



S2:E9 – Kathryn Palmer Skillings | When Volunteering & Inclusion Collide

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Beth Stallwood: [00:00:00] welcome to the Work Joy Jam podcast. I'm Beth Stallwood, your host and founder of Create Work Joy. In this episode, I am joined by Kathryn Palmer Skillings who I was introduced to by one of the people who have been on the Work Joy Way coaching program. And Kathryn has a really interesting background in the world of work.

Somebody who has always worked with volunteers. And I know that's a subject that a lot of people are really interested in both because they get a little of joy from volunteering. And because it's a really interesting place to be. And I also asked Kathryn to come on because she has a side hustle and so many people, you know, people who are listening here, people I'm talking to are people who have, or who are interested in having a side hustle. And often people talk about having a side hustle and that being the place where they get all their joy from, and it makes work okay or bearable. And in Kathryn's case, Kathryn really loves her day job if you call it that her employed job, as well as really loving her side hustle. And I thought it's a really interesting study in how you can actually get joy from both and how they can complement each other. And Kathryn has two very different jobs here, but when we talk about her world of work, actually, you really see the connection. So I hope you enjoy this episode with Kathryn I know I did.

Hello and welcome to the Work Joy Jam. I'm really excited for this episode to be joined by the wonderful Kathryn Palmer Skillings. And we're going to talk about some interesting things, around. Volunteering and around things like your side hustle, but not necessarily just because you don't like your main job and all kinds of things around inclusion as well so really excited that Kathryn has joined us today. But before I start asking lots and lots of questions, Kathryn, I would love for you to introduce yourself properly better than I can. And to tell us a little bit about your story and how you got to where you are today.

Kathryn Palmer-Skillings: [00:02:45] Thank you, Beth. And thank you so much for having me. I'm really excited to be here on the Work Joy Jam so I suppose, how do I get to where I am? Uh, so I've spent the last, nearly 20 years I realized which is slightly terrifying creating a career that has been really centered, mainly around kind of three things, uh, volunteering and development, inclusion and learning, learning, and development.

So training, learning resources, things like that, and I've done that predominantly in the kind of third sector. So mostly charities, big and small, heritage organizations. So I've been at a museum and some public body type places. And especially as you can never quite quantify. And so, but really all of my career has been about people and people making change and people kind of being authentic to themselves and intentional and just really having a path where they can, where they can do something really amazing. And I love that and I still do that. And it's still my full-time day job, uh, big old national charity and it gives me, it gives me huge joy actually, if that's not too cheesy to say that so soon.

Beth Stallwood: [00:04:00] You're allowed to say that right up front.

Kathryn Palmer-Skillings: [00:04:03] The joy, even though, even on tricky days, I have a lot of joy and I mean, lucky to be able to do that. And I can't ever see myself not doing that to be honest right now, especially in case my manager's listening. Over the years so there's always been things that I've been particularly drawn to and especially I've had this, got a hankering to the something additional, especially around people and inclusion and maybe having my own kind of business. So having that kind of element of being, you know, kind of out there on my own. The past few years, I mean, many years, I guess now I've been to lots of weddings as I'm sure everyone who is, you know, pushing the 40 has and quite a few last few years, a few of those have been humanist weddings. And I went to one a couple of years ago now of a really dear couple of friends of ours. Infact, my partner was one of the best men and it was a beautiful wedding and it was a humanist wedding and they chose that because they had vastly different kinds of cultures and backgrounds and all sorts of kind of things that I wanted to meld together. And they knew that a traditional wedding ceremony just wasn't going to feel authentic. And I sat there and watched the ceremony and I thought that's what I want to do and it wasn't getting married again, have another wedding, that was fine, but I really loved the idea of being the person that could create that experience. And that could support a couple to create that, that moment of joy actually at the start of there wedding, so yeah now on top of my day job, I'm now an accredited humanist wedding celebrant, which means that I, I conduct create and conduct personalized bespoke wedding ceremonies for couples who want a non-religious ceremony and in England and Wales, that probably means that I do celebrant led ceremonies. At the moment of recording they are not legal within England and Wales, unfortunately, but they are legal in Scotlan, Northern Ireland and Jersey. But we still have a number of couples in, in England and Wales who choose humanist or celebrant led, because they want that personalized experience.

[00:06:39] They want to get away from kind of fitting themselves into a box. It doesn't quite feel right. So, yeah, so I guess for me, I just, I just love humans. I love people. I love being with people 2020 was tough. I think I'm just really passionate about creating those experiences and yeah. Marking milestones and all sorts of things. But for me, it's about like kind of ritual and that celebration.

Beth Stallwood: Amazing. It's such a great story of kind of where you got to. And well, I now have as well is there's so much assumption made about people who have side hustles is that they do it because they're trying to get out of their day job.

