



## S2:E3 – Rachel Vecht | Parenting & Working

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**Beth Stallwood:** Welcome to the Work Joy Jam podcast. I'm your host Beth Stallwood founder of Create Work Joy. In this episode, I am joined by the wonderful Rachel Vecht and Rachel has an incredible background in education, as a teacher and now runs her business, Educating Matters, where she does the most incredible work helping parents to help the children with education, with life, with things that they find difficult. And I think over the last year and a half with things like the pandemic, this question of parenting and working and people having to do all these things at the same time, in a really different way to how they've managed before it's such an important subject.

[00:01:21] And also I want to say, I am not a parent person, unless you count me being a baby, mommy, which I am for my dog. And although you may be thinking, oh, if I'm not a parent, is this one for me? There are so many things here that I think go beyond what you can do as a parent. So much great advice. And I know I took loads from it.

[00:01:41] I'll pop on at the end to tell you what my takeaways are. So if you are a parent person, loads of great advice for you, if you aren't maybe have a listener, see what you can discover as well. So hair is over here, Rachel and I in our conversation all about this thing called parenting and how it really is one of the hardest jobs you can ever do.

[00:02:07] Hello, and welcome to the Work Joy Jam today we are joined by the fantastic Rachel Vecht, and I'm going to hand over to Rachel now to introduce herself and to kind of give us a little bit of her backstory and how she got to where she is today. So Rachel, over to you.

[00:02:25] **Rachel Vecht:** [00:02:25] Thank you. Thank you so much. So, so my background actually is I started out my career as a primary school teacher, which is something that I always wanted to do.

And I did that for around seven years. And I realized when I was teaching that parents were perhaps not being used enough of as a resource. And I felt that parents are a child's most important teacher. So I found myself giving quite a lot of guidance and support to the parents of the students. And then when I had my first child, which is coming up to 20 years ago, I wrote a really short course on for parents on how children learn to read and how to instill in children, a love of books. And I ended up, doing a talk in a friend's house where there was an investment banker sitting in the audience and he said, this is, you know, this is so helpful. Any chance you can come into my office, one lunchtime and give this talk to some of my colleagues that are a parent.

So it was like, okay, I don't mind anything goes, and that is literally where it started. And it was so well received that I then called a few other bags and then a few more dolphins. And then they said, well, how do you teach children to do maths? And how do I choose a school for my child's? And how do I deal with sibling rivalry?

[00:03:42] And it was never, I always thought I would stay in the education system, but it just grew and grew and grew. And then as I went through the experience of having my own four children. I was very much able to draw on teaching other people's kids, teaching, supporting my own and raising them, but then getting the opportunity to speak to tens of thousands of working parents and get a real sense of the challenges that they face.

[00:04:09] So it's really constantly evolving and growing organically, according to the need. And of course this last year has all been about how the hell do you work, and look after and homeschool at the same time. So I just kind of go with whatever topics people need support with.

**Beth Stallwood:** [00:04:26] I love it. Thank you so much for such great intro.

[00:04:31] And I love that you know, where you're having your own child and you're doing a little talk and suddenly it becomes over time that thing that becomes your career. And, uh, hopefully, and we'll talk about this in a bit, but it brings you some joy in your working life as well. Absolutely. I love it. And some things to ask you, and I'm going to put things out there, like parenting challenging in the last year. Even more challenging than probably it's been in a very, very long time. I will put the caveat out there that I am a non-parent person. I have relatives, my sister's got two kids and I've got a lot of friends with young kids who are in that zone of, or have been in the zone of trying to balance parenting and work and life and time for themselves. One of the things that we talk about in the Work Joy area of everything, a theory of life and theory of work is that work. If you put that label on things also includes the things that are outside of your job. So things you don't get paid for things like volunteering. And obviously parenting. So one of the things I'm thinking about is a bit of a perspective on this from my perspective where I see it. And I obviously work with a lot of parents. I know a lot of parents, it's a big thing here, and I've always labeled it possibly, and maybe I'm wrong, but the hardest job that you don't get paid for, and you have no training to make it happen. Absolutely.

**Rachel Vecht:** 1 million percent. I literally say to parents every day, parenting is the hardest job in the world with the least amount of training and you know, I've spoken to tens of thousands of parents over the last 26 years. And it doesn't matter what their background is, how they were raised, you know, who they are within a business or organization. Parenting is just the best leveler because we faced so many common challenges. And I, you know, outside the workplace for, for decades, I've been running like a positive parenting course and I've had teachers and doctors and psychologists on my course. And I'm like, why are you here? You must be a real expert in this. And they're like, no, no, I'm great with other people's jokes. I'm seriously struggling with my own. And you know, I can relate to that. Basically, children have the potential to push your buttons. Like nobody else in the world. Because we were so emotionally connected to them and so desperate to get things right. And then we kind of tie up their successes or failures with our own. And it's really hard to just stand back, let them be independent and own their own problem. You know, something, something really, which highlights this for me the other month.

[00:07:16] So I was interviewed on BBC radio about some work I was doing with an author. And the radio host said, he'd spoken to Mark Omrod. I don't know if you know who he is. He's the UK first triple amputee to survive the Afghanistan conflict. And he had told me this radio host that he's got three kids Mark and he said, homeschooling was the hardest thing he'd ever experienced in his life. And I'm thinking, how is that possible? If you are a triple amputee and you were told you have to be able to walk again, how can homeschooling be harder? But that's what he said. Gives you a sense of what it's been like for parents the last year.

