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### S3:E1 – Alison Jones | Write Brained

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[00:00:00] **Beth Stallwood:** Welcome to the Work Joy Jam podcast. I'm your host, Beth Stallwood, founder of Create Work Joy. I'm so excited today to introduce you to my conversation with Alison Jones. I was lucky enough to be introduced to Alison, probably about 18 months ago now via one of my amazing squad who said you need to talk to Alison and I totally did.

And Alison was actually one of the people who helped get work joy and Create Work Joy. As you know, it, including this podcast out of my head and into something that could actually be something, something real, something that has a purpose, something that is able to be out there with everyone. So the podcasts, the coaching program, the club, it's all partly to Alison's wonderful support, coaching and engagement with me.

So I really love our conversation. We're going to talk loads about writing and how writing can be an amazing tool for thinking and for your business and for yourself. One that can give you an immense amount of work joy. I had a great time having this conversation and I hope you do to, enjoy.

Welcome to the Work Joy Jam - I am very excited to be joined by the fantastic Alison Jones who has taught me so much in the last couple of years and I'm so pleased that she agreed to [00:02:00] come on the work joy jam. So Alison, and for people who don't know you, why don't you introduce yourself and tell people a little bit about how you got to where you are today?

[00:02:10] **Alison Jones:** Okay. Well, it's very lovely to be here, so thank you for inviting me, Beth. I'm Alison Jones. I am the director of Practical Inspiration Publishing, and I'm the host of the Extraordinary Business Book Club, which is a podcast, a community, a way of life.

[00:02:25] **Beth Stallwood:** Love it. And tell us a little bit about before you, in the world of your publishing company, which is amazing and your podcast, which I love because as you know, I'm a total book nerd and the community and everything that goes along with it. How did you come to be in this world of publishing and in the world of book and everything about writing?

[00:02:50] **Alison Jones:** So I've been in publishing all my life, really. Seriously, literally out of a university straight into writing, and then bookselling to sort of pay the bills so that the two pointy ends up publishing as I always say.

So it was a very good grounding. And then, I started as the assistant editor at Chambers in Edinburgh, and I was just sort of, yeah, with Oxford university press working on the Oxford Companions, and then I moved to, I had a brief stint at Reader's Digest, which was quite surreal. And I was working with Macmillan, Palgrave, McMillanBasingstoke for 14, 15, 14 years. And then in , ,



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2012, I was a director there. I was Director Of Innovation Strategy, so specialized, , I was an editor and then I kind of moved into big reference books. And of course when digital publishing happened, it was all about bringing those online.

So that, that was my focus. I took a diploma of computing and so on, and I was, you know, a pioneer of kind of our eBook platform. So that, that led naturally into innovation strategy and just being in the space of trying to negotiate, publishing and navigate [00:04:00] through the disruption of, of the sort of, yeah, it was fascinating. And then in 2012, as a Director, I discovered that we were moving to London in 2014 because we've been based in Basingstoke. I see there's two things going on. One was that I had fairly small children at the time and we were living in a lovely village in Hampshire. And I was like, do you know, I don't really want to live in London, never really have. And I've managed an entire career in publishing with 10 months in London. Publishing was very London centric or something it used to be, and then the other thing that was going on was I was like, you know, I just feel like we're on the wrong side of history here. I feel like. Asking people to pay for discrete units of content. It feels a bit last century. And I thought the book was dying, honestly, even though that kind of broke my heart.

So I made the decision then to jump and I, I retrained as a coach. I had two years, of course, cause I, I found that 2012 and the move wasn't happening in 2014. So I was very, very lucky. I had time to kind of process it all and think trained as a Coach decided I was going to leave publishing it become a business coach, a facilitator, a trainer, all the people that was working were my practice clients and when they found out I was a publisher all they wanted talking about was publishing a book... and I was like, oh, maybe the book's not quite as dead as I thought

I kind of came back into, but Practical Inspiration is what I call partnership publishing. It's like, do you know what publishing has changed? And, and it's a really, quite a miserable experience trying to eke out, you know, a viable business model off the back of assembling bits of content for money.

And if that's your only revenue stream, actually business books are such a powerful part of a business. And so let's do that. Let's, let's work together, you know, we've got the publishing expertise and I've obviously got a lot the business coaching expertise as well. And let's try and see how this book can be an investment for you as a, as a business [00:06:00] and will really make a return investment in the business, obviously the books that we want sell as many books as possible, but actually the return on investment is going to be in the business and let's make that work.

[00:06:11] **Beth Stallwood:** I love it. And you know, I'll share a bit for our audiences that Alison is one of the reasons why Work Joy exists at all?

