S1: E4 – Jordan Saxby | Are you Exploiting Yourself

Please note this is an automated transcription with minor editing & may contain errors.

Beth Stallwood: Welcome to the Work Joy Jam. In this episode, I have a really interesting conversation with Jordan Saxby expert and organizations and culture. And we have a really interesting discussion about Psychology and how our brains work and the neuroscience of what happens and things like the pressure we put ourselves under versus real pressure and the difference those things can make. I will give you a warning at some point, we do start talking about ghosts, but in an interesting way, I think as a metaphor might actually really help you. I know it's one of those things that really stuck with me after we recorded this podcast. So I really hope you enjoy it.

There's lots of really great practical, sensible things that you can do advice within this episode. And a huge thanks to Jordan for joining us on the Work Joy Jam.

Hello, welcome to the Work Joy Jam podcast. Today. We're joined by Jordan Saxby and he's joining us from Argentina, which is very exciting and I'm going to let Jordan introduce himself. So Jordan say hi to everybody and tell us a bit about your story and what your thinking is about Work Joy. Just, just give us the vibe from you.

Jordan Saxby: [00:01:54] All right. Hello, yes, so I'm currently in Argentina because of taking a career break, uh, to support my partner while she works out here. But during that time I set up my own business and have realized just how much of a complete nerd I am., I think I've realized that the stuff I'm really passionate about and where a lot of my joy sits.

at work is through being creative and using analytics to find the story behind what's really going on. And I've spent most of my career doing, uh, cultural surveying things like employee engagement, diversity inclusion, employee experience, starting in Asda, but then moving into consultancy and being the go-to data nerd for, any of those, businesses who want to understand their culture, but don't know how to structure like an analytics approach behind that. But throughout that time, [00:03:00] I've also used a lot of my psychology degree from Oxford to really dig into some of the neuroscience and some of the decision-making that goes on behind the scenes.

[00:03:10] And so there's this lovely layering of like, neuroscience beneath analytics beneath sort of culture consultancy. And that's sort of where my real sweet spot lies and yeah, kind of my story so far.

Beth Stallwood: [00:03:26] Brilliant. And, really interesting there that the, the analytics and the story together, or how they inform each other or how the neuroscience is working.

So I can totally see the kind of nerding out. And you will find that there's a theme along a lot of these podcasts and the people we're talking to is that we all get really geeky and nerdy about our subjects. And I think that's cool. I'm really happy to be a nerd and to be the geek in the room. Um, yeah.

[00:03:50] So tell me a bit more about, um, your thinking about. Where you get your joy from, but also where in your area of expertise. So you've surveyed and understood what was going on in lots of organizations with probably hundreds and thousands of people and kind of getting under the skin of motivation and engagement and inclusion and all of those things.

[00:04:13] What do you think when I say to you about Work Joy and how do we. How do people get work joy? How do you get it? How do you see it? And how do you see the opposite of that? Like the stuff that I call the work gloom, the things that kind of make you mad and crazy and, um, annoyed and frustrated. Um, just tell us a bit about your perception and what you're seeing and what you understand in those areas.

Jordan Saxby: [00:04:36] I think what really strikes me, and this is going to be something you might not expect from someone who surveys hundreds of thousands of people over their career is it's deeply personal. It for me, it, what brings someone joy and conversely, what brings someone gloom in work comes down so much to how people have been raised, how people have been really conditioned to see the work that they do. If I took someone who was slogging away in a factory or a workhouse in Victorian England and brought them into what we would see as a really difficult harsh work environments, they have a huge amount of Work Joy just from a difference in like a relative difference from what they've been raised to expect to what they're actually given.

And that's an extreme example, but I think it can show that what we expect from our careers and from our work and what context we're in really does share what brings us joy and what brings us gloom in the work environment.

Beth Stallwood: [00:05:46] Yeah, it's pretty interesting. Our expectations. And, you know, I've seen it in some places and I don't know if you have where organizations try harder and harder and harder to engage people and to give them what they're looking for.

And then almost they raise and raise and raise and raise the expectations until there's no more that they can do. And individuals still aren't necessarily as engaged. You want them to be, so that individual piece and what people are really looking for is an interesting part. And it's something that we talk about in the Work Joy theory of life.

That it is deeply personal. What brings people happiness and joy is totally different depending on who you are. And there's something about workplaces and organizations and leaders and managers, um, even if they made their best efforts, it's really, really hard. Isn't it. To get something working that will suit absolutely everyone 100% of the time.

Jordan Saxby: [00:06:41] Oh completely. And I'm as an HR consultant, I'm seen as like horribly hard-nosed sometimes because one of the key things that I recommend for a lot of organizations is stricter performance management, um, focusing on like positivity and. Helping two people to play to

their strengths, but also to realize when their strengths are not a good fit for the business or not a good fit for the role, because that's seriously it's a career killer.

[00:07:07] It's potentially a health killer is working in environments in situations which just don't suit you. And the biggest challenge though, is that you talk about managers and leaders trying to create environments that suit everyone. But I think there are also bigger systemic challenges where you have companies setting everything up in ways that they've been taught that should, um, and where's that there have, uh, learned that cultures are organizations should be set up sometimes from their own experience sometimes from formal qualifications. But end up creating something, which just isn't any good for anyone because you create jobs that have no inherent joy to them and no way of creating joy in the person and the people that do that task. And I think that could be a lot of the cause of people having a bad fit to their jobs.