**Beth Stallwood:** Parenting hard enough normal world, normal life, trying to work and parent, and do all the things that you want to do in the last year when that has included.

[00:08:08] Not just when kids have had to be at home, but also kind of the stress that kids are under understanding what's going on in the world and that things are changing and that, no, you can't go and see your grandparents or you can't see your friends or in that world is that it's a routine. It's been a really challenging parenting year.

[00:08:25] Hasn't it?

[00:08:26] **Rachel Vecht:** [00:08:26] It really, it really has. But on the other hand, parents, I mean a lot of the work that the parents, I work with it working full-time. And they've, they've just really, although it's been challenging, they've had that opportunity to deepen their relationship and connection with kids, with their children, spend so much valuable time with them and get to understand them better and possibly kind of rethink how they work in the future because they find you that time with them so much.

[00:08:55] **Beth Stallwood:** And so, in terms of joy and work joy. So obviously that's the topic of our podcast, but I'm really interested here is one of the things that I often find with, with parents that I'm talking to, that I'm coaching that I'm working with in organizations is this challenge of how do I do all of these things and do them well enough and you know, how do I do my full-time job or my part-time job or whatever work it is that I'm trying to do? How do I do that? And how do I look of my kids and do a good job with them? And then how do I actually have some like time for myself as well? And I think that's one of the biggest challenges I find when I'm talking to parents is there is not enough time to do all the things they want to do.

And they're always feeling like they're doing something badly. What, what's your advice around that kind of feeling and how do we help people move from that into something where they can feel like they're doing a great job or doing the best they can, and still able to have some joy in their life.

**Rachel Vecht:** What you've just described, echoes what I hear almost repeatedly every day and I, sometimes I sometimes feel myself. So we, you know, we want to have that time. There's three main areas. There's your work? There's your family and yourself. And especially parents tend to sacrifice. I call it, sacrifice yourself on the altar of parenthood. Anyone with caring responsibilities, you put yourself last.

And I always say to parents, self care is not selfish. If you are running on empty, you're not going to be able to look after anyone else. You know, it's that same concept of putting on an oxygen mask on

a plane before you help someone else? I normally start when I work with parents, I say the number one thing.

[00:10:49] Is to kind of establish your why or your purpose. Just, just take a bit of time to think what is really important to you and what do you value? And as children get older, even to create, create why call like a family mission statement together to give you that compass and destination. This comes from the idea of Stephen Covey habit number two, which is begin with the end in mind, so that you're constantly however much, you know, some days really struggling, keep reminding yourself why you do what you do, and also to really consciously define your boundaries, you know, for yourself, for your work and for your family and people aren't mind readers.

So make sure have you communicated those boundaries, you know, to your partner, to your child. To your work colleagues. I think the big challenge of, of what we've faced the last year is that everything is just mashed together, sleeping, working, eating, parenting, everything all in the same environment.

And we haven't had those, you know, even the commute to work gives you that, that boundary and that, that kind of break from one thing to another. So you've got to be, you know, when you're with your kids, be with your kids. Put your phone down and it, it, you know, it can be for 10 minutes, 10 minutes of really focusing and pouring your love and affection on them.

I call it special time. It's literally vitamins for their soul. It doesn't need to be half a day or a day just capturing those moments and then say, no, I've got 20 minutes. Now I'm going to work on this, this project. I'm not going to check my emails. I think that's the problem that a lot of time feels splintered. We let everything kind of merge together. So I think it's about creating a system that really works for you and trying to make some of those really boring routine things somehow happen on autopilot. Like especially being a parent, even if you're not naturally organized, it forces you to be and a little bit more structured.

And the other thing, the other thing I would say. I need to listen to this advice is to learn how to delegate. I always say to parents, ask yourself this question, whether your child is two or 20, what are you doing for them that they could be doing, learning to do for themselves? It's like humans are the only creatures that devote their energy to making that offspring happy.

[00:13:28] The rest of the animal kingdom. It's all about fostering competence to survive in the world. So getting your kids involved and being independent and taking responsibility, it's not like, or it's chores, but this helps to boost their confidence and self-esteem so they genuinely feel they're contributing.

[00:13:47] **Beth Stallwood:** It's really interesting. There's a few things I want to go back and pick up on. Cause I'm like, ooh, that's so interesting. And are also so many parallels with working life as well. When you think about these things, I'm loving this idea of like a family mission statement. Like, what is it we're actually trying to do here?

[00:14:02] What is our, what is our family kind of like motto or mantra or something that we always come back to? I think that's a really interesting idea. Mean if you think about organizations, right. Structure like a family. I mean, obviously they're much bigger and different ways of thinking, but so

many organizations now are really focusing on purpose, focusing on values, really focusing on what's the behavior.

[00:14:23] It seems like translating that and actually spending the time thinking about that for your family could be a really great thing to do.

[00:14:28] **Rachel Vecht:** Absolutely like schools do it organizations, charities, and I'm like, this is kind of your own mini, and there's no right or wrong, but it's having that conversation.

