



**Episode 30 – Emotion at Work Stories - Working as an unhealed victim of child abuse  
Chatting with Katrina Collier (@KatrinaMCollier)**

Phil: Hello there, fair podcast listeners and welcome to this latest edition of the Emotion at Work podcast. I tried a new way of recording this week and safe to say I need to improve. I've got a mixer which I was very excited about where I can fade my mike up and fade my mike down and I thought it would make everything just a little bit more profesh or professional. However, what's been happening is that I kept forgetting to put my mike up or I put my mike up too high and my levels are all over the place so when you listen to this episode some bits will be really clear and in some bits, you'll hear me as a faint voice in the background. The main thing is though you can hear our guest all the way through really clearly and it's their story that is important. For the keen eared listener apologies that my levels are a bit all over the place, but the main thing is you get to hear the guest's story loud and clear. So here we go!

Phil: Hello and welcome to the Emotion at Work podcast where we take a deep dive into the human condition. Today's episode has the potential to be a hard listen as my guest today who is Katrina Collier has talked about her experiences in the workplace with what she describes as being an unhealed victim of child abuse. That as I said can be a hard listen or a sensitive topic for some people so if you are affected by anything that we are talking about in the podcast today, then in the show notes there will be links to resources and support groups and places where you can go to get some help and support and if you need some urgent help or if you are feeling particularly vulnerable then you can always contact the Samaritans on 116123. What's important to me today is that you as the fair listener get to hear this important story that needs to be told but also that you fair listener are taken care of and supported along the way. So, let's get our guest on the air and let's welcome to this edition of the podcast Katrina Collier.

Katrina: Hello! Thank you for having me.

Phil: Thanks for coming along. And thank you for suggesting this as a topic to explore. I'm really grateful that you are willing to share what we are going to talk about today. So, thank you.

Katrina: Oh no, you're welcome.

Phil: All right. As always with the Emotion at Work podcast we begin with an innocuous and unexpected question. This gives us a different way into the conversation we are going to go into and Katrina has no idea where this is going to take her. A while ago I went to the big wide world of Twitter to increase my bank of innocuous yet unexpected questions and today's question comes from Mark Gilroy (@thatmarkgilroy on Twitter) and his question is: "What would you stockpile if you found out it was never going to be in existence anymore?"

Katrina: Time.

Phil: Time? Ok.



Katrina: Yeah. It was between self-care and time. (laughs) So either one of those. Why? Because don't you always feel like it's our most precious commodity and it's always running out?

Phil: Yeah. Ok.

Katrina: I'd always love more time. (laughs) And then self-care because I don't think we put ourselves first often enough and therefore actually put other people in jeopardy because we run ourselves to the ground. That's why I'm split exactly between the two. Sorry Mark, I've come up with two. Typical of me!

Phil: Yes. You went quite existential there. When I saw the question, I went really practical and pragmatic.

Katrina: Like toilet paper?

Phil: No. I didn't go for toilet paper. (laughs) I went for herbs. I couldn't go for one in particular because I like quite a few different herbs. Rosemary I think it's my favourite herb. But I think herbs in general make such a difference in cooking different dishes that I enjoy making at home and if something was going to run out, I would want to make sure that I stockpile as many herbs as I can so that even if I may not be able to wipe my backside after enjoying those herbs, at least I can enjoy what's going in even if I cannot clean what's coming out.

Katrina: Exactly.

Phil: All right. I guess where I'd like to go next then is the self-care bit. Is that something that links to the topic we are going to talk about today?

Katrina: Oh, absolutely! My mother who was my child abuser whether she likes to think so or not is always like "You're selfish! You're selfish! You're selfish!" and actually self-care isn't selfish. They tell you on the plane, don't they, to put the gas mask on yourself before you put it on your children or anyone that is dependent on you and it is like that. I chose to take myself out of the path of destruction. My being on the other side of the world and not in communication with both of my parents is me protecting myself. That is my self-care. If she wants to see it as selfish, that is her choice, but it isn't. To me they are very different. And unfortunately, a lot of people when you do go to take care of yourself would say oh, you're being selfish. So yes, it's completely related to today's topic. I'm off to Uganda again for Retrak charity next week and I'm so excited! Actually, it's not for a couple of weeks but I'm off next week. And it was one of the things we talked about there as well – these amazing carers who give, give, give but don't take care of themselves and then burn out. It's so important that if you really do want to keep caring and doing the best for people, you must take care of yourself.

Phil: And is it societal norms, do you think, that is stopping us doing that? The notion that it is selfish to do self-care, is that society or...

Katrina: I think it could be. I mean obviously it depends where you grow up, but I actually do think it is because we are very quick to judge, we are very quick to go “oh, you are being selfish...” Are they, or aren’t they? And it’s really not for us to say. It’s down to the individual. So, yes, actually let’s blame society. It’s much easier (laughs) than blaming the individual who’s being judgemental.

Phil: So, it’s going to be both, it’s going to be aspects of the two. A similar thing happens when I go swimming which is an activity I talked about on the podcast before and which I don’t particularly enjoy. I’m better at it now and I am enjoying it more than I used to, but I still don’t enjoy it as much as running. I saw a runner out this morning. I went to yoga and as I was going back I walked past somebody who was running, and I had a pang of running envy that I wanted to be part of what he was doing but I will feel guilty, my wife being one of those people as well. “Have you managed to find time for a swim today?” As if that’s being the understanding that you should be working or there should be other jobs in the house beyond that or a bigger priority than that. But I know if I don’t swim (a) it’s not going to help my recovery and also (b) I’m going to be grumpier as a result.

