



THE PODCAST

## S1: E7 Melissa Doman Looking After Your Mental Health

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[00:00:00] **Beth Stallwood:** Welcome to the Work Joy Jam podcast. In this episode, I had a really interesting conversation with Melissa Doman and Melissa is a mental health and wellbeing expert who's worked for many years both as a clinician and in organizations and with organizations to help them get better at talking about and managing mental health for individuals, for teams, for leaders, and it's such an important subject and one that is really, really related to work joy and getting joy in your life. And that if you are struggling with your mental health, if you want struggling with mental illness, joy can be quite hard to find so proactively managing, supporting, finding ways to talk about and to manage and to respond to issues around mental health is such an important thing to be able to do both for yourself and your colleagues.

So I take so much from this around how important it is to have the conversations and to be a great, supportive human to the people around you. I hope you enjoy this episode.

[00:01:47] Hello, welcome to the work joy jam today we have the fantastic Melissa Doman joining us from the USA. Um, I'm going to let Melissa introduce herself in a second, but it's great to have you here, Melissa and thank you very much for joining us.

[00:02:04] **Melissa Doman:** Oh, thank you so much for having me, Beth. I've been looking forward to this opportunity for us to catch up and nerd out as it were. So I guess I'll just give a quick highlight reel of my background.

[00:02:18] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:02:18] So tell us your story,

[00:02:21] **Melissa Doman:** So I I'm an organizational psychologist and former clinical mental health therapist. And I currently specialize in mental health at work. So I was doing, you know, diagnosis, counseling treatment for a number of years.

[00:02:36] And I was really pleased to be able to do that work and have that impact, but I really wanted to have an impact on a larger scale so I transitioned into organizational psychology because I wanted to have more impact than just one by one by one or small group by small group. And so I went into soft skills, training, leadership, development, coaching, and all of that traditional org psych stuff.

But when it came to mental wellbeing at work, because it seemed like it was framed as not a workplace issue and that just didn't sit well with me. So in recent years, that has really just been, the drum that I've been beating is normalizing those discussions. De-stigmatizing those discussions about mental health at work stress, and mental illness and it's work that I've been doing with passion and purpose from tiny companies of 20 people, all the way up to multinational organizations like Salesforce, because every single human being on the planet has mental health and many, many, many people have mental illness. And so it needs to be normalized because these are the building blocks of who we are, how we relate to our environment, how we relate to the people around us, how we do our best work and to not talk about that almost seems as ridiculous as not being able to talk about the weather. So here's where we are now. I'm doing all my work remotely with clients and, uh, also working on my book, which is exciting, that's just a bit about me and personally, I cannot live without dogs, coffee, and travel. Although, sadly, right now we are living without travel.

[00:04:20] **Beth Stallwood:** You're missing one of your key things.

[00:04:23] **Melissa Doman:** Yeah. So I do a lot of, uh, guided visualization to places. I have traveled to take my brain on vacation.

[00:04:31] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:04:31] So yeah. Take your brain on vacation even if your body can't go there.

[00:04:37] **Melissa Doman:** [00:04:37] Oh yeah, I do that several times a week. I visualize places that that we travel, particularly when my husband and I were living in the UK for those three glorious years. And we saw some amazing places so when stress is high, I visualize those places that we've been to like my life depends on it, and it just really helps.

[00:04:57] **Beth Stallwood:** Brilliant. And I'm hoping that throughout our conversation today, you might have some more tips and things that we can all do. Obviously in the UK situation, we're heading into another lockdown at the moment and it's a difficult time for people. And one thing I've been really, I think reassured about in the last few years is how much mental health and mental wellness and whatever you want to call it, um, has become part of the agenda in organizations.

[00:05:26] And I'm not, I don't think we've fixed it yet. I think it's an ongoing journey towards a place where it's not stigmatized when people understand it better, where it's talked about more, where we're doing more proactive things to look after our mental health versus I think there's still a lot of problem solving if something goes wrong.

[00:05:44] And for me, I think when I think about work joy and everything that I stand for, like getting joy at work. Having a really good approach to how you manage and look after your own mental health, as well as your own wellbeing and all the other things. It's like a really important foundation of being able to get some joy in your life.

[00:06:05] So tell me a little bit more about when I say work joy and you talk about mental health at work and you know, the importance of that how do you see those things coming together? What's your perspective on how we could. Look at mental health as a foundation of getting more joy at work.

[00:06:23] **Melissa Doman:** So that's actually a really good question.

[00:06:26] And I wanted to, first of all, just pause and say, I really appreciate that when you were talking about the different terminology that you were saying, whatever that means to you, because it is so uniquely defined for people. And that's actually one of the key reasons that I slow down and take a look at these definitions for people because when you have a shared definition of something, it can promote understanding. And so if you think about achieving work joy within the context of mental health at work. There are so many natural emotions that we have that we can feel as human beings naturally, for a reason that includes positive emotions, neutral emotions, and really uncomfortable ones.

[00:07:10] So even if you look at the feeling wheel from Dr. Gloria Wilcox, the number of negative emotions that we naturally experience and keep in mind, these are not clinical in nature, there are dozens of them, dozens and people, people don't realize that. So I think that to have work joy within the mental health context is really just embracing those emotions and working through them naturally.

