.

[00:32:44] Again, there's a bit of science. There is, you know, the, you know, the expression, what is it many, a true words, said in jest. That right. Your subconscious is sneaking into your conscious brain with some kind of a little provocation, but there might be valuing, right? So if nothing [00:33:00] else warm up to any, any serious important conversation or thing you're doing by just grabbing what would be the most ridiculous thing I could do right now?

[00:33:07] Um, if nothing else you'll laugh at it, it will relax your brain. The reticular activating system will open. You're more likely to have some fresh connections and create new options to solve the situation, but actually as well, if you do genuinely will play, play with it for awhile, it there'll be some principles in those silly ideas that might actually be the key to the answer. And there is there's tons of examples of some brilliant ideas in the world that started out as a ridiculous thought said in jest.

[00:33:38] **Beth Stallwood:** It's such an important thing, isn't it? And I, I can imagine. And I, you know, we've all been there. Haven't we, in those situations, wherever we work, whether that's, you know, in a shop or in an office or in a hospital where they're genuinely things that have to be fixed and they are serious and they're serious, whatever the job is. And you know, it might say the, you know, the person in the hospital who has to save a life [00:34:00] is much more serious than whatever I work I do, or whatever works someone else does. But within the context of our work, there will be things that are serious.

[00:34:07] Um, and. It's so easy to get lost in the seriousness of it all and to get stuck in. I find sometimes it's like a bit of a quagmire, isn't it? You get in there and you're all there. And you're also serious about finding a solution and we have to do it by this deadline and we have to do it. And then everyone's minds just goes completely blank.

[00:34:26] And we go, hang on a minute. Well, what should we do last time? Even if it failed, if we just repeat that because we know what we're doing there. And it's just a really hard thing to get off. I love the, I love the idea of just thinking what's the craziest thing we could possibly do because surely when you go crazy, even if you weren't walked it back two steps, you might actually find the answer.

[00:34:45] It doesn't have to be as crazy as that.

[00:34:46] **Kirk Vallis:** Oh, you know, um, I've got an Einstein that said, you know, it's a lesson idea for, at first seems absurd. It rarely turns into anything. I know I'm totally destroyed that phrase or expression, but there's something in that it's much easier to take a crazy out there idea and go, right.

[00:35:06] We love this. How do we keep the DNA of this, but make it fit for purpose in the context that we're in, that's much easier than taking the same old stuff. That's having minimum, if no impact at all and go, all right, let's blow it up and be crazy. I mean, that's where people sit there and go, oh, I'm not creative.

[00:35:23] Like the pressure then kicks in because someone says, be creative around this. Whereas just recognize we are naturally creative people. You know, we don't show up to our work context, naturally creative, but you know, we are naturally playful. You know, we like to laugh. You know, our body reacts well to laughter and fun and so on.

[00:35:42] It's really hard. You gave a couple of contexts there, you know, work at your hospital. If you're the front line of life or death, literally life or death situations, it can be uh that you might be listening to something in that, and that might be quite hard to, to accept, but please take it with a spirit it's man.

[00:35:58] And actually what I would say is [00:36:00] I've having worked with, um, a group of nurses a few years ago, um, new all at the front line life, or death in accident and emergency and other professions that are all doing that. Oh, actually I tend to find that generally they are the best at in the right context and right way making light of the situation.

[00:36:22] If for, for a couple of reasons, one, because they by into everything we're talking about, they get it, like it doesn't pay for me. They might not say it in the same way we're using very mean, have we try to use very smart language, right. But they might just go. No, it doesn't pay for me to get stressed about this that is not going to help me to solve it.

[00:36:36] And that's exactly the same point. It's just said a lot better, um, a lot better. Um, and then nothing else. I literally I'd, you know, I did end up with mental health challenges if I, if I weren't, if I wasn't able to, to put some light on it that helped me to smile or to laugh or to see some, some benefits and some different there.

[00:36:57] So I actually find that a lot of the time, the most creative people, [00:37:00] particularly in, in really, really important situations are those that actually do this, um, uh, do this pretty well.

[00:37:08] **Beth Stallwood** Yeah. And I have the same thing that, you know, nurses and doctors and people on the front lines and in, in, you know, jobs cycle that you have like really big decisions to make.

