



The Impact of Volunteering – Season 4 – Episode 7 - Rebekah Wallis – The WorkJoy Jam

Beth Stallwood:

Welcome to the WORKJoy Jam. I'm your host Beth Stallwood, Founder of Create WorkJoy and I'm really excited today to be joined by Rebekah Wallis. Rebekah is a HR Director, Board Director, Director of People, ESG, CSR and everything to do with people at Ricoh and we have a conversation today all about that world of giving back to the community, of getting out there supporting the things that are going on and how that can actually, individually and collectively, bring us a lot of joy and a lot of learning. I really was interested in how they've done it in their world of Ricoh and the impact it has had on individuals and teams and actually how it's become something that has real momentum and is really integrated into how they do things like learning and development, with the idea of some mandatory volunteering that then becomes things that people really, really value and want to step into themselves. So, I really hope you enjoy this conversation. I know I did. Here it is.

Welcome to the Work Joy Jam. I am excited today to be joined by Rebekah Wallis and I am going to let Rebekah tell you a bit of her story and who she is, what she does and I am really excited for today's conversation, because it's one where I think we have a really shared passion here. So, Rebekah, before we get into our chat, can you tell our wonderful audience a bit about you and how you got to where you are today?

Rebekah Wallis: Of course. Good morning and hello. What I did was I grew up in The Fens, actually. So, I grew up in The Fens. I had a very, very lovely childhood actually. Sort of, very much countryside. My mum, my dad, my brother. Very much into horses and riding and then at eleven, my world changed somewhat and my family broke up, which actually at my time was relatively unusual. Nevertheless, I subsequently, sometime later, actually gained an additional three step sisters, all who came to live with us, which was a different experience. So, very busy household. Very happy though and surrounded by animals. A lot of outdoors. Always on my feet. Never sitting down, still continuing to ride. Friends round the house all the time. So, it was lovely, but having said that, I knew actually that The Fens wasn't for me. I needed more. I needed to see the world and had no other intention, from as far back as I can remember, that I would go to university. I was actually the first of my family to go to university. So it wasn't something that was already written in stone and I applied originally based on the advice of my school, which was quite a traditional school, to apply for law.

So I applied for law. Got a place for law, to study law and then during the, sort of, before I got my A Level results, suddenly had a moment of, 'I don't want to do law.' I'd spent some time actually-, I know. I'd spent some time actually, which I would always advocate, having work experience, because I think it helps you rule out what you don't want to do, as much as it rules out what you do want to do. So, I had done some work experience in a solicitors and I decided, actually, this probably isn't quite for me, and what I did was I leant back on my love of people and I decided that I really wanted to study psychology, and because I loved animals and stuff, at the time there were only two courses in the whole of the UK that did human psychology not animal psychology or applied psychology. So, I applied to one of those courses, got it, and I have to say it was

absolutely the best decision I made. I loved, loved, loved my degree. I loved my topic. I loved the whole student experience and I never went back to live at home, which was always my intention, and I think it probably, for me, was my first chance to really, really be me. Find, you know, who I am, what I love doing and all of that.

So, as a result of that, kind of, fast forwards and I'm sure we'll cover some more around the topic, it was a little bit more mind changing of course and some more work experience, I ultimately led into the career of Human Resources, albeit it was called Personnel, of course, at the time. And then my first job, actually, was in a big energy company and it was just after it was privatised and had a really fascinating five years there as we worked through, sort of, mechanics of splitting the organisation into five companies. I also spent the last period there, last six months, living in London, working, and that gave me my opportunity to, sort of, do the city side of things. I then went from that to a very commercial and customer facing HR Manager role, which actually I really, really loved which led me into my current role, where I'm now a Board Director with Ricoh and responsible for all of the people things. So, HR, learning and also corporate responsibility, which is now actually typically called ESG, but also what I should say, reflecting on some of these things, on a throwback to my childhood, I still live in the country. Somewhere else in the country, not in The Fens. In the Midlands. I also have a house filled with people. So, I've got three young adults, mother to three young adults and we also have lots of animals. So I, kind of, think the reflection on the countryside and my upbringing is still there and I have to say one thing about me, is I'm absolutely as happy in the city. I still go into London a lot. I'm as happy at a black tie, sort of, event as I am in wellies and that's probably the two. That describes me quite well.

Beth Stallwood: Love it. So the two sides of you. The outside work, going back to that animal, big house, family. All filled with people and then filled with people and people stuff, in your working life as well.

Rebekah Wallis: Yes. Indeed it is.

Beth Stallwood: Amazing. So, the subject that I (audio distorts 06.13) we're going to dive into today, which I'm really excited about, and there are so many we could, because obviously with work joy, the work that you do around people and learning and all of the stuff you do, as a Board Director at Ricoh, for your people, we could have gone down any angle of that to talk about work joy but I think the one where we have a real shared passion, I'm really interested in this, that we're going to focus on in today's conversation, is talking about this CSR. The ESG. The stuff around what you can do in your community and how that can actually bring you lots of joy. So can we, to start with, talk a little bit about some of the things that you have been working on in your world and why they're important, and what it (audio distorts 06.59) you. There's lots of questions there. Let's just start and we'll see where we go to.