[00:07:35] So you can get to a place of joy more easily. So for example, let's say that you're experiencing negative emotions at work, whether it's caused by work or caused by something outside of work, the odds of you getting to a joyful state, if you are pushing those feelings down and not acknowledging them will be far more difficult because you're not, you're not experiencing an authentic emotional state.

[00:08:00] And typically, unfortunately those emotions will find a way to come out sideways if they're pushed down for too long. So if you're allowing yourself to move through those emotions more naturally and to give yourself that permission to be able to talk, talk about this natural peaks and troughs of those emotions within the workplace context, it really allows for more of you being able to bring your whole self to work, feeling like you don't have to push those things down and when you have that feeling of authenticity and having that feeling of the whole self at work, it really does promote those feelings of psychological safety. And if you're having those feelings of psychological safety, both at like a basic animal level, but also at like the higher thinking human level, you can probably achieve that joyful state much more easily.

[00:08:49] So I think that while it may sound a bit counterintuitive, sometimes you have to acknowledge the not so good stuff to get to that joyful place. So that's what I would say.

[00:08:59] **Beth Stallwood:** Great and I think one of the things that I talk about a lot in the work joy context is work joy isn't about trying to feel, work joy all the time or ignoring that there is stuff that annoys us, gets us down, makes us miserable, all of those different things. I call those the kind of work gloom, the work gloomy stuff. We can't ignore that there are peaks and troughs in the world. We can't ignore the things ebb and flow. There are going to be times that we have to do stuff at work, whatever our work is.

[00:09:30] And however we define work, whether that's paid work, volunteering, looking after your family, doing any more for life aren't men that we all have to do that, you know, some people love and some people just hate. You can tell that I'm not, I don't get joy from life admin, but I think it's about understanding those things.

[00:09:46] And like, when you feel the joy, recognizing the joy and being able to do more of what brings you joy and being able to accept that some things are just going to be like that, but maybe being more neutral about it rather than being negative about it and just accepting that that's part of what you do, but not the whole thing. So it's really great to hear that, so kind of maybe explore this a bit more for me about like moving through that negative or those, you know, there's many of them moving through naturally negative emotions. I know that you're saying naturally, but are there some things that we can do as individuals when we feel those negative emotions to speed up that process or to move through it in a more effective way. Have you got some ideas and suggestions in that zone?

[00:10:34] **Melissa Doman:** That's actually a really good question. So if it was easy to speed up, everybody would do it.

[00:10:41] **Beth Stallwood:** Yeah. I know. I'm like asking for a miracle cure

[00:10:43] **Melissa Doman:** So I think that. Said more effectively.

[00:10:50] That's what I would go for. So I think that one of the most powerful things you can do is actually slowing down and giving yourself a moment to name what it is you're feeling, because often times we get so caught up in the emotion that, you know, there's been folks I've spoken to, or even if it's me and you're just feeling bad and you don't really know what the emotion is or why you're feeling that way. And so oftentimes when people are in that overwhelm state, I don't know what I'm feeling. I can't describe it. And so I think that one of the ways to more effectively move through it is by pausing and naming and giving yourself space to decipher what it is you're feeling.

[00:11:34] And that can actually be really powerful because that sort of nomenclature the ability to name something that that's not something that everybody is necessarily exposed to, I mean, it depends on how you grew up, who you grew up with, where you grew up. If mental health and emotions was even a topic, when you were raised in your family, there's so many factors that, that influence your ability to do that, or even recognizing that there is a need to do that. So I would say that one of the most effective ways to move through those emotions is it might sound a bit counter-productive but it's, it's slowing down asking myself, what, what am I feeling? Why am I feeling this way? And then just giving yourself the space to feel it because by doing so theoretically, it should shorten that duration because you're just giving yourself space, giving yourself the space to do it.

[00:12:35] As opposed to trying to push it down and move through, which as we talked about earlier, we'll just come up sideways. So I'd say that naming piece is definitely crucial and just allowing yourself to feel how you're going to feel. Because if you do that, it's almost like, um, uh, gosh, I hate to compare it to this, but it's almost like a geyser. So if you just let the geyser blow then it'll be over quicker as opposed to having a bubble bubble bubble bubble. You know, obviously you're hoping that the guys are blowing doesn't result in like punching the wall, uh, or someone else, but, um, you know, allow yourself to just feel those emotions naturally because you feel them for a reason.

[00:13:20] So it's clearly you were feeling those emotions to signpost, to yourself and to signpost to others that something is not right and that you need some, some care that's really what it is.

[00:13:34] **Beth Stallwood:** And it's interesting, isn't it? That idea that if we don't talk about them or name them or understand them, we can end up, I think, I mean, maybe this is just me, but I think sometimes if I don't do that pause and think, and name it and understand why I'm feeling that way is I often miss a tribute, whatever I'm feeling to something that's not, that will not really make a much bigger deal out of something. So actually sometimes if I do do this and I, as you can tell, I came at it, let's get this over with quickly and move on and get into the happy place is that I probably need to sit on it a bit more.

[00:14:07] And I really liked that advice. And I think it is really good advice because I know that if I sit there and understand it and think it and unpack it sometimes it's just that I'm bored. Or it's actually just binding to talk to another human being. And I think especially if we think during lockdown and all of the challenges that people have had with working from home and not being in an office is the accidental conversations. You know, the random corridor conversations that you had, or, you know, the traditional water cooler or coffee machine chats, aren't happening for a lot of people. And a lot of us are spending a lot of time with the same people over and over again. And so many people are spending so much time on their own, which they maybe haven't expected. So sometimes it's around actually I might be feeling like I'm angry about something, but why I'm actually feeling is I'm actually bored. I just think I'm angry because I'm moody because, and what are the reasons behind it? And I think sometimes it's really hard to not to actually sit there and go, I need to take some time to think about this because we just want out of it.