Katrina: Yeah, exactly. And sometimes you’re in a funk and you might be present like sitting at your desk staring at your screen or whatever it is that you are doing, and you’re present but you’re not. Because mentally you’re not there. You’re upset, you’re angry, you’re frustrated, you’re whatever! And actually, I often find just by going outside (I’ll often go and sit and chat to the dogs because they don’t answer back, or I’ll go and sit outside) or just by moving away my entire energy shifts and therefore my mood shifts. So yeah, I understand the comment because perhaps she would like you to be washing the dishes up or something as well as going for a swim. I kind of get where she’s coming from but at the same time I guess it’s for her to understand that if you didn’t do that perhaps you would be in a foul temper and that would impact on her as well. And again, I think it just comes down to the fact that we need to look beyond the initial reaction. Say if I was in that situation and you’d gone and done that and perhaps not hoovered or taken the bin out or whatever you hadn’t done it’s for me to take a breath and think “wait a minute! who am I annoyed with here and why am I feeling this way and what is this really about?”. And just take a moment rather than be quick to throw a comment. But it’s hard to do in the moment. Could bring one to divorce, I think!

Phil: One of my mantras, one of the phrases I say to myself a lot: “there’s always more going on or it’s a bit more complicated than that; there’s always more going on than you can see or you can think or you can hear.”

Katrina: Yeah. And I think with this topic, the people that are in my inner fold are fully aware. I am fairly open about my child abuse because I am a survivor of it or a victor over it as my gorgeous friend Sue Ingram says.

Phil: That’s a nice phrase.

Katrina: Yeah, she said you’re a victor over it and she bought me this stunning candle which was all about that as well. It’s beautiful. The oils in it are all about being a victor over not a victim. But I think a lot of people have met me healed and they met me as the face of disrupted HR and this vibrant person who is very much centred, has self-care, has self-love, has all the stuff I didn’t have, and a lot of people can’t actually believe it because they didn’t see it. But then also because some of my

school friends had no idea. I know Julie whom I've known for... (wow, let's not do the maths on that) well over 30 years was saying that she actually went and asked my other friend Louise "did you know? I just didn't know!". Because it was so beautifully hidden. Because it was very much like Mrs Bucket in Keeping Up Appearances. We were so that. We were white middle-class North Shore Sydney in a wealthy area hiding everything behind the door. It was quite extraordinary. I don't know quite why I went into that train of thought but I went there, yeah... (laughs).

Phil: So when it was hidden, what was that like for you?

Katrina: Mum emotionally and physically abused us. The physical is in a way easier to get over than the emotional and when it's hidden it's like you don't believe it's real and you normalise it to cope with it. So that was all I knew from this particular incident that happened when I was three years of age. That was all I knew, it was what I was living. You feel like you're not being heard, and I think those that know me, know I train, I speak, I run events to give people the opportunity to speak. I am doing my show this afternoon and I will ask people to speak. It's very important for me now as a 40 something year old rather than then when I couldn't talk, or no one listened. My father didn't listen; he just said "oh, you can't change your mother". And there was no protection, there was nobody listening and even the school knew. I saw my school report card as an adult and it's really quite fascinating. It shows in there, it says she needs more support on the home front. It literally has those words in there and I didn't have that. I used to go home terrified to give them my report card because I will always get a beating for it and I'd always be in trouble. I used to physically shake. But it was interesting to see that the school knew. But of course, we're talking the 70s and the 80s, you know, it's not like that now. The school might have actually asked what's going on, but they didn't. I mean we're talking different times and things have progressed which is good.

Phil: So you said you weren't heard or nobody listened, not sure what it was. When did that change then?

Katrina: Probably once I left home. So I left home finally at 21 because she undermined my self-esteem so much I just stayed. She would always tell me I would fail once I left and there had been some monumental failures but nothing I haven't gone past, you know, who hasn't? I think I really started to be heard once I started to get help. I really fell into therapy/coaching at around 40 and I fell into it. Believe me, I did not know I was going into it because if I had, I probably wouldn't have gone. Just because I was so defensive. There was a specific incident that happened when I was 3 years of age and from that time I was protecting myself. I was pretty well on it full guards up. You couldn't say anything to me, Phil, literally nothing. I would just defend myself. I was probably saying stuff, but I doubt anybody was taking it on board. Everybody was like "oh, she's off again" and I was very negative, and I was very angry, and I didn't have many friends, I used to prick quickly. I used to look at cactuses and go "oh yeah, that was me. yeah I was that!" And I still look at them with a sort of affection because that is how I was. I was so prickly. The reason I say I fell into it is because I had been in this contract and the guy was a narcissist of course. The thing is when you grow up with a narcissist you then attract more into your life until you finally learn the lesson to stop being the co-dependent. So my boss was a narcissist. He was doing something completely unreasonable and I got fired on the most ridiculous grounds. It wouldn't even stand up if I bothered to take it to a tribunal. Anyway, we parted ways and I thought I don't know what I want to do, I don't know if I want to set