[00:07:23] Talking to you about, there is this isn't about getting out of your day job because you love your day job and you find lots of joy here, but you find even more joy doing this as well. So it's not a

side hustle instead of as a side hustle as well as your main job and I'm really interested, so maybe we'll go down this road for a bit about talking about working with volunteers. And obviously if you're working with volunteers in that world or working in the kind of the third sector or different areas. I'm just really fascinated about this because volunteering has so many benefits to it for organizations who are trying to kind of get stuff done for the people who benefit from the people who volunteer.

But also there's so much research isn't there about what volunteers get out of volunteering and how amazing it can be for your own levels of joy. So tell me a little bit more about that world to start.

Kathryn Palmer-Skillings: So I think you're absolutely right. And it's, it's a kind of mantra that I have led with all three being involved in that world is that it has to be kind of truly mutually beneficial.

[00:08:28] There has to be something in it for...sometimes, I think for both parties sometimes I'd say, well, three parties. So if it's both parties, it's about that... Uh, you know, the kind of organization and, uh, the volunteers involved. So it has to work both ways, but also a great former manager, actually in that museum space when I was in London Transport Museum. Coolest museum, just going to say.

[00:08:55] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:08:55] I enjoyed it.

[00:08:56] **Kathryn Palmer-Skillings:** I'm a big bus nerd, so you can imagine the joy I got every day there, but he used to say everything has to be a triple win and it had to work for the communities who are serving the museum and the people who, who were volunteering. And for me, I think that's so important and this, and you are right in saying there's so much evidence that you can get such joy out of seeing the change you're making.

[00:09:23] And I think that's really important as well and, and understanding that there is usually, not necessarily every organization, there's usually a way to be really involved and to make a great change, uh, in some way, whatever your skill set, whatever your motivations, whatever you want to do it, they usually is a way. And it might not be always the most perfect fit in every organization, but there's a way to do something. I think that's really important too.

Beth Stallwood It's so interesting that, and I love the idea of the community for the museum, for the people that, that, that triple win factor and the idea that they're volunteering can give you joy.

[00:10:02] And whether that is your volunteering for a cause that you really care about or something that you kind of totally nerd out about. Like, if you're a nerd for buses, I imagine working with the transport museum, like, wow, volunteering, there could be cool. Or if you love the theater, volunteering there, you know, there are so many things that you can do, but also this idea, and I love this one because I think I'm always the nerdy who puts my hand up for anything like this, is in the work you do right now. And the things you're doing in your day job. There are probably opportunities to volunteer and put your hand up to do something like, you know, is it organizing a party? Is it, you know, becoming part of a network or starting a group of people or, you know, whatever there is a social supports and social group or something, there's usually something you could put your hand up and get involved in beyond your day job.

[00:10:49] **Kathryn Palmer-Skillings:** [00:10:49] Definitely. And I think I am. So I often joke that there needs to be some sort of anonymous groups of people like me. I am a compulsive volunteer. I think that's an oxymoron and literally cannot stop myself. No, probably figuratively. I get sort of by a musically figuratively cannot stop myself, putting my hand up. So, as well as my, in my day job, I have obviously my day job, which I'm learning in development professional, but I also am the network lead, for the staff network. I have previously been involved in other kinds of networks like that. Right now it's a bit different because of things going on. But yeah, so even within my day job I have kind of a volunteering role within my day job. And then on top of that, I volunteer outside of work, at least three places. And I'm, and I'm celebrant, which is a freelance career.

[00:11:39] And technically I still have an inclusion freelance business, but so, you know, I need to put my hand down occasionally, or maybe I don't.

[00:11:52] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:11:52] You're not one of these people who needs to find more time to be able to do other things. You need to find some time to not do anything by the sounds of it.

[00:11:59] But then again, I always think that if the things bring you joy, you find the time for them right. You will find the space for them in your life when they it's, when these things don't bring you joy, that they feel like a burden or they feel like you don't want to do them anymore.

[00:12:14] **Kathryn Palmer-Skillings:** [00:12:14] Yeah absolutely.

[00:12:16] And I think it's really important to know in this whole, this, so I'd say, you know, there have been jobs in the past where I haven't felt the joy I've seen, you know, I've believed in the course, I've understood that logic. That's a good thing, but maybe it was the wrong fit, the wrong organization. And in those cases, I think it's really important to take that a step back and say, it doesn't mean I don't care about this amazing work you're doing as a, as a charity, whatever it is, but this isn't right for me right now.

[00:12:48] And being able to understand that, because I think some can feel a bit guilty about that. It doesn't mean you don't care about whatever amazing course are serving, of course not. But you also have a right to feel joyful in your day job. Uh, it's not about, you know, I think it's not about being a martyr to, uh, you know, to a particular cause or thinking you have to go ahead with it.

[00:13:10] So I think making that change is really important

[00:13:14] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:13:14] For sure. And I love the idea. You have a right to feel joyful in your day job. You don't, you shouldn't have to suffer for a third of your life, basically, which is what you spend at work.