[00:15:08] We want out of that emotion. So maybe we go in the wrong direction sometimes.

[00:15:12] **Melissa Doman:** And it's also, you know, when I think about what's currently happening just worldwide, like for example, you know, COVID-19, and, and, uh, uh, today in particular where I am is election day in the U S. And so there's just, if you think about all the different stressors happening, you know, we have this pandemic, we have, uh, a lot of political divisiveness here we have you know, world economy is up and down. There's just so many stressors and factors that we are all organisms under a massive state of distress. And so we don't pause to think the impact that this has having on so many different levels like even if you think about the neuroscience, because we are not around each other as much because we're having the same repetitive experiences over and over and over again, we're not traveling as much and doing new things and creating new memories. It's actually having an impact on the different structures in our brain. That impact things like memory. So I've seen some, um, some studies showing that our hippocampus, which is responsible for memories are shrinking because we're not creating these new experiences, which would stimulate that area of the brain. And also because we are, yeah, it's really interesting stuff. And because we are you know, by ourselves more, you know, isolation has an impact. Isolation has an impact on mood. Isolation has an impact on health.

[00:16:50] You know, these are not, they don't exist in, in like a, uh, a vacuum as it were. So all of these emotions, like you were saying, Oh, you know, I'm angry, but actually I feel bored. That's because your brain is signposting to you. I'm not happy. And I'm going to use whatever methods necessary to tell you so.

[00:17:12] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:17:12] So actually listen to what your brain's telling you.

[00:17:15] **Melissa Doman:** Yeah. Yeah. That's really, it is like, you can have these random feelings of, of dread or, or whatever it is. And even if we bring it back into the work context, you know, where is that coming from? Because your brain is clearly trying to tell you something's not right, or something needs attention.

[00:17:33] So even if something at first comes up that may not be what you're actually feeling, it might just be without your attention.

[00:17:41] **Beth Stallwood:** Yeah. And then it's about understanding what's caught your attention and kind of digging in a bit deeper into exactly. And tell me a little bit more about the, how we can.

[00:17:54] You use other people with this, because I know for me, sometimes I need to talk this stuff through if I'm in that zone. And I think sometimes it's one of those subjects that it feels a bit hard to talk to people around. Have you got any advice about how people can go about working with other people, friends, family, you know, colleagues, bosses to be able to help them through.

[00:18:20] When they are having a situation, when they're feeling some negative emotions or feeling, feeling down or feeling like they need some help, what's your advice?

[00:18:30] **Melissa Doman:** So I would say it's definitely about quality, not quantity. So it's really about fine finding those people who, who just create space for you and just take you as you are.

[00:18:44] And I think there's something around, when possible voicing, if you just need a listening ear or you actually need some support. So I think that oftentimes a lot of the onus is on the people supporting, and that's true that you want to make sure that you're doing it in a helpful way, but I also think that there needs to be some responsibility on the person who is speaking up, uh, who needs assistance or need someone to listen to them because.

[00:19:13] I, I, people might prove me wrong, but I'm fairly certain that mind readers don't exist. So I think that there is some, there are plenty of people who would tell me that that is not true, but I believe I'm sure there are, but I believe that, you know, you got to give people a little bit of a flag in terms of "Hey, this is, this is the best way to help me" and not everybody knows that what that is and that's okay. But just try to make a bit of an effort. And so it's really about the people that have the biggest impact in your life. Like, especially at work, if it's your boss or your coworkers. To be able to try to communicate to them what it is you need and the best way to help you, [00:20:00] or if there is something going on and you want them to be aware of the context of your behavior, that let's say there's something going on for you and you want to make sure that they know that if you're acting out of character, it has nothing to do with them. It's because of X, Y, Z ed. And so I think there's that, that piece around. Trying to find the way to most constructively, let others know what you need and how to help you, and really honing in on who those key people are, because it's so much better to have those three quality connections as opposed to 10 mediocre ones.

[00:20:39] I would say that it very much is the responsibility of on both sides. Cause I don't think that is effective or fair that the own, the onus only goes on the supporter. I think it also the person who is seeking that assistance needs to participate actively in that constructive conversation as well.

[00:20:58] **Beth Stallwood:** So perhaps it's more about individuals going to those people and saying I could do with a bit of help and the help I need today is just, can I get this off my chest? If you just need someone to listen to you to help I can do it today is can you talk me through this issue? I'm having. You know, check and challenge if I'm, if I'm ever thinking yet, which is a classic one, which I think so many people get into

[00:21:23] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:21:23] You know, the other one I do is am I dramatizing the situation more than it's necessary?

[00:21:28] Like someone hasn't replied to me. And I I've assumed that, you know, it's because they hate me versus actually they were busy and there's other stuff going on in their world, but that's the thing, knowing what you need.

[00:21:39] **Melissa Doman:** [00:21:39] Yeah. And that's the thing is that. Unless you tell somebody exactly what it is you need from them. They'll, they'll typically just go into fix it mode. And if that's not what you need in that moment, and someone is coming at you with fix, fix, fix, it's just going to make you feel worse. So I think it's, you know, cut them a break and let them know what it is you're coming to them for. And it can make those conversations not only more meaningful, but far more effective.

