



## Episode 16 – Emotion at Work Stories - Imposter Syndrome Chatting with Amanda Arrowsmith (@pontecarloblue)

Phil: Hello and welcome to the Emotion at work podcast where we take a deep dive into the human condition. One of the things that I did at the start of 2018 was promise that we would introduce a new aspect to the podcast so we had introduced an aspect of Emotion in work and stories. I started that off by telling my story of my 2017 and our guest today is here to talk about Emotion in Work in Imposter Syndrome so in a way reluctantly volunteered to be our guest. So anyway let's get them on the air to start with, let's welcome the wonderful Amanda Arrowsmith

Amanda: Good morning, hello, how are you?

Phil: I'm good thank you, I'm good, what about you, and how are you doing?

Amanda: I'm good, really well. It's beautiful and sunny, it's cold but sunny I'm in a good place.

Phil: It's crisp today actually. Have you got a fire in your house cause you are in the countryside aren't you?

Amanda: Yes we do, we have a fabulous log burner that we didn't put on last night despite the fact it was cold, I was under a blanket. We also have, where we live in the village, a biomass heater for the village.

Phil: Oh do you?

Amanda: Yeah, so the guy who runs our village, a couple of years ago when he took over put biomass heating in for the whole village, so yeah I have put the heating on both upstairs and downstairs today much to the dogs delight.

Phil: I haven't lit the fire today, it is something that I want to do because it is similarly crisp and cold where I am, but yeah I haven't lit it yet today, I was wondering if you had lit yours.

Amanda: But as a fair haired, freckled, ginger woman I love this weather because you get the benefit of the sun and the Vitamin D and all that great stuff but you don't actually have to get hot and sweaty. This is perfect for me.

Phil: Perfect weather for you.

Amanda: Yeah.

Phil: Okay, so as well as being our guest then Amanda is a HR practitioner and we will hear more about your experiences professionally if that is alright as we work our way through the podcast. So, before we get in to talking about our topic at hand today one of the things that I do on all the



Podcast episodes is I ask an unexpected/random question that takes us off into other topics that go from there, so is it alright if I open with that question?

Amanda: Yes of course.

Phil: Wonderful, so I had a different one planned and then our opening discussion has made me change it, so is there, or in your experience, is there an ideal way to light the log burner?

Amanda: Yes, I believe there is.

Phil: Okay tell me what that is then.

Amanda: You need to clear your grate a bit, I don't believe you have to have it clear completely every time, you can have a couple of ashes in there but you need to clear your grate because oxygen and moving air through is important. Don't overtighten your paper, you need to screw your paper up but don't put it too tight because if you put it too tight you end up putting too much paper in. Also, don't overfill your paper, you need to find that great balance between paper, kindling and logs. I don't use firelighters, we get a very good draw on our fire so I don't have to use them, but if we do use firelighters we use the natural ones because I can't stand the smell of the paraffin ones and you can't get it off of your hands, it doesn't matter what you do. Also remember to have your grate open, don't do that thing where you close it and your vents are still closed. The other thing is small logs, it's always tempting to use massive logs to get things going but actually if you want to get heat going the smaller the logs the more heat you are going to get. The larger the logs they'll burn longer and stronger and you will get a nice constant heat but you won't get that really really hot heat. I am a log burner nerd as you can now tell.

Phil: You are a log burner nerd, that's good.

Amanda: Well there is the type of logs as well Phil. So you have got your hard wood, soft wood, are you going to have a mix, different wood burns differently. You want kiln dried.

Phil: I was going to say do you do kiln dried, we don't do kiln dried, we do, we get ours from a provider that leaves them out in the dry but just leaves them out in the open rather than kilned.

Amanda: We have a mix, we get ours delivered, they deliver by the cubic meter here, they don't deliver by the bag or by weight because obviously depending on how much moisture is in the logs they are going to weigh more. Drier you probably want weight but cubic feet is important because you probably get the number but you want a little bit of dryness because otherwise they are going to get harder to burn.

Phil: Yeah we get logs delivered by the tonne, so we get a tonne of logs delivered and then we have got a massive log store that we will put them in. So as well as being dried by the person that provides the logs we will then put them in the log store and leave them outside. A tonne of logs will probably last us about a year but we have an open fire so rather than a burner we have got an open burner which I know is less efficient but I love it. I love the ambience of it as well as the heat it



provides, but also we have got our chimney in the middle of our house so if we light the fire and have it on all day, it burns really well all day and it will also heat the whole house as our chimney is in the middle.

Amanda: So we are lucky like that, our wood burner is below our bedroom, so at night when we go up it is nice and toasty in our room but if you happen to be at the other end of the house, because we are in a long kind of old barn shape, if you happen to be at the other end of the house it is freezing.

Phil: It's freezing because you don't get the joys of it.

Amanda: Exactly.

Phil: So I think that we have established that both of us are in the sticks, so one of the challenges of being in villages is that internet connection can't be great sometimes, so one of things that we often do on the podcasts is try to get it recorded in one hit, without any editing so we have a genuine experience of the conversation but if that means we lose our audio we can always pause the recording and come back and edit stuff back together if that's okay?

Amanda: Okay.

Phil: Cool. So I guess I wanted to open with, what went through your mind as you put your hand up to say I would be interested in doing an Emotions at Work story podcast?

Amanda: So amusingly I started with yeah, yeah I could do an Emotions at Work podcast, I'd be happy and then immediately I went to; there'll be better people than me, there'll be people with more information, there will be people with more qualifications, there will be people with more experience, oh he won't want me that will be fine, but you know I'd be good. So I had that kind of internal I won't be good enough, he will probably have better people.

Phil: And how long has that been with you, that kind of internal dialogue?

Amanda: So I think I have had that most of my life. I am a younger sister of a really successful, clever, talented big brother and he got really good grades at school, he got the lead part in school plays, he could write and play music and I couldn't do any of those things. He was first born, he still is first born, I am talking about the present.

Phil: I was going to say...

Amanda: He was the apple of everyone's eye and I was me, who was a little bit awkward, a little bit clumsy, I was Mr Bump for many years at school. My first school, my mum jokes about how she used to bump into people in the village we lived in at the time and they would say "Oh we have seen your Amanda down the Doctors again," because I had fallen over at school and bumped my head or broken my arm. Yeah I wasn't a perfect child – I always had a tear in something and probably as I say bruises and bumps and those sort of things so I always, I could never live up to our kid, I could never



live up to him. He is one of my best friends, he is someone I love beyond measure and I know now that for many years he had the same feeling, he is older than me but in his 20s he would say things like when I grow up I want to be like Amanda.

Phil: Oh wow, okay.