And why the Work Joy Jam podcast exists very specifically because I went on one of Alison's incredible courses when I had this little germ of an idea about work joy. And I'm still, I would say at time of recording, I still haven't written the book, so I said out loud, I'm still writing the book I am in the process of making it happen.



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But actually, one of the things that came out of it was this idea about how to, create a business around them, how to create more than just a book, which is where I started from. And I remember very clearly being on a call I think it was, I've always wanted to do a podcast and you're like, you should do it.

And I went something like, oh, but the tech scares me, and then you're like, it's easy to do the tech stuff. And then I found out it was actually quite easy to do the tech stuff and put it off. We're now on nearly 40 episodes of the Work Joy Jam.

[00:07:17] **Alison Jones:** So glad cause we find so many reasons not to do things don't we but, you know, it really isn't that hard these days. And , you know, you say I haven't done the book yet, like, like it's a bad thing, and of course you do need to write the book. Yes. But you don't necessarily need to lock yourself in a room and write the book as quickly as possible. I think that the period when you are researching right. You know, you're out there in public as owning this, the concept and connecting with people and talking about the ideas that will become the book that is such a, a rich, fertile period. Don't rush through it. You know, you use every minute of it and you know, of course you need to write a book, but you don't need to speak.

It's not a race. You know, it's much [00:08:00] more about what that whole process can bring you. And so here you are doing the podcast, talking to the people, having the ideas and enriching ideas. It's great.

[00:08:07] **Beth Stallwood:** Yeah, and it is, it's amazing. I love it. So massive. Thank you first of all, for helping me get past my stupid hurdle, which was stupid because actually wants to start to doing it.

I was like, this is actually amazing and I love it and I would do it even if nobody listened to it because, I just love having conversations with fascinating people. You know, part of what brings me work joy. So what I wanted to do when you were coming on the podcast is to talk to you about writing and how I know that it's a really powerful tool for actually thinking and for your business and for all of those kinds of things and I was just really fascinated for you to share. Some of your work and how, I mean, I love your story. Like, you know, this epic career in publishing and then you're like, oh, that's not really what I want to be anymore. So I'll go and transfer to be a coach. And now actually I'm bringing all of this background in to bring it together into how do we do this for businesses and make it work and use your amazing coaching skills and all of those things.

They love it. I'm going to leave it open. I'm going to go. Where should we head down first? And we talk about writing.

[00:09:15] **Alison Jones:** She was talking about just how, just how ACE writing is. Even if you're not writing a book, should we talk about that?



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[00:09:19] **Beth Stallwood:** Because actually you don't have to write a book, do you to be a writer? You don't have to write a book to be a writer. That's one thing I keep telling myself as well, you can be a writer without writing a book. So tell me all about how ace writing is.

[00:09:32] **Alison Jones:** Writing is ace Beth, because. This is one of my most passionately held beliefs, , way I will, you know, you're gonna have to stop me at some point, cause I couldn't bang on about it forever, but I just, I, I discovered free writing fairly late in life.

In fact, it was a guest on the podcast, Honour Ross, that introduced me to it. And it was absolutely regulatory because particularly with business writing. So I'm not a creative writer particular though. I do do the poem and I wish I could share it if you're like, no, I won't. [00:10:00] , but you know, we're talking about business writing.

We're talking about stuff that you are writing for other people's consumption, you're writing to persuade or to convince what, to explain your reasoning. And it's all very much directed outwards and your internal sensor is on absolute full alert and you want to create a good impression and all that kind of stuff. All of which is necessary, but it's just, it's like the tip of the iceberg. And underneath that, there's the writing that you can do for yourself, which nobody seems to talk about or teach you about. So this is the messy, raw, exploratory stuff that you can do. And the way I do it, as you know, in, in, in Write Brained, which is, an online course that I run is to set yourself a timer and write, and for the first couple of minutes, you're writing absolute garbage but then suddenly you can find a connection or a hook or, or an insights, or, a thought that you had kind of bumping around the back of your head, but you haven't articulated yet. And the process of writing allows you to draw to capture it on the page. And, and then, so what you can do afterwards is basically bin this scrawling mess for spelling and, you know, grammatically grammatic, grammar free kind of, you know, whatever it is. But the point is you have got the bit of gold and then you can actually, you can take it on and do something with it.

And I don't know any other process that allows you to completely remove the internal sensor, because you're not even something like you're talking to someone else where you've got, you know, a little bit of sense of going on, because just, it's just the page in you. And it's kind of like, it's like a workshop for the mind. It's like a solo workshop, you know, and it just allows you to do that work, and you know, think out loud in a way that you can actually use, rather when you're thinking you tend to go around in [00:12:00] circles and you can only have one conscious thought in your mind at one time, but writing just allows you to unspool that and capture it down.