[00:22:06] **Beth Stallwood:** Yeah. And I always think as well in fix it mode, one of the challenges of fix it mode that I see quite a lot. And I'm sure we've all been guilty of as we fix it from our own contacts and our own experience and our own background than how we would want it fixed versus helping the person find the fix that's right for them.

[00:22:27] **Melissa Doman:** Right. And I think that it's interesting because a lot of times. People will try to fix from their context because they're just trying to be helpful. It's not oftentimes that you'll see people doing that with some sort of nefarious intention. Those people do exist, but I would not say that they're the majority.

[00:22:49] And so people are trying to help from their own contexts because when they are typically speaking, viewing another human being who's suffering, oh, let me, let me share with you what work for me. So I think there's something around giving people the option to hear or deny that suggestion. So typically if someone comes to me, uh, in a work context or even personally, and they're, they're explaining a problem to me, you know, typically one of my first questions is - do you want me to just listen or do you need help working through this? And then another question, depending on what they tell me is I go, I went through something similar or my friend went through something similar. Would it be helpful if I shared what worked in those situations and let them answer?

[00:23:36] Yes or no? Because if I dive straight in, it can almost feel like it's invalidating what they are sharing and that's not what I want to do. So it's, hey, you have this option without the obligation to hear this story, but if it should be up to them, as opposed to me diving straight in, because you know, the intention versus the impact, they're not always the same.

[00:24:03] **Beth Stallwood:** So in both of those questions, you're giving people two options to choose from. And, but you're not, you don't have any preset expectations as to which one they will

take. You are genuinely openly saying I can be here just to listen, or I can be here to listen and work through these things. And you're also saying I can just help you think about it, or I can give you some examples from my own experience or from where I've seen other people of some of the solutions they have found, but it's not about, this is the solution for you.

[00:24:33] Exactly. And I think that that would solve a lot of miscommunications and, and missed moments for connection, whether that's personally or at work, you know, for example, and oftentimes you can see folks who their work persona versus personal persona are the same. And for others, it can be quite different.

[00:24:58] And so there's something about even in a work context that people slip into their work mask, and then they try to be just really solution orientated. And I get that, but that's not always the right course of action. Sometimes you just need to be. Which in the world of business and in corporate is not an encouraged value.

[00:25:24] So I think it's just, there's a lot of research coming out and lots of case studies showing that by providing that space to just be, or to take those moments, to try to have meaningful connections with coworkers, that it can actually boost rapport and connection and psychological safety and all, all those wonderful buzz words.

[00:25:46] And it's, it's a bit, um, it's unlike the, the model from which we've all been used to because when you think of, you know, work or corporate or business, you don't typically associate that with creating space.

[00:26:04] **Beth Stallwood:** Yeah. It's a different way of thinking about it. Isn't it? And that's probably why it doesn't happen like that because it's just out of kilter, even though, even though logically, when we talk about it, I'm sitting here thinking, well, obviously that's so sensible.

[00:26:17] That's exactly what we should be doing.

[00:26:21] Yeah. But in that zone, just because it's obvious and it's what we should be doing. Doesn't mean it's what we do. Exactly.

[00:26:31] **Melissa Doman:** [00:26:31] there. Yeah. It's and it's really about turning off the autopilot. That's the thing is this is conditioning that people get from a young age and it's really about, it's almost like a bit of workplace reparenting that's the best way I can describe it. It's like, does that make sense? Like it's, um, it's really like a bit of workplace reparenting like, yes. You know, being solution-oriented is great. Yes. In addition to creating space and creating space, doesn't have to have a negative connotation.

[00:27:07] It doesn't mean. Like some workplaces get concerned that that means people will slow down or work less and, and all that sort of stuff. But that's actually not true by creating space for those conversations. People actually feel better at work and they feel more purposeful and they work more efficiently.

[00:27:25] So it's really just that's the best way I can describe it. It's just workplace reparenting.

[00:27:32] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:27:32] Yeah. And like a reset on what we value. And we, I suppose the, all of this stuff, we understand it more now and we're still growing to understand the



neuroscience and you know how it actually, if we look after people's mental health and mental wellbeing and physical wellbeing at work, you will get better productivity, better results, better creativity, all the things that workplaces want, but you have to invest in that first.

[00:27:58] You don't get the results from assuming it will happen later. So there's something about how do we, how do we encourage that? I really interesting. I'd like to move into if we are in a workplace. One of the things that I think is great for getting work joy is having really great, like reciprocal relationships with people where, you know, they help you, you help them.

[00:28:17] And I'm wondering like, as a coworker, as a colleague, as a boss, as a, you know, someone who works for a bosses, whatever position you're in and work, how can you be somebody that helps other people with their mental health and you know, what are the signs that we should be looking out for? What are the conversations we should be starting or having, or, you know, gently checking in with people I'd be really interested to know, because as an individual, what can we all do?

[00:28:46] Because it's not just about the organization taking action here. Totally. Right. We totally have to wait for our organization to run a mental health week. And I kind of think it should be mental health, 52 weeks, not mental health week, but, um, what do we do as individuals to encourage this behavior in our teams, with our colleagues and, and create a better working environment where we can talk about these things.