Amanda: Yeah so it's interesting the perception we have of ourselves isn't it and what we feel. I think the other thing for me was that I left school without qualifications at 19 after quite a bad illness when I was 15 and then many years of struggling to be academic again, having been one of those people who found school quite easy and learning quite easy to then miss a year through ill health and never get that cognitive ability back again was really tough. So I went to work and all my friends went to university because that's what you did when you went to St Bartholomew's in Newbury, that's what everyone did – you went to university, you didn't go to work and so there was that whole thing of what's culturally accepted and so I felt that I was not enough and that I was slightly lesser just because of the way my path took and that kind of stays with you through life. It stays with you professionally, for all the jobs I couldn't apply for because they required a degree. If I had done a degree in fine art could I have applied for that job, would it have made me any better at that job – probably not but I couldn't apply and they weren't interested in seeing me.

Phil: Yeah because you would apply and you didn't have that tick that they could put in the appropriate box.

Amanda: Exactly, through to not being able to have children. Unfortunately I can't have children and it is something that for many years it felt like a failure, but you know with hindsight and a little bit of reflection I can't, it's not a failure, unfortunately I am physically not able to and that is sad. You know failed relationships and friendships that you invest lots of time in and they just disappear and I don't think this is just me, and I envy to an extent, people that don't have this issue you are going to be, how wasn't I enough, what about me and that element of self-doubt and how we doubt ourselves and the toll that that can take on the way that you live and the emotion and the way that you work, so I guess that I would say probably from the age of, I probably always had an element of self-doubt, I would say that I probably felt it more from my mid-twenties when I started to try to achieve more at work but I couldn't because of my circumstance and my history.

Phil: Okay, so, and if at any point I ask questions that you don't want to answer or you are not comfortable going there then just say and that is okay. What made it more, I want to say the word pronounced, but that is not the word you used, in your mid-twenties. You mentioned that you think it was around the time you wanted to try and apply for more stuff, is that right?

Amanda: Yeah definitely, I think in Human Resources particularly and as I said I am a HR Practitioner, and in the field of Human Resources I am a generalist. In the, this would have been the mid-90s and I would say still now a lot of organisations, if you were to apply for a job, required a degree. Interestingly if you go and look at the number of people who did degrees in Human Resources Management in the late 80s early 90s it probably was quite low, so it wasn't a degree in my chosen field or vocation but they wanted a degree and so at the time the way that recruitment was working, and recruitment worked this way with everything, CVs would be looked at and they would just be

discounted and if you didn't, as you said, tick that box then you would get discounted and it was disheartening and so I got to a point where I just didn't apply for things because I didn't have the experience to be able to show that actually I didn't need a degree because I had the experience to do the job, but I also didn't have that tick in the box to show that I could do the activity and this wasn't for jobs that required a particular skill this was for a personnel officer, HR advisor, junior HR manager, HR Business Partner roles, it wasn't and so as recruiters we got lazy and ticked, "must have degree" but actually what we meant by that was "must be from a certain background, must fit a certain mould," because actually by saying "must have a degree" what we were saying was "must be white middle class" and I appreciate that is a big leap but...

Phil: But you know, if you think about society at that particular time, you know if you looked at the demographics of the people that would be able to get to and sustain being at university I don't think that is a, maybe it is an over-generalisation but I think it is a fair, reasonably fair generalisation.

Amanda: Yes

Phil: So, I am a little bit curious around was it you were applying for jobs and you were getting knocked back or was it that because of your kind of, the roles you were doing, you could see that CVs being discounted on the basis of it and therefore you didn't? So I guess I am wondering was, you were doing stuff and getting rejected and that was compounding it or that because you were seeing the practise that was compounding it or was there something different?

Amanda: It was a bit of both actually. So I have recollections of conversations with recruiters where there would say "no, client must have a degree on this" but also I was working, so late 90s for three years I worked for a law firm in Leeds and I loved it, I loved working there it was great. It was where I did my IPD, as it was at the time, because that's how long ago it was, and we would look at paralegals, we'd look at secretaries, we would look at, I think law firms and professional service are particularly hierarchical in terms of their education anyway, and I think about how we used to select trainee solicitors – not only did they have to have a degree but it had to be a degree from a Russell Group university and it had to be a 2:1, at the time we didn't really look at anyone else. So I think that I was within a structure where the importance on qualifications was so high that it made me, it probably highlighted my lack of qualification even more.

Phil: Okay, and then if I may, I want to take a similar themed question and then go back to one of the things you said towards the start of the podcast about your brother. So I guess a similar questions – was it that you were trying to live up to that and being told you weren't able to or was it that you were telling yourself you weren't able to or again was it something different?

Amanda: He has a first class degree, he has a Masters. It's in Creative Arts, but he has these things. I think it was more around the doors that were open to people that had a degree and could tick that box and what that actually meant and I think if I'm completely honest I was bitter. I was bitter about the fact that the reason I didn't go to university was because I was ill, it wasn't about the fact that I didn't have the capability to go to university, you know if we take away the cognitive ability but think about the mental, so actually the ability to learn, the ability to reason, the ability to research. If I could have spent the time reading and spending the time doing that then I could have done that. It

was more about, so I think I was bitter and I was a bit angry about the fact that I didn't do that and I felt that I was being given a chance to show my worth because of this perceived lack of something because I hadn't gone to university because at the same time I wasn't telling people that the reason I didn't go to university was because I was ill because it wasn't acceptable because if you admitted, sorry I'm skirting around the illness – I have ME, Myalgic Encephalomyelitis, it's a, oh I added extra syllables into that – Encephalomyelitis. At the time it was known as yuppie flu or chronic fatigue syndrome, so you know if it comes with that horrible label it's not seen as a real illness

Phil: Yes I was going to say.

Amanda: So you are not going to tell people that you've got it and you are not going to say this is the reason I didn't go to university and the reason I didn't complete my A-Levels. You are going to, I chose to talk about the boom and buzz crash at that time, talk about the fact that my parents were on the income level where they earned too much to get a grant but too little to put two kids through university at the same time, talk about the costs and the reasons why, because I didn't know what my vocation was going to be, I didn't go to university because I didn't know what I wanted to do – I knew exactly what I wanted to do but it was easier for me to talk about the reasons being external for not going than internal, but you create stories don't you and you create reasons for yourself for not doing things but the self-doubt through not getting opportunity and then the narrative you start giving yourself is like "well I couldn't do that because I don't have a degree", "I could never be this because I don't have this", "I could never do this because of this or that" and you close doors to yourself and you close opportunity to yourself because of that.