[00:14:40] With your partner and with your children when they're old enough and that, you know, for some, it could be, I don't know, like charitable work or work ethic, or just respect and empathy for others, but it's just actually tangibly kind of articulating what it is and is the way I'm living my life aligned with those values and those people that I really respect and admire.

[00:15:06] **Beth Stallwood:** A really good check-in as well. Like if something's not feeling right, is it because we're doing something that doesn't fit in with that? Is it because we've gone too far in one direction or another, and we haven't come back to what we're trying to actually do. Exactly. Exactly. I love that. So, so interesting.

[00:15:22] And then the other one on boundaries and wow. Boundaries is such a big topic to talk about. We could probably do about four hours diving into boundaries, but I'm loving this idea and I, this is one of the things. Work joy as well as that, when people hear that, they asse that we're trying to make everyone happy 100% of the time.

[00:15:40] And that is not at all, what life is like. It is about what is that 10 minutes of joy that you could just give yourself right now? What could you do in such a small way that gives you that little boost that gives you some joy. And I'm loving this idea that actually children don't need a hundred percent of your attention, but when you're giving them attention, give it to them in that small space of time.

**Rachel Vecht:** [00:16:04] I read last year, I read this New York times bestseller called A Time to Parent. And what that was saying is you can split parenting into, there's, there's four elements to parenting, provide, arrange, relate, which is all about relationships and teach. And there's a distinction between what you do as a parent and that's visible to your child and what is invisible.

[00:16:32] And when you start to analyze how you spend your time as a parent, you may be realized that quite a lot of it is you, you know, that being a parent takes up a little bit of your time, but if that time isn't visible to your children, You know, working as part of it because you're working to be able to feed them and clothe them but that occurs in the adult world, not in your child's world, so they don't see it in that way. So thinking about how your child perceives what you do and the time you spend together.

**Beth Stallwood:** I also think, and again from a non-parent, so it's a very different experience when I'm with my friend's kids or when I'm with my nephews, if you give kids 10 minutes of like real attention after 10 minutes, they get a bit bored of you anyway and wants to go and do something else.

[00:17:21] **Rachel Vecht:** [00:17:21] Ye. And what I mean, what it's about is because there's a lot of kind of helicoptering that goes on, especially with little kids. Like, even if you're playing with a Lego, oh no.

[00:17:32] Put the break like this, do that. It's really giving them that sense of control and autonomy. And it's just about your presence it's kind of like the power of showing up. That's all you need to do is just give them your attention and step into their world. So whether that is like, Oh, God, you can't imagine the things I've had to do with my kids, but dressed as a ballerina in a ballet class, or listen to my son for the five millionth time while he plays something on his DJ decks, which I hate the music.

[00:18:05] It's just seeing what my other child's like doing on Instagram or my worst it's having to do a Tik TOK dance, but it's just like, there's no agenda from the side of the parent. It's just. Give them that attention. And what I find off to it is there so much, they feel so much more connected and so much more co-operative like a lot of children's lives. It's being, it's being told what they've done wrong and being given instructions by adults. And that isn't really a relationship, but it's those pocket like people working parents think, oh, you know, of course what I always say. It's the parents that are at home and then not working. It's not as if they're spending all day long, doing arts and crafts and like taking their kids out all the time and doing amazing activities. It's just consciously making the most of those pockets of time. Whether it's work, whether it's your kids or whether it's with yourself.

A parent the other day told me she ran a bath for her five year old. And he absolutely refused to get in it. And she thought, do you know what? I haven't got the patience for this. I'm going to get myself a glass of wine. And I'm going to sit in that bar at five o'clock in the afternoon. And that's an example of self-care and she's like that 10 minutes felt like, you know, an afternoon ass, but I just so needed it.

And it's being realistic about how you use your time. And I, and I read somewhere else that said our perception of time is our reality. So it's not even about how you spend it, it's how you perceive it. And it's like being busy has become the status symbol, but actually we need to just step back sometimes and just press the pause button.

**Beth Stallwood:** And isn't it lovely when you do step into a child's world without any kind of agenda, without trying to get them to do something, their imaginations and the stories that they come up with are incredible. Aren't they?. You got to really understand a bit more about where they're coming from.

[00:20:06] **Rachel Vecht:** [00:20:06] Like adults, our best ideas do not come when you're sitting at a desk. Like you need that downtime. You need to be going for a walk. Or if you can't like force yourself to come up with this with problem solving and creativity, when you're sitting down, like the other thing is with adults, is we don't, I don't, I mean, I don't know why I'm saying this because I don't do this, but we don't spend enough time just like playing like that lightness of being where we haven't got any agenda for us.

[00:20:36] Am I saying even really includes exercise in that, because we know we need to do that, like for our physical health and it's always an agenda behind it, but just like being able to kind of play and improvise and be creative.

**Beth Stallwood:** [00:20:52] That play idea listening to Brene Brown- I love all of her work, it is so interesting, but she talked about how, when she realized through her research, but the people who were kind of living their full and best lives were the people that really engaged in play. And she was like, I can't understand that. I don't know why isn't there an agenda. And it's like, that's shock, but actually the realization of how important it is to let ourselves do that play thing, whatever that is for you, some kind of mental release or some kind of you know, as you say, exercise for adults has become something that you have to do versus something that you just want to kind of go and do and have fun with it. So such a great thing. And that's where kids can really teach adults, isn't it?

