Episode 33 – Emotion at Work in Organisational Change
Chatting with Julie Drybrough (@fuchsia_blue)

Phil: Hello and welcome to the Emotion at Work podcast where we take a deep dive into the human condition. Today I am very excited because I have somebody as my guest on the podcast who introduced me to a word a while ago and it's one that I just love. When she used it, she used it with an image of a tree on a slide and it's a word that both phonetically and in its meaning just says a lot about what we do in the theme of the podcast today. Today is about Emotion at Work in Organisational Change and that is something that is *gnarly*. Now I love the gnarliness because it's like Bill and Ted's Adventure gnarly but it's also nutty, tricky, hard, difficult stuff and that's what organisational change often is. So, without further ado, let's get our guest on the air and welcome to the Emotion at Work podcast Julie Drybrough.

Julie: Thank you very much.

Phil: Thank you. How are you?

Julie: I'm really well, thank you. I'm all good.

Phil: All good. As per usual with the Emotion at Work podcast then, let's open with an unexpected yet innocuous question. And this episode's question was to a certain degree inspired by Neil Morrison in that he wrote a blog recently and in it he talked about thanking bus drivers. My question to you Julie is do you thank a bus driver?

Julie: I think I do. I was definitely raised on the polite end of the scale. And I think that's actually important. I read Neil's blog and I do think that's right. I think if you say thank you first, it's good. It's good to be a role model. So yes, I think I do.

Phil: And are you a vocal thank you or are you a nod on the way past or do you raise the hand? How do you show your gratitude to the bus driver?

Julie: I think I just say thank you. I wouldn't raise my hand. I'm not like a high five response kind of person, no. It's a contained *thank you very much* as I leave the bus. I just think it's a really kind thing to do. I do say thank you to people for stuff. And I've started saying *have a good day* to people as well. In shops after they've served me, I noticed that I've gone and said *have a good day* at the end. I think I chat more now than I used to in my 20s. It's the joy of getting older, you give a shit a lot less. Oh, am I allowed to swear?

Phil: Yes, you can swear. It's ok.

Julie: Ok. I won't say anything too rude, but I am known occasionally for having quite a potty mouth, so I will try. I have a polite but potty mouth, so there you go.

Phil: I know we're going to use the C word today because we are going to talk about Change, but any *shit* or other similar expletives are all right because when I upload the podcast, I can make a note that there are some expletives. I'm pretty sure that on the podcast in the past we had the F word dropped at least 4 or 5 times so any potty mouth stuff is well put.

Julie: Oh dear! Ok. So that's then done. There is no big cake to open.

Phil: It's wide open. Coming from Bristol, the general thing is a *cheers driver* as you are getting off. That's the way it always used to be, that was the way to thank the driver. Most of the time I get the bus now it's in London because where I live in my village near Lincoln the bus service isn't great. It's like 5 buses a day so it's not a regular thing for me to do so I do it when I'm London. Because you often get off either through the doors at the back or the doors at the middle, I'm always a bit like do I shout down the bus? Because I don't want to walk to the front as that's where most people get on, so do I shout down the bus? Do I nod my head at the driver as I get off? I would say in the main I shout down the bus accepting the fact that if I'm slightly embarrassed, I'm about to go off the bus thinking no one is going to see me again because I'm in London and there's millions of people. That changed the dynamic for me a little bit when I started to think about it. Oh wow, I'm not going to walk past so can't just do a *cheers driver* on the way back and out of the door because I'm getting off at the back of the bus.

Julie: Yeah. I think when I'm in London I'm super friendly and polite. It's almost like a nihilistic response to London where people are very focused on moving around and are not going to smile and I just grin and smile and say hello to people when I'm on the tube. Not when I'm actually in the tube carriage because I think people think you're slightly bonkers if you do that in the tube carriage but just as I wonder around London I do tend to. I've done that for a long time. I tend to just smile and go *hello* and stuff.

Phil: I can't remember if I said this on the podcast before or not but when I used to run a lot for a while (I don't think I've shared this so anyway here we go), I had this dream about being known as the friendly runner, so whenever I would go out running I would say *hello* and *good morning* to every single person that I passed. Because often I would be out early in the morning (around of 7) so I would meet other runners or people riding their horses (if I was running around Hyde Park) and I would go *MORNING! MORNING!* as I went around. I thought do you reckon I can get this reputation of being the friendly runner? *Oh, I saw the friendly runner in London this morning. He's the nut bag who runs around saying good morning and hello to every single person that he runs past.*

Julie: I love that, I just love that. Yeah, there you go. That kind of thing. In the face of relentless grumpiness, one has to do what one can [laughs].