Rebekah Wallis: So in terms of-, so shall we pick up on some of the corporate responsibility?

Beth Stallwood: Totally.

Rebekah Wallis: Yes, absolutely. So, around the community investment stuff. Absolutely and this is, I think as you're aware, this is my work joy. I love, love, love. I love that opportunity to give back to do something more. So, that actually does, just before we dive into community investment, actually that is one of the things is I've learnt about myself, is that what I love is enabling people is, sort of, that kindness. That inclusion. Helping people to believe in themselves, actually, and that happens in the work environment, in your traditional professional life, as well as it does when you work in the community investment and those two link really closely together and I have to say one of the things is I always say to people is, 'My job is probably the

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best one in the company.' because I get the opportunity to do all of those things as part of my every day job. But in terms of if we dive into community investment activity, you know, I am lucky to have that responsibility.

I'm also lucky to work for a company where its foundations are built around that. That's, sort of, the three loves we talk of in Ricoh and the founder did talk of that love of your community, that love of the world, that love of your neighbour and we can live that. So I get that, you know, officially I'm allowed to and it's encouraged to do that as part of my role. So, we typically, we work with young people. That's typically our focus. So, we have a couple of partnerships with external charities, not for profits. One is The Prince's Trust, which I think people will have heard of, and the other is Business in the Community. Now, we've specialised in some of those things. I chair a couple of boards for Business in the Community but in terms of the activity, to give some examples, we will work with The Prince's Trust to run workshops for-, they run a twelve week programme. We will work to run workshops on CVs, on interview skills. We also have the pleasure and, like, it is something that you do have to take-, I definitely have to take a tissue along to, of the presentations at the end of this twelve week programme that these young people have been on, where parents come along. Actually, local dignitaries in there will come along and as part of this, they tell their story and until that point, you may have interacted with them. Also, we have them for work experience but you haven't heard their stories and, seriously, it is mind blowing, heart breaking, emotional beyond belief. And, you know, even talking about it, I can feel, 'Oh, my goodness.' and the thing that comes out of it, is you just want to do more. You're just, like, 'How can I do more to support these wonderful people?' that maybe have not had the best start, the best luck.

Different things have happened or just that, you know, that mental health point of view. They've not been in the position to go through the normal transition from school into work and so on, and (TC 00:10:00) it's just, 'Oh my goodness.' Uplifting. So, those things. The other thing we do, actually, which is a similar experience, albeit we just do the one day, is we've done a lot of work in prisons. So, we go along and do CV, interview type workshops with current, serving prisoners and that, again, the experience of going in at the beginning of the day and quite typically, maybe you'll have fifteen people in there. They may actually not know what they've come along to. They'll typically be nearing release and you talk to them as an employer, and you can see at the beginning of the day it's, kind of, 'What have I been brought along to?' Like, 'Oh, I'm a bit disengaged. Nobody's going to tell me anything.' and you can see that their self belief-, bearing in mind some of these people may have been in prison for, say, twenty years and imagine if you even have, I don't know, six weeks off work, two weeks off work for holiday, you go back and the world's changed and they haven't had that contact with the outside world. So, their perception and their self belief, you know, typically is not where it needs to be and they do not, a lot of them, believe that any employers would have any interest at all in employing someone who's been in prison.

So, that's their starting point and you imagine coming out of prison in that context, is if you believe it's not going to happen, we all know it's not going to happen and as you go through the day and you spend time with these people, you see this self belief change, until at the end of the day, you've got this person who, sort of, suddenly sees a whole different future for themselves. And what I would say is that it's not just a different future for themselves but if that person comes out with a view to getting a job, gets a job, gets employment, gets a, you know, stable living environment, the impact on their families of course and the communities, let's not forget, is massive. So, it's that bit of helping one person, I would say. It's every little bit helps. Any single thing you can do, actually. You're not just helping that one person. You're helping all the people surrounding that person, in the community as well.

Beth Stallwood: Amazing. And such an interesting and diverse range of things that you're focusing on and spending time and thought and effort into around, you know, The Prince's Trust stuff. A full programme with work experience etc. And then it's a really interesting one, as well. Like, I'd love to know. Obviously, this is your specialist area. This is something that you do for your business but also, there must be some personal connection to that to be able to, kind of, go okay, what is it that you-, I'm trying to get to the point of why did you decide to focus in those areas with The Prince's Trust and with the prisons areas. Was there, kind of, a meaning behind it that helped you get involved in the first place, because I know you've been doing this work for some time now?

Rebekah Wallis: From, sort of, the young people aspect, it was, there is. You know, there is a benefit to the business. That wasn't our reason for doing it and I can talk, you know, separately about the benefits to the business. So, the young people, it's that at the time I think there's typically, actually even now, there's always more young people unemployed than the rest of the economy and that's the same coming out of COVID as we are now. In terms of prison, actually, it was triggered by 'Seeing is Believing' visit that my CEO did at the time and was taken into a prison. Now one of my philosophies in life, actually, is seeing is believing and so every single activity we've done, I always, kind of, been-, I do it myself first basically, because I think there's two things. One is just check out what it's like. Two, if you haven't done it, you can't really talk about it or you can't talk about it with a passion. I like to talk about things. So, that was really triggered by 'Seeing is Believing' visit through Business in the Community that my CEO did and he, sort of, came back thinking, 'Gosh. Surely we can do more for these things, for these people.'