up as a searchologist and do this thing I had in my head for 2 years or if I want to just get a job. I was talking to my nutritionist and she said you must go and talk to Michelle Elley and Michelle is smack bang between a therapist and a coach which is why I love her so much. She propels you forward. You have to look at the past. She herself has been through child abuse, she understands it and can help because of that. She knows exactly where to guide you. We used Pia Mellody techniques and Demartini, you name it. When I sat there in that very first session with her, I thought I was talking about my career and we were talking about something like walking the dogs through the village and I went "oh, I get so annoyed when people get in my way". And she went "oh, hang on a minute, let's just unravel that". And she just started unravelling everything and it was like layers of an onion. We just started taking off, and she says that at that point I was the most defensive client she'd ever had. She did not know in her soul how she was going to break through because from 3 I had to protect myself. And that's why I was talking to you from a workplace point of view. If you can imagine people that are trying to manage me and saying anything to me and I am either ripping your jugular out or sobbing. There was never anything in the middle. There was never the reaction you'd get now. So going back to your original question about the voice, it came I think once I started to be able to look at 100 different ways that something could go to be able to go "ah, Phil just called me a bitch; now, is that more of a reflection on him or have I actually done something to deserve that comment?". And just breath through things rather than just yell, scream, carry on. And I think now people are much more interested in hearing what I have to say because I'm coming at everything from self-love, self-care and love for them and protection for them and a caring angle on everything not just defensiveness. Not from fear. I mean there was just constant fear.

Phil: And if you don't mind me asking fear of?

Katrina: Fear of being in trouble is probably the biggest one I have and still have. It's a really tough one. Fear of rejection for a very long time. It's quite interesting because my ex-husband, Richard, who I very strangely share a flat with but we get on great, he also still has the fear of being in trouble. It's a tough one to let go of. So I do crazy stuff. I would deliver this amazing training and I wouldn't want to hear what the feedback is because I'm terrified it won't be great even though I know that they enjoyed it because I could tell by looking at them. So I'd be like "don't let me know, don't let me know" and crazy stuff. I got a letter from our estate agent about the GDPR and I just put carpet down. I saw the letter outside and I'm like "oh my god they are going to evict us". I literally panicked. So I said "ok, Katrina, this could be a letter about 3000 different things; calm down". But it's from a work point of view that it still impacts me. The fear of rejection was of course because I had been rejected my whole life. Mum is incapable of loving in a healthy manner due to the stuff she'd been through. My father as well. So we weren't loved, supported and protected in a healthy way. All 4 of us. And then we were cleverly isolated from each other as well. There was actually 4 of us in a house growing up isolated in little silos...

Phil: When you say the 4 of us is that...

Katrina: My older brother and sister who are my half brother and sister from my mum's first marriage and my full blood brother Darren and myself. And then mum and dad. So there were 4 of us but all in silos. We didn't support each other. And I think that was one of the most fascinating things about going to Uganda. It was going out to the slums and I remember Donna Hewitt and I, we



didn't feel anything compared to what other people were feeling. We were just "ah yes, ok" because we saw the interplay and I very much saw the older taking care of the younger and the bigger of the smaller, and there was teamwork and I looked at that and went "oh, as sure as hell, we didn't have that in my house".

Phil: really?

Katrina: It was a really eye opening experience. That entire trip was very healing for me because of that. Because it was like "ah, OK! That's interesting". Never to use it as an excuse because I would never say "oh well I'm going to be obnoxious to everybody on this planet because I've had child abuse" it's more like "ok, it also gave me all of my strength and I went through it and that's it, that's what it was". Let's just move on and then be aware when it's sabotaging my work or being managed which is the matter we were initially going to talk about, wasn't it? (laughs)

Phil: Yeah, that's all right.

Katrina: I've gone off on a tangent, as always.

Phil: So just to check timings. You were 20 when you left home and then at 40 something happened which then led you on to getting help. I don't necessarily want to unpick everything but that bit in between I guess is what I want to focus on today. How did that manifest itself in the workplace? How did that manifest itself in the interactions and relationships you had in the workplace? You talked about how you were either ripping the jugular out or you were in tears.

Katrina: Yeah, I suppose I was monumentally difficult. On the one hand I had extremely high expectations of other people and myself because that comes from fear of being in trouble, it's almost like an OCD kind of thing you just deliver beyond so that no one can criticise it.

Phil: Is that like a perfection thing?

Katrina: Yeah. And then you expect other people to do the same and of course they don't because we're all human and we're all perfectly imperfect. So that makes you really not great to be around. And then I was very blunt. Surprisingly everyone still calls me blunt which I find really odd because I'm so not blunt compared to how I was. I must have been really bad and I'm sure there's a few people who know me on this who are laughing when I am saying that because I can be very direct. But I was just always coming from anger and frustration and stuff like that but I think the worst thing that I used to find were the annual appraisals. Obviously we all know how much they suck anyway...

Phil: Yes.

Katrina: But they'd wait all year and they'd come into this meeting with me where I'm already on the defensive because I'm terrified I'm going to get fired.

Phil: And this was like your report card from school moment again.

Katrina: Yeah, very much so. All of that is coming up. I'm not shaking in fear, thank goodness, but I'm still like "oh god, here we go!" And it wouldn't matter how they went about it, unless of course they were full of praise which of course they weren't because they would be like "well you know you're a bit abrupt with the staff" and that would be what I get. I'd never get an example of where I was and how I could improve or anything like that. I'd just get "you're very abrupt with the stuff" and they'd give you just statements which was so unhelpful. But the trouble is because my inner child would be so terrified that out would come the inner teen and I would just literally go either balling my eyes out or being extremely rude, very defensive. Literally ripping your jugular out. Now I look back on it with quite a lot of embarrassment to be honest. I think how the hell would a manager cope in that situation? I truly feel there are so many people that are walking around in what I call inner teens. The way my therapy works is you've got inner child, inner teen and functional adult. Right now, functional adult is talking to you because my inner child is very calm. I'm centred, I'm grounded, she's feeling safe and secure. If she's not, the inner teen comes out. That's, you know, when sometimes you get really angry and you're storming around, and you're slamming doors, and you're carrying on and, in a way, you're going "why am I being like this?" But that's what's going on. There's something that upsets your inner child and she doesn't feel like functional adult is there so out comes this teenager. But there are a lot of people that are permanently in inner teen in the work place because they haven't been through the help. Their bosses don't understand that they've had that kind of a childhood or that they haven't been set up for life correctly. Can I just cave in on that? There is having a shitty childhood and there is having a really shitty childhood that is child abuse. I know everyone just thinks let's just all blame our parents abused us and everything. I appreciate that there is no manual for parenting. I've only parented four legged children so I do understand all of that but I am talking specifically about child abuse and there are plenty of places you can go to find out exactly what that is and what that includes, but children that aren't set up to have a functional adulthood can be very difficult to manage and I think there are a lot of them in the workplace and I don't know that managers are taught how to handle that. I'm certainly not the expert to teach that, I'm just more giving empathy for what they went through.