And I think it is absolute. I'm not going to bate about the bush. I think it's revelatory. I think it's transformational, everybody I've taught it to. Why don't they teach you this at school? So I think, you know, if you take one thing away from this podcast, just that set yourself a little prompt, you know?



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Oh, I'm really worried about this. And I, I think it's because it's that time for six minutes and just keep writing and see what comes out. It's such a lightweight, powerful tool and it's so little used.

[00:12:35] **Beth Stallwood:** I love it. And as you know, I really love the process of like the six minutes. Like they're short, sharp, actually, what can you get to and having done, I went through the Write Brained course I can talk from experience here is, what often happened with my head is it started a little bit structured because my brain is always like, how do I structure?

I think so, I reckon about 40% of my work is writing for other people, right? That's, that's part of what I do as part of the process. And it starts with that very kind of structured what thinking. And then when you let yourself go a little bit and you allow your brain to just, it's almost like you take out all the consciousness and something happens between your brain and your hand, and you suddenly realize what's going on and you suddenly have connections and I will tell you from the Write Brained course, there are a number, there are some Venn diagrams, there's a whole structure, there's words and sentences and amazing bits of content that I had never know when my brain before. And that's one of the things that I really love about it.

And I have to say, I am, I am a person who, if I'm going to write something, I tend to use a pen and paper and not type it because something different happens in my brain when I write with a pen, then it happens when I'm trying to type something out. I don't know if other people experienced that as well.

[00:13:56] **Alison Jones:** Well, I can tell you that they do not because I've asked everybody, but because there's [00:14:00] research on it, it is a different process. And also there's something as well about the provisional nature of writing it down that feels more freeing. It's more provisional, it's more, unfinished. And, and that is quite, I remember Barack Obama saying this, so we're in very good company. He says he always uses a...

[00:14:16] **Beth Stallwood:** Us and Barack!

[00:14:18] **Alison Jones:** I know us and Barack believe he says, if he's typing something, it, the, the, you know, the words on the screen, the correcting thing that it does, and the fact that it looks like any other document you might read gives it an air of completeness, of finality, of being done, which he doesn't want yet, because he's still at the early...and so it's a way of keeping yourself at that free-flowing early stage thinking and it's incredibly powerful.

[00:14:47] **Beth Stallwood:** So one of the things you said and mentioned that was around you know, set yourself a prompts, set yourself a question or something. What are some of the things that you could set yourself? Just thinking about the first time you've ever done it?



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What are some of the things you could do to help you get into that zone? Where you can really allow brain and pen to connect.

[00:15:09] **Alison Jones:** Yeah, absolutely. So in a sense, you don't need a prompt and if anybody's familiar with morning pages, that that's a really, Julia, Cameron's the artist's way, you know, morning pages is one of her practices and there's no prompt there.

You just, you get, you know, you sort of grope you out of bed in the morning and you sit down and just cough up your, your subconscious onto the page for three pages. And, and there's no problem. You just, you know, talking, on the paper and that's really powerful. But the way I do it, you don't have to do it first thing in the morning, you do it.

Any downtime you like. And I think six minutes is a great period of time. It used to be five, but I talked to Jenny Bolton who wrote Reflective Practice. And she said she uses six minutes because it takes a couple of minutes to, to get anything useful. And so by adding one minute on the end, which, you know, it's only one minute anybody can do that. You actually almost going to double your productive time. Really smart. Yeah. [00:16:00] So six minutes. I forgot where I was going with this now. Sorry, prompts. Yes. So in a sense of prompt can be anything and you have to hold it quite lightly, but sitting in front of a blank page is a bit of a killer, isn't it? Yeah.

So if you are, if you know what you want to write about, and since you probably don't need a prompt, just, just start, but a prompt gives you a toehold. It gives you just mixing my metaphors horribly here. It gives you a little sort of springboard to go off. And then at once you're off, you can leave it behind.

So your prompt might have been something like, I'm thinking about starting a podcast and I'm nervous. And I think it's because, and that's a kind of invitation for you to, to reflect on this and sort of think about it, but actually you might end up somewhere completely different. You might write anything. Well, actually it's not the podcast that's the problem is the fact that I'm not clear enough about how I'm positioning this. I don't know what title to promote that, and you're going upstream almost from that. And, and you're, you know, diagnosing the thing so you can make a prompt out of anything, but I think it kind of ellipsis, you know, ... to encourage you to write is really, really helpful. But you can also use questions. So one of the things that we do on the Write Brained course, as you know, Beth is, you know, one of the weeks is about inquiry. There's a big debate in the course, but how we say that I've stepped on inquiry, inquiry seems to annoy people too much

[00:17:25] **Beth Stallwood:** Inquiry with an "I" not enquiry.