[00:13:25] **Kathryn Palmer-Skillings:** [00:13:25] Obviously not all day every day.

[00:13:28] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:13:28] I was about to say we're on the same page here. Cause like at the beginning we were talking about, you know, you find your work really joyful. That doesn't mean that every hour, every second of every day, you're like bouncing around like an excited tigger, cause there's stuff that still annoys you. Right. There's things that aren't as joyful.

[00:13:46] **Kathryn Palmer-Skillings:** [00:13:46] Yeah, and I think that's fine.

[00:13:47] I think, uh, in fact, as we joined the court, I said to you, I've had a bit of a day, but I still, you know, I still need that. I love, I ended up going to, and even if I have a bit of a day, I know. Then obviously it's a Friday when we're recording it. So if it wasn't, if tomorrow I was back at work, it won't be as bad tomorrow. There'll be a lovely, wonderful thing that happens. There's still joy that I've got that I'll be doing today in my day job.

[00:14:15] So there'll be a joyful bit at the end of the day when we have our team get together the time. And that's really important. There's always some element of joy found. Even if some days are less joyful.

[00:14:26] **Beth Stallwood:** We all have those days where it's less joyful sometimes it's because things happen. Sometimes we just get our bed on the wrong side of bed and we just grumpy, some days like the moon's in the wrong position, if you believe that kind of stuff, like whatever it is, there are reasons why we don't find it.

[00:14:41] But I think that the thing we're talking about here. You know that tomorrow there'll be better things and you'll be able to enjoy some of those things. You know, that you can create some more of those opportunities if you need to. Like, is it, I always find if I've had a couple of days where I haven't spoken to many people, I will feel more grumpy than if I go and have a conversation with someone.

[00:14:58] So booking a conversation makes life easy. So it's about finding those things that you find joyful and they will be different from everybody. Now you get lots of joy maybe from looking at buses, I would think. Yeah that's a bus. But they'll be other things I find joy from. I was talking to someone this morning about, one of the things that I find absolute joy from, which my husband looks at me and goes, what are you doing? Is some like open water, cold water swimming. I find it absolutely amazing. And I talked to someone about this morning and they went, no, just no. No. Well, what, what floats our boat for joy will be different for each of us find it and do more of it. And don't be ashamed of it. Like if you, if you love buses and you want to nerd out about buses, go for it because that's what you like doing.

[00:15:51] **Kathryn Palmer-Skillings:** [00:15:51] And I think for me, that's really central to it is I, it's funny. I think, especially, I think so I've gotten more experienced as well. I've come to know myself a bit better and you know, I've done a bit more. I guess as to what they use in it, uh, that I really realized that if I can align whatever I'm doing to my values and to being authentically me, then, then I will find joy in it. Even if I have a rubbish day, uh, I know even on my rubbish days, all I'm doing is genuinely making a difference. I know I'm in the right place and that's really important. That's I mean, what I get joyful and again, with those 2020 restrictions, it's almost like it's almost as if I like hosting, but sometimes what I'm literally doing is hosting people in my life or in my job and that my sound stressful, but I love that, but I love making sure everyone's having a great time.

[00:16:48] I love making sure everyone's included and that has so and so met so-and-so because actually they can really work really well together and making that connection. And for me, as long as I know I've got those elements then I absolutely know I'm making a difference. And if I know that my work is that, you know, making a difference to the people we serve ultimately, or helping people understand their own value, their own inherent worth, if it's the inclusion piece that I'm doing, then I think that's really key.

[00:17:18] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:17:18] I love it. So really connecting there, what what's important to you, your values around making a difference, making people feel included, connecting people together. If you can do all that and use your skills of hosting at the same time, you're kind of in the tick, tick, tick, ding, ding, ding. I like this, world.

[00:17:36] **Kathryn Palmer-Skillings:** [00:17:36] Yeah, absolutely.

[00:17:37] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:17:37] And it's interesting you say that about kind of the growth journey is I think it takes us well. It's certainly took me. Although I am a total nerd for work. So I do love to work. I always have done, which is probably why I find the work joy thing a real passion of mine, but it takes a while I think in the world of work to really set up who you are.

[00:17:58] So there's a lot of talk about being authentic and living to your values and stuff, but they don't just magically come to you. When you first start work, you really have to explore them. And you learn through living through the things that you do, like giving through some stuff that you don't like, you know, Great colleagues you learn from them. You might learn from great bosses or you learn just as much I think from bosses who aren't so great and organizations where the fit isn't quite right to navigate yourself to probably where you are now, which is knowing yourself well enough to know the kind of things that you need to be working on.

[00:18:31] **Kathryn Palmer-Skillings:** [00:18:31] Yeah absolutely and I think it's really important and it might sound counterintuitive on a kind of joy podcast so that I think it's almost important that it's not perfect when you don't enjoy it at the time. But to even to be in situations that, you know, very, very wrong. And I have been in those, or I think actually, you know, whether that's triggered my, my dislike for unfairness or inequality and all stuff like that, and I've seen it happen or fail to happen.