So, I think and you could argue all of these things, in terms of the link with work, is are they, you know, trying to give people the skills or the confidence or the belief to be employable. In terms of self belief, I guess I hadn't really reflected on it in that context but there have been some learnings for me and I, as I said, I am a mother of three children. My oldest daughter has very severe learning difficulties and when you're, sort of, a first mother, you aren't given a rule book and apologies to all the people who aren't parents out there to talk about this but suddenly it's such a leveller, as my mother would say. Illness is a leveller because, you know, if you're ill, you've got no advantage. You've got no privileges. I think the same's true when you first have a baby to some extent, is you're, sort of, it does help you-, you've suddenly got all these things to deal with that you've not got experience of. You know, you're no better than anyone else. You don't, you know, you've not done it before. So, to have that as my first child, was a big learning experience actually and I think what it has done, it's certainly I've always said it's made me a better person by far. It's made, whilst I would never wish on, you know, Isabel herself, my family, the rest of them, it does make you better people and the way it makes you better people is that it makes you focus without realising it and what people can do.

You don't go, 'Oh, she can't do that. She can't do that. She can't do that.' You go, 'Oh my goodness. Look, she's done that. Oh look, she's said that.' and what's really interesting is an observation I have is when we work with these young people and particularly when we bring them in on work experience, the impact on the managers is significant. So the managers, for these young people that have come in and they know they're, sort of, starting from a different, less privileged position arguably, they don't look at what they can't do. They look at what they can do and they get immense pleasure about helping them do what they can do even better and getting more confident about things they can't do, and suddenly that has an impact on their own team, because they're suddenly looking at, 'What can people do? Oh my goodness, they do that brilliantly. They don't do that so well, but that doesn't matter. We'll get someone else to do that.' So, I guess there is that personal link of that, sort of, having that very positive perspective on a can do, rather than a can't do, which I have in my life,

through my own life experience, which then you can bring into work and I see that happen to other people who perhaps haven't had the same life experience as our managers.

Beth Stallwood: I'm sitting here listening and loving the term and the phrase, like, seeing is believing. It's, like, actually go out there and discover and see what is going on and the-, you often might think, and I think this is the interesting part about doing things in the world of Corporate Social Responsibility, of the environmental, social, all of that side of life is we often think that it's there because we're going to do some good in the community and it's that philanthropic type of thing. But it's really interesting you saying here but what people come back with is more than that. They actually come back with enhanced skills and abilities and understanding, as well.

Rebekah Wallis: They do. They do and it's a really good observation of yours to say that, because you're absolutely right. I do think that and I had this view as well, that people think volunteering is just one way.

Beth Stallwood: Yes.

Rebekah Wallis: I would say, we've actually, because of the nature of my role of spanning the different areas, I've had this long dream that, you know, we must be able to do something with the community investment, the types of community investment activity to develop them. So, we launched a, sort of, pyramid almost of leadership programmes and we have still continued this philosophy, whereby as part of that programme, part of the learning, was a community investment activity. So typically as an HR Director, you might go out and you'd say, 'Right. Come in. Do me some team building with this team.' and what we now do, is we say, 'No. We'll use community investment activities.' So, you know, team and we'll do it within teams as well, not just as part of their ongoing work. You know, raise money for a soup kitchen, effectively. A homeless shelter. Go in. Cook the dinner for them. Spend the day with them and, honestly, the pleasure the people get out of this, it is the best day they've had. It also, interestingly, the reason I like doing it and I felt this myself, is it pushes you outside your comfort zone, and I think we're all aware that if you push yourself, not too far but outside your comfort zone, you learn. And so just tying those things together, it's almost an obvious. You know, why wouldn't you use these activities, which people wouldn't naturally do? We call it, sort of, laughingly, mandatory volunteering. You know. Yes, I mean, what you will do.

Beth Stallwood: It's a slight oxymoron, isn't it? Mandatory volunteering? I like it.

Rebekah Wallis: What you will do, is you will be volunteering. And do you know what the learning is? What's really interesting for me, is there's certain divisions which, like, 'We can do that. I'd never do this all my life.' You know, 'I've never volunteered. I wouldn't do it. Not something I'd do.' They come back and they're, like, 'Right. When can I go again? Let me do it again. I loved it.' and that's a real proof of the point and we also, actually, just in terms of for people who like data, we added a question in to our pulse check saying, 'Have you done some community investment activity in the last six months?' and we found that continually, constantly, the rating, the engagement levels were over twenty percentage points higher for those that had. Now, you could say it's chicken and egg. As in, those who are more engaged, more likely to volunteer, but we know that the majority of our people were ones that we asked. You know, told. You know, said, 'You will be volunteering.'