] There's some jobs really shouldn't exist in the way that they do. If I'm going to sound really harsh. Okay.

Beth Stallwood: [00:08:15] Have you got any examples of those?

Jordan Saxby: [00:08:16] Oh, so I think something that really sits here is there's a difference between there's like a philosophical difference that I think a lot of philosophy is just down to like definitions.

[00:08:28] Um, yeah, but between there's a, there's a theorist called MacIntyre and he talks about how there is this concept of, uh, practices and activities. And practices are things that you can really get deeply into that complex cooperative activities. And you can build a standard of excellence within, within a practice that, that all of these they are about say becoming a master craftsman when you're making, making beautiful chairs would be fully a source of practice. In MacIntyre's view. An activity is a task list. If I am creating the same arm for wooden arm chairs, every single hour of every single day, there's no real way of getting better at that, except for like slight efficiency gains, which could potentially come at a risk to my own body and health.

There's no way to turn that into a practice. It's always just going to be a task or as sort of architect calls it an activity. And I think that's, that's where some where, when I talk about some jobs that shouldn't exist in the way that they do is that you have these roles where you can't create joy out of that very mechanical, very physical process.

[00:09:57] Unless you are very, very clever about it compared to something like customer service, which is very different, every single sort of moment of the day and creates new challenges and is a much broader skill set to be developing.

Beth Stallwood: [00:10:14] Yeah. So it's more about. From from that example, the way I'm thinking about that and correct me if I'm wrong here is it's about the ability to learn and develop and improve and continually adapt and work with different people and have, have different experiences throughout your working day, your working week, your working month, your working life almost.

Jordan Saxby: [00:10:37] Yeah, completely. And it's about there being something inherent to the work that brings. Personal joy and fulfillment. That's where I think it connects into Work. Joy is that

the actual roles themselves have to be designed with that in mind first, before someone can then find that own joy in that work.

[00:11:01] And some work is going to always be inherently more rewarding and some work is going to be rewarding because it contributes to a bigger, a bigger, wider aim. Like you could be making those armchair, those chairs. Those chair, wooden chair, arms, uh, for a company that donates huge amounts to charity, for example, and actually you could feel connected to that work and you could feel more positive and get joy in your work.

[00:11:26] Not because the task is good, cause it's not, but because you're part of a bigger thing. There's a lot of arguments and it gets very philosophical about whether that's a good thing or not that you, if you're connecting someone to a bigger purpose to essentially drive them into doing what is a really pretty poor job, um, whether how ethical that is, but you can create joy through those aspects through connection to our wider purpose.

Beth Stallwood: [00:11:53] And let's talk about purpose for a bit because it's something that organizations have jumped on the old bandwagon for making sure that there's purpose, because you know, when you look at the research, purpose is important in your work and. Okay. Great. So let's make sure there's purpose here. What do you see when you're researching organizations or you're working with them around purpose when it's done well, versus when it's not done so well.

[00:12:17] And what are the differences in, in the joy that you can bring through having like a good, positive purpose versus a purpose that does other things

Jordan Saxby: [00:12:26] people are generally really clever and they can see through BS pretty quickly. Um, uh, I think that's one of the core issues with purposes and value organizational values is when you try and connect some people to something bigger, and then you do something which is against that purpose or against those values.

[00:12:49] So say a big example is a lot of corporate companies try and create a purpose that has nothing to do with money, but then constantly make decisions that are about maximization of profit. And that rings incredibly hollow then to the people they're trying to motivate, because they're essentially saying, look, we're going to join together to...

I'm going to keep using the furniture example because I've never worked with a furniture company. So it means that I'm not going to have someone messaging me when this comes out and say like, Oh, is this about me? So you could have this amazing furniture company where they're like, we want to put the best armchairs in every household in Britain, and that'd be like that purpose, but then they skimp on material quality.

[00:13:40] Because they want to create a profit margin to keep coming back it's to stop it. And that's how capitalism works. That's completely fine. But for people in the organization, that's when it rings hollow and that's when it starts to be a negative when that purpose is there and it sets an expectation. As we said before, I expect that I'm going to work for a company that really cares about making great furniture.

[00:14:01] And the first thing you've got to do is deal with materials. That' going to ring really hollow. As I say it, people see through BS and purpose. That's the biggest risk we're on the flip side, the

biggest benefit and where purpose can really be done, right. Is if you get behind what you're saying. So if you are committed to putting those arms, the best armchairs into houses in Britain, like making the case to your employees, that like we.

[00:14:28] Have the best processes and we have the best systems in place to turn bad materials into good materials that we can then create something we're proud of. And if they do actually have those systems and processes in place, well then actually you're going to be able to keep, get your employees involved and get them on board to actually go right.

[00:14:46] We can make these things cheaply, but also well, and that's a very different way of dealing with the same challenges and the same purpose issues, but the processes and systems have to be there.

Beth Stallwood: [00:14:57] Yeah. So basically it's like making [00:15:00] sure you actually walk the talk and do what you say you're going to do with your purpose.

[00:15:03] And I've seen the same apply to values where you have these values written on the wall. And there's like some nice marketing campaign and PR'ing internally at the values. And then one of the leaders very obviously does something that's against those values and you might as well not have bothered sticking them up there.

[00:15:20] Yeah. Constantly. And it's like, actually, if you're going to do these things is you've got to invest in like the purpose and which, you know, I totally believe that purpose is important if you are a purpose led organization, but there's also something to me about the transparency. And I totally get that people get BS really quickly.