[00:17:28] **Alison Jones:** Yes, yes. To me it sounds like a government inquiry, which is why I don't like it much. But the thing about inquiry is, is, is being almost more conscious of the questions that you



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ask, because we are so good at smuggling in assumptions and telling an accusation and defensiveness and an all kinds of unhelpful stuff into our questions.

But when you're talking to yourself, because you can back off with the defensiveness and the kind of, you know, trying to get your opinion across to someone else, and you can just ask honest open, [00:18:00] vulnerable questions. Yeah, because it's just you, and if you can't be honest between yourself and the pens, you got some serious issues going on.

And I think it's just about experimenting, but you know, giving yourself a prompt, just gets you out of the block because the first minute or so, a tough and you think it's not really going anywhere. You're not getting anything. And having somewhere to start off is a huge help.

[00:18:28] **Beth Stallwood:** Yeah. I definitely find that they're staring at a blank piece of paper for me is what is the worst, well one of the most gloomy things. It doesn't give me much joy to sit and stare at a piece of paper, whereas. Answering a question or thinking about something or just writing a few notes down feels like progress. Even if as, as you said before, what your rights, if that is absolutely rubbish and that you've got to throw it away later, but it feels like you're moving somewhere.

I'm always thinking that one step further feels better than stuck. Doesn't it? It feels like your opening something up.

[00:18:58] **Alison Jones:** It does. And I guess the other beautiful thing about prompts, particularly if they've been given to you by someone else, is that they start you somewhere different. Yeah. That can be hugely valuable because you you're so used to kind of running around in your own formulation of an idea or the tracks that you're not and if somebody gives you an external prompt. It starts you somewhere completely different that can jolt you into a new way of seeing a problem or a reframe or just approaching it from a different angle, which can be hugely helpful.

[00:19:28] **Beth Stallwood:** I remember two of the exercises on Write Brained, and I'm going to talk about that because I think other people will appreciate this is one of the things you asked us to do, which I loved, but as first I was like "What on earth is she talking about", and I was like, I'm just going to dive into, it was a, you know, pick a couple of objects that are near you.

And I was literally, I sat at my dining table about six o'clock in the morning and looking, thinking I'm going to do this before I start work. [00:20:00] And I was looking at a box of tissues and I was like seriously, how am I going to talk about what I do in relation to a box of tissues? And then suddenly, boom, I had a whole thing around how coaching is like holding space for people to be who they are.

And like it takes tissues out one at a time and understand and uncover. And I was like, maybe it was better than what I've just talked about it when I wrote it down. I actually thought it was quite good



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but I was like how on earth does that work, but your brain has this amazing capacity to connect the dots and find a way and find a solution.

And I would never have thought of that prompt before. And so that one was like, oh, I love this one. And then another one was like, I want you to do a Venn diagram. And I was like, oh, okay. And now that Venn diagram is definitely going in the book it's going in my course, it's going in all kinds of things from a very rough well it started off very rough but then I have to make it beautiful. Cause I can't stand the rough and ugly stuff in the final page. I would never have gone. I need to write a Venn diagram about this particular thing you said write a Venn diagram and I linked it back to the thing I needed a solution for. So there's that external prompting that somebody's giving you a different challenge to look at in a different way for me, even if you do have that moment and I'm sure other people have of er where am I going with that I haven't trusted you because I've been on courses any previous high. I trust you. I know that, you know what you're talking about, I'm just going to go with and then I'm like, oh, that's what it was all about.

[00:21:34] **Alison Jones:** And do you see one of the beautiful things about forced metaphors, is exactly what I was saying before about starting somewhere difference, which gives you a new angle on, on something, but it also builds your sense of confidence in your resourcefulness and your mental resourcefulness and I think that is hugely powerful. And I know quite a lot of, I mean, just being able to do that in itself is, is a great skill. Is it's [00:22:00] mental fitness. Isn't it. It's competent fitness but also many people like you've used event diagram, that's come out of it and you will be using it. Of course, you know, you're starting it up, but this is where it starts.

Other people found metaphors that they are using to explain that the way they approach a subject. And it's you don't, you never know whether it's going to be useful or not, but even the process of trying it out and, and building that skill of being able to think in a more flexible creative way. And that's what it's all about.

And yes, the last section of the course is all about visual thinking, because this is one of the great joys of doing all this stuff by hand is that you can segway between drawing it out and writing it out. And those two are really different mental modes and compliment each other so well.

[00:22:41] **Beth Stallwood:** Yeah. And I love that and I have to say for me, that was an unexpected moment in time say, oh, I get to get my post-it notes and pens out. Now, as you know, from working with me before the minute I've been asked to get my coloured pens and post-it notes, I am in my most happy...I don't just have to write, I can draw things and I can make it look pretty. And I can find it up a little bit as you can talk it out. I love that. I say, thank you. I spend my nights doing tarting stuff up. So yeah, I totally love it. And the different angles and things and what I'm thinking about how much relevance, all of these things and prompts and style have not just on your, for writing, but also on compensation and thinking, because one of the things you said there about that flexibility and creativity, and thinking about things differently, I don't know about you, but the people I work with, so many of them tell me, they literally say, I am not creative.