Phil: One has to bring some joy. Absolutely. And I wonder if that's our segue into change, organisational change in the face of relentless grumpiness. It might not be relentless grumpiness, but organisational change is a notoriously tricky or gnarly to use the word that I love. It is a gnarly world to navigate.

Julie: Yeah, it can be.

Phil: It can be?

Julie: Yes, it is more often than not. But I guess it depends on what you're thinking about really. Do you want to start that bit again?

Phil: No, no. I'm thinking of a couple of things. So maybe it's not relentless grumpiness then. Organisational change in my experience anyway is relentless effort. Even when you think you're making progress, any attempt to take your foot off the gas or shift the focus is met with rapid return to status quo. If I think about some of the work I did with Boots Opticians and you and I worked together on some of the aspects of this, we launched a new company purpose, we galvanised different parts of what the organisation did some of its HR processes but also some of its operational processes. We used the purposes to galvanise all of that together and yet the speed at which status quo would be restored if we diverted any attention away from it, just amazed me. It was really quickly back to how it was done before.

Julie: Yeah. I don't really hear a question in that but from my own observations around that stuff, it does sound right to me. I've been working with organisational change, with culture change for probably about 20 years so I'm very lucky I started into it quite early. One of my very first proper jobs was working on a cultural change programme within the post office in Jersey and I think what I learnt very quickly from that was that you have to be in a number of different places. If you're genuinely thinking about changing an organisation you've got to tap into lots and lots of different points in the organisation and I think when I first started thinking about purpose wasn't actually that trendy so you had to have a vision. Vision has been kicking around since I've ben working in all this stuff. I think purpose is something which has come in as being more important more recently to be honest.

Phil: Yes, I agree.

Julie: So with that word we must have an *organisational purpose*, I think what we are trying to do is try and codify where we are trying to get to. But the status quo is hard wired. We join organisations for a particular reason. Particularly when we are first beginning into a workspace. The organisations that we work for are very formative. They help us understand what is permissible at work, how one does things around here. It's an education so you're formed by the organisations that you work with and by what you've studied or what you've been an apprentice in or how you've come into that role. All of those things are going to form you. The status quo is quite important in certain ways. And I'm conscious that I'm talking about the organisation as if it were an entity alone and of course that's just not necessarily the case, but we join an organisation for our own reason and if the organisation then decides that is going to shift or change or grow or restructure or downsize, we didn't necessarily cut that deal. Psychologically we're a bit like *oh, I'm not sure that's why I work here; I work here for perhaps different reasons*. That is one of the reasons why status quo is quite pervasive. We quite like things to remain as stable and as steady as we can master for all sorts of reasons: for safety reasons, for identity reasons, for energy reasons. There are very few folk that are like *yeah, let's change lots/often/frequently*. Some people love it and get bored and adapt and adopt well in constantly changing states and others prefer things that are a bit more stable and steadier.

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Phil: When you talked about safety in there then, you said there is some identity stuff which I am exceptionally fascinated by, but I will come back to that later. When you talked about safety what did you mean by safety back then? Some safety aspects or safety parts?

Julie: Just that really.

Phil: Are you talking about psychological safety or physical safety?

Julie: Yes. The two can go hand in hand. You could be working in a potentially dangerous crazy workspace out on oil rigs. I worked with people from the oil & gas and it was a madly unsafe environment. But they do whatever they need to do to make themselves feel safe and make the environment around them safe and that's both physically safe and psychologically safe. There are things in place to stop you from getting hurt or killed. And we are social beings, we are hard wired to be together, look out for each other and all those things so psychological safety, yes, but a safe environment, a safe place, all of those things I think are really important which alludes more to status quo than it does to change often because change can feel very unsafe, it can feel very destabilising, it's just not the deal.

