



THE PODCAST

S1: E3 - Rimla Akthar | The Joy of Volunteering

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[00:00:00] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:00:00] Hello and welcome to the Work Joy Jam podcast. In this episode, I am joined by the fantastic Rimla Akthar, Rimla is an incredible speaker, she's an amazing advisor and she works a lot in the sporting world, but that's not where she started. And I think Rimla's experience is a great one for us to think about where we started in our career isn't always where we end up and how, when we focus on spending some time on volunteering in our passion areas and finding space to do that within our lives, it can actually become something that becomes a career, even when that's not expected. I think there's something great in Rimla's thinking around this idea, that to trust the process, to that you're going through things for a reason, even when things are tough and that there's always something to be learned from everything that you're going through.

I hope you enjoy this conversation. I know I did. I took a lot from it and I will come back at the end and think about what are the actions I'm going to take from it. Hope you enjoy.

Hello and welcome to the Work Joy Jam. This week, I am joined by Rimla, who is a fantastic person with such great insight into the world of work and sport and volunteering. And I'm really, really excited to have this conversation. So before we get going with all my questions, I would love to hand over to you and for you to introduce yourself, Tell our audience a bit about your story and what got you to where you are today.

Rimla Akhtar: [00:02:17] Hi, Beth thanks for having me on and hi everyone. I'm sure. I, uh, just to tell you about where I am right now, I work in the sports industry, um, as a sort of, I have a portfolio sort of non-executive roles but also, uh, of away from that, I work quite a lot on governance and leadership, what good governance and good leadership, uh, can look like for our industry, what it should look like, and then trying to drive some of those standards, uh, across the industry.

[00:02:47] So, uh, that can be anything from a diversity and inclusion angle to a general sort of governance, uh, angle and, and kind of the people that you're getting around the table and how you. How, how you put [00:03:00] a group together really to, to, to, to, uh, to govern your organization. Um, so that's a little bit about what I'm doing now.

[00:03:07] Um, I absolutely love sports and have done from a young age. So it was no surprise really that I ended up doing what I'm doing today. Um, and, um, although probably not planned, I would say so I started off after studying science at, uh, at university, I went off to be a VC, worked in

finance, got my charts, accountancy qualification, and then somehow ended up back in sport because it does drag you back in. That's what your passions do. So yeah, I've, uh, you know, been in this space probably for the last. I would say in, in a sort of job role focused rather than the voluntary capacity I've been in this space for about the last five to six years since I joined first, the FA council as a football associations counselor, back in 2014 and then sort of more recently to con roles as non-executive director at sports ground safety authority and then more recently last year at rugby league, the RFL, which has been really amazing to join. Um, so yeah, so as you can tell hands in a few different pots, but, um, all things that, that come back to sports and governance and leadership, so that's what I do, um, in terms of, I guess what my philosophy is and, um, you know, how I really focus in terms of my work and what I choose to do for work. Um, it comes back to the idea of intentions and purpose. So those two things, the first thing is first and foremost, the idea of paying attention to your intention.

[00:04:50] Um, and then whatever flows from that is bound to be good. So, um, obviously as a person of faith, you know, um, I draw a lot of my inspiration and [00:05:00] my focus from my faith. Um, and we have a saying to have, uh, you know, to work on as the Arabic word, but what it effectively means if you translated it, the best word is probably trust.

[00:05:11] So to have to trust in God and to trust in what's going to happen. So you tie the camel, then you need the outcome in God's hands. So, you know, that they're the best of hands, so that's kind of from my faith. Um, and then there's the idea of, you know, all of your actions start with the intention. So, so for me, my philosophy comes from that.

Why am I doing what I'm doing? people have said it as well. You know, why what's the why part and what's your reason, what's your purpose? Um, and I think it quite links quite well to another concept that, um, that is out there that, I came across a few years back and it's I think I'm pronouncing this properly it's a Japanese word ikigai yeah so the reason, a reason for being or reasons, um, for, for existing, I guess, and then how you are. [00:06:00] Um, and then that's really, um, I guess in summary that when I saw the diagram and I said, So that concept, I thought that's, that's really where I'm at, you know, in terms of my work and my life.

[00:06:11] Um, everything that I do is, is kind of in that center, uh, of that Venn diagram and, um, um, I'm just really privileged to be doing what I'm doing, I guess.