Phil: It's triggered me thinking about why, because I never went to uni either, I pretty much flunked out of my A-Levels, so I didn't fail them or did I fail them? No I didn't because I got three Es so I just about passed them, but in terms of actually then taking those three E A-Levels and doing something with them I was like you know what I don't want to. I sailed through my GCSEs without any real effort or energy, no revision and I was late for an exam because I was playing football. There was very little cognitive effort in it, but when it came to doing my A-Levels I thought it was going to be the same – I thought I could just rock up and answer some questions and I would be alright. I remember the blaseness of when I kind of opened my results and went "oh look I got three Es, I'm off to the pub with my mates see you later" and walked out of the house and then I created this story of why I didn't want to go to university and how it wasn't the place for me and that sort of stuff. I still maintain that that was, and I would say this because it is my life and it has turned out alright, but I still maintain that not going to university was the best thing I ever did because if I had then I would've just ended up getting stupidly in debt, drinking far too much alcohol and coming out with nothing to show for it at the end of it because I was far too interested in drinking alcohol, meeting girls and playing with my friends and having fun than I was in doing anything vaguely resembling study, but there is definitely some stories that I have told myself in time since then as to the reasons why for doing or not doing it.

Amanda: Yeah and those stories that we tell ourselves they start forming the truth don't they?

Phil: Absolutely



Amanda: You kind of lose the actual truth because we rarely sit down and go “oh actually what did I do during that time” and what I did, when I look back and I look back at what I did I joined the Civil Service, I went to work at the serious fraud office, I spent a year in a press office at the serious fraud office – just to put a little bit of context around this we had a shared email account which I used to dial up every morning, lunch time and evening because we didn’t have that, so you know for anyone who didn’t start work until the 2000s the 90s were fun. We used to fax things, I made some friends and did some things at 19 that formed who I am later in life and formed what I did. I stayed in the civil service and moved into the health service, I did a lot of work around patient advocacy and patient complaints, and I then worked for a community health council which at the time was around helping patients to access services and helping them to formulate their opinions on services. I did a public consultation on the University College London Hospital – I was part of the public consultation on the new UCL in London, I also did a public consultation on access to abortion services in North London and worked with the Local Health Authority to avoid sending 16 year old girls out to Mile End on the tube to have an abortion when actually they could get one in London subject to. At the time we had 36 different languages being spoken in Camden, we had massive issues with drugs which they still have and I look back and kind of go actually, you know what, I did alright in those first six years of my working life and I did some really good work but at the time I was looking at my friends who were at university, other people around me and what I hadn’t done, what I hadn’t achieved and why I hadn’t and it’s not until you actually take that time to go back and appreciate that you can look, and you know hindsight is a wonderful thing, but I don’t think we as humans spend enough time going “do you know what, I did alright, I did this stuff and that stuff” and I think that’s that self-doubt as well because I can’t have done alright because if I had have done alright then I wouldn’t be feeling like this now would I?

Phil: Yeah, I want to come back to that last point in a second but I find it really interesting about all of those things that you sort of explained about the different roles that you have had. There was a real theme in that around finding a voice for people whether that be around patient advocacy, patient consultation, 16 year old girls needing an abortion, you know everything you were doing was about finding a voice for people and yet almost in a way you weren’t, you weren’t finding your own voice. I don’t know if that is a fair thing to say but I’ve said it now so.

Amanda: I think it’s interesting, I think it's one of the things I loved working in HR, when I found HR it was the right thing for me because actually I joke that HR was 90% talking to people and 10% being a complete bitch and if someone at school, you know a careers officer, had said to me “we’ve got the perfect job for you Amanda” I would have been like “yay, perfect” because I would actually, now what I would say is my role is about helping and it sounds a little glib but it’s about helping organisations and people getting the best, it’s about really working with individuals and making sure they have the tools and resources and the situation to do the best that they can do which then means that for a business you are successful as a business so it is still about advocating for people, it is still about helping people to have their voice, it’s still about giving people access to services and the best that they can do. It is more about them as individuals than it is access to health services I suppose so I am still on that advocacy bench to a certain extent.

Phil: Okay. So when that voice inside your head says “I’m not as successful as” ooh you have a little friend (dog barking).

Amanda: I have sorry, there's a delivery so let me put said friend down so he can go and chase and see what's downstairs. Apologies, he's gone.

Phil: That's alright. So, I can't remember what I was saying now, where was I going?

Amanda: When, I got so distracted by the dog barking. We were talking about, argh, I don't know.

Phil: We came out of advocacy and then I was going, so in respect of those stories that we tell ourselves then, so when you tell yourself that you're not, or when that voice inside your head tells you that you're not good enough, that you can't do this, that you haven't got what you need, or that you're not the right person how does that feel, which I know is a really broad question but I am going to run with it if that's okay?

Amanda: Yeah sure, okay so I am not sure that I recognise that I am doing it at the time that I do it.

Phil: Okay.

Amanda: So I'm not sure until afterwards when I go "oh, I have been procrastinating quite a lot around this, oh yeah because actually I'm not good enough to do it". So I think it's, I think that it's a, let me change this, so the feeling and reaction I'm not good enough actually isn't based on fact and actually when you look at self-doubt and imposter syndrome and that kind of belief that is not enough, it's usually contrary to any subjective evidence that shows that you are quite talented and actually okay, I think I don't feel because what I do is find ways to avoid, so I am a procrastination master. I joke with my brother that actually I just need a bit of pressure to get my best work done, I don't know if that's necessarily true I just think about the fact that I, that the self-doubt in me goes "aw that's going to be quite hard and I'm not sure I'm going to be good enough to do that" so look there's a nice bit of a list that needs doing over here or there's a kitchen that needs tidying or there's a cake that needs baking or a box set that needs watching or actually if I can just play around with this piece of work over here I can avoid that bit over there, that actually I am doubting whether I am good enough or have the skills to do. So it's about confidence and it's, I don't know, doubt of feeling, it's about a lack of confidence in myself and that self-doubt and that kind of fear of being found out that I am not good enough and I am, and actually I'm going to fail because I am not good enough. Also I think that procrastination is a bit of a coping mechanism because if you procrastinate and then you fail you can say that you failed due to lack of effort and then it is something else's fault. It's because of the procrastination because, or you can turn it around and say I was lazy or those sorts of things so I think that it is doubt.

Phil: You still haven't fulfilled your story.

Amanda: Exactly, yeah, complete you can fulfil your narrative. So I think that there is that, it is interesting because obviously we agreed to do this 10 days ago and I have been thinking about it since then and I have been reading and looking at a couple of things since then and looking at my behaviour and it is interesting, that inner voice that I don't always know if I believe in – so I read a lot of self-helps books and listen to self-help tapes in the car and stuff and a lot of the time I find myself

going “yeah, yeah, yeah, affirmations and all that stuff, blah, blah, blah” but actually my inner critic and my inner voice, she’s quite loud and not actually that nice and she doesn’t pull any punches with some of the things she says and so that has been quite an eye opener for me and it’s having this conversation and thinking about it has kind of made me go “why am I saying that about myself?”. So one of the things that I do a lot about myself is that I am lazy and actually you go back and look at what you can achieve and what you have achieved and what you can do and that wasn’t the activity of a lazy person, that was someone actually getting stuff done so what was it, what do I hide behind and why do I call myself lazy, I think as individuals we are not always very nice to ourselves and if I could find a way of, not silencing that critic but challenging her immediately and kind of taking it back a bit I think I will probably cope and get more stuff done and perhaps procrastinate a little less.