[00:15:37] If you're in a business that's main objective is to make money and the purpose does it something else? It's weird and it's conflicting and then people don't know what to do with that. Um, and it's hard to process that. So if every decision is actually about making money, but the purpose has been, Oh yeah, we really want to serve our customers.

[00:15:54] It's like, well, do we. Do is that actually true? And tell me a bit more in, in your experience about the organization. Purpose can be a good thing if it's genuine, if it's transparent, if it makes sense of it much as your systems and your processes and how you go about actually running your business. Great, put it in that box. Purpose, not so helpful, and in fact, it could be quite damaging if it doesn't match those things. So there's like pros and cons, depending on how you're going to do it. Talk to me a little bit more about individuals in the situation. So. In the Work Joy theory of life, we're thinking around what can you do as an individual, as well as what can organizations do?

[00:16:30] Because for me, it's not just about organizations doing everything we all, as individuals have responsibility to look after ourselves to create joy, to create a work in a place that we're not a round peg in a square hole, because that's part of, you know, does the job fit what I want to do. What are you seeing around individual purpose and individuals being able to influence or do things or how they might go about making some of these things work for them?

Jordan Saxby: [00:16:58] I think [00:17:00] where a lot of this can come down to for me is what are you striving towards versus what are you being pressured to do?

Oh, okay. Tell me more.

As an individual, I think. There is a lot of, there are a lot of things that are modern society. Where there tell you, you will be happy if you do act, there'll be happy if you do.

[00:17:25] Y like if you go through the school system, um, you're told if you work hard, you get good grades. You'll be able to go to a good university and then you'll be able to get a great fulfilling job.. And you see this crisis of confidence where people come out with the university system, with these grant grades and the join and organization.

[00:17:44] And. That job is not what it lives up to be, or there certainly is no mark scheme for them to be able to actually create real, like, to be able to know when they're doing well and know when they're doing poorly. And this can cause these pressures inside you to think, well, I need to find this mark scheme, or I need to find the, where to be the best at this.

[00:18:06] And those are pressures they're not striving towards. I want to strive towards living a life that is fulfilling. It's, I am running away from the worries and fears about where I could be going wrong and all of the things I'm trying to avoid. And that's what I mean really is if you're constantly being pressured into doing things, pressured into acting in certain ways and to following set scripts of what is normal or what is a good working life, I think that can get dangerous very quickly.

[00:18:40] Whereas if you're focusing on what you're striving towards, That can be enable you to be much clearer on what you do and what you don't do. And if something goes wrong, you can see it in the context of, oh, well, I'm looking to try and get a job that I find really emotionally fulfilling. And I haven't got that interview for a job that I thought was going to be great.

[00:19:02] If you were going, going for that interview from a place of pressure, you'd be really down and depressed because you're thinking, Oh God, I haven't achieved that. I'm a failure. Whereas, if you're going to it from a place of stress of trying to get the job that is most fulfilling to focusing on what you're striving towards, not getting that job as assigned that, that job wasn't right for you.

[00:19:25] Like either you were either the process for that company was so poor that you were the right person for the job and you missed out. And I bet you, that's not the only process that's wrong in that company. If that's the case. Yeah. Um, or you weren't actually the right fit for that job. And if you thought it was going to be amazing, if you'd have got into it by accident, cause you weren't the right candidate, um, you'd have possibly been really miserable and really unfulfilled forgetting it.

[00:19:54] And that's what I mean between pressure versus strive. Um, and I think that can be a real difference in how to find that work [00:20:00] joy and individual level.

Beth Stallwood: [00:20:03] Yeah, I I'm really fascinated by the thinking here. And one of the things that's coming to my mind is this idea that we're conditioned or many people feel conditioned or are conditioned during their younger years into thinking that, um, success.

[00:20:22] In a traditional, you've got to this level, you've achieved these grades. You are at a good organization. You are in a good job. And our definition of good job in my opinion, is to change as to what that really means. Um, and maybe we can talk about that in a second, but this idea that we

have a very set idea of what success looks like and that somehow by being successful, will mean happiness.

[00:20:45] I'm not sure that are very controlled box of what success looks like is actually anywhere near what creates real happiness and joy in people.

Jordan Saxby: [00:20:56] Completely. I also think you talk about success. There is a control box, and I know it was just a, just a line of description there, but I think it's way worse than that. I think our typical views of success are conditioned into us in very different ways. Like I I've caricature to the school system that as an example, but I don't think it's just, uh, early years, if you have an Instagram account and you're following a set of celebrities, awesome sports players, they're going to be showing you a very different picture of success as the good grade system that you had in your school growing up. And if you were on LinkedIn and you're following some of these influences, and you're seeing what they're saying, success looks like, or if you're sadly falling down this sort of YouTube rabbit hole of con men, all of those different views of success are very different. And you are seeing all of these different pictures of this is what success looks like, and you're not achieving any of them.

Beth Stallwood: [00:22:01] Because you're not that person. Right. You're, you're an individual. And what success is like for you will be different from the next person, but you're so right. We're so in a culture where there's a lot of people marketing themselves very visually and doing videos, doing, selling you the next big product that will fix your face or your life.

[00:22:24] And somehow if you don't buy this, but you know, that's the marketing world. So we could go very deep into the philosophy of whether we should all be, um, in a consumer marketplace or not. But you know, that that is what is happening and it happens at many stages and a lot of people that I spend time coaching or working with through workshops or in different situations are spending so much time comparing themselves to other people's versions of success that they've totally forgotten to think about what they actually want and what their purpose is and how they can find an organization to work with.