So, you know, that as a benefit to the organisation, without going into the more engaged, the more productive, the more better customer satisfaction, without having to have that link, it is quite startling actually. But also the skills bit, Beth, (TC 00:20:00), because that's a really good point, because quite often people don't think

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about using their skills. So, they might think, 'I'll go and do something not related to what I work.' but, actually, there is a real need for skills based volunteering. So, actually, for someone to either use their skills to help someone. So, if you've got a start up organisation, maybe IT skills. You know, they don't have any of these things in-house but also mentoring. Mentoring and everyone in a working environment, I would say, or outside of a working environment, knows stuff. They know so much stuff. They've got life experience. You know, they've had different experiences to another person and therefore they can help them. So, I'd say things like, you know, any of those skills based volunteering like mentoring, people would be stunned by what pleasure they get from it, I think it's fair to say.

Beth Stallwood: Yes, and it's such an interesting one and the way I'm thinking about it, as you're talking about it, is so many people are in the zone of, 'I'm really busy. I'm really busy. I'm really busy. I don't have time for this. I don't have time for these things.' and this idea that you have linked it directly to people's development, that it's part of a programme. That it's, kind of, in your working world. It's integrated into work versus being something additional on your to do list.

Rebekah Wallis: Exactly.

Beth Stallwood: I think that's a really smart and interesting way of doing it and that idea that, actually, 'Go and try this. This will step you far out of your comfort zone.' and I can imagine there would be people, who right now are thinking, 'Oh. That's a really interesting one, when you go and step into a prison environment. What does that feel like?' and there might be some fear associated with some of that. Right? To start with.

Rebekah Wallis: Definitely. Definitely and, you know, I felt that. It was quite interesting, actually. When we first did our Prince's Trust workshop, we engaged with someone fairly local to the office, who'd ran these courses for years and years. We were invited in. I was, you know, I was pretty scared. I'll be honest with you. We were told, you know, 'You'll be faced with fifteen to eighteen, very disengaged young people. They may not talk. They may decide they're going to walk out.' All this sort of thing. We were, like, 'Okay.' Interesting. So, we went along, you know, pretty terrified and, actually, it worked well. What the funny bit, the, sort of, punchline is, actually it wasn't the young people I needed to be scared of, the course leader actually, ex-marine, had never, ever, ever let anyone, any employer anywhere near his programme. If we had slipped up at any point, apparently we were straight out the door. So, actually, we survived and, you know, he works with us all the time and it's an amazing thing. But was I terrified before I went in? Yes. Was I nervous about going into prisons? Yes. And would I still be, if I do it again? Yes because, actually, that pushing yourself outside of your comfort zone doesn't go away just because you've done it once, because obviously you're faced with a different group of people, but I think that's why because you've pushed yourself, why you get so much benefit and pleasure from it.

Beth Stallwood: Yes. And that's an interesting one, isn't it, as well? About how the pleasure of volunteering, how that can actually give you some work joy in your life and it's not necessarily the work that you are, you know, if you looked at your job description and your salary and the work that you're paid to do. It's diving into something else that can give you something that you maybe don't get in your usual working day.

Rebekah Wallis: That's absolutely right. So, yes, no it's absolutely right. Apologies. My daughter just came in.

Beth Stallwood: That's all right. Hello. We're a-

Rebekah Wallis: She's gone. She's gone.

Beth Stallwood: We're a family friendly podcast. It's cool.

Rebekah Wallis: Bless. She knew that I was talking about her, I think. Most probably. So, Beth, in terms of the, sort of, work joy. Yes, absolutely. You know when you reflect on your, and I'm sure you do this, I'm sure we all do this, when you reflect on the days you remember from work. I reflect on the days I've done community investment activity. You know, the days I've gone into prisons. The day when I was talking about that workshop, the day I ran that workshop, because it somehow for whatever reason, sets in your memory so strongly. I think because it is such a different experience. It is different to our every day job. It's different to what, you know, your typical job description looks like and it's different in terms of the people you meet, of course. So, your brain is probably processing all this stuff. You know, you're probably dreaming about it. Your brain's thinking of all the learning it's picked up from the day and maybe that's why it stays in your memory so strong and I'm not sure but it certainly does. And it stays as a very positive one, for me, and, you know, I get that warm feeling when I think about these things.

Beth Stallwood: Yes. And it's really interesting to have an organisation that is really focused and has this at the heart of what they do and a lot of organisations will have a CSR and ESG or whichever version of it. There's many acronyms for the word we're talking about here and some people are offering, you know, paid volunteering days to go and get people to help their local community and some people go and read in local schools or whatever it is, and I think that interest and that focus is one we can sideline in our minds, because it seems like it's just something that you go and do for a day. But I love the way you're talking about this and I'm going to remember this one about thinking about the days you remember at work. What comes to mind, because that is a really great way of thinking about and understanding what gives you the work joys. If this is one of those things, then you know that that's that. The things that stay in your mind. The things that you remember about work. I love that. So, if you don't mind, I might take that for a little bit and ask some other people that question, as well.

Rebekah Wallis: Yes. Definitely. Please do. Please do.

Beth Stallwood: And so, for you personally, tell me a little bit about this. So, obviously, you have a role that includes this as part of your job. But for you, personally, when you're out there and, as you say, you're doing this seeing is believing stuff. You're out there experiencing it yourself. What are some of the things that you find give you the joy, when you're out there doing activities with other people? With young people. With people who may not be in the, kind of, work system as it is at the moment, and you're trying to help people? I think you said that what you loved is helping people in all kinds of situations, so I'd love to know a little bit more about you personally and how that works for you.