And so when you're in it, it's very easy to think, oh, I'm a bit it's me. And to not move, you know, to not going to get yourself out of that, but I think once you do and you look back on it, what might've been very difficult time. I think it's really enabled me to go well, actually, I'm not going to put myself back in that situation ever if I can help it.

[00:19:22] And hopefully I would recognize that again sooner and, and make the change and whatever that changes, it can be speaking out. It can be getting extra support and it could be an extreme cases moving on, who knows, but you know, it's about recognizing that you know, that there is joy to be had and finding how we can navigate out of that if that makes sense.

[00:19:43] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:19:43] I often think that if we take all of those experiences where we have struggled, like, you know, if you're in the wrong organization and it takes you a while to work that out, or if the role doesn't quite suit you and you need to think about, is there a different role here because I love this workplace, you know, is you kind of have to go through it to understand it.

[00:20:01] So you can't look at it in advance and go, yeah that's not going to work for me. So I just won't go there. You have to experience it.

[00:20:09] **Kathryn Palmer-Skillings:** [00:20:09] Absolutely. Yeah. Equally on the flip side, you might want to see thing go. I mean, not sure about that, but I'll try it and then have a really great experience.

[00:20:19] And, you know, and I think it can work both ways and I've certainly experienced it both ways, and I think that's really important. Like you say that the experience is just as important, I think too, to be a bit transport nerdy, but you know, it's partly journey, not just this a destination. That used to be somewhere written when at the museum.

I think it's really true, I think it's very experiencing that and getting through that and understanding what you can take from it. And it does open other opportunities as well. So I know I wouldn't be as personally, I don't think I would be as strong in my inclusion headspace, if I hadn't had some experiences that were less than inclusive.

[00:21:04] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:21:04] And that's it. Isn't it it's like you then sometimes find your passion for it and find your, actually, this is something I want to work towards having more of, because I felt the, I felt the negative end of that person or I've experienced some of those things that I don't like. So lovely Segway cause I literally wrote down the wedding occasion said, right. So here we go. Nicely done, Kathryn, let's Segway into your passion around inclusion, and I'd love to know from you, obviously you've experienced some of those things where you don't feel included and that's a really horrible feeling, but also how, how your interest in that world and how it's driving, what you do, both in your paid job and what you do in your wonderful side hustle as a celebrant.

[00:21:49] **Kathryn Palmer-Skillings:** [00:21:49] So I think for me, it drives me because it's, it's what I live every day as, as a pretty kind, caring, disabled person with a capital D, then actually for me, that's really important. It's more, you know, what I experience is how I view the world and how I perceive things. So, I mean, it's how people perceive me and I'm, I'm proud of that.

[00:22:12] And I think that's really important to, to kind of say out loud. For me, what that does mean though, is I, I truly believe in, so there's two ways of thinking and this always debate on this and I'm not going to the huge theoretical bits of it. But ultimately the way I look at things is much more along this line called the social model, which views, uh, disability, or being disabled as essentially a context dependent situation.

[00:22:42] So I have not everyone looks at it this way. This is my way. So I'm owning it, and it's about, I have an impairment I have, you know, in terrible terminology a bit that is different. You could say. So I have that, that is standard. That doesn't move that doesn't chop and change that for me. That's, that's, that's a fact and it's not a bad thing, and this is not a good thing.

[00:23:07] It's just the thing. Is that being brunette, it's like having brown eyes. Whatever, but, what happens is the reason I experience things that aren't inclusive is because actually the context around me isn't always accessible. It's not always built to include everyone, you know, systems, processes, spiral staircases to loos in the pub, always my favorite pub of all places, but, where wobbly!

But things like that. So the bit of me that's different, isn't going to change and that's, that's fine. I'm cool with that. What can change or should change? The context around you and to kind of put them into perspective if I can. So when I, back in the day, I used to work at a Scope and I had a colleague who I would sit in the office who was paralyzed from, you know, kind of half way down the chest downwards.

[00:24:04] And, uh, well, it still would be in an accessible office. I'm sure I know I'm not been there for years, but at the time Scope offices hugely accessible and really kind of forward thinking. And this chap who was a full-time wheelchair user. And, you know, a lot of people, I think if you didn't know, you'd look at him and go for it. He's a disabled person. He used to quite openly say that he, the soon as he came into the Scope office, he wasn't disabled anymore. He could do everything he needed to do on an equal level with that. Not in the same way as others, but on an equal level. So actually his, you still got the person starting going anywhere, but his disabledness, for want of a better word, lessened, and it is context dependent. So that's how I always do things like I'm, I'm not that fussed about having an impairment. There I said it, but I'm really fast when stuff is actually built to make my life difficult. That's really frustrating and there is enough ableism going around. To know that there's enough having to.... And I take that and I said that I'm, I also know that I'm in a privileged position. I'm a white cis gendered women in the Western world who is disabled. Therefore I'm on, you know, I do check my privilege. I understand I'd have much harder time if I was intersecting in any other way.