[00:37:17] There are actually life threatening situations and things like that. All of those people I know, and I'm friends with, or I've worked with all have what I would call, you know, the traditional great sense of humor that able to find the fun, the able to find the, the moment where they can have a little bit of relief from a very serious thing, by having a bit of a joke and doing it in the right way.

[00:37:41] And you know, but you're right. Sometimes if they didn't have that, I wonder how would they get through the day? Cause I know that I would find that really, really hard to me. I think those jobs,

[00:37:50] **Kirk Vallis:** and even if you, and even if you, even if this still doesn't sit well with you, and even if it's still sitting there going, no, I can't laugh at it.

[00:37:56] But actually the mindset is, this is what whatever's going on for you. [00:38:00] This is really bad. This situation. But if we get it solved, wouldn't that just be amazing? That's that if nothing else, that's what we're looking for. When we're talking about lightness of touch, when we're talking about being playful, that's actually what we mean is just being able to see, not being wedded to the outcome, recognizing that getting stressed about it is not, I actually going to help you to think, think through whatever it is you're in.

[00:38:25] And actually just having a mindset that is like the actually has an eye on part of your brain fixed on the, the vision of what would be great if we were able to solve this or we were able to do it. And that's kind of what we, what we mean by this, you know, about enjoying what we are, what we're doing, because we can just focus on the, on, on the output.

[00:38:46] Another thing that, you know, people that I find generally, especially in, you know, very important jobs and we are all in important jobs, um, Uh, they're all that I really tend to be creative. I, that tend to [00:39:00] be better, practiced to practice skill, by the way, um, at generating new and different options to help them look at situations, whatever they're in, they will tend to be curious people as well.

[00:39:11] Right. So then that was sort of, we talked about a little bit of that before they, they are naturally curious about other, other things. They, and they're also brilliant at being curious about stuff that might not seem relevant today. So that's, you know, at Google, we talk about the smart, creative, that's kind of a term that's loosely used to define Googlers, like in whatever capacity, your job, because if there's one thing that unites Google is we like people that, you know, we like people that are smart, but smart means people that know a lot of stuff about a lot of stuff.

[00:39:43] They've got a lot of experiences. Right. So that they're not just. Fixed, you know, there used to be an expression about this relation between generalists and specialists. We always said we liked the generalist and it's not really about that. I'm not sure that language kind of worked for us as much as it should.

[00:39:56] It should have. And it's not saying we hear as much in the more, but what we do mean is [00:40:00] by generalist is that we love people that have got lots of experience, lots of stuff going on, because the easiest way to make a fresh connection between the challenge that you're working on is to have other experiences that you can make those connections to.

[00:40:13] So when you just have someone that's only obsessed with deep technical expertise in their very defined fields, the watch out is that they, your, all you're doing is building that binary auto pilot response, you know, whereas. Being curious going "all right" You know, it's got nothing to do in my job today, but I'm going to go and have a look at some Georgian architecture because it's a bit different.

[00:40:37] I dunno. And there's a lot of it around where I live or sort of like that. Um, and I think the difference is, and that's the creative bit. So the smart is people know a lot of stuff about the, not lot knows stuff about a lot of stuff, but unless they're practiced at making fresh connections between all that stuff, then you're losing the battle to technology because no one, if it's just [00:41:00] binary information, well, there's a thing called Google that kind of does that for you.

[00:41:05] Um, but what human backs more well humans will do better is, you know, the practice hat, practice, skill of making fresh connection between stuff we need on demand.

[00:41:15] **Beth Stallwood:** Yeah. I'm also kind of thinking back to the word that you used two words or use that as being really important. And the first one is playful, which is not a word we often use associated with work.

[00:41:29] In many cases, um, neither is joy, which is why work joy is about how you associate these things together and how important curiosity is as a practice that you do all the time. Get interested, get curious, even if, I love that. You're saying that even if right now, it doesn't seem like that particular thing will have a solution for you just having that range of thinking, being interested, being curious.

[00:41:56] And when you were talking about those things, character talking about playful and curious, and interested and coming up with the, you know, go with the crazy idea for a bit, because why not? It's all stuff children do naturally. So it has been in our brain somewhere to be able to do this.