Rebekah Wallis: Yes, so I do this in work as well actually, to be fair, albeit again, you could argue it's voluntary, so I do opt to mentor people actually, externally, but also within the role. I think where my particular, I don't know if it's a sweet spot, or the bit where I get particular joy, is where I identify someone who maybe I can recognise some of the things that I have maybe experienced, so that where you're-, I wouldn't say I was always the most confident of people. You know, I've learnt I'm obviously pretty resilient in terms of the role I do and things, but that wasn't the case when I set out at work. I think where I can see people who haven't truly realised their talent, their ability, whether that's inside or outside of work, that's where I feel I can

particularly add value, because I can talk-, I'm not assuming everyone is the same as me, but I can talk very honestly about, you know, what's helped me. You know, what's helped me with doing certain things, and also just sometimes, just someone believing in someone else is all it needs, and someone that makes someone look at themselves. I think people typically don't realise how good they are, and they don't always-, you get this situation where they don't realise how others see them. Then, if they do, if people do say things, they don't believe it, so it's, kind of-, and I've been through all of that, you know. People used to say positive things about things that I thought I was really bad at, and I just thought they're just being nice. I probably still do it to some extent, let's be honest. These things never go away.

I think sometimes, you have to step outside of that, and if I can give somebody the ability to, sort of, stop, step outside of all those inner thoughts, and actually trying to see themselves from someone else's perspective, and also I don't think we're very good at comparing ourselves to others. That sounds a really weird thing to say. I don't mean comparing ourselves to others, but we always go, 'Oh, gosh, they're really good. Oh, my goodness, look at that,' or, 'I wish I was brave enough to do that.' You don't actually know how you compare because you can't see yourself. You know, everyone else sees you, you don't, so that's my feedback. Obviously, it comes into it, but you have to ask for it and you have to believe it, but I think that's where I get real work joy, where I can see someone-, you know, I can think of examples where I've had people who have been terrified of, maybe, speaking in either a meeting, speaking in a group, and kind of, just worked with them through that. You know, like, 'Come here, sit down. We're going to do this.' I think what's lovely is when people, this sounds weird, but I feel real joy when people show their vulnerability and then you can work with it, and when I think of an example when we're in one of the prisons, and you can imagine without stereotyping, you know, it's tough in prisons. Maybe you can't show your vulnerability, shall I say, and one of the interviews we did, and we do, sort of, mock interviews, (TC 00:30:00) so we give them the opportunity to be interviewed and then to interview with us, sort of thing, to help in a role play type scenario.

We all know role plays are horrible and everyone hates them, so I'm pretty mean from that point of view. You know, one guy in particular, he showed his vulnerability that really, really stayed with me, and he genuinely studied his job description. He genuinely thought about what he'd say in interview. He was genuinely really nervous, and showing it, and showing it to his prison colleagues, and I think, you know, I just wanted to offer him a job when he came out and I tried to facilitate that. If you can really help people to really lose all of their, sort of-, you know, all of the things, the mask we wear, and get down to what they are, and then build themselves into what they really are, and really understand that and believe, that is my ultimately joy. That's inside of work, that's outside of work, with the young people we work with and everything. The frustration is, you want to do more of it and there's never the opportunity or the time, you know, that particular individual.

Beth Stallwood: Yes, and that's the interesting thing is that you actually then want to, kind of, try and find people that you want to help more. I'd be really interested to know, and I know you said that you had amazing survey results around the impact it had on how engaged people feel, but do you have any idea about how people actually go on, and do they do more? Do they volunteer in a diff way? Do they, kind of, get involved beyond the mandatory volunteering side of things?

Rebekah Wallis: Yes, they do actually, so we've got examples in prisons where we've had people go into a prison for a workshop, say a manager, when we're trying to get buy-in from senior managers, and then they come out and they want their whole team to go, and then they don't just want their whole team to go. They want to have someone on placement from a prison on Release on Temporary Licence, and then they want to help that person, and then they want to offer them a job, so there's that bit of it. The other experiences or

examples we've had is where people have been involved with, say, one of the programmes with the Prince's Trust, and they've then gone on to ask if they can be a mentor. We do offer a lot of mentoring, both internally and externally, and these people actively-, so I've put myself up individually to be a mentor, you know, and I'm mentoring in this. Other people, sort of, make connections in other organisations they know in supporting people, so definitely, there does seem to be this, it doesn't just end on that first day or that one day.

Beth Stallwood: Yes, I love that because it's just then building its own momentum. You then don't have to, maybe necessarily force people as much. It goes from mandatory volunteering to naturally, kind of, passion-based volunteering where people really want to do it, and you're not necessarily having to force people to go and step out of their comfort zone, because they're doing it for themselves. That, for me, is a massive part of work joy as well, is people taking that personal responsibility to do the stuff that helps them, that works for them, that brings them some joy. I do think sometimes, you know, we all get into state sometimes when we're in work and maybe we've been in our jobs a while, we know what we're doing, and there's that, kind of, day-to-day stuff that could get a little bit boring, and something like this might help you step out of that.