[00:29:11] **Melissa Doman:** So that's actually. One of the key themes in my book is that the book is really about what can you do as an individual, whether you are a colleague, whether you are a line manager, what can you do as an individual that is not dependent on company policy? And so I think there's a, I look at two sides. I think there's the piece about.

[00:29:35] Signposting to people that it's, it's safe to talk to you about that, and it's encouraged and that there are the moments to recognize. So let's talk about the first one. So like I said before, I'm fairly certain mind readers don't exist, but I think that sometimes, you know, that, um, if it goes without saying, you could say it was never said that, that old chestnut and that's really true because how, how on earth are people supposed to know that they can assume that they can talk to you when things are not going well, unless you signpost to them that they can. I mean, granted, if you're a friendly person, you would hopefully assume that people would be like, oh, they seem, you know, nice and friendly.

[00:30:25] You know, maybe I can talk to them about this, but it doesn't matter who you are, where you come from, how old you are, every person. Especially in the context of work is typically looking for some form of permission and when it comes to mental health, oh boy, does that apply? So it's really about just being explicitly clear and role modeling to people that, you know, whether it's something that you are.

[00:30:52] Talking about with yourself, with which if you are doing it typically gives other people the courage that they can do it as well, or setting the tone in your team that talking about mental health is normal. Talking about it is healthy, managing your mental health is a healthy adult practice. Or if it's a colleague, you just have to put it out there that you are.

[00:31:16] Not only okay to talk about it, but that you encourage it. And when it comes to recognizing moments to support other people, I think intuition is one of the most powerful under-recognized tools in the workplace, because typically when people hear the word intuition, they go, oh, that's fluffy, hippy nonsense, but it's not, it's really not.

[00:31:39] So I think that if you're noticing that some of might seem off their baseline. Odds are, they might be. So it's really about again, creating space that I think what I hear from a lot of people is, Oh, I don't want to be intrusive. I don't want to be invasive. Showing care is rarely that it might make someone uncomfortable and I get that and they may not want to burden other people in there.

[00:32:04] These are all storylines I've heard before, but creating space and checking in with someone and stating the intention of why you're checking in. Showing care the right way is not intrusive. And so it's really just recognizing when people are not acting like themselves and creating the space for them to tell you if they want what's going on, because you have to be okay with no, you can notice something is off.

[00:32:33] He checked in with that person and they say, Oh, I'm okay. I don't. Want to talk about it. You have to be okay with no, and then usually it's all right. Well, you know, if, if you want to talk, I'm here, put it in their court. So it's interesting because work in the time of COVID in particular, a lot of us working remotely so you are relying on the signals that you get on video or on voice, because there are no nonverbal communication signals through text or email, even with emojis.

[00:33:05] I mean, emojis, explanation marks are helpful, but they are no substitute for the real thing.

[00:33:11] **Beth Stallwood:** And they're not helpful when people like me use them way too much.

[00:33:14] **Melissa Doman:** But I love that a lot. Cause I, I sometimes do that too, but it's um, it's, it's noticing those things on camera. It's noticing it on voice and, um, You know, gosh, at the time of COVID there just so many things to look out for.

[00:33:30] I mean, irritability, sadness a flattened affect, which means it looked like a bit like a, like a slumped potato. I don't know why it's slumped potato, but that's just what came to mind. Um, so you mean

[00:33:46] **Beth Stallwood:** I can picture it now, so it makes sense. Yeah. Right.

[00:33:50] **Melissa Doman:** Seeming just really quite flat, uh, easily angered having trouble concentrating, uh, seeming a bit more socially disengaged. I mean, and granted, I, I am a big proponent against virtual presenteeism because that's, that's like the world that we're in now that if you're not doing presenteeism in an office, that a lot of folks are being expected to be connected quite consistently, which is not very healthy. So if it's, um, you know, disengaging more than typical and only to see the word normal, because normal is, is a human made construct, but more than typical for that person.

[00:34:30] So it's really just relying, relying on your intuition, if something seems off it's. cause it probably is. And so just check in

[00:34:38] **Beth Stallwood:** Yeah. And I think there's something there about people often are funny about intuition, but intuition is your brain telling you something that you haven't really understood or focused on yet?

[00:34:48] Isn't it your brain saying? I have noticed something that you haven't consciously understood yet, and you might, you might have a conversation with someone and say, Oh, hi and I noticed the other day on our zoom that you seem to be sad. That was my interpretation of that. Is everything. Okay. And is there anything I can help with and be prepared as you say for you to say I'm actually fine, or actually, I don't want to talk about it, then you go find, but I'm here if you need me, or if they do want to talk about it, just be the person that is there for them.

[00:35:16] **Melissa Doman:** Yeah, absolutely. And there's also something about really being explicitly clear that you will not judge that person and that you respect their privacy. So, you know, there's a lot of motor mouths in the workplace and people.

[00:35:33] They just love the gossip. I look at, uh, the workplace as, um, as a adult sandpit. No, hear me out. Hear me out. So. You're a jungle gym. And you have like a, that big, like metal dome thing where you can kind of like climb up like a spider monkey and then you have all the toys and you have, I mean, if you think about it, you want to have, you have somebody who wants to be, you know, King of the castle.

[00:36:05] You have someone who likes to lead a team game. You have somebody who doesn't like to share their toys. You have somebody who's running around crying. Like you have all, all of these sorts of dynamics, but it's just, we're all grown up now. And it's in the workplace. It's really quite similar. If you think about it, it really is.