Phil: Yeah, so I was doing some work last week with a group and one of the things that we have been, so we are playing with like this notion of leadership cause, it’s a nebulous thing that no-one can really pin down or define and you have got hundreds and thousands of different definitions of what it is, and the group are kind of, it’s like a future leaders type programme, sort of like a hypothetical type thing and I have been doing some work with them for a while on their identity – you know what is their identity as an individual, as a person but also as a leader. So one of the things I asked them to do last week was to dance with their inner critic, or what I call dance with your inner critic, so I put them in to some thinking pairs and I asked them to choose people that they trust and are comfortable with. If anyone felt like they wanted someone else to talk with then that was okay to say, I don’t want to talk to you I want to talk to... So the question I sent them off into their thinking pairs with was “I can never be the leader I want to be because...” and I deliberately kind of framed that as “I want you to allow your, I want you to give your inner critic a voice, I want you to give it a chance to advocate, I want you to give it the floor – give it some time and space for advocacy and then I want you to then reflect on. So the process was answer the question in your thinking pairs – so one person thinks first and then the other person does it, write down whatever notes you want to write down and then I asked them to reflect on their previous achievements or things that they have done or tasks that they have completed and to kind of do a check and balance against what that inner critic says. What a lot of people reported in the session was “it took me to a really dark and horrible place when I did it but actually that check and balance aspect afterwards really made me think about it, how valid a lot of those things that that voice advocated really are”. To use your example of lazy, when I then look back at it actually the actions, the things that I complete or the things that I have achieved aren’t achieved by a lazy person they are achieved by somebody working hard, so it was a really interesting thing to explore with them.

Amanda: Yeah I think we as individuals don’t, I don’t think life gives you time for that because you move from one thing to the next thing, but I think as HR Practitioners and as people who develop individuals and work on leadership, I actually think developing those skills and developing that listening to your inner critic but also then addressing it and looking at it, I think that is something that to develop leaders is really important and I think it’s beyond, it’s allowing that space for and allowing that space for actually “how will I get there” because I think culturally when we look at leaders and when you ask people about leaders if they were honest they would say they would expect leaders to know the answer, to know it quickly and to know what’s right. Actually I quite like the leaders who are prepared to go “I don’t know, I surround myself with people who do know or I know where to find out” I quite like that space for I don’t know and that recognition that actually it’s

important to continue learning and those sorts of things. It's a challenge when you are developing through your career because culturally we are expected to know – we are expected to know what's best, we are expected to be successful, we are expected to move things forward and actually allowing that space for "I don't know" and discovering within business is something that we don't always do.

Phil: I agree and I think that kind of links and in addition to that is the, I don't know what I'm saying. I suppose it is broadly, so I could be really kind of glib like you said earlier on – emotion isn't allowed in the workplace unless you're happy, if you're happy that's alright and nothing else isn't allowed and again I think as a super generalisation that is probably a step too far but as a broad generalisation I think it is probably fair but within that then comes the fear. I think the intrinsic fear within individuals that if I say "I don't know" am I going to be judged, how is that going to affect people's views and perspectives of me, but also then you've got if we're full of a business of people who don't know are we ever going to get anywhere, so I think there are, I agree with you, there are some kind of cultural narratives that allow it to happen and one of the big outputs for me from the session last week, one of the things that really resonated with me was somebody said "I thought it was only me who had a really loud voice, the voice that I hear that is really loud, I thought that was only in me, I didn't realise that all these people had it but actually everybody in this room has it and that has been a revelation for me" and I was like okay, yeah that was really great because if that changes that perception or narrative that "it's only me that thinks I'm not good enough, or it's only me that challenges myself or that it's only me that's really harsh on challenging myself" then that's a sort of tick for something that has been achieved.

Amanda: But that's one of the things about imposter syndrome isn't it? Everybody else knows what they are doing and I don't and I am going to get found out because I don't know what I am doing and everyone else does. Whereas actually there are very few people who live without self-doubt. I was listening to a podcast last week where, and I am going to be a bit vague because I can't remember it, but I will tell you the podcast afterwards, where they quoted some research that showed that the least likely people to have imposter syndrome are senior professors in academia, senior men in the health profession and bankers and I think that is quite interesting in terms of what we think about who those people are and what they do. Now actually I want a surgeon who doesn't experience self-doubt.

Phil: Yeah absolutely.

Amanda: I want to know, I think I want someone who can be humble and who can be open to conversation but when they've got their knife in their hand and they're about to cut in, I want them to be as sure of themselves as they can and I don't want them to think, I don't want them to be there with a fear of being found out.

Phil: Okay.

Amanda: There must be other professions where we want people not to have that fear of being found out. Driving instructor – do we want people teaching people to drive who actually have a fear that they're rubbish drivers themselves?



Phil: Yeah, pilots.

Amanda: Yeah that's a really good example – I want a pilot who is confident that no matter what the weather throws at them they have been trained to be in that situation, but is this about giving people the skills and training to cope with that or is it about an individual having that self-assurance and lack of self-doubt.

Phil: So there was a couple of things in that. So humanity is a big one – so what I wouldn't want is a surgeon who is so arrogant that nobody will tell them if they are doing the wrong thing or if they're concerned about something. That humanity is a big part of it and you know again you mentioned earlier that you have been doing some investigation and research and I have been doing the same thing and in terms of those I found an article on those that have self-doubt yet are kind of humble with it, those who have less self-doubt and more humble with it are more valued and appreciated than those who have no self-doubt but are arrogant and go with it. There is an element of common sense that sits within that. Did I want a surgeon who has got self-doubt? I'm really hung up on that one because whether or not that's to do with my operation last year I don't know.

Amanda: Of course

Phil: That has really got me thinking about do I want a surgeon that has got some doubt?