[Beth Stallwood: [00:06:23] Great. And it's really interesting that, and I mean, maybe we'll go back in time a little bit. Obviously you had a career in the corporate world at PWC, um, chartered accountancy and that kind of world.

[00:06:33] And one of the things you said that I'm really interested in that sport kind of draws you back in and drew you back into your passion, right? And how did you first really get involved into sport? And then how have you managed to move away from being in the corporate world to being, you know, an advisor, to being a non-executive director.

[00:06:51] And, and how did you balance that stuff with work and making it happen?

Rimla Akhtar: [00:06:55] Yeah. So I, you know, as I said earlier on the of trust, right? So trust [00:07:00] the process. If that's how you, if, you know, if you're somebody that isn't on faith and you

can always think about things like trust, trust the process, right. And you're going through things for a reason, and there's always something to learn from it.

[00:07:10] And I feel like my life's been really a story in that. So growing up, um, I got into sports as a young girl because you know, my mom was sports president back at school every year. And her mom was a basketball player and her father was Hockey player, her grandfather it's in the blood and my brothers two older brothers as well, the only girl, you know, it was bound to happen. I'd get left out otherwise. So it was, that's how, that's how I really got into sport, honestly, um, playing with my brothers in the back garden or in the. The the grounds in front of a home or whatever. Um, and, uh, it's, it's always been a huge part of me because I grew up in the reality of the situation is I grew up in, in a, in a, in a racist kind of environment, racist Britain in the eighties and nineties.

[00:07:58] Um, and then, uh, and an Islamophobic environments that, of coming into this. Late nineties into the two thousands. I started to feel that, that my faith was a reason for, um, hatred coming my way. And, um, sports was this space where I felt safe. I felt like nobody cared about my identity. The fact that I'm a girl or, or an Asian girl or a Muslim girl, it was just, um, how, how well I played on the pitch or whatever the field of play might've been.

[00:08:26] And, um, you know, I happen to be good. I happen to be good are a few different sports, that really helped me to find myself. I clung on to sport for dear life growing up because of that, because of that sense of I'm accepted, um, I'm accepted in this space, um, And, and that really, I carried with that with me, my whole life, whether I went to PWC or whether I was at a university, what I was focused on, my studies, it gave me a way to, um, be [00:09:00] ambitious. It gave me a way to be confident. It helped me to, um, really focus on what my goals were because that's what sport does for you. Um, but growing up, you know, Women full stop, but women like me certainly, um, you know, could not have considered a full-time career in sport. And so I didn't really ever think that I could be in the sports space.

[00:09:23] I didn't think I could be a player, an athlete. Certainly didn't think about administration side of things that I'm doing now. Um, but yeah, so, so at PWC, when I joined PWC, um, after graduating, um, I also became chair of an organization called the Muslim Women in Sport Foundation. And, um, that was sort of me being dragged back into sport after I sort of said, um, you know, that, um, I'm kind of going to get my boots as it were.

I just played for the British Muslim women's football team, captain them. Um, and I was like, okay, I'm focused on my career now [00:10:00] it's as if I caught compartmentalize and said right now, it's time to focus on the real life, right. The real, the work stuff, uh, in the city. Um, and I sort of carried on playing sports with, for fun, but it was, it was, um, less competitive, um, and, uh, ended up being asked to lead the organization after I put together a grassroots strategy from them. And that's really where the journey on the sports side starts voluntarily. Um, I still look back at it and think I was effectively doing two jobs and anyone that knows the city life and PWC knows how crazy that is. So I do look back at it and think how the heck did I do that?

[00:10:37] Um, but, um, I did, and you know, there came a time. Back in sort of 2012, 2013, where I'd taken a sabbatical from PWC. Um, and just in time for myself and I had to think about now, what is it that I want to do? Do I want to go back to the city life or do I want to make all the sports stuff that [00:11:00] I do voluntarily my work.

[00:11:03] Um, and I chose the latter and I, and to be honest, Beth, I'm so happy. I didn't that I haven't looked back since.

Beth Stallwood: [00:11:10] Brilliant. And so interestingly, and let's talk about this for a minute, cause I think there's a lot of joy to be found in volunteering. Obviously there's also a lot of work involved in volunteering, so, but, um, you know, from work joy, we define work as anything from, you know, the job that you're paid for to volunteering to the annoying adulting stuff that you have to do in the household or that you have to do to kind of, you know, live your life as you can.