[00:36:25] **Beth Stallwood** It is so like the kid that throws their toys out the pram and you know, there's always somebody.

[00:36:31] **Melissa Doman:** Yeah. Yeah. They didn't have their nap, you know, just really, and that's how I look at when people are acting out certain ways or they're uncomfortable with certain things. I don't think you ever really lose that.

[00:36:48] Childhood sandpit experience. I think we bring it into work except instead of a jungle gym playing with toys, it's, you know, millions of pounds and, you know, Karen took my stapler or something like that.

[00:37:07] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:37:07] Totally get that. And, and, you know, also thing I always think about like Mean Girls is one of the films I always refer to when you're thinking about how people get into like clique's and you want to be in a certain group, or you're not in a certain group and they exist in work too.

[00:37:22] Right. And that can have either have some really great effects on you. If you're in the group that you want to be in or some kind of really excluding feelings, if you're not in that kind of group.

[00:37:32] **Melissa Doman:** [00:37:32] Gosh. Yeah. Oh, my God. I have definitely been excluded in a workplace context. And even just the, the mental health impact of that is just so unfortunate is what I will say.

[00:37:47] **Beth Stallwood:** Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. So we've got we've, we've kind of talked about some of the things that we can do for ourselves, like naming emotions, et cetera, or being able to kind of work through it and, you know, good advice. Don't try and get through it too quickly. Like I would try and do it well. So that's good advice for me.

[00:38:04] Thanks. Well, and also thinking around as a colleague, as a coworker, as a boss, as a person you're working with other people. And I suppose really that advice goes to friends and family as well. Doesn't it, if you're speaking and talking, if the lesson, you know, how many are often the hardest ones, aren't they to get to listen to stuff, but that it is.

[00:38:25] The theory is the same. Isn't it as notice if something doesn't feel right, if something feels out of kilter for that person. So not your judgment on it, but if it feels like something's not quite right, have a conversation, be prepared for them to say no, be prepared to just listen, be prepared to talk and have that have a conversation.

[00:38:43] I suppose it wouldn't be right for us to continue on without saying what happens when it goes from managing your mental health into actually thinking that there might be some kind of mental illness or a problem that needs more than a conversation or thinking about it or resting it because that's often I think, and I might be wrong here where people don't have the conversation because they're worried that they're not equipped to have that conversation.

[00:39:08] Or if it goes that far and people are worried about somebody and that can feel really hard. So sometimes people don't even start that conversation because of that fear.

[00:39:17] **Melissa Doman:** Right. Right. And that's the thing is, and you couldn't be more, right. So I think that oftentimes that people think they'll say the wrong thing, or they're not qualified, but the thing is just because you're starting the conversation, it doesn't mean you're the therapist.

[00:39:33] It doesn't mean you're their doctor, a psychiatrist in those moments, you you're right. You're not the best person to help them. However, you can call to attention that you want to be supportive. And then it really just becomes about triaging because you're not, you're not meant to be their therapist is a reason it's called a support network, not a support standalone.

[00:39:55] So it's really about getting them. What, what would be the most helpful resource for them to help them feel like they are managing that condition in a way that works for them? Because when it comes to mental illness, it's not about cheering. It's not about, you know, snapping your fingers. It's about promoting insight and promoting management.

That's what it comes down to. And so there has to be. A willingness on that person's part. There has to be an acknowledgement of the existence and you, again, you have to keep in mind that so much of this matters depending on how they were raised, what sort of mental health education did they have was a talked about in their family? Was it talked about in their culture? There's so many factors that will determine whether or not that's even a possibility of acknowledging it to that person. So

let's say that, uh, someone, uh, has no idea what generalized anxiety is, but to their colleague who let's say is very emotionally intelligent, might think that this is not your typical worry.

[00:41:07] This just seems like persistent, persistent, persistent anxiety. And it really seems like something is not right. And so that can be a, quite a difficult conversation where if you're raising to someone and they're like, what are you talking about in those moments? You can say, I, I have known some folks who have seemed to struggle in a similar way, and they seemed to benefit a lot from talking to someone or, you know, looking into these resources and I'm, I'm only recommending X as seemed like it really helped them totally up to you what you decide to do with it. But I'm raising it because, because I care and it seems like you're, you've been in distress, you know, obviously you want to state that intention.

[00:41:56] About why you're raising it. And ultimately it's, what's the action from that conversation because awareness is great. Action is better. It's what are you going to do with that conversation? Because I think all this mental health awareness is wonderful. Mental illness awareness is wonderful, but what's going to come from it.

[00:42:16] What's going to happen. So I think that by. I understand the hesitation because people don't want to say the wrong thing. They don't feel they're qualified. The good news is you don't have to be. You can just be a supportive, empathetic human who call something out that you're seeing and encouraging someone to action, taking action to help themselves.

[00:42:42] That's really what it comes down to. You don't have to be a clinician, just be a decent, supportive human and help them feel that they're not alone. So that's really it.

[00:42:54] **Beth Stallwood:** And that is said in that way, it doesn't feel so scary. Does it? It doesn't feel like, you know, like I know people always compare, like if someone walked in the room with a broken leg, you'd take them to hospital.

[00:43:10] **Melissa Doman:** I hate that comparison – it's such a like linear problem with a linear fit.

[00:43:14] And I'm like, Oh, that's. So not the same as the human brain, which has millions and millions of millions of connections.