Amanda: Or is it about the timing of that self-doubt? One of the things about imposter syndrome is the way you behave up to that point that you are in the room, so actually a little bit of self-doubt up until the point you are in the room and let's talk about people who have to facilitate meetings – you know there are often times when I've had to facilitate a group of leaders and I have thought "these people are all vastly more qualified than I am" I was on an executive team with a group of medical research professionals – the bulk of them were medical research professionals. In that room we have two knights of the realm, we had a man who had won a noble prize, we had a Dame and you know the great and the good from London academia and with no degree, a newly divorced living, but off credit cards woman who was in the room I could tell them about maternity law but once they started getting into things could I get these people to make a decision and actually when I got in the room and I had to facilitate things I realised I was the right person for what they needed in that room at that time, but doubt leading up to that wasn't necessarily a bad thing because it made sure that I was prepared, it made sure I had a real understanding of what we wanted to achieve, it made sure that I researched when I got into the room and because I knew that I had these concerns actually I used that self-doubt and that imposter syndrome to make sure that I was ready so that when I went into that room and I had no room for self-doubt anymore because I had to facilitate the conversation we were having I was able to do that in a way that worked for them and worked for me, so I think you want a surgeon who double checks, you want a surgeon who does their research, you want a surgeon who continues to learn, doesn't think they know everything but actually when they are in that operating room with that scalpel that's the time you don't want any self-doubt.

Phil: I now want to get a surgeon on to the podcast. Sorry, you've really made me think – I want to get a surgeon on the podcast and talk to them about it. So I think that as a patient and individual I

agree with you, I think that was a really good summary of what I would like and then, again it was really interesting – the hospital where I had my surgery, when I was going in for the scans and even on the day of surgery and day after, I think it was one day after, I was asked who my surgeon was and when I said who it was they were like “oh he is a really good one, he’s really good” and I was like so there are multiple surgeons on the team and we know there is because you have asked who my surgeon is and the response I get is that and I thought that was really interesting, so what does that tell me about the other surgeons.

Amanda: Well exactly, what would have done if they had gone “oh well”.

Phil: Yeah, absolutely. “I am sorry to hear that you have got this person you really should have gotten this one” or is it a stock answer because that’s the other thing, because we have to put it in context of the hospital, would a nurse or a physio or porter say anything else other than “they’re a really, really good one” because actually is it part of a ritualised conversation that they have irrespective of the name, I should have done an experiment and given a different name shouldn’t I. So irrespective of the name I said would that have been the stock response is another possibility.

Amanda: But this, that’s quite interesting isn’t it? So there has been, I think it was the news this year there was a surgeon who was prosecuted for branding organs with his initials.

Phil: Really?

Amanda: Did you read about this?

Phil: No

Amanda: I think it was kidneys and he laser branded these kidneys with his initials. I will find you the article and send it to you to add to the show notes. There was a lady that he treated afterwards who came out and said “I don’t care, he is the best surgeon who probably saved my life and if he wants to put his initials on stuff because he has done this then I don’t care because he is saving lives” and that really conflicted me because I was like how dare he, how dare he be so arrogant as to put his initials on someone’s organ but then there is this woman who is going “I don’t care because he saved my life, I don’t care that he put his initials on me”. It’s a real, I don’t know, I genuinely don’t know how to feel about that because should this man who can save lives no longer be allowed to practice because his arrogance allowed him to put his initials on people’s organs? I don’t know.

Phil: No I don’t know either.

Amanda: I know, do you save the fat man?

Phil: Yeah, I don’t know either. I’ll tell you what because I want to step back into something you said earlier on, so what I’m going to do instead is say listeners let us know your thoughts so you can, on twitter or on the podcast please comment as it would be interesting to know your thoughts on whether that surgeon should be allowed to practice or not anymore because they have found to be branding organs with their initials for the work that they have done.

Amanda: Sorry that took a bit of a weird turn didn't it?

Phil: No its fine, it's alright, it's really interesting. So before that we were talking about how, when you were talking about when you were facilitating the meeting with the Knight of the Realm, the Dame and the Noble prize winner and so on you talked about how the imposter syndrome actually helped you because it helped you be prepared and thoroughly prepare and that sort of stuff, so what else, or how do you work with your imposter syndrome now? What do you do to help you and sustain you through that or with that?

Amanda: So it is really interesting, I think that I have been working for 26 years now and in the last probably 5-7 years I think I have really started to recognise my own expertise and kind of go "actually this is what I'm good at and this is what I can do", now I still don't think I am the best at those things and I still want to develop and learn and I still read but I am starting to kind of go "actually I have an expertise in these areas" and that is part of it and actually looking at what I have done, recognising what I have done and actually going, recognising that it is okay to go "I am good at this stuff" so I am good at being in a room with loads of people who want to talk around a subject and getting them to the subject and move that forward. What I am not good at is pampering people's egos and stroking egos and working around that and as a result there are certain situations that I am not the best person for but you kind of get to. I think that the other thing I do is I go into research mode, so if I am going to be working on something or I am going to be looking at something then I have a habit of going into research mode. So I will get books, I will look at podcasts, I will do a google search, search reviews, I will look at articles and those sort of things, so I use that doubt by going well actually I need to be better informed because I think the information, again it sounds a bit glib but information is power, even if by reading all of this stuff you come away going I know less than I thought I did or even actually I've now got more questions than I had, actually getting that information around. So a good example is I was doing some work on diversity and exclusion at work and we were particularly looking at gender pay reporting, the gender pay gap and what organisations could do to address issues they had around the gender pay gap. Whilst I had a personal interest and I have a bit of a campaigning mind when it comes to that sort of thing, I wanted to go and find some practical examples of what organisations could do to start addressing the gender pay gap and I did that by doing a lot of research. I came across some fantastic books and some fantastic articles, talked to people and find out things that people are doing so it's, I took what I felt in my gut might be the right thing to do and then backed that up with some evidence. I'm terrible at quoting the evidence I have to go "such and such wrote a book, I'll send you the link" because I never remember anyone's name, but actually I personally back up my assumptions by trying to go out there and get some facts so that's one of the things I look at.

Phil: Okay.

Amanda: The other thing that I have done recently which I think is, I recommend to anyone and I got it from a lady called Sas Petheric. Sas is someone who I worked with in the corporate world many many years ago and she took herself out of the corporate world and re-trained as a coach and she did a really heavy masters and actually did a lot of work around self-doubt in this, so again I'll share in your show notes, the link she is [saspetheric.com](http://saspetheric.com) and also has another podcast called Courage and