[00:11:33] So, you know, volunteering is definitely work and it sometimes comes alongside your other work. How did, the volunteering experience help you in kind of give you some joy and, and help you define what you wanted to do in the future.

Rimla Akhtar: [00:11:46] Yeah. I mean, the volunteering work, like you say it is, it is work, and it takes up probably more of your energy because.

[00:11:54] You tend to volunteer for causes or for organizations that you really feel [00:12:00] passionate about, or you feel close to in some way, whether that's through a connection, you know, a friend or family members asked you to get involved, or whether it's something that you really believe in, And I think that takes a lot of emotional toll, not just, um, physical toll in terms of, um, the amount of energy that's expended.

[00:12:17] It's probably more because there's so much more emotional kind of connection to what it is you're doing. Um, but it comes back to again, um, for me, uh, about your intention. So it's being really self-aware yes. About what you can possibly do potentially do and how much energy you can give and not just, you know, your work life in terms of what you can get paid for, um, but also your work life in terms of what, what the world needs and what you love and what you're good at. So, for me, it comes back to that point that I was saying of your own, about your intention. And it all begins from there because the desire or the need to control something can be really [00:13:00] destructive and it can actually remove all joy.

[00:13:02] Um, but if you can look at it, what, um, what it is you want to do as well as what you can do, and you can enjoy the journey, uh, when it does get rough, when it gets tough, when those hours are really, you know, you're clocking them in at high levels, you know, your intention, if it's in, if it's sincere, it will get you through.

[00:13:20] Um, and I, whilst I said sort of joking earlier on. I don't know how I made it through. I think what helped me make it through was the fact that I had everything in that sort of model of ikigai had everything other than on being paid for it. And to me, um, you know, that's the thing, everything happens for a reason.

[00:13:42] It was, it was all my, um, personal experiences of, of sports. It was all my business experience of, of having studied, sort of management and, and chartered accountancy. It was also me seeing the power of sport and that the world needs sports, um, kind of coming together [00:14:00] into this space of this really means something.

[00:14:03] This means something, it gives me a purpose. It's a purpose, um, that I kind of knew was there. Without really knowing it was there subconsciously and it came to the surface when, you

know, the opportunity to be in sports administration and lead a charity. Um, like the Muslim Women's Sport Foundation actually came up.

[00:14:24] That was then my opportunity to bring all of these things together. Um, so, so I do think that it's, you know, all of those things rolled in one it's that lesson again, once more around intention and what's your purpose? Why are you doing this?

Beth Stallwood: [00:14:39] Yeah. And, and, and taking that opportunity. So sometimes we see things out there that might link with our purpose that actually intention wise, like totally would fulfill us or give us the things that we're really looking for.

[00:14:52] But sometimes we don't take that opportunity or we think actually we can't do that, or we can't make it happen. And obviously you were in that full-time [00:15:00] full well. More than full-time full speed job, but we're able to see that maybe see the long-term opportunity and doing something that really did link with your deeper purpose.

Rimla Akhtar: [00:15:11] Yeah. And, and I think, you know, there's one thing, um, that, that I look back at there was that time I had the sabbatical. Right. So I decided to take some time away from PWC away from work. I had personal reasons for doing that as well. I'm now a carer as well, so there's, there were reasons for me to step away and sort of take some time for me as well and onto the person that I care for.

[00:15:33] Um, but actually that, that moment, that time to myself, and I'm quite a reflective person and I'd like to think quite self-aware as well. Um, and, and I think that played a huge role in terms of, um, of that and for me, you know, that time gave me the opportunity to realize, um, that whilst having joy in your work is hugely important and, and having work is hugely important, obviously, um, not making work your life or how you define yourself.

[00:16:07] Um, you know, I think that is that's really important. And I got that during that time, you know, it doesn't mean that you're not interested. It doesn't mean that you're not gonna, you're not getting joy from your work. It doesn't mean anything like that. It means that you have some perspective. Um, and you can ask yourself, who am I and who am I, if I'm not doing the work that I'm doing?

[00:16:30] Um, so I think that time actually gave me that space to, to do that and think about. What it is I want to do. And I remember I had, um, a mentor there who's who's ex he's ex PWC partner ex partner there, uh, who had just started seeing for mentoring. And when I told him I'd decided to, for the give up PWC, you know, sabbatical turns into I've now quit.