**Rachel Vecht:** And apparently women are particularly engaging. In play, like, you know, I don't know. It's like, let's go to a trampoline park, like which women would go and do that without children. I'm not saying that, but it's just thinking, when do you have that time? Just to, just to be without a plan. Most of what I say about parenting. I try and put in practice myself, but it's not my strong point.

[00:22:10] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:22:10] This might be one to be working on. Know, we're all, we're all imperfect there. Aren't we? And that's. Again, something I want to talk to you about is that this feeling that I get from a lot of parents that they're trying to be perfect.

[00:22:24] And then they're trying to be perfect at work and trying to do everything so that they create perfect children. And I'm just thinking that expectation on children probably isn't very fair either. Right? Make perfect happy humans.

[00:22:36] **Rachel Vecht:** No. And it's not, I mean, I always say to parents who are aiming for good enough, not perfect.

[00:22:42] I've got plenty of asks on my website about what it means to be a good enough parent. And also I have my, one of my other favorite sayings is expectations are resentments waiting to happen? There's no, there's no point setting unrealistic expectations either for yourself or your children. Because you're kind of, you're setting yourself up to fail.

[00:23:07] It's, it's much better to teach your kids like small, tiny, manageable steps, and having an objective we're working towards. And we're not there yet. Like the word yet is such a powerful word. If a child says to me I can't get through this math, I don't understand the vision. You can't, you know, maybe it feels like you can't do it yet.

[00:23:29] That doesn't mean you're never going to be able to do it. So it's absolutely. Dropping any idea of perfection.

**Beth Stallwood:** And I saw a great thing and it was one of those like mean things. They want me, I don't even know if I'm saying that. Right. Cause I'm not very cool, but, and it was like a picture of parenting from like a hundred years ago.

[00:23:50] And the parenting advice then was. Feed them wash them occasionally. And now the parenting advice is make sure they have a great education, making sure they have exercise, make sure they have an organic, vegetarian, vegan dinner, make sure that make sure that make sure that and that, that layering of expectations.

And I'm totally loving your phrase that they are resentments waste has happened because it's so true. Isn't it. Anytime you have that big expectation of people or yourself, you're always going to be somehow disappointed.

**Rachel Vecht:** I mean, the thing that I, when I started, like, when I started Educating Matters 20 years ago, I was trying to unlock for parents how best to educate their kids, how they learned to read, their maths. And then I realized no, This is not the priority. It's working on relationship, communication, connection, everything boils down to that. And like I said, attitude, motivation and mindset. The rest will fall into place. And so I say to parents that needs to be your priority, working out how you can deepen that connection and relationship, and really enable all children really want from their parents, is to feel heard and understood.

[00:25:05] And that's what we want from anyone, whether that's, you know, our own parents, our partners, our work colleagues, we just want that space to kind of be who we want to be and sit with our own feelings and not feel like we need to be, you know, someone else. And that's, I think if you focus on that, and you're just thinking, my main job as a parent is to raise an adult with all the qualities and characteristics that they will need to succeed in life. And there are so many days, you know, parents who were like a PA and a chef and a banker and an entertainment director and a cleaner and that, but actually we get so stuck in it. We're losing sense of, of this bigger picture, which is to prepare your child to kind of go out into the world and be independent themselves.

**Beth Stallwood:** And on that theme, one of the things I was really listening to you say, and really thinking isn't that a really good idea is what can kids do for themselves because that whatever age they are really does build resilience. And I was looking at a friend's Instagram yesterday, and every Thursday, that little girl, I think she must be about four decides what they're going to cook gets the ingredients and cooks.

[00:26:23] From a children's cookbook, obviously supervised by the parents. It's not like they're, you know, playing with gas without any kind of supervision, but from such a young. And I was like, wow, that's amazing. And it's something you see, so rarely it's not. And honestly, so many parents go, oh, what? We're going to feed the children's day, especially where we've been in lockdown.

[00:26:41] And every single meal and snack. And you feel like you are that kind of constant chef, but thinking about that, like from such a young age, building the ability to cook a life skill and something that they can really own. And I've never thought about making it a four year old or considering a four year old to be able to do that, but doing it successfully once a week.

**Rachel Vecht:** [00:27:00] Ye. I mean, that's just, if you start thinking about it, there are so many areas irrespective of their age, that kids can start to contribute. And when, and everyone was like, oh, I can't, I can't deal with this. Having scooting. I was like, forget about it. That's not what you're doing. Anyway, your kids are at the school of life and they are learning so much about, you know, what's involved in running a home and contributing and cooking and putting on a washing machine.

[00:27:27] Doing an online shopping order and you know, all the families that you're emphasizing whilst you're with them and getting that broader sense that we're part of a big community. And so they've, they've learnt so much this past year, which isn't on the school curriculum or an exam syllabus, but it's probably more valuable than a lot of this stuff, they learn in school, which is quite



controversial because I used to train teachers, I myself. But that's what I think a lot of what they're doing is Victorian. And I mean, that's a topic for another day.

**Beth Stallwood:** [00:28:06] We had Cath Bishop upon the first season of the podcast and we could have gone down the education route as well about how we, how are we teaching people to be people of the future and to be able to make it happen because the education system isn't really working for that. But again, probably not time on this one, but maybe we'll do a conversation later on about how could we change some of that thinking because you're right some of the stuff that I, I mean, firstly, some of the stuff that I have seen primary school children have to do, I could not do. And I would consider myself a fairly okay educated person, you know, there, there is no way I could do it. And thinking about what use is that going to be in the future for them in the future world, in the world of work in 20 years time?