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And it's a big mental block there around, I am a kind of process person. I think this way, I am not creative with a very probably narrow definition of what creativity is really can open up your mind in a totally different way.

[00:23:52] **Alison Jones:** Yeah, absolutely. And I think, you know, people think being creative is drawing an oil, drawing, you can see how [00:24:00] embedded in the art world I am.

They think about producing work fit to be performed, you know, or put in a gallery or something. And that's not what we're talking about. We're just talking about the ability to see the world slightly differently and to express an idea in a way that makes somebody think about it in a fresh way. And I don't care who you are anybody do that.

[00:24:23] **Beth Stallwood:** Yeah, definitely. And it's, it's such a good way of getting all of those different things out of your head and actually building your confidence. And one of the things that we haven't talked about is like the, one of the things that you go through is like, what, what is, what are those barriers what's coming up for you and talking about, you know, like the chimp model and all those kinds of things around what's your Chimp saying to you?

And my Chimp was telling me I'm not a writer. And how much of a block that had become for me and really using writing as a way to get over the fact that I don't think I'm a writer, which seems like a very strange way of doing it but it really did actually find my confidence building, even though I was only writing for 6 minutes a day,

[00:25:11] **Alison Jones:** Yes because you are doing it and you're building your craft. And as I say, you're building that sense of, of your, of your, you know, yourself as a writer because you're. You're doing it. This is how nouns, verbs, work, but it also means that you're, you're, you're building that, the resources in your brain. So you're building a way, you know, a vocabulary for talking about your topic. You're building images and pictures that you can use to describe to people. And that's very confidence inspiring, but there is definitely so much about the craft of writing and writing well, to communicate, that you started off internally, you start off with those metaphors, those word pictures, those, the imagery that, that we do in the exploratory phase, you pick and refine, and those feed out as you've discovered into the expressive phase or the [00:26:00] explanatory phase, which is what you're doing when you're writing a book.

And so you're, you're, you're basically gathering your material and that is a hugely confidence, inspiring things to be able to do.

[00:26:11] **Beth Stallwood:** Yeah. And one of the things I love about the, when you're writing for yourself and you're doing all this exploring and doing it as, like I come from a bit of a musical background that's what I did in my kind of degree. And I always think of it as like, you would never go and do a concert. Without doing the practice and the rehearsal beforehand yet, sometimes when



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we're writing, we're expecting to be able to write for an audience straight away without necessarily exploring or rehearsing, practicing.

[00:26:41] **Alison Jones:** Yeah, exactly. It's about building that confidence in yourself. Yes. I bet know it keeps them more craft. But I think that when you're writing a business book, particularly the instinct is to just go into full on lecture mode, instructional manual for, you know, whatever it is you're talking about. And of course it's not the way to engage a reader and it's not the way to help them see the world differently. You want to be telling stories, using word pictures and writing in a way that holds attention, which means really thinking about entertaining and moving, you know, giving, giving your reader a way of understanding what you're talking about at a sort of high level before you go down into the detail and the best way of doing that is locking it into stuff they already know and understand what you know, through metaphor or through word pictures.

[00:27:33] **Beth Stallwood:** Yeah. I love that and it just also makes me think when we're talking about writing. I don't think there are many jobs in the world right now, or many that I know, because there are so many jobs. We never know all of them, where a little bit of writing isn't part of it. I double negated myself into that sentence, which is shocking and I hate it.

[00:27:59] **Alison Jones:** I know what you mean. I don't care what you do. If you can [00:28:00] write better, you can do your job better. Yeah. And it's not just about writing. It's about thinking as well. So literally no job that's worth doing it.

[00:28:09] **Beth Stallwood:** Yeah. Like every job requires thinking every job requires some form of writing, even if it's an email or social media posts, or if it's even just for yourself versus in your job, writing a report, presenting a report that you've had to write before you present it.

So you have to do the thinking before you write it for you. You know, there's so many stages whereby writing is part of what you do. And so many jobs where that's just an essential skills that. We underestimate, maybe it's power and debt and prevalence in what we do because we just get on and do it don't we without really considering it, unless you're like me. And you're like, you want to write a book and you have to start thinking about it, but I've never really considered all of the writing that I do in my job.

[00:28:54] **Alison Jones:** Yeah, no, it is. It's, it's absolutely the way we make the stuff in our head, tangible and visible.