Again, let's redefine what work is as well, because that's another whole piece of things to think about, but finding an organization to work with, or a job to do, or a freelance project, or working for themselves or doing something that is right for them and that their success comes from actually feeling like it's right and feeling like it's an authentic way of living and being, and working.

Jordan Saxby: [00:23:23] Yeah. I agree. I think. I think one thing to, just to preface part of this point of the conversation with is we're sort of talking about people who are in already incredibly good privileged positions. There are a lot of people out there who have to work to live, and I think. Work Joy looks very different for those people and the steps you need to take to achieve work joy is very different for those people than it does for the sorts of the structures we're talking about here, where people are free to be able to find jobs and organizations and working for themselves in a sort of safe environment.

[00:24:00] So I, I think it's important just to make that point and I'm sure other people have made the points and other podcasts as well for this. But, um, I do think there's an aspect of that, but so with that, disclaimer, aside, um, it's such a strength to be able to know what you want from life and being able to keep reflecting on that because it changes.

[00:24:23] What I wanted when I was 18 is very, very different to what I want from my life now. Yeah, and, it's that point yourself? Think about talking to your younger self and you probably end up, and I think my younger self would find me insufferable, um, because I have changed and grown in so many different ways to appreciate so many different things that I didn't when I was younger.

[00:24:54] And so I think it's an, it's a moving. It's moving goalposts. And you've got to be aware of when [00:25:00] your goal posts are moving, but knowing what you want to knowing what you strive for, I think is incredibly important in navigating the frankly like intimidating number of options that people have in our kinds of situations where you're, you've got sort of good work experience already under your belt.

[00:25:19] You're maybe mid career. Um, and you're thinking what next. And the first thing I think you should be doing. And I think you probably advise a lot of your clients is for them to reflect and to think where can I go next to improve my life and find work joy?

Beth Stallwood: [00:25:38] Yeah, and I, it's really interesting. And thank you for bringing up the point around, you know, not everyone is in this privileged position to be able to say, what can I do?

[00:25:46] And that is also a big point of the Work Joy thinking is not everyone can afford to, is able to, is in the position to be able to say, and there's my, one of my most hated phrases is like, go ahead if your best life and, you know, follow your passion and everything will be fine because. For a lot of people.

In fact, I think for most people isn't reality.

Jordan Saxby: [00:26:10] And the way to kill a passion is to turn it into a job

[00:26:12] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:26:12] Like for sure. And so I always say, and you know, in some of the writing about this side of things, I'm thinking not everyone can do that. Not everyone wants to do that. And even the people who, who do do that and follow their life's passion and go and do their own work, there's still things that annoy you about that.

[00:26:30] And there's still, you know, if you don't like spreadsheets, Excel spreadsheets to do, if you don't like me too, there's still meetings to do. There's still the, the world of work will always have. Annoyance says the stuff that gives you the work glue means that that will exist in whatever context you work in.

[00:26:45] I have never met anyone, even people who are literally doing the stuff that other people admire and think is amazing. And that they're so cool and brilliant, and you know, everything on their Instagram is perfect and all that kind of stuff. They still have stuff that they don't like about work.

Jordan Saxby Yeah. Yeah. And I think there's a, there's a relativity thing again here as well. Like just to go back to the neuroscience I brought up earlier, um, we are constantly updating our view of the world. Like our neurons, the connections between them are constantly updating and changing our view of the world.

[00:27:21] But what I think people can sometimes forget is that view of the world is the only information we have to make decisions. And it's the only information we have to judge what's good

and what's bad in our lives. And so if we are some mega rockstar, living a life of gorgeous guitars and life on the open road. For a lot of people from the outside that can be like, Oh, that life is so different to mine. It looks amazing. But when you're inside that life, your. Existence is still normally distributed. You still have mainly decent middling experiences. Some things are rubbish and some things are great. It's just that your scale is just very different systems to the first person, but that doesn't mean your emotions are any different.

[00:28:11] And obviously people in difficult circumstances and really bad situations are going to have much more negative experiences. And that is going to feel much worse. But when you start getting into the sort of more aspirational side of things. Yeah. There's always going to be the bottom tail to that distribution.

Beth Stallwood: [00:28:28] Definitely. And what you were saying, um, a couple of points ago about this idea around careers and you know, where are you going to go next and what are you going to do? And one of the things I quite often talk about is about. And, you know, if you think about the Wizard of Oz for a second, just go with it, go with me for a second

Beth Stallwood: [00:28:47] The idea is that the Emerald city is this perfect place where all your problems can be fixed and there's perfection there. And actually my advice to so many people is just don't follow the yellow brick road. That's been set out for you because there are many, you know, if you think about people who are working in corporate careers for a second, and that isn't the only people in the world, and there are so many people who do lots of different things, but the corporate machine as it is the structure and the process kind of says, well, actually, if you get to the next level or if you ahead of this level, or if you become a director or if you become one of the C-suite people, that's what success looks like here. So we're always striving and pushing you towards that particular thing. And I know so many people and have coached so many people who have got to where they thought they wanted to be, and haven't done the reflection, you know, haven't updated themselves as to what they think is important anymore and what they really want to do and have suddenly achieved the thing that they've been working towards for 10 or 15 years and gone, Oh, I'm not sure the Emerald city is where I want to be.