Spice but one of the things she talks about in *Courage and Spice* is actually understanding how vast you are and kind of looking at the idea that you are beyond that one thing that imposter syndrome and self-doubt you have, and so she advocates this exercise where you spend about 15 minutes writing a hundred words or phrases that describe you, so roles you play, things you like, think of special things that you do and it can be anything like that special skill that you have of making a crying child stop crying in an airport or the way you knit wonky scarfs and hats or the way you can really drill into the detail of a particular issue at work and those sort of things and it's kind of getting that whole roundness so you really have an understanding of just how vast you are and yes whilst you have imposter syndrome and some self-doubt around this one thing you are so much wider than this one thing and that has been really helpful for me because, for many years I felt that without my work and without my success at work I wasn't entirely sure who I was and I wasn't entirely sure how I could be successful and happy. It felt very much about I had to be successful at work and I had to be doing this to be successful and happy and actually in the last couple of years I have realised that having a proper kitchen disco and a laugh with my partner Anthony brings me so much more joy than completing a piece of work. I want to do both really well and I want to enjoy both really well and be successful at both but actually one isn't worth less than the other. I used to put work and my success at work above everything else and that was how I defined myself and I just don't do that anymore and that has been a real, a real shift in how I cope with not feeling good enough in a lot of areas. My house is never clean enough, my weight is never the right number, my dogs are never tidy enough, there is never enough food in my cupboard or there is food but it's always the wrong kind of food, my to-do-list is very rarely completely done – there is always going to be other stuff to do but actually I am so much more than my to-do-list, I am so much more than that one piece of work that I am doing right now and knowing that, I think has really helped me cope with that imposter syndrome. As you know from conversations we have had in the last week it hasn't gone, I still go "ooh why would Phil want to talk to me, I don't know anything" but actually that discovering how vast I am, and I'm not that vast – you know I don't have any particular skill that a lot of people have – I don't play any instruments, I haven't climbed any mountains but even little old me I'm doing alright.

Phil: Yeah and you made me smile as you said that cause as soon as you said it I was like "oh look there's a bit of the imposter syndrome talking" and I've not done any of these things.

Amanda: Yes cause that's what success is isn't it?

Phil: Absolutely, success is about raising money or whatever. So one of the things I wanted to ask, if someone googled Amanda Arrowsmith they might find things like, especially if they were searching on social media, they might find things like an ignite talk that you gave at a conference called NAP or the CIPD Northern Area Partnership Conference in 2017 where you decided to do some singing and poetry and they might look at that and go "how on earth does that person" you know they might not compute the two things together in terms of you saying this is something that I have really struggled with overtime and have worked really hard to get better at and they kind of see that as an action and might not equate the two together. So I was wondering for something like that, the ignite talk for example, how do you prepare for that, what's the kind of, I get that there's the over-research bit but how do you work with the imposter syndrome stuff to come out with something as amazing as that ignite talk was?

Amanda: So a couple of things – one is I have been practising accepting compliments which I know sounds ridiculous, you practise the violin, you practice tennis, I have been practising accepting compliments so thank you I am glad you enjoyed it – I don't mean that I'm like "oh my God, people have actually seen that and it's on the internet."

Phil: It was amazing.

Amanda: So I am going to be completely honest and I apologise Gemma and Kez. I was asked last minute to do the ignite talk, someone had pulled out. Oh I'll tell you what it was, do you remember we had the snap election called that year and Joe Swinson was meant to be doing the keynote speech and unfortunately Joe was standing as a Member of Parliament and NAP was on the day and the day after the election so Joe could no longer do the keynote speech, so five weeks before NAP all of a sudden they had no keynote speaker anymore so the committee rushed around and found some people who would do some ignites and myself, Gary Cookson and David said "yeah sure we'll do it" and for four weeks I did nothing. I went aw I'm doing that talk at NAP, I wonder what I'm going to do oh yeah, oh yeah I'm doing that talk at NAP it's only five minutes it'll be fine, what am I going to do? And for four weeks I did nothing and then I had this idea one night where I thought I wonder if I could do a bit of a song and a slide with each song and then Gem and Kez asked me for my slides and I said "yeah, yeah they're coming" I finally finished my presentation on the train up that morning. I ran it through for the first time at the racecourse that afternoon with our good friend Julie, who bless her, said to me "have you run through this before?" and I said "yeah, yeah once or twice" I lied to one of my best friends, and she said "yeah you might just want to slow down a little bit and check the lyrics on a couple of things" I think Julie knew very well I was lying – she knows me very well. I ran it through three times before I got up on that stage and did it. Now I'd had the idea some time before and thought about it in my head some time before but procrastinated so much that I didn't actually put it down on paper until I had no choice but to put it down on paper and then I took a depth breath and then I jumped in and I got away with it but I loved it, I thoroughly enjoyed it and I realised that I enjoy standing up in front of people and singing, it's something that I have done from a very young age. There is a newspaper article that my mother has from the Newbury Weekly News where I was 12 that says that I was a miniature hybrid Lisa Streisand, oh yes, I was a diva it is fair to say but I was a diva who wasn't good enough because her brother got the leading part and I didn't get a part in the Sound of Music but my brother and my best friend did and my brother was Oliver and so even though I loved doing these things actually I was never good enough. How did I get up and do it? I didn't give myself a choice but also I went to something I know I'm comfortable with and know I'm good at and I know that I can stand up and sing in front of people because actually it is something that I have always done and so I found something that worked for me.

Phil: So that procrastination that led up to that, was that back to something you talked about earlier on which was "if I don't do it then the voice won't tell me that I'm not good enough to do that and what a stupid bonkers idea".

Amanda: Completely.

Phil: So if I leave it until the last minute I have made a promise to these people and all those people are going to be waiting so my only option is to kind of deliver irrespective of what that voice says.

Amanda: And if you ignore something long enough, if you put it in that box over there, you can ignore it and don't have to worry about it do you? I think it's really interesting because I think that you can equate this back to lots of things in work and life. So in work you don't get that report ready until you have to and you end up staying up until 5 o'clock in the morning or working until 9 o'clock at night and then getting up again at 4 o'clock in the morning, which I have done and I have done with writing, with bid work, I've done in the last few years when I have tried to write something and tried to write something and just looked at a blank screen and it hasn't been until the last 24 hours that my brain has gone "it's too late you have to do this" and so that fear comes in and you get it written but then I think that there is also an element in life, you know, I have wrote a blog this week about the menopause because you know that's fun, but one of the things that I have mentioned in there is that I have lived in this house now for seven months and I still don't have a GP. I know I need a GP, I know I need to get it done but it is just one of those things, I hate going to the Doctor, I can't be bothered with going to the Doctor, it's not something we do as Arrowsmiths. I fell over at school when I was very young and they phoned my mother and said, well there's two things. The first thing was they phoned my mother and said "Amanda's sick" and she said "well has she been sick" and they said "no" and she said "well call me when she's been sick" and then the second one was "Linda, Amanda has broken her arm" and she said "are you sure?" and they said "yes, yes, we're really sure she's broken her arm" and she was like "oh, okay" so you know as a family it's the way that we work. It's almost that you put things off until they become something you have to do and often to your own detriment and I think that people do it all of the time. I think you look at people who have skin cancer is a really good example – they've got a mole, it's really itchy, they know it's uncomfortable, they know it's probably changed shape a little bit but they do nothing about it for several months. Actually, it is something that can be fixed really quickly but it's one of those things, and I don't know what it is about us humans that ignore those difficult things but we do, we ignore them and we ignore them sometimes to our own detriment. So far I have been lucky, so far I procrastinate and then I get stuff done and it gets out there and it's been okay or it's been good even but I know it's one of my, it's something I need to deal with and do less of.