Phil: Yeah, and I think in a way there are risks that it all gets a bit reduced and it gets a bit reductionist and it gets into managing difficult people or managing difficult behaviour or managing difficult conversations. If somebody shuts down or goes quiet or responds with surprise it's almost reduced down to those different kinds of caricatures, I guess, or those prototypical views of it rather than here are some strategies to calm them down or...

Katrina: Yeah, we don't want them to have any emotion. I would be concerned if managers were taught how to open someone up in some respect because they wouldn't have the skills to be able to therefore handle the situation of what might come up.

Phil: Yeah, exactly.

Katrina: But what I was more thinking as well of, for example, the US where they've got 4% unemployment, so they're struggling to hire and here in the UK thanks to Brexit (God knows what we are doing to ourselves) it is also becoming tough to hire or to recruit and obviously that's my space. I was talking to someone who shall remain nameless who is in chronic pain and her boss would not allow her to work flexibly. She is only a few months into the job which is where the



problem comes in unfortunately. She doesn't have a leg to stand on at this point but it's frustrating because the option could be to work remotely, come into the office just 2 days a week, all this kind of stuff. So we'll do this stuff but sometimes I think we need to look at it like "Ok, that Collier, she's got potential but you know what, maybe we need to invest in her and get her some support and help". Be it some coaching, be it some outside support, be it a psychologist, like I did, whatever it is. You just think about it - if you help that person, how loyal they would be. If you allow that person to work flexibly, how loyal they would be and stay. Everyone is complaining about retention so if you do shift how you invest in your people what is going to happen? Well, firstly I wouldn't have been that rotten egg or that rotten apple ruining the barrel because that's what I was doing with my negativity, so that would have reduced and therefore everyone else would have felt more productive. I would have been more productive just by deciding to get a coach in. Just get someone in to help her to give her the skills.

Phil: What do you think stops that happening then?

Katrina: Ah, bank balance! The Finance Director! (laughs) It's not being in the right hands. It's too fluffy! I don't know! It's funny because with my day job with the social recruiting, the world has changed so fast hasn't it? You look at when I started out in my career (let's go with 25 years ago because it sounds so much healthier than what the actual figure is) you couldn't go online and search for HR manager jobs in London and see 3 million appear. I'm exaggerating on the number but you couldn't do that. My boss at the first branch of the bank I worked for (I worked for a bank initially because I didn't know what I wanted to do with my life) used to make the second in charge throw up at lunchtime because he was such an asshole and nobody could do anything about it because there was no transparency and people stayed. Whereas now people would go and read Glassdoor reviews and Indeed reviews and they would talk to people who work there, and they would go "you know what, no, that's not the place for me, I'll keep looking and find other jobs and it's all right on the internet". It is shifting, and companies are trying harder to look after their staff and give them the help but sometimes I'm just so far ahead of the curve on that, that I forget, and I'll come across a company that will be like "no, you can't even work from home. I know you're in chronic pain, but you'll have to come in." "Why? I can do my job from home." "No, you'll have to come in." Presenteeism, old school thinking. It is shifting but a lot of the time it just comes down to old school thinking and the Financial Director going no, we can't invest in our people like that, cut budgets.

Phil: So the annual appraisal was I guess a challenge for you, something that you knew you were going to find tough. From a day to day kind of point of view or day to day operational management perspective how did you carry what you carried with you as you described it as being an unhealed victim of child abuse. How would that manifest itself then on a day-to-day?

Katrina: Oh, like I said, very negative, very difficult to be around. If I didn't like you, you knew. If I didn't respect my colleagues, they knew, which made it even more unpleasant. I've learned to mask things like that or to be a lot more tolerant of people, to be honest. And from a manager's point of view whilst you were saying that I was thinking of the few that could manage me, and they were the ones I respected. They were the ones that saw through me, so they were the ones that saw the vulnerable child not the angry teenager. They were able to see there's more here. They were all age

groups as well. Some were younger than me, someone especially was quite a lot older than me and had 4 children. And therefore, they just coaxed me if that makes sense, but nobody micromanaged me. You couldn't. That was the worst thing you could do – trying to force me to do anything because I was just not having it. You were better to let me go. I was always very good at my job because I had the fear of getting in trouble, so I would over deliver. There was no issue there but as far as the team work and the cohesion and all the stuff you need that keeps the engagement up, I was that rotten apple.

Phil: And those high expectations that you talked about, were they applied to your peers? So if you were working with someone on a project and they had something to deliver and they didn't deliver would that be pushing some buttons for you?