So that's kind of, I spoke on that more than I meant to, but, but that's kind of the perspective I look at. So the reason that drives me is then I think well actually that's what drives me. Everything I do should be able to flex everything I do should be designed every, you know, my day job, every course I design every resource I made for learning every experience for learning for any volunteer.

[00:26:03] Should be able to entirely flex to make sure it fits whatever need they have. And it's not just the same people. All humans have access requirements. I, someone find me human who doesn't have one. Because if you define that as being something that makes you access your life and enjoy your life and get on with things and perform at your best, and that actually you could argue how you take your tea is an access requirement.

[00:26:32] I want to get to that. I mean, I'm being a little bit facetious, but I used that example in inclusion training, because everyone has things that they need to make them feel healthy and safe and included, and their differences. Some have been kind of normalized and some have been seen as being really specific.

[00:26:50] So when I'm looking at my day job, I'm trying to make sure that everything I do can offer that experience and in celebrancy I think it's an even bigger opportunity because the wedding industry is starting to try and be better, but it's still filled with ableism, and that's not necessarily active people trying to be horrible, obviously, but it's that kind of casual underlying every day, ableism that does exist. And I think when you have a celebrant led wedding and your ceremony, the whole point is it's bespoke. So what better way to make sure when you have a, have a ceremony that's fairly accessible to you as a couple. And when I say fairly accessible to that couple, because obviously, well, maybe not, obviously nothing can be freely accessible to everyone because everyone has individual needs.

[00:27:52] It's about always being really flexible, always responding to the people involved. And that's, I think really important. And I look at, kind of how, and this isn't a have a go at other ways of getting married, of course not, but it's tricky. If you have specific needs for your ceremony to make you feel safe, and the person's going to conduct the ceremony is someone you meet 10 minutes beforehand.

[00:28:19] It's very hard to kind of get across to them, with everything else going on when they don't know you, all of that stuff that you need them to know to support you through that day. So it could be that you might feeling quite overwhelmed. It could be that, if you're neurodiverse, you need to be considering temperature changes and things that could be that you need to sit a certain way or stand certain way or whatever it is.

[00:28:45] It's almost impossible. Whereas with being a celebrant, you work with that couple for however long, you know, that kind of from when they book you to their ceremony and you work with them, you get to know them, you understand them, they understand you. And importantly, it's a two way thing. And so you can entirely make sure that ceremony works for them.

[00:29:05] And also you can quite frankly chuck all the tradition out the window. All the should ofs, the you should do this. You should do that. Get in the bin.

[00:29:17] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:29:17] It's amazing. And I'm just really interested in this whole world because I, you know, I got married 10 years ago, so it was quite a while ago. And I had no idea that celebrate led wedding was a thing at this time.

[00:29:27] And it was either you got married in a church or you got married with a registrar that was the two options that I knew about. And I remember thinking. Hang on this, this ceremony could be like 15 minutes long. By the time you go through it, that's pretty sure I would want a bit more. I don't want a church ceremony, but I don't want that.

[00:29:44] And it was quite hard and it's quite set up in a weddings are quite set up in a standard way. I think in a lot of places and even going to venues and stuff, and we won't go too down into the deep dark depths of my wedding. People like, well, you'll do this. Then you'll do that. Then you'll do that. And I was like, I don't want to do it that way.

[00:30:01] And they were like, oh, well, that's how we set up our packages. And I'm like, no, that's not how I want to do it. And they all looked at me like I was insane. I was like, I don't want to do it like that so I'm really interested that I, as a non-disabled person. I feel what you're saying here, but I can imagine.

[00:30:18] And I feel like yeah I had said what you call the kind of tea based access needs, not disability name at that time. And I didn't feel like my needs were met. And now I'm saying and considering if I did have some kind of impairment or a need that was more serious than I don't want it like that how important it would be. To be able to experience what is supposed to be, you know, the most joyful day of your life or one of those most joyful days of your life. Actually, it could be really, unjoyful if you're not feeling like your needs are being met.

[00:30:50] **Kathryn Palmer-Skillings:** [00:30:50] Absolutely and I think that's the thing.

[00:30:54] I think it's really important at this point when I'm, obviously I'm talking about how I particularly try and make sure that my services inclusive to disabled people. I work with all couples and that's, and that's my work. Cause we were a couple months because all couples quite often, no all couples, who have a celebrant led ceremony, that's what brings them to it because they suddenly go, there is this other way.