[00:42:11] **Kirk Vallis:** Oh, yeah, this is I it's.

[00:42:13] Um, and it's, you know, I do get people when I'm in face-to-face workshops. Yeah. To get people, to put their hands up, if just to acknowledge it, that they were a child. Um, but there has to be a time where we will have like AI sitting in the room and it won't be possible, but, but, but we were all children.

[00:42:31] Yeah. So we've, we've lost that practice. There's a, there's a couple of things that come to mind. John Cleese says it brilliantly. Monty Python and, um, and Fawlty Towers. Um, many of you will know who I'm talking about. Um, you know, he just says you can't make the stakes where you're being creative.

[00:42:50] I love that. Now, what is brilliant about when I talk about creativity, I talk about the two modes of thinking and expansive and reductive. And, um, and the point is you can make mistakes when you're reductive, you can make the wrong decision. You can, you, you know, if you've created lots of options, you could analyze judge that and, and, and make the wrong call.

[00:43:08] Right. That's possible. But when you're actually just coming up with options to work with, you can't make any mistakes because they're just options. And then a lot. So he says it best, the word playfulness. I got it credit to, um, an organization called "what-if", where I worked for a few, um, a few years. And they, I mean, I've never been anywhere where w where the power of culture has been so brilliantly defined and used the power of an organization, you know, so that's where that, or the suddenly that word I started to latch on because they used it as a way to remind each other to, to not be wedded to the outcome and having a lightness of touch around the, around the, around any situation that you're, that you're working on.

[00:43:55] So sort of credit to them that was, you know, and they, they've got, [00:44:00] you know, databases full of case studies of where they are only solved the innovation problem that they were working on for, for a company or an organization or a team because of playfulness. And so I think sort of fair, fair, fair play to, to that.

[00:44:15] So, um, so hum, a hundred percent, you know, it's vital, but it's also really hard. It goes against it. You know, I'm at work, it's serious, we've got a lot of years. Of our own career in most of us and certainly in the business world or corporate world or working world, should we say, cause not just business, of we've got a one pack.

[00:44:38] That relationship would work because most people don't, and this is why it's brilliant, the work that you're doing. Right. Because just getting people to stop and know does work have to be serious and can you not, I mean, I think Henry Ford didn't Henry Ford used to charge people money for their salary if they saw them smiling at work, because you're not here to have fun.

[00:45:00] You're here to work. So we have got a history of where work is associated with seriousness and the home life is associated with fun and for, and we've got, you know, so it's not going to be easy to unpack that. And if you're listening to this or any of the other, so podcasts that you've, that you, that you've done Beth.

[00:45:18] People, you know, give yourself a break is what I'd say to people. It's not easy. It's not really change over overnight because we're working against the system.

[00:45:27] **Beth Stallwood:** We are. And the thing that I keep saying around work joy, it's not about finding it all the time. It's not 100%, and it's not, as you said, it's not going around with a crazy smile on your house and jazz hands and your way around work joyfully every day.

[00:45:41] That's, that's not, the goal is around finding the moments of joy and using joy to help you be better at work, or to help the working situation change, or to do what you want to do. And that idea that you just talked about there, I think, you know, home is for fun. Work is for seriousness is work and home or so.

[00:45:59] I mean, [00:46:00] particularly right now with a global pandemic on, and lots of people are working from home or in a different way. They are not so separate anymore. The, the

boundaries aren't like that. Um, but almost some of our culture hasn't caught up with the idea that our boundaries aren't like that anymore.

[00:46:17] And it always feels like a bit of a tussle in one direction or another. So for me, when we find work joy, it's about those moments. It's about that. Bringing those things in and playfulness is a, is a massive and important part of that. And just bringing some ideas, bringing, I love what you said about lightness of touch and not being so wedded to the outcome, but work on the process.

[00:46:37] And one thing I'd love to talk about, but before we finish off and I ask you some quickfire questions, is this idea that it is a skill you build, not something you have, or you don't have. And so many of us, I think are very quick to put something that we haven't built a skill that we don't spend a lot of time thinking about or learning about into it.