[00:29:50] Um, and so shiny from the outside, but actually on the inside of that, it's not really what they wanted for someone else. It might be exactly perfect and exactly what they want and, [00:30:00] you know, round peg, round hole, brilliant purpose aligned all of the stuff that you want, but not everyone does want that.

Jordan Saxby: [00:30:07] Yeah. Do you mind if I take a bit of a tangent here? Cause I think it's relevant. I might be, I might be nattering for a while. So do interrupt here. Don't worry. I'm about to talk about ghosts. Um, so I think a lot of this can come down to things like conditioning that I talked about before, but this is the, there's a great book called "Burnout society" um, which it defines like our modern 21st century Western developed society.

[00:30:38] I'm going to add once you're above a certain level of work or like add socioeconomic level as well to that, and is no longer a disciplinary society, but an achievement society. What that really means is there's no longer a supervisor stood behind you on the production line, making sure that you make 50 t-shirts an [00:31:00] hour.

[00:31:01] Instead we construct our own supervisors. And we have those supervisors, like ghostly supervisors constructed for us in our own heads. And that what you talked about there is the sort of that path, that's been laid out for you, the yellow brick road towards the Emerald city in a lot of ways. That's how I see the sort of ghosts, the construction of the ghostly supervisor.

[00:31:27] Like that supervisor is in your head and saying, if you don't make this project work on time to budget, make everyone happy, constantly strive, find time for in learning and development. So you can evidence it in your next appraisal, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. You're going to fail. Or I'm going to be angry at you.

[00:31:46] This takes off ghostly supervisor and the construction of that supervisor happens. Partly I think because like market economies are really efficient. And so we found this really inefficient to puts a real life supervisor behind every toxic and we found that people make their own, and you've got to realize that.

[00:32:10] That supervisor doesn't have your best interests at heart, that yellow brick road doesn't lead you to a real Emerald city. It leads you to a constructed version of it that really when you get inside, it there's another yellow brick road. Um, and so I think a lot of it for me at least comes down to that piece that I said earlier about sort of.

[00:32:34] Where your pressures lie. And those pressures are what create a, you can visualize those pressures as this mental supervisor and for every person that supervisor's going to look a bit different because we have different conditioning, we have different morals and we have like different, different psychology.

[00:32:55] And so some of us will go into work and we'll be gloomy and will overwork ourselves into burnout because we've been told that working hard is what we should do by an authority figure that we respect, or we could be overworking because we're scared of implied discipline, even though that might not actually happen.

[00:33:12] performance management process processes are generally quite bad across the board. Um, also people overwork because they don't want to drop the ball for their team or their community. All like some people want that promotion. I want to create the perfect presentation, but all of these come down to that supervisor standing behind you saying.

[00:33:30] You must do this because if you don't do this, you will fail. Or if you don't do this, something bad is going to happen and it's creating internal damage for external reward. And I think that can be where a lot of the work gloom can come from or is this where you're in these situations where yeah, you are to put a blunt point on it, exploiting yourself.

To get something you think is going to make you happy without sitting back and realizing why, why am I feeling this pressure? Why am I feeling this, this drive to do something? Is it because there is a future that I can see that I want to work towards? Or is it because I'm listening to that awful supervisor stood behind me in my own head.

Beth Stallwood: [00:34:29] Yeah. And I often say that the things that are in your own head are far worse than reality.

Jordan Saxby: [00:34:34] goodness, yes, our brands are cyclical. Like our brains are cyclical. They, um, every time we think something, it starts to cycle so the thoughts operates as a thought. You think it, it usually drives your behavior at this specific moment. So say for example, you think, uh, Oh, I'm gonna, I'm going to get shouted at if I get this wrong, that thought happens. But what it also does is it sends a smaller signal back to the front of your brain.

[00:35:14] And that part where the front of your processing, the part that understands the world, the part that is in charge of perception and that tiny signal alters how you view the world to make it that slightly, to make you slightly more ready to see someone about, to shout at you for getting something wrong.

[00:35:37] And so if someone sighs in a meeting. But your con you're already thinking of, if I get something wrong, someone's going to shout at me. You interpret that sigh very differently. So if you haven't already had that thought. And so every single time you think these things, and if you let them get their grasps in your mind, they're change your perceptions of the world.

[00:36:00] Which of course then re-emits you think the thoughts again, which changes your perceptions of the world again? And that's what I mean, when I say thinking you're cyclical.

Beth Stallwood: [00:36:10] It's like the cycle of doom though. Isn't it? It's like it gets worse and worse and worse until suddenly you've blown everything out of proportion.

Jordan Saxby: [00:36:18] And that's the thing is that a lot of the time it is about blowing stuff out of proportion. And I think that's where, yeah, it's what can feed that ghost to the supervisor, um,. Yeah. You're essentially thinking this bad. Thing's going to happen. This bad thing is going to happen and they're going, yeah.

[00:36:36] Is, is going to happen. Work harder, work harder, work harder. And you don't stop and think about what's actually important.

Beth Stallwood: [00:36:43] Yeah. So I'm. I totally think I have my own ghostly supervisor. I'm picturing like a supervisor now, which is also hilarious because I actually worked for myself. So my supervisor is definitely me, but my ghostly supervisor definitely exists and like taps me on the shoulder and says you should be working harder and all the things that are, you know, all our worries and things come into that.

[00:37:07] So really interesting. And I'm interested in everything you said so far, but what I'm also keen to do is to not just paint a picture of. Oh, there's lots of doom and gloom that could go on in the world. And there's all these things go wrong.