**Rachel Vecht:** For jobs that haven't even been invented yet.

**Beth Stallwood:** [00:28:51] So actually there's something here. Isn't there about teaching kids to be adults teaching them how to do things right. Money, and how to do things like cooking and how to do things like having a great conversation, all of which are skills that they can take through life versus, I mean, I don't even know what some of those things were called, but some of the English or maths lessons that just completely blew my mind.

[00:29:13] And I was like, Hmm, but kids right now, like my, my watch can be more of a calculator than my brain can ever be. Do they really need all of that?

[00:29:22] **Rachel Vecht:** Exactly. And also because I mean, the school day is so structured. Well safe being at home. Of course it's been difficult, but they've learned so many like light work skills.

[00:29:33] So time management, so often they're set the work and it's up to them to get it done in the day. It's not like maths is from 11.05 to 11.40, and then the bells going and you're going to walk around the playground So they've learned about managing their time. They've learned about organizing themselves. They've learnt about how to deal with procrastination and if you don't feel focused and that's exactly what we do in our jobs as adults.

[00:29:58] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:29:58] For sure. And I'm also thinking about how many of the bits of advice you've given about parenting we could directly take and make it advice about managing and leading people.

[00:30:07] **Rachel Vecht:** That is what comes out every single session I do.

[00:30:11] So the other day I did a talk about how to help children manage and articulate their emotions and someone might align manager it. Oh, now I understand the best way to, listen to, you know, that person when they're really seriously kind of frustrated or overwhelmed. And now I realize why those conversations are not going so well.

[00:30:35] So much of it translates to. All relationships and basically how to communicate with anyone. And sometimes when I, when I speak in the corporate world, they can always hear it more easily. When you're talking about it through a child, it feels like less like you're, you're kind of criticizing them and then they make that link themselves.

[00:30:56] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:30:56] I mean, I just think about everything, literally, everything you said so far translates completely into. Are we giving people the tools that they, when we're training people, are we giving the tools they need to be able to do their job well, or are we training them how to do it by roads? Are we, you know, can we have that conversation that says, I noticed Rachel, that you, you didn't look so good in our meeting this morning is everything okay? Can you, you know, is there something going on when we see frustration and people often say things like, oh, well they're not a team player or something like that. You're like, actually there's something going on in their world. Why don't we have a conversation about it instead?

There's just so many great translations there. Here's the question for you because you said it there is that, you know, how do you help children? With that emotions. And I know we don't have time cause there's probably like four hours worth of content to talk about here, but I know that's one thing my friends and my family with their kids, they find really hard when kids are really emotional and they won't, they can't get them to tell them what's going wrong. I'd love to know if you've got any kind of quick top tips on how to do that.

**Rachel Vecht:** [00:32:03] Wow. You've just picked up on my favorite topic of conversation.

[00:32:06] So I I've been saying forever. But emotional intelligence counts way more than IQ to succeed in life and parents that worrying about your child, like getting 12 A stars, whether they know how to actually manage and articulate their emotions, because that's going to affect everything that they do later.

[00:32:26] So I love, I don't know if you've ever heard of Professor John Gottman, the founder of the Gottman Institute, but he kind of created this, this phrase of being an emotion coach for child and his books raising an emotionally intelligent child. But essentially it's all about when a person is experiencing an emotion, they're going to be behaving in a way that... If it's a child that you don't like, cause maybe they're ignoring you or being rude or throwing things across the room or not following instructions. And what we do is we just react to that behavior. But actually that is just literally the tip of the iceberg. The main problem underneath is the emotions and feelings that are driving that behavior.

[00:33:10] And the same thing applies to adults. So it's really about using some people call it active listening, reflective listening. It's just in that moment, your first priority. Is to get that person back to feeling calm because that they're thinking part of the brain is completely offline when you're triggered by your emotions.

[00:33:30] So it's literally just offering empathy and understanding, even if you don't agree with them. And you don't agree with how they're behaving, it's not asking questions and dismissing and you know, making suggestions and giving advice. It's literally just. I get it. I understand. I can see that you're really frustrated, or I realize that it's so hard to go back to school and get up at 6.30 in the morning when for three months you've been able to get out of bed at 8.30. It's not saying stay in] bed for another two hours, but you're just saying, I understand I I'm listening. And I get it. That that is literally the number one thing that you can do. And especially with young kids to give them the vocabulary to describe those emotions.

You know, we say to four year olds, you use your words. Well, they know what a tractor is or a cup, but how are they meant to know what it means to be frustrated or embarrassed? You know, you can't, you can't see an emotion. So we've got to start to share that vocabulary with them and help them to understand that everyone can feel however they want to. The behavior might not, will be acceptable, but that's secondary.

**Beth Stallwood:** [00:34:41] Because actually it's a bit like, isn't, it it's about treating the symptom rather than the cause. If you're treating the behavior, versus that what's, what's causing that behavior. You're going to just get yourself into a pattern of always doing that.

Whereas if, if you can, as you said, in that situation, when your emotions take over your behavior, [00:35:00] Having a very logical conversation isn't going to work because of your brain...