Rebekah Wallis: I absolutely agree. I think when we think about anything, anything which gives us a different perspective, I think the danger is, I mean, you're more than aware, none of us are aware of our own privilege and I think you can get stuck. You also don't realise, I think, when I talk about not comparing ourselves, you know, not everyone's good at knowing how good they are at stuff, or their own value. I think also, we can get into our job, our organisation, we don't realise again how that looks compared to external things. I think just opening up that perspective, being very curious about the rest of the world, it helps us understand what different lives are about and what impact that brings. I think it's almost like when we talk about well-being, you know, go for a walk in the middle of the day. It gives you-, just your brain, it opens it up. You see different sort of things, and you come back, and you're so much better, and I think it does that for you as well. Also, the interesting thing I find, and this has always been quite significant to me, is when I have mentored people inside and outside work, albeit that's in more of a professional role that they would be in, every single one of them has said, 'Do you know? The impact this has had on my family is amazing. It's been really positive.' I think that is always brilliant, and we are, you know, the same person inside and out of work. I think we artificially try to split these things.

Beth Stallwood: It's all one life, right?

Rebekah Wallis: It is, you know, this work-life balance thing, it's, kind of, like, it isn't a balance, one or the other, it is. I always say that and actually have been writing the work joy book, and one of the things I've been saying in there about is our life is a big thing and work is a part of that. It's not a separate thing. It's not something we have to have this equal balanced life and work. It's actually, life is part of work and work is part of life, and there is so much that goes through that made-up barrier from how you feel about work, to how you feel at home. You're not two separate people. You might have a professional filter that you put on when you're at work, and there might be slightly different things and ways you do stuff, but actually you're the same human being. If you've had a great experience at work, that does translate into your home life as well, of course it does, and vice versa.

Beth Stallwood: Yes, that is so, so true, and I think that's, you know, the core linking of the work and the life outside of work is you. So, you know, there's got to be something in there that translates, and you're absolutely right. We've all had those days we've come home and it's maybe not been the best day

or vice versa, it's been the best day and it definitely impacts your way of thinking, your way of behaving, everything, so I think that it's really important. That's the thing is that maybe I'm saying these benefits we get at work, I'm sure those benefits are going back into home life as well.

Rebekah Wallis: Yes, and you know, that idea that by doing this, stepping out of our comfort zone, getting curious, seeing other people from a different world from us, and understanding the privilege. You know, maybe just the privilege of not being in prison is one of the things that people can understand better, and then be more open and understanding, and empathetic to people who live a life that is different to us, and not just helping, but you know, helping ourselves understand that we have a role to play in, and that we can help, and do some different things.

Beth Stallwood: I think that's the thing, and I think certainly with prisoners, I think that is something that I should have said is, I think one of the biggest findings for managers that we have feedback, or not just managers but anyone who goes into prisons is that these are the people they meet in the pub. You know, they've got this image, this stereotype of what these people will be like, intrepidation, fear, something they need to be scared of. They're not.

Rebekah Wallis: Yes, they're human beings, right?

Beth Stallwood: They're all human beings just like us, you know, and there for-, just their life course was different and it could have been any one of us. That's such an interesting thing, isn't it, is that we always assume because it's a natural human thing that, you know, the other nest of people, they are other from us, and you go, and you realise that actually we're all just humans. Yes, I love that.

Rebekah Wallis: Yes, absolutely.

Beth Stallwood: It's been amazing talking to you. I am going to move us on if it's okay, to think about some quick fire questions, and I think this first question, you have answered, kind of, in the bigger picture stage but I'm going to ask you, like, a more micro bit, like, a daily thing you could do. I'd love to know what's always guaranteed to bring you some work joy.

Rebekah Wallis: Actually, talking to other people is. I've noticed that about myself which is probably the other thing, so if I have a day when I'm not doing much interaction with people, that's not my best day, but the thing that I really love is a little bit of a repeat of what I've said. It's when, you know, the thing that really brings me work joy is that one-to-one, sort of, in-depth, mentoring type, coaching conversation where we're having that real, sort of, learning, where you can really support people, and vice versa. It works both ways. I learnt so much from these activities, so that's it, but the thing I really love actually, over the years when I reflect, is when I've had teams of people in. When I've worked with someone in my team, say, and then you watch them do something, or they've done something, or they've produced something, and it just blows you away, and you know there is no way on earth that I could ever do something as good as that, and that is my absolute, 'Woah, that's fantastic.' I love that. I love people when they blow me away with how good they are. I get such a thrill from that.

Beth Stallwood: Love that, so really, kind of, basking in other people's successes.

Rebekah Wallis: Absolutely.

Beth Stallwood: Love it.

Rebekah Wallis: That's a lovely way of putting it, yes.

Beth Stallwood: I love that. Okay, next question. What book are you currently reading?