Jordan Saxby: [00:37:19] Sorry. I'm possibly the wrong person to talk to.

Beth Stallwood: [00:37:24] I'm going to do now is I'm going to dig us out of this, like, and I'm going to say, so if, you know, if this is the world, as it is, and we know it is, and different people experience this in different ways.

[00:37:34] So some people might feel some of the pressure from. The work environment, more, some people might feel the pressure from a home cause there's like, work goes on, not just at work, if you're in a traditional job, work also goes on when you've got work to do at home and life admin

and all these other, you know, things that you have to do and parenting and caring for other people and all that kind of stuff still for me counts as some kind of work. So I'm sitting here thinking if the structures and processes and ghostly figures exist, if we've been conditioned into these ways. Yeah. What practically could people do. So I've got individual system has caught podcast thinking. Okay. Yeah, I agree. I do definitely have a ghostly supervisor.

[00:38:11] I have these things that go on. I have been conditioned to think that the Emerald city is a place I want to go where maybe it isn't. What are the, some of the things that individuals can do to maybe interrupt some of those patterns, to think about changing some of their thinking to maybe reset their mindset in these areas.

[00:38:29] What are your practical things?

Jordan Saxby: [00:38:32] Actually, it's quite nice. I do have some positive messages. That's good. Thank you, Beth.

Beth Stallwood: [00:38:37] I told you I'd bring us back

Jordan Saxby: [00:38:38]. Perfect. This is why you're running the podcast. I think there are two or three things. And they're all super easy.

Beth Stallwood: [00:38:49] I love that. The easier, the better, because we'll actually do some if they're easy.

[**Jordan Saxby:** [00:38:54] Uh, and that's the, I think that's the only way that we get stuff done. Um, the first one is reflection. It's [00:39:00] sitting and thinking about thinking. So if you find yourself in a really bad emotional space and thinking, Oh, this is all terrible, it's all going to go wrong. Stopping. Getting yourself out of your specific situation.

[00:39:14] So removing all of those environmental contextual cues, if that's going for a walk, if that's even just going to the loo and it's taking that moment to think, why am I thinking this way? And you might not have all the answers, but not to think, why am I feeling? Why am I feeling stressed? Oh, it's because of these 20 different million things that I've got to do.

[00:39:36] No. Why am I feeling stressed about that list of things? And that's the point where you're asking that second level question of like, thinking about your thinking you go, Oh, I'm stressed about this because I think that people are going to view me badly if I don't get them all done and then you can start to see a way through it.

[00:39:57] Cause you're like, Oh, but I can take that. And I can have a quick conversation with my manager about a couple of things that obviously don't matter and we can boot them to next week. And that's quite a simple thing to do. Just get yourself out of the situation and think, try and think about your thinking.

[00:40:11] And that's all it takes to disrupt it. Like I talk about the cyclical process, but there's a bit of our brand, which is essentially like conscious control. Like it's like command center and they can come in and change any of it. Um, so like just take a moment, let your command and send to kick in and go, okay, let's look at all these brain things.

[00:40:34] Oh, that wrong. That obviously wrong. Why have we been thinking?

Beth Stallwood: [00:40:38] Yeah. And is it that I like the idea of that second level question. So it's easy to look at your, to do list and go. I'm stressed because I've got a big to-do list, but actually on another day you might not be stressed by that to do this because you might be excited by it, or you might be really into what you're doing, or it just doesn't feel like that that day.

[00:40:54] So you have to kind of dig a bit deeper than just the initial thinking.

Jordan Saxby: [00:40:58] Yeah, the second small thing [00:41:00] is thought recording. Um, and I don't want to sell this as like a cure all. It just doesn't work for some people, but for others it can be incredibly powerful. It's just like writing down what you were thinking, because we don't think in complete sentences, we think in images and snapshots and sort of weird feelings, um, So writing things down in full sentences, forces a logic and an order on what you're thinking and that in and of itself can be enough to just expose the problems, like expose the faulty thinking that's happening.

Beth Stallwood: [00:41:36] Interesting like that. And I, I, you know, a lot of people would say cool that something like journaling language puts a lot of people off. Um, But the idea for me, and I don't know if you've ever done this is sometimes just taking a piece of paper and do that brain writing thing where you just write whatever you're thinking and it comes out, you then go, Oh, I don't need to worry about that anymore because it's kind of gone somewhere.

[00:41:55] I've given it a different home and it no longer needs to be in my brain. [00:42:00] Um, so that stuff can be really, really helpful. So, so two things sit, reflect

Jordan Saxby: [00:42:06] there's one more. And I actually think this is by far the most powerful one is the go for number three. Um, We have constructed these ghostly supervisors out of our experiences, out of our interactions with people on it SMSs, but just like I say, brains are cyclical, so we're human relationships.

[00:42:28] And so if it's hard to change your own brain, but if you are reinforcing the positive, beneficial, non pressurized things in other people's brands, they're going to do it back to you. So I'll give you an example. Like if you are in a work environment, you are going into a meeting and you see, someone's really nervous about the meeting they're going into like, just having the small interaction, just even just smiling at them or telling them you [00:43:00] think they're going to be great if you know them well, this can be really powerful because you can know, Oh, I know what their supervisors probably saying to them at this point.

[00:43:09] And you can try and get in there and counteract what that supervisor's saying. You can be a real life living, flesh and blood human, telling them like re to basically breaking up the narrative. And the more positive you are to where the people, the more support if you are, and the more you help to deconstruct these societal messages, the more everyone's going to also do it to you.