[00:46:56] I can't do that. This is what I'm good at these other things, what I'm good at category. So I just love to know what are some of the things that people can do to build that skill? Simple thing.

[00:47:07] **Kirk Vallis:** Yeah. Well, so the first, first thing, sorry, this one, this one isn't simple, but I'll follow it up with some very simple things.

[00:47:15] The first thing is we got to change our relationship with failure. Or risk of failure. Right. So, and God would, you know, we could spend a whole session talking about that, so I'll try to avoid it, but, but if you stop and think about that, I, I, again, it's another question that I'll ask teams and leaders. When I first meet them is where does failure live around here?

[00:47:34] You know, or where, where is it safe place? Because fundamentally, if you haven't got a happy relationship with risk of failure, should we call it? Failure is a bit defeated. It says it's going to fail risk of failure. Maybe that sits a bit better for people. So, but if you haven't got an, a positive relationship with it, um, then you will never try anything new or different.

[00:47:54] So that's the first thing is sit and start to appraise your relationship with things that work.

[00:48:00] And because that is one thing with creativity, If there are no guarantees. Okay. Um, yeah. I can't tell you that you come up with three new ways to tackle the challenge you've got going on right now will yield better impact than the, than the autopilot way that you were going to do it based on how you did it before.

[00:48:20] Um, but I'm, I'm confident, more options will to this point options equal better decisions. That's what it is. So, so I think we've got a. First thing is what, so, so back to some practical things that might link to that, where is your safe to fail experimental zone? Shall we say, where's your, where's your disrupt?

[00:48:41] Where's your innovator lab? You know, big corporations have innovation labs where essentially budget is protected for people to fail loads. Um, uh, I, you know, I think in, in the tech world, in general, someone did a back of an envelope and it's about 81% of the time. They, uh, the tech world fails like that.

[00:48:57] That's brilliant that there is that positive relationship [00:49:00] with, um, with it. We don't need to be as formal as that, but what we do need to go is go. Where am I allowing myself to

try new things? Eddie Jones, the head coach of the England senior men's rugby team has given me the best answer to that I've ever had.

[00:49:14] Um, Mondays, he said immediately, as soon as I asked the question, didn't think about it. And his point is we shouldn't be failing on a Saturday, you know, game day. But if we're not, if we're not trying new stuff that we know might not work, if we're not experimenting on a Monday, the furthest point away from game day, there, there physically isn't another day that we could do it.

[00:49:34] So, and I, and I thought it was brilliant. So where's that, where's that safe to fail place for you? Maybe, you know, I did some work with, um, Google's cloud team. Our enterprise is quite long sales cycle with the commercial team and, uh, you know, for them, it's the start of the quarter. The start the quarter is when you should be rapidly trying to have meetings that, you know, aren't going to go a hundred percent.

[00:49:55] Right. But go with it, you know, there's some stuff there. And then. Be more deliberate then about back backend in your really important meetings where you might learn something from the stuff you tried and then you can apply it with more competence, you know, so you have to do that thinking there, but sit with that would be one, one thing to help us to kind of, um, build that better relationship with potential failure because you have to, um, and then other things very quickly, what can we do to build, to build the practice?

[00:50:23] So it might just be, um, what's, uh, back to, you know, there's a few things, one thing might be, how do I, um, who can I speak to this week? Who, who would give me a very different, what one challenge I've got going on this week and who kind of go and talk to who I know would give me a totally different perspective from my own echo chamber.

[00:50:43] Um, Uh, Matthew Syed the, um, the former Olympic, uh, Olympian. Now I think it's psychologist and this certainly an author of two brilliant books. He uses his language of the echo chamber that we're in, which is essentially all of the voices of the, of the deep expertise that look at the [00:51:00] challenge in the same, same way.

[00:51:01] So, you know, it might just be that weekly act of having a coffee with someone who might have a different perspective. There's a great quote, um, in Silicon valley, which is wherever you work. The smartest people work somewhere else. And the point is, it's a reference to the fact that actually it's, someone's naivety or lack of emotion and emotional connection to the challenge, the actual challenge you're working on that will allow them to see things that you're missing.