Rebekah Wallis: This is quite an interesting, actually, one because I've gone back in time. Actually, I have just finished a book. I mention it because it was novel of me to read it, I guess, but my daughter, my youngest daughter started to read some sort of classics as it were, and she got Animal Farm. I'm like, 'Oh, I read that when I was fourteen. I want to read it again,' so I read Animal Farm as my most recently completed book, and that was fascinating to read something I'd read when I was fourteen. Yes, I think everyone knows the story of Animal Farm, but also how much I remembered of it stunned me, and the characters in it, so that was interesting. The other one, actually, that I'm actually actively reading at the moment and this is-, I'm really late to the party. I'm reading this although I know a lot of the stories from it, but it's Outliers by Malcolm (TC 00:40:00) Gladwell is what I'm reading at the moment. So, again, just reminding yourself of some of those things is great, and I do also read, although I haven't got one live at the moment, I typically do read, for light reading, I'll read your typical, sort of, you know, Sunday Times' Bestseller, novel type things. I love stuff like that but I haven't got one active at the moment.

Beth Stallwood: Brilliant, and Outliers, I love that book. I'm very-, I think I might go back and read it. I do like a re-read sometimes. I think it's a good thing to do, but yes, a really great recommendation, and actually maybe going back and reading some of those things we read when we were in school might be interesting. It's so amazing how it's still in your brain though. It's, like, there somewhere in the back of it, being able to bring that back out. Brilliant, thank you. Next question. I'm sure you've got many of these so I'm going to ask you to pick one. What's the best or most useful bit of advice that somebody has given to you in your life that you always find yourself coming back to?

Rebekah Wallis: I have got two, but I'll stick with one unless you let me sneak in the other one.

Beth Stallwood: You can have two, it's okay.

Rebekah Wallis: Okay, so this is one actually, and I've thought about this a lot, and it actually reflects on some of the stuff we're saying, so going outside your comfort zone. Somebody once said to me, I think I've mentioned I'm never naturally the person who puts their hand up in a meeting to speak, or in a group of people, and it's this thing about your comfort zone. It's this butterflies in your stomach thing. I think somebody said to me, 'It's the same hormone. It is your fight or flight fundamentally, but it's adrenaline. Excitement and fear, they're the same thing.' So, I started interpreting any, sort of, outside comfort zone as excitement rather than fear, and actually it puts a completely different perspective on it. The particular bit that really I put into practice a lot, is when you're, say, in a busy meeting, something like that, and you get that feeling in your stomach because you really, really want to say something and typically, I might have not taken the opportunity. But someone said to me, 'That's actually you really wanting to say something. That's the word that you really want to say to come out.' Actually, if you reinterpret that and say, 'I really need to say these,' it's been really useful advice actually, because it has-, you know, I do believe in people have a say in everything, and it's helped me with, 'Yes, I really must get this point across.' It's that, just interpreting those butterflies as excitement rather than fear, and other things as well. I use it quite a lot in coaching and I use it with my children, and it's something which I think is really useful.

Beth Stallwood: Yes, I was using the same bit of advice actually with a group of people I was working with yesterday, about that physiologically, it is the same thing that's going on, but your brain is telling you that this is fear. Actually, if you can, and it takes some work, it's not an easy thing to do, but if you can start changing that to be, this means I'm excited. It means it's important. It means I care about this subject of what's going on. It does over time, help you to use the adrenaline for good versus use it to feel nervous, so it's a really great bit of advice, love it. Do you want to do the second one as well? I'll allow it. I'll allow it.

Rebekah Wallis: I'll do the second one, because again it's something I've used a lot particularly during the last couple of years where, you know, things have been tough, I think, for people, tougher maybe than normal. It's just a very simple one about put your oxygen mask on first, you know, and that's in the context of physical and mental health. Some of our managers, certainly my team, it's been tough supporting other people over the last two years at times, and I think quite often, people haven't looked after themselves first, but we all know, if you don't look after yourself, you're pretty rubbish to everyone else. I think, you know, that seems to have been really powerful to people.

Beth Stallwood: Yes, I think that's such an important one, especially if you think about, you know, even your situation. You've got kids at home, I know that they might be young adults, but they're still in need of you. You're trying to work. You've got people to look after. You're trying to do all of these different things, and so many people in similar situations where it has been really tough, and actually I've been looking for ages and I haven't found one yet, so if anyone can find one for us, looking for a new word for selfish, because selfish is always interpreted as a negative thing. It's like, hang on a minute, because for me, self-care brings up all the, kind of, like, 'Let's go and do some yoga and spend some time at a spa,' which doesn't quite do it for me. I need a word in between self-care and selfish that's a positive word, that is looking after yourself first.

Rebekah Wallis: Yes, and I've always been so bad at it, Beth, so, so bad at it. It's something over the last two years I've really, really tried to-, it's really hard, I tell you.

Beth Stallwood: It's so, so hard, and you have to think about it, like, when you talk about the things that bring you joy, helping other people, seeing the success of others. The things that bring you joy is not taking care of yourself, it's taking care of other people, yet there is this big, kind of, caveat to that is, you can't do that unless you're in a good place yourself.

Rebekah Wallis: Exactly, exactly, so it's a work in progress.

Beth Stallwood: Yes. Even I, maybe, should talk more on this one offline, because I am also trying to bring in, like, the rest element into my life and it's just not something I really understand, or know how to do, or value. There's something here, isn't there, about even if it doesn't bring you some joy, it is a baseline for making joy happen, because you won't be able to do or be in service of other people if you don't have good mental and physical health yourself to be able to make that happen. I'm going to jump in on-board with you on that one, and we'll help each other work through it.