[00:35:05] **Rachel Vecht:** [00:35:05] Basically you're it makes it that the fight flight freeze is firing off on all cylinders. And that logical thinking part of the brain is like, has gone to sleep until you calm down you can't even access it. So you're wasting your breath, give advice or use logical reasoning.

[00:35:24] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:35:24] And for anyone who's ever been told to calm down, when they're a situation saying calm down, isn't going to work either. It's going to send like even more red mist.

[00:35:32] **Rachel Vecht:** There is a doctor in the US, Dr. Dan Siegel, and he has this phrase, it's name it to tame it. Literally just name the emotion in that way. Have you ever seen that movie Inside Out that kid's movie? It's literally you can see how patch her parents are pouring petrol on the fire. You want to engage, not in rage,

[00:35:54] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:35:54]. You see you're full of amazing advice, but again, I'm sitting here thinking, but this is the same for grown-ups.

[00:36:05] Oh all over it occasionally. Or we do that thing, I think as adults where we are feeling that emotion, but instead of actually saying anything about it, or instead of kind of going off in one, because most of the time we learned not to is we do that seething thing where everyone else can feel that there's something wrong, but you're not actually saying it, but there's just like this negative emotion pouring out of us.

[00:36:26] **Rachel Vecht:** And also to be really aware that we've got that in our brains, you've got these mirror neurons. Which means we mirror the emotions of each other. So it's being conscious. I mean, this applies again to work with without kids, like, even for your work colleagues of the, of that energy that you're radiating because people mirror it.

If you smile at someone in the street, they'll smile back. If you've ever seen a year olds having a tantrum in the supermarket, basically their parent is also having a miny tantrum.

[00:37:00] [00:36:59] **Beth Stallwood:** And then that, then everyone thinks, you know, being judged by other parents, it makes them even more smarter than again,

**Rachel Vecht:** PWA - parenting with an audience. Worst situation to be in because then you behave in ways. You never, you know, like, oh, parents are amazing at catastrophizing.

[00:37:20] You've no idea that the thoughts that race through your mind, in those moments without even consciously realizing. And that's why we kind of act the way that we then regret.

[00:37:30] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:37:30] I'll do a confession now. One of my earliest memories. I think it was on a Christmas Eve. I can't remember exactly when it was, cause I was quite young and uh, we'd gone to like some church service and my dad had come with us.

[00:37:44] My dad didn't like church. So he was like, oh, come to church there. And I remember being marched out of church by my dad and walked home, very, very sternly because I got bored and Cartwheel down the middle of the church aisle. Even if you think that parenting with an audience now, I think about us like, oh God, he must've felt so awful at the time.

[00:38:06] I was like, I was bored. Therefore I caughtwheels what's wrong with that. But kids don't have that same like logic or the same. We haven't learned to change. They haven't that to change that behavior by the judgment of others.

So, ye. I love that. And catastrophizing parenting with an audience, which happens well, I suppose not, not recently in terms of lockdown, etc but it definitely happens quite a lot.

[00:38:33] **Rachel Vecht:** Especially grandparents that, you know, you feel this pressure that maybe you can't parent in the way that you want to, because they just think you're giving in. The authoritarian side of parenting is not as popular as it was

[00:38:48] **Beth Stallwood:** It's not the same. It's a different, different world now. And, and you know, these mirror neurons is something we talk about in work Joy is around the fact that if you get some joy in your world, it is catching people will catch that Work. Joy. They'll go, oh, someone's got a smile on their face over there because they've done something joyful.

What's that all about? And it's happy. Subconsciously does it. And, and, and, and, but do you want that to be catching? Do you want the bus stuff to be catching all the good stuff and both of them? Well, so how do you make that happen? This is like all amazing, brilliant stuff. And there's so many parallels to the world of work and the world of parenting, you know, things like boundaries being really important.

[00:39:26] , so ye, definitely on board with that. Can we go back to boundaries for a minute before kind of we head in some quickfire questions is. Can people who find that hard, take a little step towards being clear on what their boundaries are about themselves, their family, their working life. What are some of your ways of making that work?

[00:39:49] **Rachel Vecht:** [00:39:49] I think you've, you've really got to personalize this. So you can't just inherit a system that someone else has is it's about starting with defining. What is important. So like one parent will say, oh, I allocate two hours on a Sunday morning when I catch up on all my emails during the week. And that just relieves a lot of pressure.

And someone else was saying, that is my worst nightmare. I need to know that we can completely clear. So it's giving yourself that time to, to think of a system that works. And even like little things, like if we're still working at home and the kids are back at school, you know, force yourself to schedule in 20 or 30 minutes to actually walk outside at lunchtime. It's it, you know, that idea of

smart goals. I can't remember specific measurable, achievable, or whatever they are time related, but just tiny, tiny steps. One at a time, really small with little tweaks can make a huge, huge difference. So you've just got to get started somewhere, but give yourself the time to actually.

Get off that hamster wheel and just stop and think, hang on. How can I just make this work differently? Even things like using time. Right. The kitchen timer or that Pomodoro technique where I'm setting the timer for twenty-five minutes and I'm not going to look at my emails. I am just focusing on this specific piece of work when that timer goes off.