[00:43:23] **Beth Stallwood:** I'm thinking here, like it's so someone had you know, if you were talking to someone and they're like, ah, I've got really bad backache and you probably go, Oh, have you ever tried physiotherapy?

[00:43:31] Because my friend tried that for backache and it really sorted it out. Or have you ever thought about there's other things out there, or, you know, have you seen somebody, have you spoken to someone who's professional in that area? Do you, you know, have you ever had that conversation with your doctor or so there are, in those ways, we, we, we have that behavior built into us, caring about somebody, seeing if they are getting some help for it, but we're less inclined to do it when it's something around mental health than we are around something around physical health.

[00:44:01] **Melissa Doman:** Oh yeah. Because you don't want the person to feel like you're attacking the core of who they are because mental illness involves the brain, which is the organ that governs

who you are. And so people don't want to feel like they are making someone feel abnormal or there's something wrong with them. But the thing is that if someone were to have, let's say type two diabetes or asthma, you know, if we think about it more like a chronic condition space, encouraging someone to go see a doctor about those things, you wouldn't even think twice wouldn't even think twice.

[00:44:42] **Melissa Doman:** Oh yeah. So I think it's really just, de-stigmatizing seeking help. Like, if someone is really depressed, it should be no different of saying, Oh, you know, it's totally normal to go get help and to talk to someone about it and just explore what your options are. So you can feel like you have some influence on it because the last thing you want to do is tell someone, Oh, if you do this, you know, you'll, you'll feel better. You'll be happy. But don't you think they would do that? If they could. So it's it's that I never ever use that terminology because it's "Oh, you know, if you try these things, maybe it will help you feel like you have some more influence over it", or you have some more options because that those are neutral terms.

[00:45:33] **Beth Stallwood:** Like, as you said earlier, it's not about curing mental illness now, because that might not be a possibility for what your mental illness actually is, and it might not be possible for you to be, have that mental health at a great level all the time.

And each type of situation is going to be different. So don't, don't prompt, don't promise an outcome that you don't know is going to happen.

[00:46:04] **Melissa Doman:** Exactly. There's some people, absolutely. There's some people who experience a clinical depression for a few years and then never, again, there's some people who have debilitating panic attacks for the entirety of their life and everything in between. So yeah, just, just don't know. And there are. There's so many ingredients in the cocktail of of life that can lead to those sorts of things that I think it's really just about normalizing getting help and encouraging insight and management, not about going towards quote unquote, feeling better because feeling better to someone could be totally different from how we think about it.

[00:46:47] **Beth Stallwood:** Definitely. Yeah. And it totally depends on where you are at the time. And I suppose when I link it back to work, joy is one of the things we're talking about is that what gives one person great work joy, maybe the complete [00:47:00] opposite of what joy and the example I often use, or that's a really basic one. Is there are some people who couldn't love a spreadsheet more.

[00:47:08] in the data and stuff like that. People who would like rather go up to their own eyes out than have to play with a spreadsheet, but the joy is dependent and it's, and it depends on you and what you love. And some people get loads of joy from having conversations with people and other people would rather not have conversations with people.

[00:47:24] So there are so many different things here and so many different levels of it. And I think that that for me, relates back to mental health as there are different levels of it for some people getting to neutral. No from a negative space will be where they find some joy because neutral feels okay. And that's, that's, that's that's good enough.

[00:47:42] And, and it's better than it has been. And for other people who may be, are in a flow of having some really good mental health, it might be a bit, a deeper level that they can go to in their work joy. So there's something there about just accepting that it's different for everyone and it feels different and everyone's going to have different goals and different yeah.

[00:48:00] [00:47:59] Understanding of what that all looks like a

[00:48:01] **Melissa Doman:** [00:48:01] hundred percent. I, I couldn't agree more.

[00:48:05] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:48:05] So it's such an important topic and thank you for coming on and talking to us about it. And before you go, I've got some kind of quick fire questions for you. If you're up for it, about your work, joy and what you're doing.

[00:48:18] Um, so question one, what is always guaranteed to bring you some work? Joy

[00:48:24] **Melissa Doman:** [00:48:24] me individually.

[00:48:26] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:48:26] Yeah. You as an individual. I just love to, I'm just nosy

[00:48:28] **Melissa Doman:** [00:48:28] basically. Oh, you're never nosy. I love our conversations. Um, what is always guaranteed to bring me work joy. Okay. Knowing that I have helped someone or a group of people to view.

[00:48:51] Their workplace experience differently enough that they feel like they can have an impact on their journey. That brings me [00:49:00] so much joy. Uh, when I, you know, even in the pre COVID days, if I was doing in-person lectures or now I'm doing it all digitally, just the feedback I get from people of thank you for helping me see this differently.

[00:49:14] I'm going to do something with what you've taught me. That brings me taking action from it. Yeah, people taking action from what I've taught them, brings me a lot of joy because I know it's helping them. Brilliant. Second question. Um, what are you currently reading? What's on your bookshelf right now?

[00:49:34] **Melissa Doman:** [00:49:34] I am reading, uh, two books, uh, sadly, not as often as I like, cause I'm currently writing a book.

[00:49:43] Uh, but uh, the two books I've been reading are Watching The English from Kate Fox. She's a, um, anthropological researcher. Who basically unpacks in this massive thick tome about the insights and nuances to British culture and behavior. Uh, because I lived in the UK for three years as an American foreign national, and, uh, another expert recommended it to me.