[00:43:31] And so actually the best way I found to getting rid of. They like the supervisors voice is by getting rid of other peoples. And then the reciprocity of human relationships means that they're drone out mind. Um, and it might be a really, I don't know, I don't really like it. It's not like it's a selfish approach because really the best benefit is that I'm super powerful in being able to help other people [00:44:00] not feel this rubbish.

[00:44:03] Um, but then there is a slight benefit that you get some of it back as well.

Beth Stallwood: [00:44:07] Definitely. And a big part of the work choice theory is that reciprocity is an absolute, fundamental human thing to give you joy. So you know that all of the research says the more you give, the more joy you feel versus take, take, take, and.

[00:44:22] The thing about having the right people in your squad. If you're the person who's helping other people to get rid of their, go see supervisor, helping them to feel more joy, talking to them, talking them through things, being that person that listens or supports or enables them to do stuff. You also then also have to listen to your own advice because you're saying it out loud, your brain is processing your own advice.

[00:44:42] One way. So it, it helps. And, um, someone I heard once speaking and I was really interested in what she had to say. She said that your brain doesn't listen until you say something out, out loud. Like it really needs to hear that. So if you can't talk to yourself out loud and I do do that, and [00:45:00] people think I'm insane, but.

[00:45:02] If you can't talk yourself out loud, if you talk to someone else in the way that you would want to be taught to at that point in time, it with kindness and things like that will, hopefully you'll remember to do your self talk in a more kinder, considered way

Jordan Saxby: [00:45:15] completely. And it's the thing is I was talking the way we actually interact with other humans, especially if we're conscious like about it it's all. Like command center. I talked about earlier, like you don't talk to people generally on instinct, unless you're like full of emotions, um, at a specific moment in time, you generally talk to someone by thinking it through. And that is again, it's strengthening that part of your command center and they can then see where those problems are happening in your own brain as well.

Beth Stallwood: [00:45:50] Great. So I love those three practical tips that people can do reflecting , thought recording and helping other people to do it, which then also helps yourself.

Jordan Saxby: [00:46:00] Yeah. And I think the key part of the helping other people is you need to be deconstructing the narratives that society and companies and just all of the unconscious stuff we do to each other, like deconstructing those narratives is the important takeaway there, it's not just about being nice to people.

[00:46:21] It's about helping them to see that, what they are worried about is not actually going to be as bad as they think it is, or because this thing about society is rubbish and we've made that bit up.

Jordan Saxby: [00:46:39] Yeah. And, and I've been really sort of blown away with the sort of Work Joy concept is that essentially is you baking that into your everyday and into other people's every day is deconstruction of that narrative, realizing that yet telling people that the Emerald city is not the perfect place they want to be. And that sometimes you just find forge your own path is it's an excellent. When it's said in the way that it sounds like you say it, it's very much that third thing I was talking about just helping people to disrupt the narratives that have been constructed for them by a society that's running away a lot faster than our monkey brains can keep up.

Beth Stallwood: [00:47:25] Yeah, our brains. Aren't ready for this society we live in. We can't quite get there. Um, thank you so much for sharing all your thoughts with us. It's been really, really interesting to have the conversation with you. I've got some quick fire questions. If you're happy to finish up quick fire ones and these ones, I ask everyone on the podcast.

[00:47:44] So we'll get a whole range of different views on these. So question one is personally for you, what is always guaranteed to bring you some work joy.

Jordan Saxby: [00:47:53] The moment when I see the pattern behind the data, when suddenly a story emerges

Beth Stallwood: [00:48:01] or say like, when you, when you have that like moment where everything comes together and you understand the data and what it's telling you.

Exactly. I love that. Cool. Um, number T what book are you currently reading?

Jordan Saxby: [00:48:14] Um, I'm currently reading Danubia, which is a history of the, Austria Hungarian Habsburg empire, which is very different to my novel reading. But the actual narrative, like voice it's written in is as if your sat in an old family, friends, like study in armchairs.

[00:48:38] And they're just like, so a very kindly uncle is just talking about their journeys through Austria and Hungary and the sort of surrounding areas. So it's, it's got a really nice style to it, which has meant that what could be a really dull history book has been made incredibly personal say it's, uh, it's been quite a fun read.

[00:48:58] It's been a long one though.

[00:49:01] [00:49:00] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:49:01] That's great. And it's interesting. Sometimes we're reading stuff that isn't necessarily what we would expect to be reading and having something a bit different can be quite a nice thing to work on.

Jordan Saxby: [00:49:10] Yeah. I'm also rereading Sandman by Neil Gaiman, which is much more on brand,

Beth Stallwood: [00:49:16] more in your much more in your zone.

[00:49:18] Um, question three, what is the best or most useful piece of advice that you've had that you always come back to?

Jordan Saxby: [00:49:26] Um, I've talked about it a lot in this actually. When my therapist turned around to me when I was recovering from like a workplace panic disorder, who said like the actions you're taking on the issue, the pressure you put yourself on there is,

Beth Stallwood: [00:49:43] Oh, can you say that again for me?

[00:49:45] Cause I think we need to hear it again.

Jordan Saxby: [00:49:47] The actions that you're taking, aren't the issue, the pressure you are putting yourself under is.

Beth Stallwood: [00:49:55] That is really good advice, isn't it?

Jordan Saxby: [00:49:57] Yeah. It's almost like, you know, she's trained to do that.