[00:31:17] There is a third way. And yes, at the minute in England and Wales, it means that you pop along to the registry office and say some legally required words separately. But we worked with, I worked a couples, to help them find way to do that. That feels fine. And that's still joyful and it isn't kind of, don't have to hide it away.

[00:31:38] And there's some sort of shameful thing that we have to do the legal bit, but it's that same one for some people you might want to go and do the kind of statutory ceremony. So that's where you literally sit down and it's like a meeting of two people. There you say the words you don't need to switch sort of things you do also literally get married, you say those words, the certificate is signed, that's your legal but, some people they want it like that. Cause that's almost like getting a license it's a bit like, equating it to, you know, you might register the birth of a child, but then you have a christening in a religious setting. No one goes to the Christening and goes, oh, you're already registered. That doesn't count.

So I kind of, I like using that as an example because you know, some couples do say to me when, when we're chatting through the process, they go, well, what if someone on the day says it is not our real wedding. And I just think, well, I say it in front of me, but, but actually someone might one day say that. And it's about understanding that it will feel, it will be a real wedding, it won't just feel like one it is a real wedding, you might've got a license essentially for it by stamping a certificate somewhere else. And other people, you know, they want to make a bit more of a celebration of that legal but. That's amazing as well. So you might do the even you might do that last bit of the day, you know, you might go and do it at five o'clock and then have cocktails afterwards, or you might do it on a Monday morning and then go have brunch.

You know, there are loads of ways to make that work, but more and more couples are looking. I think at those standard options, and even like, even now, there's nothing overtly terrible about any of those options, but they just might not fit. They might not essentially might keep it joyful. They might put a little bit patriarchal to so many of us, even if they're not meant to.

[00:33:35] And it might just not know it's like having some doesn't quite make you feel comfortable, it's about making sure that that's not what you experiencing in that moment.

Beth Stallwood: And I would just saying here, really reflecting on, if we take the whole thing about this flexibility to help people feeling clear, to, to help you feel comfortable, safe, healthy, all of those different factors.

[00:33:58] And if we plonk all of that stuff back in the workplace, I'm really interested here to think about actually, if we took a more person centered approach, a more people, individual approach to how we sometimes run workplaces. We could actually create a lot more joy for people in their working lives.

[00:34:23] **Kathryn Palmer-Skillings:** [00:34:23] Yeah, absolutely.

[00:34:25] I think having that person centered approach is really key, like it's interesting because even just having that freedom to work more flexibly and in a way that suits people work. I think there'll be a lot more of that going forward. I can't see. I can't imagine any organization kind of suddenly going back in time.

[00:34:46] Well, hopefully none of them, but going back to exactly how. You know, we, we, when we, when we were traveling the same time, roughly exactly, somewhere, even though, and so I've always been, not always, but at my current organization for the last four years, I've been a homemaker. So when this happened, it was interesting because everyone turned to me, went, oh, you've done this.

[00:35:10] No, this is not homeworking, this is working at home when there's a crisis outside. This is, this is a very different situation. It's not the same thing. And I think that's really important to recognize, but the reason I talk about that is that previously as the, and I want to say anonymous, is that the word anonymous? It sounds right? The anomaly, there we are. I'm trying to conjugate that, that word so whereas most of my team were office based and I was home-based you know, I would sometimes go in because there was an hour meeting that someone didn't think it would work if I joined via Skype slash team slash zoom, whichever one you're using.

[00:35:54] And I would think so I ? it In for that hour. And then I'd get them to take 40 minutes and I'm done twice that to get there. Both ways and you kind of think.... And now, and you know, I'm not wanting to go, but going into work. I see some people I'd connect that was lovely, but now you think that actually wouldn't it be, isn't it better that hopefully going forward, we'll be able to go in when we need to not just cause we have to and find ways to use our spaces better and also in a more equitable way. So we are a UK wide organization and quite often we track every one to London for a meeting. Even when we go back to your offices, can we just, we do a big team meeting. We've all agreed it's going to stay on teams because it's such a better, everyone's kind of got an equal experience then. And you know, it just, it just makes so much better and it's much more person centered. Now, if you need to pop away and have 10 minutes, cause you, you know that's what you need to do then, then it works much better if you can't travel that day, or if something happens.

[00:37:03] And then the nursery shuts and you might be able to cope with being on a call bouncing a toddler, but you couldn't have exactly, you know, so I think it's really key to look at thah.

[00:37:15] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:37:15]. And even like, I think even beyond like the working hours or the way you work, but always say things like, and, you know, I might get into trouble with some of my HR colleagues on this.

[00:37:25] Even when we look at things like HR policies and processes, which are very much based on a kind of cookie cutter. This is how it is. It is from here to here and you get this or you get that, that doesn't really, I mean, the good organizations with the great HR people, and there are many, many of them out there and I will, you know, I think they are brilliant.