[00:41:16] And then I'm going to spend, you know, 15 minutes with my child, or know that when they walk in from school, cause you don't not be able to do that for that much longer. I am going to go and greet them at the door and I'm just going to have, you know, 15 minutes of snuggle time and just to catch it. But you just got to consciously think about what works for you and, and really small, manageable, achievable, realistic..

**Beth Stallwood:** [00:41:41] And that's such great advice and it's so often we think don't we, that we need to change everything because something's not working out or we don't feel in control of what's going on, or, you know, we're not making the time in the right places at the moment is we think we have to change everything, but actually just changing one small thing, doing one small thing a day, and then adding on another small thing when you've got that as a habit can really make that work.

**Rachel Vecht:** [00:42:05] And it is, it is kind of creating those habits that you suddenly get into that flow and routine so that you don't even have to think about it so much that the thing that people really struggle with, especially parents is called like this mental load, all the stuff we are carrying around in our heads, thinking about what we need to do.

I mean, I feel it, but state before kids and running my own business, how can I, how can I just get some of that stuff out of my head? And make it happen almost like on autopilot and that relieves some of that pressure. And the other thing is how do I make some things feel less urgent to, how do I make more time for the things that are really important, like exercise or one-to-one time with your child or picking up the phone to a friend, but then not urgent because it's the things that feel really, really urgent that just suck our time and energy because they have to be dealt with like now or by this evening. And that's what creates like a pressure cooker of stress. So how can you be a bit more proactive and not make everything urge? I mean, you can't always do that because sometimes things pop up that you hadn't expected, especially with.

**Beth Stallwood:** And like, this is all trying to do it within real life. And again, you're thing about, let's not aim for perfection here is there's going to be days when you can't do all this stuff, there's going to be something that happens at work. That's going to take your attention. You're not going to be able to do it, or there's going to be something that happens in your family, which means you can't do the urgent thing at work because that's the real life of where we're at.

But just those little small things and. A lot of what I see going on is that mental load becomes so big, but that it's never been shared or vocalize, or is that hang on a minute, how do we actually deal with all of these different things? You know, who could I delegate it to? Could the kids do that themselves?

**Rachel Vecht:** And the same at work? Like how can I share, like your colleagues are not, they're not mind readers. If you haven't even worked out for yourself, let alone communicated it to someone else. How's anyone going to even know. Like someone else might come up with such a great solution that just takes that, that pressure away and you didn't even know it was there because you've got to first consciously articulate what it is and then talk about it with someone else, whether it's work related or something in your family.

**Beth Stallwood:** Even if it is both of those. So it might be actually saying to your team, actually, Sunday's a real precious time for me.

So if you're emailing me on a Sunday, I'm not going to respond until the Monday, just so you know. It's just, it's just letting people know. But if you haven't, if you haven't worked out for yourself, it's very hard to communicate. And that, that idea, problem shared problem harvest usually actually a problem shared is someone else has a better solution than you've be able to come up with yourself and you can find some ways of doing it.

[00:44:54] And also it just builds other people being able to empathize with your situation and know what's going on for you.

**Rachel Vecht:** [00:45:00] Exactly. As it might. I love the saying, what is shareable becomes bearable, but just talking about it will help you to get often helps you to get that clarity. That's the other benefit of like using this kind of emotion, coaching or reflective listening, because as you talk through something and begin to calm down, you see how to solve the problem.

[00:45:20] Very often yourself, that person isn't actually really doing anything. A therapist doesn't solve your problems. They just help you see, articulate what they are and then you talk through them yourself.

[00:45:35] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:45:35] Love it. Right. I am going to move us on to some quick fire questions for you, Rachel, if you're happy to do this, I mean, we could talk for probably another three or four days about parenting and all of your amazing ideas, but I'm, I'm, I'm loving the little things that you've got here.

[00:45:48] Like shareable becomes bearable so true in everything that we do in life, right? There's something that's going on in our head. We tend to catastrophize that we tend to make it bigger than it airs. We don't find all the solutions. I love it. So quick fire questions over to you. It's for you personally. And obviously I'm bringing up four children running your own business. You haven't got it. It's not like you're sat around going. I've got it all perfect here, but in your life, what is guaranteed for you to bring you a little bit of work joy?

**Rachel Vecht:** [00:46:19] I think it is knowing, especially through all these talks and support, I'm giving that every day, somehow I'm trying to help a family improve that relationship with their children and family life and just, you know, being authentic and trying to make that small difference, that tiny tweak, that suggestion of an idea in someone's mind that can actually be really, really, , contribute to a change at home.

**Beth Stallwood:** [00:46:49] That is so lovely. And so one of the things I do know for sure is because I have spoken to some people who have been to your talks, there's sometimes it's not even just a

small difference you make, it's like a total game changer by getting people to think about doing these different things. So fantastic.

[00:47:03] Love it. What book are you currently reading?

**Rachel Vecht:** [00:47:07] Well, I am reading a book that I've already read, but I decided to read it again because it was mentioned the other day in The Times, it's called How To Raise Successful People and it is by she's called like the godmother of Silicon valley. She has literally seen it all.

Her name is Esther Wojcicki, what'd you kick here, I think is how you pronounce that. But basically it's like stop hovering and helicopter parenting and focus on what you really need to do to create capable, successful people. And she, she says, I think the, what the anagram is trick, trust, respect, independence, collaboration, and kindness.