Beth Stallwood: [00:50:01] Well, yeah. I mean, obviously that's the purpose of her role and, um, but being able to take that and I can see so many different situations where you could take that advice and you use it.

[00:50:09] And again, I always think the good advice is then passed onto other people. So perhaps by this podcast, we pass on some good advice. Question four you've probably already given us some of these in your kind of tips and hints, but. So give us one really practical bit of advice to your letter, to our listeners here.

[00:50:30] Something that they could go and do right now or tomorrow or the next day that would give them a bit more joy in their life.

Jordan Saxby: [00:50:38] Oh, um,

[00:50:43] stop caring about being excited about things. Like if you really love baking or if you really love playing wacky Indy role-playing games are, if you really like [00:51:00] listening to Celine Dion every weekend, like be excited about that and be excited about talking about that. Um, like, yeah, just don't let other people dull your sparkle.

Beth Stallwood: [00:51:14] I like that. Yeah. And you know, I always think I'm a person who. Personally, I'm really happy with being a geek and being a bit weird. And I've just kind of come to accept that in myself and love it. And just, and that also is like, be living authentically for me. Like if I want to nerd out about something, I'll no doubt about something and other people don't have to love what you love and it's okay to have those different things.

[00:51:36] So yeah, during the sparkle

Jordan Saxby: [00:51:38] slightly selfish for me as well, because one of my favorite experiences is just listening to someone talk knowledgeably about something that passionate about. And like, I don't like crocheting, but I could listen to a crochet and expert talk about crocheting for quite some time,

Beth Stallwood: [00:51:53] because it's the person you're interested in the passion behind it versus the actual subject.

[00:51:58] Yeah. So just be [00:52:00] interested in that stuff. Cool.

Jordan Saxby: [00:52:00] Yeah. Basically nerds. We want to listen to you. Don't stop yourself.

Beth Stallwood: [00:52:09] Final question from me is where can people find out more about you or get in touch with you or just, you know, hear more from you? Um,

Jordan Saxby: [00:52:19] so there's two strands. The first one is through my LinkedIn profile, um, and that's probably the best way to get in touch with me, um, and, uh, emails to Me directly work as well at Jordan at insightfulplayer at gmail.com.

Um, the second strand is very different, but, uh, one of my sideline activities is I designed tabletop role-playing games. And so I can also, if that's the sort of thing you're into, I would also recommend going to. Uh, [00:53:00] just pulling up the web address now system X emotion . itch. io for some strange little games about going on journeys down tow paths and all of that nonsense, very different, very different pitch for the end of this kind of podcast.

[00:53:14] But I think it's always good to celebrate the outside things we're doing as well as just the core

Beth Stallwood: [00:53:22] Definitely. So the side hustle, the sidelines, the things that you do for joy and excitedness versus the things that you do in your paintwork work or your job that, um, has a more traditional aspect. Yeah. So I love that.

[00:53:35] I'm totally going to have a look cause it sounds like lots of fun. Um, thank you so much, Jordan, for joining us today and for sharing your insight and for thinking about how we can get some more joy in our lives. I will definitely take those three. And bits of advice away. I'm going to be thinking about my ghostly supervisor this evening.

Jordan Saxby: [00:53:56] Don't give them more food, but like

Beth Stallwood: [00:54:00] I feel like my supervisor has quite a lot of power over me and I want to kind of break them down, down. Right. Break them down, understand who they are. Sometimes naming things makes a difference. So I think that, like, I see might need a name.

[00:54:16] Um, so I will work on that and I hope that everyone listening to this podcast take something away and it's able to do something to bring them some more joy in their lives. So thank you very much for joining us Jordan. And hopefully I'll speak again

[00:54:30] **Jordan Saxby:** [00:54:30] since. Yeah. Thank you. I've really enjoyed it.

[00:54:34] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:54:34] Thanks Jordan.

[00:54:34] Bye.

[00:54:39] I really enjoyed my conversation with Jordan. I hope you enjoyed listening to it as well, and a real, um, going round of different concepts and different things from actually, how do we, or how do we. Organizations and people who look after creating jobs and organizations create jobs and [00:55:00] define jobs and design jobs that have joy built into their behalf, that understanding of having practices versus just activities.

[00:55:10] And how do we build that tension to keep on learning and keep on growing and keep on doing things that will really help to build joy into life. So if you are a leader, if you are. Somebody creating jobs in organizations or defining or designing jobs, maybe that's something that you can take away and think about.

[00:55:28] I also think there's some great, really simple, practical advice here. The one thing that I'm taking away from today, it's really this idea of thought recording. And I know I am not a person who is vegan to generally I've tried it. I'm not sure it's really the thing for me yet. The idea of some sort recording to process, what's going on your brain to write things down and full sentences.

[00:55:51] To get them on the logic and the order within it. I think for me, that could be a way of momentarily in the moment when it's [00:56:00] needed creating some real helpful consideration in your brain. It's really understand what's going on. So that's the one I'm missing. Take away today. We'd love to hear what you think is podcast.

[00:56:10] We'd love to hear what you're doing and your actions. As a result of listening, you can go to create work joy.com. If you want to find out more about work, join the things that we do, and you can also follow us on Instagram and tag us in the things that you're doing. We'd love to hear that. And that's at create Work Joy on Instagram.

[00:56:30] Thanks very much for listening. I hope you enjoyed it. Um, go and listen to another episode and see what other advice we have for you. Thank you.