[00:29:03] **Beth Stallwood:** Yeah, amazing, I love it all. I love it all. And everyone can be like, these two are totally nerding out on my thing and we are not sorry. And as people know, you listened to this many of you, all those types of nerds as well. So we're all in one big happy nerdy family who love learning and love new and interesting things. One of the other things I was going to say, and I'm trying to recall in my brain, what it was while I talk is how much impact a very short commitment can



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have. Yes. So, On the course that you run “Write Brained” and you can tell me where it comes from later on is the kind of commitment is six minutes of writing a day.

And I think, I know I do this. I go, what difference is six [00:30:00] minutes a day going to do? We have to flog it worth really blooming hard for loads of hours to get anything done. Yet there is a real power in short and sharp and regular isn't there?

[00:30:09] **Alison Jones:** Yeah. And there's real power in consistency, and this is how you make habits as you make them really small. Yeah. And you know, I, I run every day as well. That's one of the things that I do I young, but I, I run a minim of two kilometers a day because that's kind of just under 15 minutes. I can do that. I don't care how busy I am. I can find 15 minutes for a run and that means I do it every day, which is really powerful for me.

So finding that the thing that you can do even on your nightmarish days, is really good because if you've got longer, you can take longer. You know, sometimes I go for a longer run. Sometimes I write for half an hour, an hour, but even on a really crappy day, I've got that habit baked in. And I think that is a massively powerful.

[00:30:53] **Beth Stallwood:** Yeah. And it's fitting in with your life, not becoming an extra massive thing on your to-do list.

[00:31:01] **Alison Jones:** Yeah. And also, because when you don't do it, then you think, oh, I failed and you get these massive loathing and you know this criticism of self. And it's just, that is not what builds habits. What builds habits is the reward system in your brain?

It's the dopamine. So when you do six minutes of writing, it's like, you know, there's a little kind of dopamine hit in your brain and, and that just helps cement the habit and for next time, because you're winning at it, so, you know, it's tiny habits, isn't it? You know, it's, or whatever his name is that, or Atomic Habits is just tiny, tiny embedding them until the are what you do and who you are and then you're winning.

[00:31:41] **Beth Stallwood:** Yeah. And I think that's a great thing. And when you think about it, I always think that dopamine hit it's what gives you what I would describe as the work joy? It's that moment of like, ask to do more of it versus the dramatic option of [00:32:00] the, oh, I never get anything right. And I failed it, they forget. And I can't write a book and I can't do any of these things is that actually, that was great. And in a few minutes, a day, I could really, really make a difference. And really whether it's writing or anything else you're doing for your brain or for your body, as you say, like going running, or which well running his body and brain together, isn't it. But it's that finding the easiest simplest, smallest possible way to create a habit that then you would never not do?



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[00:32:30] **Alison Jones:** Yeah, exactly. And then there will be days when you can really run with it, but it doesn't matter because even if you, even if today is, is a useless writing session or a useless run or whatever, it's okay because it's just one day and that tomorrow's another day.

[00:32:45] **Beth Stallwood:** And, you know, that's, I think a really important point that I haven't got to in my head, but I'm glad you have is that if you're doing those little things every day, if you have a bad day or if nothing comes of it, or if you're your prompt, didn't need you anywhere or give you the answers you were looking for.

It's not, it doesn't feel like the end of the world cause you haven't spent so much time getting there.

[00:33:05] **Alison Jones:** Yeah, exactly. And, and that's not the kind of all or nothing thing. It's like, well, that's fine tomorrow. I'll try something new in each day's learning a wonderful phrase from about writing of course, which is that when you're a writer, a good day is a good day and a bad day material.

[00:33:20] **Beth Stallwood:** I love that angst that can build into your characters or your thinking. I love that. Yeah. A bit of angst and troubling, stress and strife.

[00:33:33] **Alison Jones:** But even if you know for business books. Even if you're not doing creative writing, you know that the day where you, you realize you made this awful mistake and you brought your company to the edge of bankruptcy, that's going to be a story in a book one day, you know?

Yeah.

[00:33:43] **Beth Stallwood:** Everything is content.

[00:33:44] **Alison Jones:** Isn't that? Exactly. And if you're not writing then you are just experiencing it, you can't process it. You can't create anything out of it. So I think even that, even that kind of, I think, is it Julia Cameron talks about metabolizing life through writing, which I think is a great metaphor.

[00:34:00] Yeah. Because there's so much stuff that you're constantly experiencing every day. And writing gives you a space to kind of process it a bit and understand it and learn the learnings from it. And, and also less than its power over you sometimes.

[00:34:16] **Beth Stallwood:** Yeah. That's a great way of thinking about life. I love that as a metaphor for it.