Phil: So thank you and I think one of the things that we, as humans, are good at is catastrophising and then we don't like catastrophe so we put it in a box and try to not think about it and address it and I mentioned that I think in the podcast that one that I did that kicked off the year, that I didn't want to look at myself in a mirror because if I did I would have to admit there was something wrong and if I admit that there was something wrong then that got really scary and I didn't want to do that, so actually I just put paper over glass and not look at myself walking down the street, you know I won't look at my reflection in the window type thing. So if you then think about, I remember a similar thing when I did my ignite at the L&D show in May last year and when I did that in a poetry, that was scary and like you lots of practice, but it was lots of practice in the last week to few days leading up to it as opposed to practising it for weeks and weeks and weeks and weeks.

Amanda: I think, just as a slight tangent, I personally think that ignites benefit from that. I find those ignites that are over-practised and that you know they've done before or you know that they are just selling what they're always selling, I haven't enjoyed those as much as those ones that are for

that event or for that thing and so the ones that you and I did at that L&D show – I loved your ignite, I loved the way that you built in the causes and built in that time and the way that you had written it for that event, I thought it was fantastic and I really enjoyed it. There were others on that bill that you could tell had done it before and they just brought out every time they were asked to do something and I think that one of the powers of the ignite series is because actually they are always about in that moment and because of the pressure of the slides moving on and the way that it works, so the disrupts HR series which I think there has been six of them now in London and I know they have got some in Glasgow, I quite like the fact that they have different speakers each time and a lot of the time it is people's first time doing those ignites and the energy that you get from that nervousness is fantastic. It is the same sort of thing that you get from improv – if you go and look at improv and the way that people work around improv it's fantastic and you get the opportunity to see how people work and what they do. I think it's really interesting and really, I think it's a real skill that people can get and I think there is some stuff around improv that's quite interesting to use in work and I think some of the skills people get from theatre and improv could be really interesting in the workplace as well. Sorry, slight tangent.

Phil: No, no it's alright and again for me it links back into my inner critic often tells me, the voice that I have within me, you know says things like "you can't do that, you're not good enough to do that, you're not prepared enough to do that", so actually something like improv where you don't have that opportunity to prepare then gives you a, and again this works for some people and not others, so does the translation across the workplace, to be able to say "you know what, I can create something off the top of my head that makes sense, it might not be perfect, it might not be 100% on point, I can create something off of the top of my head that works and makes sense" because then if you have that build-up of evidences of experiences where you do that then it just makes you more and more confident to do other things in the future. You know one of my habits, one of the things I am known for is if I ring somebody and they purposely send me to their voicemail the message I will leave will be in song. So it will be a version of a song with the message tailored to whatever reason I was calling for. So part of it is because I enjoy it, I enjoy the challenge of can I make up a song, on the spot, for this person about why I rang, because if I can it gives me the confidence and reassurance that if somebody chucked something at me left field, I have got the gear with all within me to respond to that and respond quickly in a way that makes sense. Sometimes the songs are good and sometimes they are less good but either way it's okay I can kind of work with it and make sense of it. So I'm conscious of time and I want to start to put it together. So we talked about strategies that help you – one being the how vast I am, another one being the using it to prepare you, are there any other strategies or any other things that really help you when working with your inner critic/imposter syndrome?

Amanda: So I think the research thing comes from the makes space for, so it's alright to actually go "I don't know enough about this" and to find out. I think I talk about recognising your inner expertise, it's okay to go "do you know what that's the area I'm good at and that's my area of expertise". I think we need to celebrate success more, I think sometimes in work we are so busy moving on to the next thing and proving ourselves that we actually don't stop and celebrate the success and I think that as managers, as leaders, as individuals we are all guilty of that and we need to find some way of just having that 24 hour rule where you are allowed to be really pleased with something that you have done. I think the other thing that I would recommend to anyone who is experiencing a bit of

self-doubt is go back and look at what you have done, go back and appreciate what you have done. I recently went back and read the first bid that I did for something and I have done a couple of them over the years and I went back and read it and kind of went “ooh that was actually quite good, you wrote some good stuff in there” because I had become a bit stuck and I had become a bit unsure that I was good enough to write what I needed to write and I didn’t have the ideas and it wasn’t flowing and so I went back and read things that I had written and read things that I had said and the research that I had done and I came away going “I can do this” and I reminded myself. So I think Gemma Dale went to a lecture at Manchester on imposter syndrome and one of the things that lecturer suggested was that you put a brag list together. Now I am not going to put a brag list together because that’s far too American for me, I’m far too British and we shall never have a brag list but I think it’s important to look at your achievements beyond your CV and actually that’s sometimes about going back and reading a particularly good piece of work you wrote, going back and looking at a workshop you developed that was really good, looking at things you have done, no matter how far back and going “I can do this and that’s good” and I think that is a real skill to come back. It comes back to how vast you are but I think this is particularly around in your work life, if you are questioning your ability go back and look at things that you have done because you can do it and you have done it you just need to sometimes remind yourself and I think that’s really powerful that reminding yourself you can do it. If you think about children and riding bikes and falling off bikes, actually they can’t do it and they can’t do it until they actually do and then your brain kind of clicks and goes “I can ride a bike” or “I can do this” and it’s that confidence that comes with knowing, so I think as adults we lose that sometimes and I think we have to go back and get that confidence that comes with knowing. I think the only other thing I would say and it sounds a little bit glib but there is that very well-known saying that “comparison is the thief of joy” and it really is and I am terrible at comparing myself to other people and going “well, why did they chose her to do that” or “why did they chose him to do that” because surely I am better and surely this is and oh look there they go and actually it’s not about them and I shouldn’t be comparing myself to anyone else – I don’t practice everything that I preach by the way – I’m working on it and working on myself towards that but I think that we, as a society need to stop comparing ourselves to other people and we need to kind of find out what my happy is and what my right is.