[00:51:27] So how do we do that? That might be one practice act. What could be an another practice, um, uh, act, you know, habit to think about this, give it a go. But the important thing about it is it doesn't need to be, it shouldn't be anywhere near, as long as your to-do list. In fact, my thing would be what's the word just habits.

[00:51:45] Think about list. It's only ever got one thing on it. That one thing should change regularly, but just one thing on it, because it it'll just prompt you just to think about it while you're having a coffee last year, it'll just become part of your natural, your natural act, um, and [00:52:00] really value time. Like the quicker you can seed.

[00:52:04] Stuffed into your conscious brain and then forget about it. Your subconscious will work on it when you're pushing the kids on the swings, when you're making dinner, when you're doing the, the vacuum in. Um, and then all you actually then need is the brilliance of your smartphone, which is, uh, the ability to capture a note and just keep it in there and then you'll come back to it later.

[00:52:24] So, you know, there's a couple of things and I could, that could go on as a few things that we could,

[00:52:29] **Beth Stallwood:** oh, wait. I also think we could probably spend a whole day. He couldn't wait on this, given all of the different things you could do, but those are, I think really great examples that, that time putting it in your brain and then letting your brain work out.

[00:52:40] I love the idea, get it in there quickly and, and, and see what happens. I'm old school. So I actually leave little notebooks around the house that I write things down in. Versus the smartphone. I probably should go for the smartphone. I have one of those as well, but you know, just,

[00:52:57] **Kirk Vallis:** I'm actually just trying to get people to break because [00:53:00] yes, I know your note book is better.

[00:53:01] There's something ironic about calling it a smartphone isn't there, you know, because actually the digital distractions that it causes for us that stops our ability to think. Um, and so on, um, uh, are anything but smart, although it does a lot of other amazing things that we, um, that have changed our lives.

[00:53:18] But, but yeah, listen, if you can a good old analog. You know, a notebook is always, is always powerful

[00:53:26] **Beth Stallwood:** and I'm just really reflecting back on how clear Eddie Jones was about where the space to fail is and how we could interpret that in our own worlds for us individually, or maybe for our teams, if we're leading teams around, where is that space?

[00:53:39] And there will be space, you just might have to think about it and understand your own cycles, your own rhythms, your own ways of working as to where within that. It makes sense for you. So totally get that. Um, I am not going to move on if you're okay. Cut to our quick fire questions, right? Let's go for it.

[00:53:58] So question number one [00:54:00] is, and this is a really personal one Kirk. So go with it. What are ways for you guaranteed to bring you a bit of work joy?

[00:54:09] **Kirk Vallis:** Connecting it back to the benefit to my family. So that might sound a little bit, um, uh, uh, fickle or superficial, but this, you know, we all talk about driven by a purpose, but my purpose is to, to work hard, to give my family the best that they can have, you know, and things like that.

[00:54:36] So, so whenever I'm able to link and important stuff to what that might mean to just my me being able to celebrate my family or what that might mean, even just basic stuff like pay, you know, and stuff like that, all of those things. So, so that for me, anything I can do to connect it back to helping me and my family have nice things and maybe do nice stuff.

[00:54:58] **Beth Stallwood:** Love that. And [00:55:00] that's just a perfect description. What I was talking about before about the fact that work and home are so connected, we can't disconnect them. They are part of one of the, each other. Right. So I feel like,

[00:55:09] **Kirk Vallis:** I feel like I'm disappointing, you're probably expecting me to say something far more profound about the impact that we're having on the world and the risk that, but listen, that's, that's the reality.

[00:55:18] Listen, I, you know, I work hard to help kind of give my kids the best that I, I possibly can and there's limits to that regardless, but, you know, it's um, so, and, and along when I was 20, my. My first job, my boss, and I thought she was a bit out there, but she, she, she told me to have a dream account. She opened up a dream account for me.

[00:55:38] I mean, when was this? Um, and she said, what's the thing you wanted. And it was, uh, you know, was 20. I was a Porsche. And, uh, and she said, uh, and she was like, and she would just put in small amounts of money into this bank account. And she let me take with me when I left the other company. And the point was, it was just something that would connect.