[00:16:56] Um, and I'm just gonna focus on my volunteering work. [00:17:00] Um, well, I was told I was ruining my career. Um, and, and he, wasn't the only one, you know, other people while I was being crazy or stopped with this, you know, greater purpose stuff. Um, you know, you've got to make your money and you'll do that in the city.

[00:17:13] You won't do that, doing this other stuff. Um, and, and it, I think that space allowed me to have that courage in my, my own conviction and know, I know myself, nobody knows you better than you know yourself. Um, and so I had to find that perspective and I then. Took that perspective and I really questioned what it is I want to do.

[00:17:37] And how do I make sure that I don't define myself by what I do. I define myself by who I am, um, first and foremost. So, so it's a real process and there will be people who will potentially try and take you off track, but it's for you to know yourself first and foremost, to know whether you can go down a certain pathway and go down at quite steadfastly.

Beth Stallwood: [00:18:02] And really commit to it.

Rimla Akhtar: [00:18:04] Yeah. Oh, a hundred percent.

Yeah, you reminded me when you were saying it was a quote from a book by Glennon Doyle called *Untamed*, which is a favorite of mine recently. And it says this life is mine alone, so I have stopped asking people for directions to places they've never been.

[00:18:21] Yeah. Yeah. Right.

And that for me is a really great quote. And your, your whole story there about people doubting you or saying you're going to ruin something, but that's in their mind versus in your own journey. And it must've been quite hard at that time to make that decision, because it is a decision out of a well-trodden path of this is what you do.

[00:18:41] This is the process. This is how you progress. This is your career and nice box. This is the money angle that must've been quite hard to do that. And to stick to that decision.

Rimla Akhtar: [00:18:51] Well, Beth, my mom's always said from a young age, I'm very stubborn. She loves me and she loves but she's always said that. So I think part of me, it's, it's a mentality in terms of, um, I feel like, uh, she, I mean, she jokes when she says that, but it's, um, it's, it's something that actually a coach and executive coach once said to me is that I have clarity.

[00:19:15] Um, and I think that clarity comes from. Like I say, giving yourself time and knowing who you are first and foremost. Um, I don't think I've discovered everything about me, but that really does help. And so when someone, I really like the quote that you use, but at the same time, I would say this, that when I was making those decisions, it wasn't me deciding for myself on my own what it, what it was I was going to do.

[00:19:38] And whether I was going down the right path, you know, I had my brothers, I had my mother around me and I run things past them. But the difference is the partner was someone who. Um, you know, his whole life had been dedicated to making it to the top of PWC and, um, you know, retiring as a partner there. Um, and that was all he knew, but my family knew me.

[00:19:58] Um, and they knew [00:20:00] what makes me tick. They knew, and they still know what, what I love. Um, they know when I'm taking on too much or when I'm not taking on the things that I don't enjoy, you know, and that I, that I enjoy. Um, and too, it depends on who you go to for that counsel and, um, surrounding yourself with people who are.

[00:20:19] Well-intentioned people that know you and know what makes you happy and want your happiness. That makes a huge difference. Um, so having that support network around them, the people who work in the sort of the non-executive space, or even the executive leadership space, having that support network around you is massive.

Um, and I'm really, really blessed to have that.

Beth Stallwood: [00:20:41] Yeah, I always call it your squad. It's like, who are the people you go to? Who know you well enough, you understand you who know what, you know, the path might look like for you as an individual versus the one that everyone expects and what does bring you joy and what doesn't and how might you make that happen and, and using those people in your squad as a great way of helping to guide, but being also driven by your own desires and what you're really looking for versus what everyone else thinks for them, for themselves and their world.

Rimla Akhtar: [00:21:11] Yeah, exactly. Um, and I think, you know, the, these are things you have to constantly consider. Um, whatever it is you're doing, whether it's volunteer stuff or whether it's paid work, um, that's an element of, of your life and the reality of life. You know, you need to get paid for what you're doing, but, but whatever it is, you are doing it all comes back to that.

[00:21:32] Um, and then for me, like I say, it comes back to that purpose and that intention, ultimately, if you take it all the way back to the beginning, who am I? And what is it I'm doing? Why am I doing it? Um, that if you, if you do that, I feel like you will be really clear. You'll have the clarity as well.

Beth Stallwood: [00:21:51] And I think it's really interesting on your journey that you took that a bit of time out to really think about that, obviously with other things going on as well.

Um, [00:22:00] is that it's very, very easy to get stuck in the zone of being busy at work and not giving yourself the time and putting yourself and your thoughts and what you want to do and your career and all of those kinds of questions at the bottom of your, to do list versus somewhere where it can, um, really make a difference.