**Beth Stallwood:** [00:47:52] Love that. What great five things if we had a whole nation of kids who are growing up to learn those five things would be incredible. Wouldn't it love that. What is in your life the most useful, the most helpful bit of advice that somebody's given you, that you always find yourself coming back?

[00:48:14] **Rachel Vecht:** [00:48:14] Just never worry about what other people think and always do what feels right for you.

[00:48:20] And parenting has become a bit of a competitive sports. I keep saying to parents, just, you are the expert on your child, focus on what you're doing and just don't worry about what anyone else

[00:48:31] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:48:31] Uh, and in, in life as well, like worrying about what other people think often leads you down a road.

[00:48:37] You don't want to go down anyway.

[00:48:41] **Rachel Vecht:** [00:48:41] It's a waste of Headspace.

[00:48:44] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:48:44] Totally love it so what is one really practical, but of advice for our listeners? That is something that they could go and do today. Really simple to help them get more joy in their working lives especially if they are working parents.

[00:49:04] **Rachel Vecht:** [00:49:04] I think to get more joy, not in your work, just in your working life, but just generally relationships with anyone. It goes back to all those things I was saying about trying to ensure that the really important people around you feel heard and understood, and really try and learn to listen. So listen to anyone in any situation, , just empathize, put yourself in other people's shoes even if you don't agree with them, just try and have those kinds of glasses on where your job is. Well, you is need to be open, but just to listen and understand and that can help with so much kind of resolving conflict and difference. And I'm massively into diverse team inclusion. It's just being open minded and listening.

**Beth Stallwood:** Love that. And I have a little phrase is that if you are truly going to listen and you're going to step into someone else's shoes and understand things from their perspective, the first thing

you have to do is take your own shoes off because stepping into someone else's shoes with your own shoes on, you're just judging it from your perspective.

[00:50:12] If you take your own shoes off and you're genuinely in there to understand where they're coming from and not to just find a way of disagreeing or putting your thing in there is to really get under the skin of somebody else's perspective and that world such a great bit of advice. Rachel, it's so amazing to talk to you.

[00:50:30] I would love for you to tell our listeners where they can find out more about you and the work you do, because I think there's gonna be a lot of people really interested in your advice around parenting. So tell us more about where we can find out more about you and Educating Matters.

[00:50:46] **Rachel Vecht:** [00:50:46] You can go to my website, which is [educatingmatters.co.uk](http://educatingmatters.co.uk).

[00:50:49] And that is a blog section with various articles on different categories. So there's lots on there about it mentioned coaching and growth mindset and what life integration and everything else. I'm not massively in social media other than LinkedIn, which I love because I genuinely I'm learning from it every day.

[00:51:08] So I do like to kind of share and comment on that those, I would say are the main places to find me and I either provide support, in corporates, in schools. And I also work a lot with, with group to parents and individuals. So there's lots of ways you can kind of access my support through various routes.

**Beth Stallwood:** [00:51:30] Fantastic. And we will put those comments into the show notes and the links so that people can click directly through and find out more about you and about your fantastic work. Rachel, it's been incredible having you on the Work Joy Jam today. Your advice is so good. And even not being a parent person, I feel like I could be a better honorary auntie to lots of my friends, kids as a result of what we've talked about today.

[00:51:55] And I really think that there's so many parents, people out there who can benefit from this] conversation and take some of those that will actually. To make a difference to their parenting and their working lives. So a huge thank you for being on the work joy jam.

[00:52:22] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:52:22] Thank you all for listening to my conversation with Rachel, there are so many things that I have taken away from that and beyond the parenting subject, but just in the way of great advice for life and for work joy. I loved how Rachel talked about how planning is really important and it's important for our children, but it's also important for us as grownups.

[00:52:42] At what point do we stop investing in that and stop thinking? It's a really important thing. And I know one for me that when I play, I get more joy. And I'm able to really focus on the things that make the biggest difference. So something I'm definitely going to take away there. I also love a couple of the sound bites that really come from it.

[00:53:00] I love something short that just kind of grabs my attention and that name it to tame it when there's an emotion there, whether that's in yourself with your kids, whether it's. People that



you work with actually sitting down, having the empathy, say I get it. It's hard. Let's talk about it. Let's name it.

[00:53:17] Let's be able to tame it in that way can make a massive difference. And I also love the one because I'm a great believer in the power of connection and people and conversations. To help this shareable become a bearable, what can you share and how can it help you? And how can it help other people to be a person who can share things with you and my final piece that I'm really taking away.

[00:53:40] And it's one that it's really hard to do, but I, in principle I'm so, so engaged with it is the never worry about what other people think and stay, if you can know, and understand to stay true to your bodies and your way of doing things and how you want to make it. Right for you that we shouldn't really be worried about what other people are thinking [00:54:00] about, how we do things.

[00:54:02] So huge. Thank you to Rachel for joining me on the podcast, such a great conversation do you go and find out more about Rachel if you're interested also, if you want to find out more about Create Work Joy, you can find us on all the socials, Twitter, LinkedIn. Instagram Facebook @createworkjoy

We also have a website, [www.createworkjoy.com](http://www.createworkjoy.com), where you can find more information about the podcast episodes about the coaching program, the Work Joy Way. At about our growing community of people Club Work Joy. It's been great having you listen to our podcast today. Thank you for joining me. And I hope to have you listen again.