[00:37:46] So often they're taken as, this is it. This is what you have versus, but this doesn't work for me. And it's about how do we flex to understand individual situations and lives and what works for them and what doesn't work for them so that you can make it right. And that's not to say that because I, you know, I don't believe there's any way that most people absolutely will not take advantage of that. They will use those things when they need them, if they're there and available for them. So I think there is something around how do we help make those things happen? And how do we really think about people and their individual needs? And I really loved your take on.

[00:38:22] And I'm going to take it away with me and think about it. Your take on the, everyone has individual accessibility needs. It's just that some people have an impairment that makes that happen. And some people just, just need it because they like their tea that way, or because it works in their life because of those things.

[00:38:37] And I think if we all thought that way on different scales of those we would probably be a lot more accessible for everybody. Absolutely.

[00:38:45] **Kathryn Palmer-Skillings:** [00:38:45]. Absolutely I often say that, I think, well, and I think it's anything looking back the last year that not the stuff. I know I've got friends. Where, I work it's amazing from my personal access, you know, I've got friends in other organizations that have been asking for home working for how long, because they needed it.

[00:39:04] And then the second everyone needs it and they kind of look at that and go, oh wow, look how much better it was for everyone. Well, I mean, some people, they struggle, I get it homeworking isn't for everyone. But for a lot people it has bought at work-life balance it has meant better energy levels. And it is interesting that some of the things that quite often are the key things that get asked on mutual adjustment requests are the things that have happened in 2020 and may happen pretty quickly then...

[00:39:37] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:39:37] It's so true. And you know, it, you know, the one person who's asked for something like one day's worth of flexible working a week or something like that. And it's been turned down and turned down and turned down and then the next day it's no, no, you're working from home for an entire year and everybody's doing it.

[00:39:53] Oh. And look, isn't it. Wonderful. I could have proven it was wonderful.

[00:39:58] **Kathryn Palmer-Skillings:** [00:39:58] Exactly. So, ye, I think if we, if we understood that everyone has, everyone has stuff that makes their life easier or stuff that makes them healthier or safer, or however you want to phrase it, then naturally ...

[00:40:15] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:40:15] I love that approach. And I think it's really great one to think about inclusion and how we can help other people, as well as thinking about what are their needs in this situation. What is that context we're working in now? Does this make them feel comfortable? Does it make them feel healthy?

[00:40:28] I think it's a really, really amazing way of looking at things and helping them to get more joy in their work life as well. So how can we be the facilitators? So, whether that's you thinking about how do you do your training or a manager thinking around how do we do this meeting to make sure it feels right for everybody?

[00:40:44] How do we do that, how do we do this? I think that's a really great bit of advice. We could probably talk for hours and hours, Kathryn, because we love a good chat but I am going to move us on now, if it's okay with you to some quick fire questions, are you ready? And I would love to know for you personally, and we've heard it a little bit about buses and people who know that already, but I'd love to know, like in your work, what is one thing that's always guaranteed to bring you some work joy.

[00:41:13] **Kathryn Palmer-Skillings:** [00:41:13] For me is seeing almost that the light go on when someone realizes the difference they can make. So especially that goes back to really my years of working for 10 years, when someone realizes they made that difference, or they could make that difference and they feel empowered to do it. That that's why I do what I do.

[00:41:34] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:41:34] Such a great feeling when you see that lights up in somebody, what book are you currently?

[00:41:42] **Kathryn Palmer-Skillings:** [00:41:42] So I'm currently reading three. Is that allowed? So I'm kind of, so the one I'm reading for my book club is that David Copperfield, Charles Dickens, cause I've met. We never actually read it in a group.

[00:41:55] How bizarre, but to give me a bit of light relief, not so much, I'm also reading "How to be a Liberal" by Ian Dunt. And, {?} Claudia Winkelman, who is my absolute girl crush.

[00:42:12] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:42:12] love it. Great range there from some Catholics there to some nice modern stuff as well, so fantastic.

[00:42:18] And we will put those in the details as well so people can link to it. What is the best or most useful bit of advice that you've had in your life that you always find yourself coming back?

[00:42:31] **Kathryn Palmer-Skillings:** [00:42:31] So I've got, uh, two initial ones if that's alright. So the first one is put question, not perfection, which I know lots of people say, but I have to, I find that if I have a card on it above my desk, that says that if I allow myself, I would try and not do it until I know it's going to be absolutely right.

[00:42:50] Sometimes I just need to start it. And so that's one and the other one and that's a transport related one - ignore the directions that King's Cross, when you get out, go the opposite way. And I think that that's actually, it's funny. Cause it sounds like it's just about transport. I think it works really well for loads of stuff.

[00:43:09] Why are you just following where someone told you, you should go in sometimes quicker the other direction.

[00:43:14] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:43:14] Or sometimes in the other direction, you'll find something new that you hadn't experienced before. Like if you go there, you might find a new shop or cafe or something in that way. And being somebody who has not even just zero, but like negative amounts of the ability to direct myself. I do not have any kind of internal compass or understanding. And even though I lived in London for six years, whenever I got out of a tube station, wherever it was, I always walked in the wrong direction that in some cases has made me cry a lot when I've got lost.