Katrina: Yes, for sure. And it was one of the reasons that I never became a team leader. When I worked in a recruitment agency and they were thinking about that, I always said no. So at least I had the capability of seeing that in myself because I would be like "if I said to Phil to do something he didn't do, I know I am going to let rip because I don't know how to handle that situation so the best thing I can do is not be in that situation". And even now I try and keep myself out of those situations because I get very frustrated and I still haven't quite healed that bit yet. I don't know how to deal with it. And then of course there is the thing that so many managers are just put in that position and they are not taught how to manage. That is definitely one thing that frustrates me. I'm much better working in a silo, working just on my stuff. I would happily pull people in on bits and pieces or help them, more than happy, but I'm better just to be "this is my day, this is what I need to get done and I'm going to get it done".

Phil: Would those expectations ever translate up to your manager or up to your boss? Did they have to live up or not live up to those expectations as well?

Katrina: Strangely more in my peers. Interestingly for some reason, I don't know why now you made me think about it. But of course, I had expectations of my manager which would be to support me and do all that kind of stuff whilst I was being objectionable, but of course, that is the power of retrospective to have a look at it now and go "oh my god, you expected them to support you and you were being obnoxious to be around, Katrina". (Laughs)

Phil: Can I just take us back a little bit?

Katrina: Sure.

Phil: Let's think about some of those people who did manage you well and you said that they saw through the angry teen, they saw the vulnerable child behind that. What was it that they were doing, saying, how were they approaching it? What was it that they did that worked for you?

Katrina: Well, they certainly were not micromanaging me. They were guiding, they were having very calm conversations with me. It wasn't "Katrina, do this". I mean literally if you say "Katrina, do this", I won't. (Laughs) Maybe now I would, but then I wouldn't. I was just so "how dare you tell me what to do?" It's quite funny when I think about it. I think because I had respect for them, seeing them



relate to others and seeing what they were doing, that I would let them in. So they were let behind my barriers and so they could. It's like I had this wall up. I mean I call it a cactus because I just think it's easier. You know the cacti are all mushy inside but really prickly on the outside. But there was a choice whether I let them in or not and if I respected them because of how I saw them be in the business, then they would get let in and therefore I was probably easier to manage in that respect until the annual appraisal.

Phil: And irrespective of who it was, that would still be a big challenge?

Katrina: Yeah, and probably the ones I respected got the tears more than the anger. And I feel for them because we're talking sobbing mess, we're not talking like having a couple of tears here. We're talking balling my eyes out, over the top. For them they must have been sitting there going "that is a really extreme reaction to what I am saying". I mean like proper sobbing, you know. And I think that was one of the reasons I wanted to talk about this subject. It's a sign for people. If they have somebody that reacts with extreme anger or extreme upset, there is way more going on. And then you have a choice – you can just manage them out of the company or if you see that they've got potential think "do we have the help within the company and if we don't, let's get some help. She/he is worth it." And what would be the payback for that? The productivity, the loyalty, the retention, all of those great things.

Phil: Yeah, you were talking about temperament and emotional temperament in particular and there is a phrase or an approach which goes along the lines of "is it the appropriate emotion displayed at the appropriate intensity for the appropriate duration for this stimulus that brought it forth?" And that I think it's an interesting one to think about, but the challenge can be that when you're in it, you can't think about it yourself.

Katrina: No, mine was never appropriate. Mine was extreme. And I think that's why I wanted to share this. Because the people who meet me now just can't believe I was ever like that. Because most of the people that I've gathered now (strange way to put it but you know), that are drawn to me now don't see that, because it's not there anymore. And a lot of that is self-love and once you get that you're therefore less defensive. I was reading "The life-changing magic of not giving a fuck"...

Phil: Is that Sarah Knight's?

Katrina: Sarah Knight, yes. I haven't read the other one. I was sitting there reading on the train laughing out loud. I mean properly laughing because I'm just sitting there reading going yeah, I am now at that point because I have realised they are just opinions and I have so much self-love and self-appreciation that it's OK for someone to have a different opinion to mine and I can take it on board or not and I don't react with the extreme anger and the hurt. But it's hard to get there. It's very hard when from 3 years of age you're told how worthless you are. You're beaten, you're growing up in fear. I had a fear to breathe. It was literally like you look the wrong way, you're in trouble; you breathe the wrong way, you're in trouble. My mother would brew. I'd annoy her in the morning over something trivial and I wouldn't cop it till the evening and I wouldn't even know what I'd done at that point. It was brewing and this constant. Because I felt worthless and of no value,

then you go into this situation where you're trying so hard to gain someone's approval when really what you needed to do was to give it to yourself and give the self-love and self-care to yourself but you are a kid. It's funny how in your 20s you still are a kid really, to be honest. I think it all starts to fall into place in your 30s. Still trying to do that in the workplace. Trying to seek approval but I was so obnoxious at the same time I was just losing it all the time. So you're just playing this battle but when it has been specifically emotional, physical, sexual or whatever abuse it has been, I do think it takes help to find that self-love. It is very difficult to get that on your own because you need the tools. They were actually quite simple tools, but you need to recognise the thought patterns that are going in your head to really know how to use the tools.

Phil: And what has been most helpful for you then? The coaching, counselling?