[00:22:16] And you can spend that time because although these questions sound easy, cause they're nice little short, simple questions. It takes a lot of thinking to really understand who you are and what you're going to get do and why you're doing it. It's not a, it's not a simple answer to those questions.

Rimla Akhtar: [00:22:30] No. And I think, um, part of it is because of the pace at which the world goes, part of it is because we come up with all sorts of crises.

[00:22:38] Like right now we have a pandemic that nobody was expecting. Um, and that has a massive impact in terms of you know, just your day-to-day life, whether it's at home or whether it's at work everything's impacted and, and, you know, there are outside forces that impact that, but actually just even finding five minutes in your day to remind yourself, or to give yourself that space to just contemplate.

[00:23:04] Um, I think it's one of the things that people really struggle with actually is not having the noise. Um, or not having a distraction, whether it's from our phones or whether it's from work or whether it's home-based, you know, just actually having even five minutes to think about all of that has a massive impact, not in, just in terms of your energies and your joy in life generally.

[00:23:25] Um, to actually stop and think, um, but actually just reminding you of where it is you're trying to go in your life. Um, I, you know, I found even, you know, working in the city, everything was

about racing, it was a fast pace of life. It was long hours. It was, um, a healthy competition with your peers. Um, you know, you weren't sort of trying to jump over each other to get to the top, but, but there was a clear kind of, um, competitiveness in terms of ratings and things like that with your peers, or you're trying to race to get the best, the best rating every year. But, but that, in some ways that just reduces your ability to be attentive. Um, and I think to the time when I was at PWC, I absolutely loved it. I loved the clients I worked with. I love the people. I work with the teams that I lead.

[00:24:17] Um, but I look back at it now and I go, I wouldn't want to go back into that because, um, you know, that kind of sense of being aware of myself, what makes me happy. Um, and when to pull myself out of something, actually, importantly, to step back. Um, that wouldn't have come. I don't think if I'd stayed within that environment, because it was a very clear pathway and you go in one direction, it's a linear thing.

[00:24:43] It's and if you look at my career in life, it's been anything but linear, I've gone from one side of the picture to the other and then back over. And it's just, you know, like I say, it's, it's that sense of just slowing down, really understanding who you are and what you want in [00:25:00] life. Um, and that makes, that makes a huge difference.

[00:25:03] So how you then see life and the perspective that you have.

[00:25:07] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:25:07] Definitely. And I love the idea that it doesn't have to be a big sabbatical from work where, you know, you don't have to go and hug trees and find out who you are and, and kind of do that thinking. But five minutes a day, just giving yourself some attention, just giving it, just giving it some focus and that can make a real difference.

[00:25:23] And I think we can all find five minutes a day. Yeah, I'm sure. Five minutes, you know, even if it's just, as you wake up before you go to bed or, you know, actually take five minutes for a lunch break and take a moment and consider these things, but that seems really achievable and work joy's all about making these things possible and achievable versus, you know, you have to go on a retreat for three months and find yourself is that you already know yourself.

[00:25:45] You just need to pay yourself some attention, maybe. Exactly. And

Rimla Akhtar: [00:25:48] it shouldn't take you having to go away for those three months to do, to give that to yourself. You know, it's like my mum's a counselor. And I'm constantly from a young age, she'd be asked us about, you know, how can you, how can you, um, Have anything left when your buckets just being full, filled and filled and it's filled it's full to the top and it's overflowing, um, and actually giving yourself that time, the five minutes, like I say, to start off with actually enables you to empty some of that, that inside of you.

[00:26:18] Um, and yeah, like I say, it just gives you so much more clarity and focus and, and I think that's something that I have now. I probably didn't have 10 years ago.

Beth Stallwood: [00:26:27] And it's giving yourself permission isn't it to give yourself that time because no one else is going to give you that time. You're going to have to find it for yourself.

Rimla Akhtar: [00:26:36] But isn't that the biggest thing, but do we, do we give ourselves permission for these things?

[00:26:39] You know, I, I, um, you know, even I struggle with even now, um, You know, giving, giving myself permission to say no to things. Um, does I actually, I don't think I can take this on, or actually, you know, I really struggled with that. Um, particularly at the start in terms of people that would ask me to speak at events or, um, you [00:27:00] know, all things that I'm really passionate about, they'd ask me to get involved with, but I am a human right.