[00:55:55] It was a token thing that started to just create a habit in my mind of connecting it to, uh, [00:56:00] to some, you know, to the benefit that I get from going that extra mile. You know, not just for the people that I'm helping, but actually for myself as well.

[00:56:07] **Beth Stallwood:** Yeah, love that. And I think when you think about it, so many people are working to support their family.

[00:56:14] That's the reason that they get up and go to bed. Not everyone has a loftier purpose in their job. Not everyone can, not. Everyone wants to, some people want to go to work, do a really great job so that they can pay the bill so that they can look after their kids. And that's, I think one of the most important things in life and work is to remember that there is that stuff.

[00:56:33] Normal. Um, what book are you currently reading or one that you would recommend to our readers? Oh, I got,

[00:56:39] **Kirk Vallis:** um, I got a started reading, literally like two pages in to a book called Loon Shots. So, um, there's a Google reference, Google expression called loonshots, which some of you might be familiar with. And, um, um, which is all about sort of, you know, big factors, big audacious thinking, and then reigning it in a Google.

[00:56:59] We talk about Ted X thinking, you know, which is, which is actually about blowing up your, creating such an extreme articulation of your challenge, that your brain is forced to think about it differently, but actually the ideas don't need to be extreme. You're just in a, your brain is just making fresh connections, this book by, um, and I'm going to pronounce the names terribly Saffy Bahcall, um, is actually just a brilliant sort of journals, some of the most crazy audacious ideas out there, ideas that change the world.

[00:57:32] So, um, kind of linked back to one of the first things we were, we were talking about as well, moonshots, crazy. And it is

[00:57:39] **Beth Stallwood:** I'm going to order that one right now,

[00:57:42] **Kirk Vallis:** the crazy ideas that win wars, cure diseases and transform, transform industries.

[00:57:48] **Beth Stallwood:** It sounds amazing. I'd love to read that. And real stories of actually at working is good to hear, right?

[00:57:55] Question three for you. What's the best or most useful piece of advice that someone's given you, that you always come back to.

[00:58:04] **Kirk Vallis:** Um, it was, so again, it links to stuff we've talked about today. Um, uh, and I'm sure I'm going to kick myself when we get off this call and I'll remember saying callous, but, uh, be happy, be productive.

[00:58:17] So a former boss of mine, a guy called Nick Hewitt when I worked in radio, I think he, I think he now works at the Guardian, um, but a brilliant leader, a brilliant manager. And actually it was an expression from, I forgotten the lady's name, but it was, she was former CEO of Go Airlines. If you remember those that, that, that they sold themselves to BA so he kind of like just took that expression with pride and would always say, it's basically, you know, if you're not happy in what you do, go and do something else like that, that that's the fundamental of it because I don't think Nick quite again, I don't think he quite knew the science that was under that was underpinning. It, it was, he was coming at it from [00:59:00] a much more about a, just a, a wellbeing, mental wellbeing and a happiness, um, uh, situation. But again, actually it stuck with me because I always go back to it though. There was more in that than what he probably intended back to this thing around the science be, you know, be happy, be productive, you'll get good stuff.

[00:59:16] So there you go.

[00:59:17] **Beth Stallwood:** And it, I find it's so much easier to be productive if you're happy,

[00:59:23] actually much easier to be happy when you're being productive. When you're not getting stuff done, it can actually be quite miserable. Can't it? So it's a reciprocal thing I feel. Yeah. Um, okay. Question. Um, so turning this around to your advice now, um, I would love you to share one thing. One tip that's really easy.

[00:59:43] The people who go and do after listening to this, like do it straight away. Don't need any equipment. Don't need any like massive things to make it happen that they could do to go and get a bit more work joy in their lives.

[00:59:55] **Kirk Vallis:** Go for a walk. Just go, go from an or, [01:00:00] or get outside fresh it, and then natural, like fresh it fresh out.

[01:00:03] So, so you know that there may be people listening to this where, um, uh, you know, going for a walk is, is, is harder for them for whatever reason. Um, but if you can get outside and go for a walk, um, and, and, and then if you want a bit more on it, Don't just go for a walk with one thing in your head that you want to think about.