Katrina: So the stuff we did with that, some things from Pia Mellody we would do things with the inner child, the inner teen and functional adult, we would call in my mother, we would call in my father, we would call in whoever was required "to sit in that chair" because I can't speak to them about this because it didn't happen as far as they are concerned. Nothing happened to me or any of us as far as they are concerned. And I would have them sitting there and whichever one that needed whatever they needed to say would say it, so be it my inner child or my functional adult would let rip. And get it all off my chest. So there was that. I did a lot of inner child work which is really incredibly healing and I would still do it. People might notice that sometimes I have my hand on my chest like I am holding a baby and I am just calming her, and I am talking about her in the third person because this is how I feel about her actually. It is the small child inside me. And it's very powerful. So the second I know I am going into a situation when I am going to feel a little uncomfortable, so contrary again to everyone's opinion of me, I'm actually on the introvert side even though I'm very loud so I hate networking a room. So at a conference where I am speaking that next morning at breakfast when I have to walk into the room, I don't like it. There is always a moment you'd find that I walk in and I am tapping my chest – "I've got you. We're OK here. We can do this. We can walk into the breakfast room and no one is going to jump on us." (Laughs) It's kind of a bizarre situation. So I've learnt that and then I think as far as being aware of your thought patterns and I think we should all do this. So our ego is there to tear us down and protect us. It's going to stop us from doing something that is going to place us in potential fear so you could say to me "Katrina, you're fabulous" and you'd see me going "yeah right" that sort of stuff. So being aware of the fact that I am going to speak on a stage in front of 7,000 people and my inner voice is going to go "yeah, sure, and you're going to fail at that". And I can then just go "well isn't that interesting? And how about the time I spoke in front of that many, that many and that many," and then it quietsens. And that's been one of my greatest one and I tell lots of people that one. It's just to go "isn't that interesting?" And give it evidence to the contrary. So not argue with it. It's quite calming because you're just being aware of your thought instead of letting it dominate which they do because its job is to stop you from doing anything scary.

Phil: Yeah. So the phrase that I often use is that emotions tell you that there's something important to your welfare happening.

Katrina: Yes.



Phil: Whether I've interpreted that the right way or not but there is something important to my welfare happening. I do need to make a decision about what I do with that. How important is it really?

Katrina: Yeah. If you're about to go and jump off a cliff and you're standing at the edge of the cliff and it's stopping you from doing that, it's a really great voice. But if it's just stopping you from being all you can be, then it just needs some evidence to the contrary (laughs). And I get that particularly at the moment as I am writing a book, there are gaps between the training I am delivering and just before I go to do it, the voice is going "what are you doing? You have no clue what you are doing." And I'm going "yeah, interesting, but I've delivered training on this 2 weeks ago and I gave training on this and this and this" and suddenly you feel like "oh yes, calm". It's funny like that.

Phil: I also find it interesting and I guess I wrestle every night with the "should have/could have been" but when people are saying to themselves I shouldn't feel this way, or I shouldn't do that, or I couldn't do that...

Katrina: Why not? It's just energy.

Phil: Well, that's exactly right, yeah. In terms of what's happening, that energy it's telling you that something important to your welfare it's occurring, and it just lets you decide what you want to do with it.

Katrina: Yeah.

Phil: Yes, I do want to, or I don't.

Katrina: It's funny because when I was growing up I was always told "oh, crocodile tears" and I would have to say most of this conversation I've been very close to tears as it means so much to me to talk about it and to be allowed to talk about it. As I told you earlier I'd been over to my flat this morning and when driving back my sat nav sent me a really strange way so there must have been an accident on the A2 and I came back via Woolwich and of course I just suddenly realised I was near the army barracks and I was until recently dating a double amputee and I just suddenly burst into tears out of absolutely nowhere. It's been 6 months, you'd think I'd be fine really. But no! Suddenly I'm sobbing and I'm thinking "you know what, this is just energy, you're just missing him, that's OK, just let it out". And I just let it out and I got home and got in a different mood. But if I bottled it, then that's where the danger comes in. And I think one of the beautiful things and where I feel so incredibly grateful to Richard who got me to Bridget and Bridget who got me to Michelle who started my journey of healing because she was the one that cracked through the defensiveness and there have been others since. There has always been someone appear at the right time to help me with all sorts of other stuff. I've done all sorts of angelic kind of stuff and spiritual stuff as well but I feel so incredibly grateful that I have given myself permission to heal, that I've been brave enough to heal, that I've given myself the permission to have self-care because all I need to do is look at my sister who is too terrified to do it and doesn't feel in the moment and is too scared to feel in the moment and self-medicates. I just have to go thank goodness, thank goodness I have been brave enough and I can't make her, I can't force her into help, I can't put her on a plane and bring her over here and

stick her in front of Michelle. I can't do that. She has to want to do it and I feel very honoured for that. And I know what I just said kind of contradicts what I was saying earlier, but I think sometimes if you go about helping someone from a workplace point of view, they are a lot more open to it whereas my sister is going into it knowing it will sort the child abuse and she thinks it's ripping a band aid off and it's not. It's layers of an onion. It's literally those really thin little layers. Nobody rips band aids off. You can't. You just can't. And it will keep bubbling, there will still be stuff bubble up. And that's OK.

Phil: Just out of interest, happy for you to tell me I am talking out of my arse, but in view of the high expectation stuff that you were talking about earlier on, you host an event where people come along and do amazing 5 minute talks and presentations but there's a whole lot of logistical stuff that goes on behind the scenes. You need people to get the slides to you, you need to get the slides in the right order, you need to get them in the running order of the speakers that's going to be happening, you need to make sure the transitions are working and all that sort of stuff. How does that work for you?

Katrina: I find that really easy.

Phil: I was dead late getting my slides to you.

Katrina: Yeah. You might have got the...

Phil: I pissed Katrina off...