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And it's also made me think as well that there's a big kind of what's out there in a big way. Isn't it? journaling as a way of helping people and often it's seen as a self-care type of writing, isn't it journaling, but actually if you don't subscribe to that theory of it actually spending some time, everyday writing for business could be something that you get more excited about versus writing for stuff for yourself?

[00:34:50] **Alison Jones:** Yes, I personally, yes.

[00:34:54] **Beth Stallwood:** I feel a bit like that too. It's like journaling. I like, I kind of like the idea of it, but I just know it's not going to happen for me. It's not really where I want to spend my time because I get more excited about the stuff that's about work and about my business and about growth and learning and stuff.

So for me, writing everyday, a little bit about business stuff or around work, whatever you would call it is much more joyful for me than sitting there self-reflecting yep. Love it. Right. I, if it's okay with you, I'm going to move us on to some quick fire questions. Are you ready? I think so. That'd be too scared. So for you, Alison personally, what's always guaranteed to bring you a little bit of work joy.

[00:35:43] **Alison Jones:** Had you say just joy without the work I would have said my dog.

[00:35:47] **Beth Stallwood:** Yeah, obviously there is a hierarchy of like you think about a pyramid, like Hierarchy Of Needs. My dog sits at the top of my joy pyramid.

[00:35:56] **Alison Jones:** Just an unfailing source of joy, which [00:36:00] is running, running with my dog. It's like, you know, ticks...

[00:36:02] **Beth Stallwood:** We put like number one and number two, enjoy together.

[00:36:10] **Alison Jones:** Yeah. At one of the things that goes with being a huge work joy is the relationships within my team who are ace. I really, really love working with them and they make me see things differently and they make me, be better, which is brilliant.

And they're also different, which I love. And I love it when we get together and we have a proper, good, full team meeting. That's one of my most joyful times. Yeah. Another thing work joy is it's just that moment when you working with an author. And they are saying that they know exactly what they want to say in their book, but they haven't necessarily found a way of expressing it in a way that catches people's imagination and feels distinctive and helping people get to that is just the best.

I, I don't know, a better feeling. And every time we have those conversations, I'm just like, this is the best job in the world. And still work joy, getting an advance copy. Sniffing it.



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[00:37:13] **Beth Stallwood:** Yeah. And that's why, you know, people are all into that eBooks and stuff. I still buy real books because I just love the feel of them. I like to touch them. I like to smell them.

[00:37:25] **Alison Jones:** I use eBooks and I use audio books as well, but there is nothing quite like, you know, the thickness of a real book.

[00:37:33] **Beth Stallwood:** I love an audio book as well, because they're so useful for when you're, when you can't physically read, if I read a really good book, I'll listen to it as well cause I get different things from a different way. So I love doing both things and I noticed that, but yeah. The smell of it. I'm going to go and smell some books off. Right? This is going to be a really hard question for you. And this is often a hard question for people on the podcast because they usually answer about four different ones.

So the question is, what book are you currently reading?

[00:38:08] **Alison Jones:** I'm currently of reading The Scout Mindset By Juliet Galef. I'm not sure if I've spelled her name, pronounced her name right - which is great. So this is one of my summer reading list books for The Extraordinary Business Book Club. And it's great she, and again, it's the power of the metaphor. Isn't it? Scout Mindset - what's that, and that she contrasts the scout mindset so when you're a scout, you don't care where the river's supposed to be. What's important is where the river is, you just want an accurate map. Whereas the soldier mindset is where we spend an awful lot of our time, which is about, you know, defending our positions or attacking other peoples to the scout is just about finding what's true.

And how do you spend more time in that mentality rather than entrenched in a, in a sort of soldier mentality. It's brilliant. Really, really good.

[00:38:56] **Beth Stallwood:** I love, that's the thing. I set a rule a few years ago, which is whenever anyone suggested a good book, I would just go in immediately order it. And that means that I always have like 50 books I haven't read yet.

And now I'm going to have to order that one. I love the idea of it. And also when you talked about the opposite, the soldier mindset, I was just thinking about all the arguments that go on Twitter and it's like, you're all in that mindset. No one's interested or curious to explore what's really going on.

It's just, this is my opinion and it's one way, and that's the only way it could be the cure. Next question. What is the best or most useful bit of advice that someone has given you in your life that you always find yourself coming back?



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[00:39:40] **Alison Jones:** It actually feeds directly into Write Brained actually. Well there's some stuff about scrambled eggs, but it's probably not so relevant for us.

[00:39:48] **Beth Stallwood:** And I do love a scrambled egg.

[00:39:49] **Alison Jones:** Always, always put the scrambled egg pan in water immediately after you've taken the scrambled eggs out. So that was a good one, but also my boss a few years back said to me, we were in the middle of discussing some structural thing in the [00:40:00] department and I was making lists and writing things down and he just turned his around landscape and started drawing it and, and he said to me, oh, I was 50 before I realized that if you draw a problem, you can solve it in half the time. Never forgotten it. It's informed an awful lot of how I think and how I work. And it fed its way into Write Brained.