Rebekah Wallis: Brilliant. We will, perfect. Sounds like a plan.

Beth Stallwood: It does. Right, next question. What is one super practical bit of advice that you could give to our listeners, that's something really easy, something simple that they could go and do now, tomorrow, the next day, that you think would help them build some work joy?

Rebekah Wallis: Gosh, I think it would be actually to maybe we should stick on the topic, of maybe just look at where you think you might be able to help. You know, do something in the community. I think that would, or find out your niche. For me, it was helping others and I can do that inside and outside, but just really reflect. Maybe it's that point, reflect on what are the best days of your work life, what were you doing, what was it about that that gave you a great deal of pleasure? Enhance that and do more of it.

Beth Stallwood: Yes, love that, and it's so aligned to what we talk about in work joy which is actually, find the stuff that really brings you joy, and wherever you can, do it a little bit more, or do it more often. You know, if you love talking to people but you haven't spoken to anyone today, pick up the phone and have a chat. You know, things like that, simple things, but also I love that you could also look outside the stuff that you do, beyond the four walls, the four walls of a Zoom screen, wherever it is that you do your work, stepping outside of that and seeing how you could use some of your skills or expand some of your skills my stepping out into a different world. Love it, so thank you so much for joining us today, Rebekah. Where can people find out more about you, your work, or maybe more about some of these other amazing things that are out there, that people might wanting to be looking at how they can volunteer or set some things up with their organisation?

Rebekah Wallis: Well, I am on LinkedIn and Twitter, but I wouldn't say I'm the best user of social media. However, I mean, I think probably, in terms of, I have mentioned extensively Business in the Community and Prince's Trust. From a business perspective, Business in the Community at the very least gives people lots of tools they can use to help work with communities, like, how do you make your recruitment inclusive? Those sorts of things, even if they don't want to actively get involved in working with them, albeit if there are organisations out there who would like to know more, please do contact me, I can help with that, or Business in the Community directly. In terms of the Prince's Trust again, if there's anything people want to do to support that, again, on the website they would find information about that, but obviously, I think one thing I would say actually is whilst I'm clearly not employed by either of those organisations, charities have struggled a lot over the last two years. So, anything anyone can do, and I would just always say, you know, even the tiniest bit helps. If you help one person, you're helping actually a multitude of people.

Beth Stallwood: Yes, and maybe it's about, you know, beyond those places, reaching out to some of the communities around you, the charities near you, and seeing what help and support they need, and whether that's something that you can offer either yourself or through your organisation to help them with skills or with different things that you might need, so brilliant. Thank you so much for joining me to today, Rebekah, it's been wonderful, and I think some great advice there around what we could do, stepping out of our comfort zones, and how actually that volunteering, even if it's a bit of mandatory volunteering, can actually really help us all to get some joy and to develop our skills, so it's a real double win.

Rebekah Wallis: Brilliant, it's been an absolute pleasure, Beth. Thank you.

Beth Stallwood: Thank you. Well, a huge thank you to Rebekah for joining us today and talking all about the wonderful world of giving back, of doing work in the community, community investment, and

how that can bring us all some work joy. There were some things that I really took away, this idea of seeing is believing, getting out there and understanding a world beyond the world we usually play in, the world beyond our world of work, of different people, different situations, different background, different experiences, different challenges. How that can really help us to understand our own privilege and to understand how we can help and support other people in our world, whether that's in our organisations or through volunteering, stepping out there, doing those. I love the idea of this mandatory volunteering as well, but it's built in and integrated into the working day, into the working life, and how much joy that can give people. (TC 00:50:00) The other thing I'm really talking away, and I am going to be thinking about this a lot, I think, over the next few weeks is this. What are the days that I remember at work? What are the ones that are great, the ones that I recall when I'm looking backwards, and such a great way of thinking about, how do we track some of our work joy, if you remember those days, what was going on for you? What was happening? What was the environment? What was the situation? That's a really good way of understanding what brings you some joy, and being able to do more of it and more often, and that will build you lots more work joy. Obviously, some great advice there around the excitement of fear are the same things, physiologically the same but we interpret them differently.

What could you do if you could get excited versus nervous or feeling fear, and really stepping out of that comfort zone, and obviously looking after ourselves first which is something that I think many of us find quite difficult. That's something that is really, really important too. So, a huge thank you again to Rebekah for joining me on this episode of the WORKJoy Jam. Do come and follow us on all the socials. We're @createworkjoy. We'd love to have you joining in and engaging with some of the content that's out there. We also have, if you're interested in getting more involved, Club WorkJoy, and Club WorkJoy is a fantastic community of people from many different organisations who are coming together, both online and in some of our events, where we help people and help each other to create and cultivate more joy in their lives. We have monthly events with keynote speakers. We have networking sessions. We have weekly ask for anything, all kinds of things, so do go and have a look if you are interested in joining our community. Also, if you look on our website, createworkjoy.com, there is a freebie that you can download. It is all about, how do you get yours, and helps you to track and understand where you're getting your work joy from, so please go and download that. We would love to help you get some joy in your life. So, thank you for listening. Do go and listen to some of the other episodes. I'm Beth Stallwood and I will speak to you again soon.