[00:27:05] I'm limited in resource and actually giving yourself even permission to say yes, It's okay for me to not get involved with that, because then this FOMO as well, right. There's that fear of missing out as well that he just be on the other side. So it's partly about fashion, but partly about FOMO. And if I say no to this, will I miss out on, you know, this whole thing that's going to happen?

[00:27:24] And actually that's okay. Um, you know, I think so much of this life is about what we see other people do. And therefore, should we be doing that well, but we're all still looking that way round. I think we struggle sometimes to look in with, and face our real selves and what we want and give, giving ourselves permission.

[00:27:41] As you say to do that, I think it would just be an amazing experience for anyone to actually accept everything that they see in the mirror when they look within.

Beth Stallwood: [00:27:51] Yeah. I had a new one recently, which is JOMO, which is the opposite of FOMO and it's the joy of missing out. I love that. So I think we all often get FOMO, but JOMO is a new one and I quite like the idea of it.

Rimla Akhtar: [00:28:05] Absolutely. That's exactly what it's about.

Beth Stallwood: [00:28:09] Um, so a couple of things before we finish off, first of all, um, just dig into a little bit for me. I loved what you were saying about how sport kind of came the place where you felt accepted and kind of, I got the sense that you felt you really belonged and.

And is there anything that we can give advice wise around, um, you know, finding that place or space and it might not be sport for some people, it might be other things where you really feel like you belong and how that can really influence what you do in life.

Rimla Akhtar: [00:28:40] Yeah, I guess, um, for me personally, it was a case of looking back and saying, um, Looking back at what I'd gotten myself involved with.

[00:28:49] Then obviously we get, get ourselves involved with all sorts of things, either at work or outside of work at home. Um, and for me, sport was the thing that was the constant in my [00:29:00] life. So, um, you know, some people like to go running. I don't run for no reasons. I say that's awful English, but I don't run without reason and a purpose.

[00:29:09] I'm always about purpose. As I say, um, I can't just go out for a run, but I can play basketball all day long, um, and run up and down the court. So to give me a ball and I'll be there. So I know what makes me tick to down to that level. And I know what's going to give me joy and what's not going to, you know, and I'm not going to fight myself.

[00:29:29] Um, when it comes to things that I've don't enjoy. Um, and I think just to, to step back and consider. First of all the pace of life, the pace that you're going out, maybe slow down. If you need to, some people need to speed up, um, you know, look at the pace of your life and, and is it where you want it to be, look at where your passion lies.

[00:29:48] Um, and you'll know that because you'll remember looking back, you'll remember the moments that made you smile or whether it's on your face or whether it's from within. Um, and then look at what, what power you have in terms of, you [00:30:00] know, what's, what can you influence in your own life? Um, and what can you do right now?

[00:30:06] That will make a difference and make a change in your life. So I think, um, those kinds of things really help towards finding what it is that will give you that sense of belonging. Um, I think those things will automatically result in you realizing there might be three or four things that might not be one, um, That you want to try out for my mom, for example, it's artwork.

[00:30:31] She absolutely loves to paint and draw and do pottery and all this kind of stuff. Um, so it could be anything, but that will give you the fire or give you the energy. Um, and it will just bring you back to, I think, centering yourself.

Beth Stallwood: [00:30:47] Yeah. And I love that idea of like, if you don't enjoy something, not giving, you're not giving yourself, like beating yourself up about it.

[00:30:52] Like, there's so many things in their wellbeing, you know, go and do yoga. But if you don't like doing yoga, you're not going to find the joy in it and it's not going to help you. But if you do [00:31:00] like doing pottery or you do like doing sport, or I often say like playing the piano is my yoga. Cause I, and my meditation, because I cannot think about anything else because I'm so bad at it other than just focusing on it.

[00:31:10] So yeah. I mean, yeah. You get better with time apparently, but you know, it's been 30 years and I'm just not sure I'm getting any better yet, but, but, but I love it and I don't care that I'm not good at it because it's, it's just really kind of all consuming. So finding that, whatever it is that gives you that space.

[00:31:26] The thing or the team that makes you feel like you belong or wherever it is. And you've probably already found them, but you might not be investing enough time in them. You might not actually have done it for a while. You might not have focused your attention there and that, that time and space, and I like that some people need to sit down. Some people need to speed up whichever speed you're going at. Is it right for you right now? And kind of, how can you make that work? Yeah. Um, I have to finish off with some quick fire questions for you. If I can fire them at you, give us your, your gut feel, um, responses to these, right?