Katrina: I think I might have said fuck to you a few times. Anyway, moving on. By the way, just so you are aware, Phil Willcox does not answer text messages... until it suits him... I'm only kidding. It's funny, right? When you were saying that, I remembered the most beautiful thing that has ever been sent to me about that event was from Julie Drybrough (I'm so sorry if I just bastardised your surname) but she said to me "you give people permission to fuck up" and I do! I create an event where for 5 minutes you can get up and completely screw it up and I'd be perfectly fine with that because I want to give people the opportunity to speak and I want to give them the opportunity to be heard. I know this is a difficult format. I keynote all around the planet and I find that format difficult. Give me 45 minutes on stage, no problem. 5 minutes? Oh God! So that side no, don't care, I have no expectations. Get out and do your best! I don't care. You know Amanda was struggling with laryngitis. I didn't care. She was still awesome. Your rap was awesome. It doesn't matter. As long as I turn up and I know the slides are going to be in order and you know that sometimes they don't run to time. You say "oh well, I think we're on time now". It's a great event. But I think because I go in with that attitude where I just want to give people a chance and I don't care if you're a brand spanking new speaker. So it's funny and I think maybe that's where I am less of a perfectionist now. I mean certainly if I look at my home now, I mean I'm currently sitting on the floor staring at a pile of washing which should not be sitting on a chair directly across from me, but I deliberately came into my bedroom as it was quiet. That would not have been there 15 years ago. My place was so pristine whereas actually now I am kind of relaxed so that would probably be some of the healing. Perhaps my standards have dropped except for my clients. And that for me is delivering training and that is a little bit different to the event, because the way the event is, I think the audience is very forgiving



about that 5-minute format and they could fail but we don't care we're here for it, we're here to support. And I think that's why I care less.

Phil: No, that's all right.

Katrina: Sorry that was a very long-winded answer to such a short question (laughs).

Phil: But it still manifests itself in the way that you deal with your clients in terms of your high expectations for yourself.

Katrina: Yes, but at the same time I've learnt to play so I was delivering some training yesterday for Lionbridge and I know Steven Cassock knows me very well so he's very forgiving. And I did flick the page and I went "Oh, I'm so sorry, I haven't changed the search stream" so in the book it wasn't the one that was showing in the screenshot. I just haven't changed the bit that I typed out. It was just a little accident. It didn't mean anything. But at the same time I could have instead go as I was doing it via webinar "hello, anyone out there? You guys are being really quiet" trying to get people to respond and be really playful with it whereas I would not have done that 15 years ago or 10 years ago because I would be too scared to have any personality.

Phil: OK.

Katrina: I would have got in trouble (laughs). Interesting, isn't it?

Phil: It is. In terms of what helped you, going back to the conversation we had before about certain leaders that did and didn't, so coaching, the additional support, all of that helped you. But in terms of support that organisations can put in place, what are the challenges with that do you think? Is there cash or what money is available and so on, but you were also talking about your friend who is suffering with chronic pain and there is actually something that can be done within the organisation that doesn't cost anything which is basically taking a look at that flexible working approach. So if you're in an organisation and you're listening to this podcast, let's say you are, and you know someone in the workplace or you know of someone who may be displaying those extremes that you were talking about earlier on. If there is one thing you could do to help someone become a victor over, is it ok for those people to do self-care?

Katrina: Yeah and I think victors over have done the work to heal so I would still, I'm sorry Karen if you are listening to this, I would call her a victim of. She is still in flight and fright constantly. And it shows. My oldest brother is just permanently angry because he hasn't dealt with it and so the reason I say victor over or survivor of, it's because I've done the work to come out the other side and I just encourage everybody. This is why I'm so open about it. Just start. Just start with one tiny baby step. It's nowhere near as terrifying as you think and when you come out, you're just so light and so liberated and so alight. It's funny when you were saying that, I thought what you were perhaps going to allude to was how potentially that person could work from home. If you feel that they won't be open or you really are not in a position as a company to invest in them, in some coaching or some therapy or whatever it is that they need, can they work remotely so that they have less impact on the entire team? I could have worked from home just fine. I was doing recruitment. You can do that



anywhere. I can do that standing on my head. So actually, that is a solution and I would have been a lot happier because I don't like being around that many people as it does my head in because of that introvert side of me so actually that would have been a great solution.

Phil: One of the most profound conversations I think I've ever had was when I had my first foray into the public sector and I went from private sector to public sector to work in a local authority and I remember the head of learning or head of learning recruitment company I can't remember which one was at the time but either way. On my first day she said to me "how do you want me to lead you? What is it that you need to allow you to be at your best? And I want you to take a few days to think about it." So this is us talking on a Monday and she said we'll talk about it on a Friday and then let her know what I think. "And I'm not going to guarantee that I am going to be able to deliver what you want or what you are asking me for, but what I want is some clarification from you about what is it that would allow you to be at your best. Yeah, so how do I need to lead you to let that happen?"

Katrina: Yeah.

Phil: And I would say 80% of what I asked for, I got. And I said things like I am going to be really needy. For the first three months I am going to come to you a lot and keep checking. Am I doing all right? Is everything all right? Am I giving you what you want? Am I doing it in the right way? Have I phrased this correctly? Or whatever that might be. But if you can see me through that, then I will just leave you alone after that because it would allow me to build that depth of understanding of what works best and then once I'm clear on that you can just leave me alone and I'll fly, type of thing. So yeah, if you can support me through my needy bit then you can leave me alone and I'll just crack on after that.

Katrina: So did that come from fear of being found out or fear of being in trouble?

Phil: Fear of getting it wrong, I think.