[00:50:12] And I was like, this seems very interesting. I'd love to read it. And there's a whole chapter on weather. So I thought that I was

[00:50:20] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:50:20] only one,

[00:50:24] **Melissa Doman:** [00:50:24] the other, the other book I'm reading is called, um, Surrounded by idiots, the four types of human behavior, or how to understand those who cannot be understood by Thomas Erickson.

[00:50:36] Oh yeah. That's, that's a doozy. Um, it's just really a book about, um, different communication styles and how to promote mutual understanding when you have two people who are quite far apart.

[00:50:48] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:50:48] Great. Thank you for that. Um, question three for me is what is the best or most useful piece of advice that you've had in your life that you always come back to?

[00:50:58] Oh,

[00:50:58] **Melissa Doman:** [00:50:58] that's such a good question. [00:51:00] Piece of advice. I always come back to,

[00:51:11] you can decide your own narrative.

[00:51:15] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:51:15] Oh, lovely.

[00:51:19] **Melissa Doman:** [00:51:19] Yeah, it's a good one. I like that one.

[00:51:21] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:51:21] Love, I might steal that and use that for some other people. My pleasure, you know, bit of R and D rip off and duplicate where you can, um, question four, what is one super practical bit of advice that you could give to our listeners?

[00:51:38] You know, something that they could do today, tomorrow the next day? Um, what would you give them as that advice and why would you give that? Can

[00:51:46] **Melissa Doman:** [00:51:46] I get two pieces of advice?

[00:51:48] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:51:48] Of course you can. I love a rule breaker.

[00:51:52] **Melissa Doman:** [00:51:52] I'm more of a rule bender. Um, I have one piece for them and one piece they can do [00:52:00] for others when it comes to themselves, I think you need, especially now be as kind to yourself as you would to a friend.

[00:52:11] I think that is incredibly crucial right now, now more than ever. Um, The other piece I just keep going back to is just create space for conversations with, with people who need it. Yeah.

[00:52:30] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:52:30] I suppose that includes yourself as well. Doesn't it? Because if you need space for a conversation it's reaching out and finding somebody as well as giving us rather than people

[00:52:37] **Melissa Doman:** [00:52:37] a hundred percent.

[00:52:38] Yeah.

[00:52:39] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:52:39] Yeah, love those two bits of advice. Thank you. And before we finish off, where can people find out more about you, your philosophy, what you do, your work, et cetera.

[00:52:49] **Melissa Doman:** [00:52:49] So, uh, the best place to find me is my website, which is [www.melissadomain.com](http://www.melissadomain.com). I'm also, find-able on LinkedIn and on [00:53:00] Instagram at the wandering Mel, uh, please be in contact if there is.



[00:53:04] Anything I can do to help your business to be better equipped to discuss mental health at work in very. Achievable practical and dare I say entertaining ways.

[00:53:21] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:53:21] Ah, lovely entertaining. And I think this is it. If we can, if we can all talk about this stuff in a way that's more human in a way that is in sometimes more fun that gets people thinking about it and understanding it and able to have those conversations.

[00:53:37] Surely we'll do better than trying to make it something very scientific and serious and things that people can't really connect with. Oh,

[00:53:44] **Melissa Doman:** [00:53:44] yeah, it's really just about making the education accessible and actionable. And I'd seen it's on my website. That awareness is great. Action is better. That's what I'm all about is promoting awareness of these conversations, but encouraging action to [00:54:00] have them.

[00:54:01] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:54:01] Great. Well, I want to say huge. Thank you, Mel, for being part of the work joy podcast, it's been great to have you. I think a couple of really key takeaways for me are around that creating space and giving yourself that time and space as well to think and understand the emotions that you're going through in the moment and not try to rush.

[00:54:22] Out of them. I like your idea that if you, if you try and do that, that you come outside way somewhere else. So I can say thank you very much. And maybe one day we'll come and talk again at some point, but thank you for being part of the

[00:54:38] **Melissa Doman:** [00:54:38] program off my absolute pleasure. Thank you so much for having me on the show and, uh, Thank you for the work that you do.

[00:54:48] Thanks. Okay, bye.

[00:54:51] **Beth Stallwood:** [00:54:51] Thank you for listening to the work joy jam. I really enjoyed the conversation with Melissa and her really [00:55:00] practical expertise, taking some of that and thinking about how we can support ourselves and support each other in our workplaces. And I think the best advice that I'm really taking to heart.

[00:55:11] I'm going to use loads is this understanding that you can be the person who is really supportive. And if you see a notice and we all do this, we see a notice, but we don't know what to say. I think I know I often do. If I see a notice, something in another person, I'm going to be the person who has a call, who picks up the phone.

[00:55:32] And says, how are you doing what's going on for you? I noticed this, you know, is it something you want to talk about and be the person who, you know, maybe if they want to, they can talk to, and that they feel supported, but they're nuts. I hope you enjoy today. Podcast. Um, do you go and listen to some of the others?

[00:55:52] We've got lots of different subjects and so amazing different speakers on a whole range of topics. With that insight [00:56:00] you can get in touch with us at hello at create work, joy.com and you can also follow us on Instagram, create work, joy, tag us in what you're doing, what the actions you are, what you're taking from the podcast and tell us your feedback.

[00:56:15] Thanks for listening.