[01:00:22] Ah, you know, I've got this meeting coming up this afternoon. How might I make that a bit more interesting? How can I have a bit more, whatever it is, but yeah, if there's one thing, just, just build it in physical motion, you know, natural light, fresh air, physical motion, all these things help us

to, um, to engage the brain, state the frequency that helps us to start to relax and make fresh connections between this stuff we booked going on.

[01:00:43] So, and even if you kind of feel like back to your point best, you know, sometimes quite hard to force it, but what, but then don't force it, just go for a walk. And I guarantee, especially if you don't take your phone, you will start to think about some stuff and so on. And so just use it more as a technique, [01:01:00] I coach leaders and some of them do this.

[01:01:02] Right. And they go, yeah, you know, I'm really good. I guess I step away from a desk and I'll go on, I'll go to the gym for half an hour. I'll go for a quick run or whatever, and then I'll get into look. And then I look at that calendar. And I've just marked it as private do not disturb. I'm like, you need to be celebrating that.

[01:01:17] So again, if you do that, make sure your role model in it, right. Because that's what we need to be doing. You know, there's a brilliant expression. I heard last year at a conference future of learning conference, which I've stolen with pride busy is the new stupid. Right. And there is just this. And again, the science is that if you, if you think about it hard enough, the more you just at your desk wracking your brain, trying to think through some, some stuff that ain't gonna happen.

[01:01:42] So step away, go for a walk, give yourself an hour and just, just, just give your brain a bit of time to do it's brilliant stuff.

[01:01:49] **Beth Stallwood:** And almost everyone can make that happen at some point in their week on there. Even if it's once a week, it's just build the habit and see how it goes for you. Love it. Final [01:02:00] question from me, and this is, should be an easy one for us.

[01:02:02] Uh, where can people find out more about you if they're interested in your work? I know you work at Google, but also many other projects. Um, just so maybe where they can get in touch with you. If they've got questions.

[01:02:13] **Kirk Vallis:** Yeah. So, well, listen, I'll give, um, um, if it's okay, I'll give my email address. That's always a good one.

[01:02:17] kirkvallis@gmail.com is always good. I'm not really on social media. I mean, you can follow me on LinkedIn, um, and you can connect with me there. That's always great. Um, I'm really sorry to anyone that's ever connected with me or followed me on Twitter or Instagram or something.

[01:02:39] I just it's too much. It would, that would make me a busy fool. Right. I know I'll change that – I don't see the value of it, but, um, but apologies if you're looking for that, but yeah, please listen, reach out. To the, to, to the point on the, I'm always up for curious conversations to kick about [01:03:00] stuff with people who look at the world very differently to

[01:03:05] **Beth Stallwood:** brilliant.

[01:03:06] Um, thank you for coming along today and joining me on the walk joy job. It's been fantastic. I think we could talk for another three or four hours a day,

[01:03:19] so thank you and have a great rest of the week and the weekend. And hopefully we might speak to you again soon.

[01:03:25] **Kirk Vallis:** Thank you very much cheers Beth!

[01:03:29] **Beth Stallwood:** Thank you for listening to the work joy jam. I think Kirk has such a great way of thinking about everyday creativity, about some of the things that you can do.

[01:03:38] To bring some creativity, to bring some options, to bring some thinking and different thinking, different perspectives into your world. I really liked this quote from John Clees from Fawlty Towers is that you can't make mistakes while you're being creative. What interesting thought is that being creative in itself is somewhere where you cannot make mistakes.

[01:03:57] And I think for me, the other thing I'm really taking [01:04:00] away is this idea of having a to do list that only has one thing on it. And I don't know about you all of your listeners, but my to do list usually have way too many things on them that are impossible to achieve in a day. Yeah. Having one thing on, it's just thinking, just have it there to prompt yourself.

[01:04:19] If you think about while you're having a coffee could be a really great way of making sure that we're allowing our subconscious brain to actually work on the things that needs to work on and provide us with solutions and the time that we need them. Thank you all for listening today. Um, I hope you enjoyed it.

[01:04:35] Do let us know your feedback. You can tag us on Instagram at @createworkjoy and tell us what you're doing as a result of this podcast. We'd love to see that. Um, and we would love to hear who else you might want to hear from. So do you get in touch and let us know? Thanks very much.
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