Katrina: Yeah, so fear of being in trouble, yeah. It's funny, isn't it? It always comes from fear which is really quite unhealthy. It does, which is why employment feels so fragile.

Phil: It does. Yeah, you're right. Because we're so quick to catastrophise, aren't we?

Katrina: Yeah.

Phil: Yes, so if I get this wrong...

Katrina: I would be out of a job, I wouldn't be able to pay the mortgage or the school fees or the rent of the... I'd be like oh, my God, I won't be able to eat, I'd be under London Bridge with a begging bowl. Yeah, I know, my God, our brains go straight there, don't they?

Phil: Absolutely.



Katrina: You can actually just walk straight into another job which is better suited to us, but no, we go straight to unemployed and out in the street.

Phil: Yeah, I put this wrong figure at the end of the report and therefore oh, no, everything is going to go wrong.

Katrina: Yeah, I know. It's interesting, isn't it? It's funny because I would have said let me know what you want but then leave me alone. Literally my expectations of you for these 3 months is this, but then just leave me alone because I just hate being micromanaged. I still can't handle that (laughs). I'm such a self-starter, I just don't need it so I find it really belittling.

Phil: What I found interesting and one of the things I said to Alison is I'd like for us to have a check-in every Friday afternoon. An end of the week...

Katrina: Yeah

Phil: Debrief on what I've been doing, where I've been going bad, how can I right it? So we started doing it and then after a few weeks she said "you know what, I feel like I can't sustain this anymore. I know it's something that you need, it's something that you want but I just can't sustain it. I can't sustain giving you this hour and a half/two hours every Friday afternoon. I understand why you want it and why you need it but it's just not something I can do so can we renegotiate what that is? We need to change the approach so that it works for me as well as it works for you". And I was like "oh yeah, cool, absolutely. More than happy to do that because it needs to work for both of us."

Katrina: I'd probably be more inclined to do that now but I would certainly never done that before. I would have done the work.

Phil: OK. So I want to bring us together then and start to wrap it up. Is there anything else that you are thinking or feeling or want to say?

Katrina: Take the time to get underneath that prickly person. So if you are managing somebody who has these extremes, try not to think they are a lost cause, just try and get underneath. Try different tactics, see what can you do differently to perhaps get a different response? It's good for your management to stretch yourself. So other than constantly doing the same thing, which is what most people do because they get frustrated and are time poor and all of that, but just try and throw the baby out of the bath water kind of thing. Perhaps it is that you just have to manage them out but are there other things you can do here, can you let them work from home or what can you do differently? Maybe ask the individual "what can I do?" It's a really different approach. Almost be vulnerable because they are feeling vulnerable and that's why they are so defensive. Try that, how do you need me to behave? What do you need from me here? Like you got and that kind of shocked you in a way, didn't it? And then she came back and said actually I can't do this, can we try something else? And you just tinker it. But you had her respect by then because she'd given you the time. So, yeah, I think that.



Phil: So that plays with all that notion of wanting to save a lot or to really help. I know that's something for me: I used to want to save people. And that's the thing. I think it's what you are alluding to there. It's not about managers fixing people or saving people...

Katrina: No, it's not your job. I can't get my sister who I adore to therapy if she doesn't want to go. I can't get her there, I can't make her. I can coax her, I can tell her what the reality of it is, I can do all of that, I can give her full transparency of what it's about, but I can't make her do that. And this applies for everything: relationships, everything. You cannot change another person. They have to change themselves. And again, I don't think it's the manager's job. Because we are talking about child abuse, we're talking about seriously defensive stuff. I don't think that most managers have got the skills to deal with that. That's why I keep saying to bring in somebody from the outside who does have the skills to deal with that. But the person has to be open to it and they may not change and if they don't, then you do have to manage them out of the business or fire them which is the shorthand way of saying that. It's challenging.

Phil: So something you were alluding to earlier on, it's about that awareness from somebody to say this isn't working for me. Let's find a way that this works for both of us. Being here is not part of the goal and let's find a different way forward.

Katrina: Yeah. And I guess if anyone got anything out of this is that if somebody is reacting on those extremes, there is a really strong reason for it. It comes from somewhere. I don't feel for one minute you can say to your employee "tell me about your childhood" because they're probably not going to do that. You may end up hearing about it though. If you're quite social with them anyway, they might just open up. But if somebody is reacting in those extremes, there's something tough that's happened to them. It's not normal to be so incredibly defensive if that's how you react all the time.

Phil: Ok.

Katrina: Hopefully we haven't made any of the listeners upset. I hope not.

Phil: No, it's been a really good chat. We'd been matter-of-fact at times. I think we'd been respectful as well.

Katrina: Yeah, and can I just say if I hadn't had the 21 years, if I hadn't chosen this life, I would not be as resilient and as independent and as strong. I wouldn't be all the things I am and I wouldn't be making the difference that I am now making in the HR community for example without it. It has given me so much creativity, working ways around problems, I am so intuitive, so there are so many gifts that come with it as well but you don't necessarily see it. So that's where someone can guide you to seeing all of that and life just transforms when you go from that victim to victor. It's quite extraordinary.

Phil: Well that sounds like a wonderful place to end the podcast then, doesn't it?

Katrina: Thank you. Such a cry (laughs). I've just welled up again.



Phil: So I'll say thank you very much again Katrina. Thank you so much for your time, for your honesty, for sharing your story and I am so grateful for you sharing your story. I'll bring it together and close it off and say Katrina Collier, thank you so much for being on the Emotion at Work podcast.

Katrina: And thank you for giving me a platform to do so, Phil. I really appreciate it.

Phil: It's been a pleasure.