Phil: Yeah. I did a piece of work recently with a company who were celebrating their fifth birthday. They didn't call it anniversary, they called it birthday. A start-up type set-up who've grown from founder to 50 people over the space of those 5 years. They recently had some private equity cash injection to drive growth and expansion to the next phase predicting to go from 50 to 100 over the space of about 18 months which is a huge transformation. But one of the aspects that made them different is that there is an unwritten rule in that sector that you have to operate in this way and they deliberately made a strategic decision (or you could argue it was strategic) when they set up that they were never going to play that game. And now they are reaching a point where their distribution model is changing and the players that are in the bigger distribution market, they are going into are actively pushing against their disruptive approach. The sector says you have to work in this way and they are saying no, we will never do that. When you start to expand into markets that are saying if you don't do that we don't know if we are ever going to work with you, then you got this kind of tension that is happening between them. There is huge opportunity there for the financial growth and the reputational growth of working with these other distribution channels, yet we may have to compromise or go back on the one thing that we said we were different about. And I wasn't brought in to explore that conversation, but it came out quite quickly as part of the work I was doing and there was some real sense of betrayal (not sure if that's the right word; it's probably too grand) but a sense that this isn't what I signed up to do. If you do that, that's not what I signed up for. If that's the choice the company makes, that's not what I signed for as an individual. That really made me challenge whether or not this is the right place for me and that "making me feel insecure or unsafe" was definitely prevalent in there and it led to a really fascinating discussion between the founders and people that have recently joined the organisation and those who've been there a while. Different people's perspectives on "if we did change, what would that mean?" and in that session I used your word actually. I used gnarly in it.

Julie: [Laughs] it's not wholly my word, by the way. I didn't invent it.

Phil: There is a picture of you next to it.

Julie: [Laughs] oh dear lord!

Phil: What I said was that I'd rather we discussed this openly with everybody in the room now before we made a decision rather than a decision being made and then people feeling genuinely betrayed that they weren't consulted on it. I'm not sure there's a question in there either. I'm just sharing.

Julie: Yeah. There's a lot in what you are saying there. There are few things that are happening in those situations. What I would look at in that situation is you have founders and founders of business tend to have a particular relationship with that business and the business tends to reflect the founder. And so the business will have some sort of personality or spirit which will be akin to the founding partners or the founding person. And founders tend to be very attached to certain things in certain ways and they put a team around them which are very reflective often of who they are and how they are so there's always things in those decision moments that show what the shift will be for the organisation. What begins to play out are things like identity against safety. You talked about dynamic tension, you talked about the tension building. Wherever there is tension building, there is apprehension, there is nervousness and there is also opportunity for creativity, there is opportunity for difference, for growth, for expansion. So those moments are very common, and I think when you are working with founder organisations and I've done a bit of work with start-ups, that's a reasonably common conversation, it's a reasonably common challenge. The minute that you work with venture capitalists or investment angels, there is a change, there is a shift and quite often you have to work quite closely with the founder about what that means for them, what that means for the organisation, but I think you also see that in other organisations that are going through rapid growth in a non-founder organisation where you have a chief executive and a board they are presented often with that "what does this mean? Is this going to fundamentally change how we do things?" But also more established, big, bureaucratic organisations frequently grapple with how do we modernise, how do we become more digital, how do we become more efficient. In effect in the public sector for the last 10 years there's been a conversation about austerity and doing more with less and how do we do that. All of these things, all of these external forces sit around your organisation and the way that we organise ourselves and ask us questions. We then are asked questions about how is this going to be, how are we going to respond, are we still going to be a good place to work, do we wish to hold on to the bonkers bureaucracy? Quite often yes. This is me talking. I'm on a ground sweep now. This is the world according to Julie. I see myself as being very fortunate. We work with lots of different types of organisations. At the moment I'm working with a university fire service, my most beloved Scottish ballet who I adore and are very small and are punching way above their weight just because the way that they are organised and their culture. People like Mazda in Europe. I have a slightly mad range of clients that we work with. Typically, each one of them is going through some sort of transition or is stretching for something different and the themes around identity, around belonging, around how do we shape our future together, around how do we plan, organise and control our work, are fairly universal irrespective of the organisation you are operating within. And so there is a core conversation in each one of these systems which is unique depending on context. It's not that every conversation is identical, they're really not. Circumstances will dictate how the conversation shapes itself, but at the heart of it all, for me anyway, there are

questions about our identity, our emotions, how we see ourselves, how we would like to be, how we would like to thrive and there is this kind of very lovely thing that we can look at in terms of what are the power structures and what is our ability to speak into those power structures and make a difference. God blimey, we're going away today!