[00:43:45] And in other cases has bought me massive amounts of joy because I'm like, oh, I never knew this was here. That's quite exciting. So, you know, either way you can find good things. Okay. Next question. Can you give our listeners one super practical, go and do it today, tomorrow the next day, build as a habit, bit of advice or guidance, for how they can get some more joy in their life.

[00:44:10] **Kathryn Palmer-Skillings:** [00:44:10] So I thought about this and I, I have not, I struggle with it some, but I thought for me, I think it's saying hello to someone whose work you love. And that could be something on social media. It could be, chatting someone in another bit, of the

organization, or popping like a coffee in on teams or in real life one day. I think saying hello and telling someone we like what you did there, and it feels that you're giving someone else joy, but I think it helps to build those connections. And it's amazing what that can start to do.

[00:44:43] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:44:43 That's a great advice. I love that. And sometimes just, I, you know, you are scrolling on social media.

[00:44:48] It's so easier to be a lurker rather than going, oh, I love that. I'm just going to tell you that and imagine the joy on someone else's face when they see something like that come up and also that it just makes you smile as well. Doesn't it? Because you love it. So that's a really, I love that really great, that advice.

[00:45:04] So before we finish off, where is it that people can find out more about you.

[00:45:09] **Kathryn Palmer-Skillings:** [00:45:09] So, you can probably find me mostly. I am on LinkedIn, but I've got a very long name, so I can probably find me easier on things like Instagram, where I am KPS underscore celebrant, and on Facebook, I'm the same. I've got a website as well, which is celebrantkathryn.com.

[00:45:29] But you have still the Kathryn K A T H R Y N only the one vowel, no superfluous vowels in my name.

[00:45:38] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:45:38] You're not, you're not going free on those valves in your name that great. And what we will do as well, Kathryn is to pop those into the show notes on the Instagram and all our social media as well, so that people can just click the link rather than having to remember how to spell it.

[00:45:53] Ye, it's been fantastic having you on today. I've really enjoyed this delving into the world of when you're working with, or being a volunteer and how kind of putting your hand up and doing something that you really care about can make such a big difference in your life and in other people's. And that just brings so much joy and also what a great conversation about inclusion and how we can all really think about what is it that people need to feel happy, safe, joyful, healthy in that work. And I think it's something that we can all take away. So thank you so much for joining us on the Work Joy Jam

[00:46:25] **Kathryn Palmer-Skillings:** [00:46:25] Thank you it's been so much fun.

[00:46:28] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:46:28] Thanks, Kathryn. Thank you for listening to the episode with Kathryn. I think she's got a really interesting background and perspective on the thing, and there are so many bits I can pick out both from her with volunteers and her work as a celebrant, which is really interesting area. And it probably of job I hadn't really ever thought about before. One thing I think is really interesting when I talked to Kathryn is when she talks about inclusion and I know it's something that so many of us are trying to work on being better at, and one of the things that really stuck with me is this idea that when you think about access or you think about how people experience things is that everybody actually has access needs and her description of like, how do you let your cup of tea really resonated with me as let's just think about this in the simplest possible way, how do we help make it possible for people to have what they need to do really great work.

[00:47:24] And if you are working in an organization or you're responsible for making vision happen. Sometimes I think it is about let's just step back for a moment and think about how do we help people who need some support with access. And that might look different for lots of different people, but there are so many things that we can do and to move into a more friendly, caring about caring for world when people who do have different needs already really well supported. And the idea here about, you know, being flexible and helping people equal to have what they want and what they need and making choices. And I especially loved Kathryn's phrase here. And it's one that I use all the time is the advice of, I aim for progress, not perfection progress, not perfection because perfection, I think in the real world, doesn't really exist. If we're always aiming for it. We've probably always going to be slightly disappointed, but what can we do in terms of making progress happen? How could we move you on a one tiny little bit further forward in what we want to do? And I think that's also a really good way when we're coming back to that point that is making around inclusion and making it bright and able for everybody to take part in whatever we're doing at work or beyond.

[00:48:41] It's let's make some progress there and not wait to start something because we're aiming for perfection. So that's going to be something that I keep in mind when I'm looking at my work and my life going forward. I really hope you enjoyed this episode. If you do want to find more out about Kathryn, do you look in the show notes for the links to heart?

[00:49:03] We also have the work joy platform, www.createworkjoy.com. If you want to find more about our programs, like the work joy way, the 16 week coaching program and our upcoming development and a great community of people, the Club Work Joy. We are also on the socials. If you want to follow us for more information to keep up to date, we're on LinkedIn, Instagram, but Facebook and Twitter @createworkjoy.

. Thank you very much for listening today. Do go and have a listen to some of the other episodes.