Phil: I went swimming last week and there was a lady who was swimming in the lane next to me and I just had like this real strong thing about comparing the quality of my swimming stroke with hers cause she made it look effortless as she was going through the water and I was like right “I’m going to be effortless” and I just wasn’t and in my head imagining myself as this flailing swimmer who was splashing everybody and weaving across the lane and whatever and I had to stop for a rest after a few lengths and I was like “right come on, stop, that’s not helping you in any shape, way or form. If you want to compare yourself compare yourself with you and compare yourself with how you were last week, or the week before or the week before that” and is that getting what you were achieving then and what you are achieving now as a comparison. This lady for you all know could have been swimming every day for a week and has been practising for 20 years and you are then trying to go “oh look at me”

Amanda: I had a yoga session with Daisy, she is on Instagram as @Farmgirlyogi, on Thursday last week and I booked for a class and actually I was the only one who turned up for the class so I ended up having this fantastic 1-2-1 yoga session but we had a long conversation about downward dog and

how you get into the position for downward dog and how your hips and your back need to be aligned and getting feet down and that sort of thing. So Daisy is paid to be a yoga instructor, this is what she does for a living and she said to me “oh Amanda, for three years I couldn’t get my feet flat, it took me three years to get this pose right, you are further along now (I can’t get my feet flat) than I was after 18 months”. So the important thing about that yoga session is whenever you go in to practice it’s your practice, it’s for you and whatever you are doing is right for you and what you can do this week might be different to what you do next week but we are each different, we each go at our own pace and actually comparing yourself to someone else isn’t going to make you better. Aspiration is good, inspiration is good but actually comparison is just going to knock you back a bit.” Says the beautiful live little 27 year old girl as she’s bending around in front of me as I’m struggling to get my hands over my toes, she meant well bless her.

Phil: I know what you mean but I think it’s another one of the things that create the “I’m not worthy” and “I don’t belong here” because you have got all these other people that have these things or do these things or achieve these things so it is back to that comparison and you know in terms of what, because by making that comparison you’re implying or pre-supposing or actually outwardly state “I’m not as good as that person” so I agree with you, it’s something that can actually debilitate an awful lot more than it can be of any use to individuals.

Okay, so there was one thing I also wanted to add to, you know when you said earlier about going back and reviewing your successes, I agree with all of that. One of the things that I did was when I made my list of the stuff I said I wasn’t good enough at I went back and did a check and balance thing that I talked about earlier on but I also got somebody who I really trust and gave them my list as well and said “I want you to tell me what you think, I want you to do a check and balance for me. So I want you to tell me whether you think any of these are, what evidence do you have to support or challenge that these things exist” and I found that a really useful thing to do. I found it really helpful, as well as having my own perspective, to get someone else’s perspective on it as well because they shared with me things that I hadn’t really noticed or hadn’t paid attention to like “you know what there is this thing that you do or this thing that happens that makes a real difference to me, to your work or to the organisation or whatever it is” so I found that quite a useful thing to do. Granted it was someone that I trusted implicitly because I wouldn’t want to give it away to just anybody.

Amanda: But I think that’s something that we can do isn’t it? We can do both in work but also in life is actually, and it comes back to the celebrating success, it’s okay to tell people that you think they are really good at something, it’s okay, it’s good to say “I really value your opinion on this, I think you did this really well” and it’s not patronising and it’s not condescending it’s actually celebrating success and it comes back to accepting compliments doesn’t it? A bit like I said earlier – I am teaching myself to accept compliments and I really am.

Phil: As opposed to just missing them.

Amanda: Yeah, because normally my first reaction was “oh that old thing, oh that was nothing I just winged it” but actually I’m really grateful that someone enjoyed it and it went well and it’s you know

allowing yourself to recognise someone else and recognise your value through someone else which is a whole different podcast that you'll have to have that conversation with someone about.

Phil: Okay, I like that one that gives me a nice link – I don't know if you did that on purpose but I'll take it. So is there any guests that you would recommend or any future suggestions of stories we should explore?

Amanda: I think that taking compliments thing and the emotion around other people's recognition is quite an interesting thing particularly in a work environment because there is the whole thing about letting people down and disappointing them but then there is the other side of actually accepting praise, accepting that you have done something well. I think that's interesting that kind of feeling, I think there is always something round the language that we use, so I find it amusing when people in work tell people that they are disappointed in them to which my general response is "well that's nice" because actually this wasn't about whether you are disappointed in something that I have written, because guess what I didn't write it for you, so I think that's always interesting that the use of language and the power behind language and how that flips into work, so I think that would be good. Future guests – there are some great people, I would love to hear you talk to a surgeon about doubt, I think that would be amazing – if you could find one to talk to about doubt that would be amazing. I think that's fascinating, I think that the other thing that is always interesting is people who have changed careers, not necessarily downsized their carers but people who have changed careers – so I am always really interested with people who were successful bankers and then go into public service. So there is a lady, I'll send you her name separately because I have forgotten it, she is a Chief Inspector in the Scottish police who used to be a banker in the city and she is now a Chief Super Intendent for the police in Scotland, Rose (it will come back to me). I think she would be fascinating, because they are completely different aren't they?

Phil: Yeah, yeah completely different.

Amanda: And there is people who go from being bankers to being teachers so again I think those sorts of people would be incredibly interesting.

Phil: Okay, I shall do that then, I shall add that to the list of guests to source. Alright, so bringing us to a close then with my usual closing question – is there anything else then, the lovely Amanda Arrowsmith, that you are thinking, feeling or wanting to say on the topic of Emotion at Work in Imposter Syndrome?

Amanda: I think that one thing that we didn't touch on and it is quite a big thing is imposter syndrome is sometimes seen as a woman's problem and it is therefore used as a label for women but it is really important that we as employers know that it is not just about women, it is about that cultural pressure to not show weakness and I think that sometimes that's harder for men and I think that within HR it is important to recognise that and to think about that. I guess that the only other thing that I would say is that this isn't always about achieving and succeeding, actually failure is okay and it is how you recover from that failure and how you get back that is important. Failure itself is a learning experience, which I know is easy to say, but as someone who has failed spectacularly several times actually you do learn from it and it's how you find a way to not allow that to eat at you



and become the evidence for your imposter syndrome. So the evidence that you are not enough, the evidence that you are a fraud and balancing that. So as you were saying the list of what you are good at or think you are not good at you need to balance. So those would be the big things for me but also I think you've talked about emotion at work and emotion isn't a bad thing. I think we think about emotion and think of tears and go "oh my God I can't cope with people crying" that's not what we mean and actually it can be joy, it can be fear, it can be anger, it can be authenticity, it can be all these different things and I think it's important that we allow those in the workplace. Working in HR we have a unique position to allow that and to enable that and we should use that position as best we can.

Phil: Yeah, I agree, I can't say anything more than I agree. So one of the things, picking up on a couple of things you said there. One is I found some research around "is imposter syndrome unique to women" and actually the data suggests no it's just that often it is targeted at women more because it seems like societally or culturally it is more acceptable for women to say that they struggle with it but for men it's not, which supports what you just said and I will put a link to that in the show notes as well. So thank you, thank you so much for being a guest today.

Amanda: Thank you, it's been a pleasure.

Phil: I really, really, really enjoyed it. We will bring it together to close, thank you very much Amanda Arrowsmith.