[00:40:17] **Beth Stallwood:** I love it. I such great bit of advice. And actually I'm looking at my notes here and I have turned by page landscape so I can draw pictures while, you talk and I can make such a big difference. And interestingly, I don't know whether this episode will come out before or after. And there was somebody else who gives that the advice as well about going landscape and see what happens. So really, really interesting. Right? What is one super practical bit of advice to our listeners something they could go and do now tomorrow, the next day, what would it be and why would you recommend it?

[00:40:52] **Alison Jones:** I'd say get outside, get outside whenever you can. , I run every day outside and something about connecting with the real world, getting wet or cold or hot...

[00:41:05] **Beth Stallwood:** And all of the above,

[00:41:07] **Alison Jones:** you know, running off road, wherever possible, forest bathing, running with a dog is just the best thing ever. But I just get outside. We spent so much of our lives in these artificial little boxes, and while you're in them, you forget that you're in them. And as soon as you get out and you see sky and horizon, that shifts your sense of what's out there and what's possible you chat to people, you know, you feel better. I just get outside.

[00:41:38] **Beth Stallwood:** Totally subscribed to the theory of outside as well is where all the good stuff happens. I don't know if I've said this on a podcast before or a live or something, is that there is a bit on my most regular dog walk. I take my dog on where like a path joins a field and another path. It's like a crossroads of the countryside and it's just the place where my ideas most often comes me. [00:42:00] And it's there and it's then, I use my watch and I do a little voice note to myself of the ideas that have come to me when I go there. So I don't forget them. I don't lose them. But this specific phase where four different bits of countryside joined together is the place where my brain goes boom, tha' s the answer I'm looking for.



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[00:42:17] **Alison Jones:** It's your idea spot – love it.

[00:42:18] **Beth Stallwood:** Forcing it doesn't always work, but I love the idea. And obviously we're both subscribed to the thing that if you take your dog with you, it will be even better.

So, final question for. For me is where can people find out more about you and your work?

[00:42:43] **Alison Jones:** Well, I'm glad you asked. I can tell you this. There's sort of three main sites, depending on which bit of me you're most interested in. So [www.alisonjones.com](http://www.alisonjones.com) is a good place to start, if you're interested in, , books is [www.practicalinspiration.com](http://www.practicalinspiration.com) is, is also a great visit.

And if you are interested in the podcast, The Extraordinary Business Book Club, [www.extraordinarybusinessbooks.com](http://www.extraordinarybusinessbooks.com) is where to go. But if you want to sign up to write-brained or you're interested in the 10 day business book proposal challenge, or I think probably [www.alisonjones.com](http://www.alisonjones.com) is, is really a place to start.

[00:43:15] **Beth Stallwood:** Yeah brilliant, if we pop all those things into the show links, into the notes and people can click and find out more about you. Alison has been an absolute delight talking to you as always. Thank you so much for coming along and for sharing your amazing insight and thinking around how, just thinking about writing and thinking about the habit of writing can really help us get some joy into our work.

[00:43:40] **Alison Jones:** Thank you for having me. It's been a joy.

[00:43:43] **Beth Stallwood:** Thank you. Thank you for that to this episode of the Work Joy Jam with me Beth Stallwood and Alison Jones, so many interesting things from Alison I don't think that particularly one I could pick out, [00:44:00] , thinking about some of these things around writing, about building the habit of writing, about letting yourself write without having, to make it perfect. Or for being there, just to let your brain before. By the power of your brain and your hand working together, the idea that you can do so much in six minutes a day for me, is incredible. And it doesn't seem impossible when we think about it in that way. And I would really recommend you check out Alison and the Write Brain course, if you're interested, or she has to lose a course about book writing if you're interested in that zone. Amazing support, amazing thinking. And thank you, Alison, for joining us. If you're interested in finding out more about Create Work Joy, do you have onto our social channels at Create Work Joy? Or visit our website [www.createworkjoy.com](http://www.createworkjoy.com). We have the coaching program, 16 weeks, Tte Work Joy Way if you are looking to dive deep into your own levels of joy at work, if you're at a crossroad a transition period. If you want to go from feeling a bit meh to feeling, yes, I can really enjoy the work that I'm doing. Then that program might be for you. If you're looking for some inspiration and some collaboration and an amazing community do come and join Club Work Joy.





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We have amazing speakers. Every month we have networking sessions every week he gets to ask me questions and I will answer you. And there's an amazing community of people connected with each other who are all in the business of creating more joy in their lives and in their work. I hope to see you on one of our events soon.

Thank you.[00:46:00]