[00:31:56] So the first one is for you personally, what is always guaranteed to give you a little bit of work joy,

Rimla Akhtar: [00:32:04] um, anything that is sports related. It's going to make me happy.

Beth Stallwood: [00:32:10] Brilliant. So literally anything sports related, you will be there, um, happy getting into it. Um, what, what book are you currently reading?

Rimla Akhtar: [00:32:19] Um, so it's probably a less well known book called Reflections, um, by an author called Gai Eaton. Um, so I'm a reflective person, as I say. And, um, that's kind of reflecting on life and, and how the world works.

Beth Stallwood: [00:32:34] Brilliant. I might have to give that one a go question three. What is the best or most useful bit of advice that you've heard from someone that you always come back to?

Rimla Akhtar: [00:32:46] Oh gosh, there's been so many. I think the one I would choose, uh, is actually a quotes rather than, you know, me having met him in life. Um, but there's, uh, , sort of I think he was a 13th century, um, Muslim scholar and preacher called Mohammed Rumi and a lot of people might've heard of his poetry, but there's one particular part of a long poem that he's written and in there it says, is it true? He asked, you know, in terms of what you say, is it true? Is it necessary? Is it kind? Um, and I like to always come back to that.

Beth Stallwood: [00:33:21] Wow. That's such great advice, isn't it? And I've written that down and highlighted it to put on my wall somewhere. Cause I think that's a really great thing to consider.

[00:33:31] Is it true? Is it necessary and is it kind great, um, thinking about our audience now, what is one super practical bit of advice that you could give to our listeners? Something that they could go and do now do tomorrow do the next day that would really help them, um, with their own levels of work joy. Yeah,

Rimla Akhtar: [00:33:50] I think coming back to what I was just saying earlier about starting with just those five minutes, um, even one minute, if you can't do five, cause I know some people even struggle to give [00:34:00] themselves permission to have five.

[00:34:01] Um, so really think about your purpose and your intention, um, in those minutes. Um, it's not, it's not what you do every time you give yourself five minutes in a day, but it's, it's what you start off with and it's that reminds you of why am I doing what I'm doing? You know, make that your brand. Uh, your personal brand and your values will develop from there.

[00:34:19] And I think right now, um, that will really lift you above, um, not just where you are right now, personally, but also above other people around you because, um, values tend to do that.

Beth Stallwood: [00:34:32] Great. And, um, it's been fantastic talking to you and understanding your perspective and your journey and how, you know, volunteering can lead to a joyful life working where you really feel the passion.

[00:34:47] Where can people find out more about you or get in touch with you if they've got questions or interested to find out more?

Rimla Akhtar: [00:34:53] Um, well, I would say the best way. Um, and I say this with zero arrogance is just to Google me so you'll see all sorts of connections on there, but, um, when Rimla Consulting is, is, my business, social business, and I'd be more than happy to hear you in there.

[00:35:12] And I'm also on the usual social. So check me out.

Beth Stallwood: [00:35:16] Brilliant. Thank you very much for joining us. It's been fantastic to hear from you and have a great rest of the week.

Rimla Akhtar: [00:35:23] Thank you so much. It's been lovely to be on.

Beth Stallwood: [00:35:27] Thanks all for listening to my conversation there with Rimla, I was really inspired by some of her thinking and the one thing that's really stuck with me.

[00:35:37] Are the three questions, which is the advice she always comes back to, which was, is it true? Is it necessary? And is it kind, and to me, that's the message I'm taking away from this episode is if we all were to stop for a minute and ask ourselves those questions about our actions, about our intentions, about what we're [00:36:00] trying to do, I wonder if we'd all be in a slightly better place tomorrow than we were today.

[00:36:05] And. Three things, really simple things. Is it true? Is it necessary? Is it kind, I hope you enjoyed listening to this episode of the Work Joy Jam. Please do go and listen to other episodes. See which ones, um, give you some inspiration, give you some things to take away. We would love to hear from you about what actions you're taking and what you're doing to create and cultivate some Work Joy in your own lives.

[00:36:28] So do let us know we are on the Instagram at Create Work Joy tag us in something we would love to hear from you and also on LinkedIn at create wife joy as well. So do go and have a listen to some of the other episodes. And I look forward to speaking to you soon.