Phil: That's all right. I like that. There was a lot in there that I wanted to pick up on. Can I pick up on that last bit around power structures?

Julie: Yes, go for it.

Phil: I haven't heard of that before. Well, I've heard of power and structures, but I've not heard those two words grouped together as a way of looking at them. What does that mean? How do you look at mapping power structures? How does that work?

Julie: Ok. If I am looking at a shift in culture in an organisation, one of the things I will always pay attention to are the power structures. Who has formal power? You look at the hierarchy, the founding, whatever. Who has been given formal power but then what you want to look at is what is the informal power structure? Who actually has the power? Who is really making the decisions in all of these? Because sometimes you can have a chief executive and actually it's the chair that is making the decisions or it's the FD who is making the decisions or whatever. And in a team, there can be a leader but actually there is Jeanie who's been here for 20 years who has all the power and influence and she is the one who is allowing or not allowing things to happen. Part of any cultural picture if you are looking at organisational change, is understanding both the formal and informal power structures because again we are social beings. We organise ourselves around certain things. We decide who it is we want to speak to, who it is we want to influence, who's likely to deliver for us, and if you don't have a sense of what's going on and who's got the power, then you're kind of missing out. The emotional stuff will just dissipate, and you need both power and love. There is a Martin Luther King quote about the power of love which I can't remember off the top of my head.

Phil: I'll find it and put it in the show notes.

Julie: It basically says if you only have power it goes one way and if you only have love it goes the other way and actually any organisational change, any change requires both. You require the agency that sits behind power, that driving force, but you also require the communion that sits around love, connection, belonging, identity, those two things are exquisitely linked and if you are looking at cultural change, through the lines that I look at culture change, those kind of things are really important.

Phil: I'm selfishly curious now in that some clients (it wouldn't be fair to say clients because invariably I don't end up working with them) are often quite nervous about me talking about emotion in a very overt way in what I do and I can imagine the notion of talking about love being reluctantly worked with as well. Is that something that you experience? If you're talking for example about love and power do you get any resistance to that kind of terminology or to that language or not?

Julie: Yeah. I probably do. There are certain boards and panels and things I go to where if I started going on about love they would just be *I'm sorry, what?* And that's part of the paradigm I'm making. Part of the paradigm is not showing softness and connection to emotion and love is just seen as being a bit oodly moodly and fluffy which of course I kind of love because to me it's the very opposite. The emotional part of an organisation is very tricky to sit with and pay attention to. It's much easier to pay attention to process and outcome and transaction and nice neat structures that we can control. That part is actually pretty easy. Show me a conversation about building an operating or target operating model. You can have an entire day on building an operating model where you don't bump into a great deal of emotion and that's lovely. It's like building Lego, it's kind of fun. But then show me the day when people are sitting and talking about implementation of that operating model and how the hell they are going to take people to take that on and the fact that there may have to be redundancies or move people around and suddenly it becomes a lot more difficult. And the reason that becomes more difficult is because you are dealing with emotion, belonging, identity, connection. You are dealing with people who love their job. You are dealing with people who love their status quo. It just doesn't work. You cannot do change without paying attention to this stuff. And I am mostly unapologetic about that now. I just see that as this is how it is. And I think often I'm brought in for that conversation. I don't worry about that too much. I just try and talk to people about how they're going to bump into emotion, they're going to bump into resistance. People talk about resistance to change. Yes, that's going to happen and you're going to bump into attachment. You're going to bump into people feeling disorientated about what is being asked of them and you are going to have to give your reasons perhaps in non-rational ways and that's going to be your job. If you want to bring that change around, that is the work. And are you up for that because for me transactional leadership on a day to day basis when you are just leading people through what they need to do, you get them through the year-end, you're leading their performance, it's quite different from transformational leadership where you are leading people into uncertainty and you yourself are feeling uncertain about what the outcome may be. It requires a different thing from you personally, it requires different visibility, it requires different emotion. Your team will be looking at you going "why are we doing this? What are we doing this for?" These are well known things. I don't think I'm saying anything that folk don't experience or know but it's how to decodify that and explain it and how do people work it, that's the trick.

Phil: And I guess that's something I'll come back to in a minute. How do we codify, how do we explain it, how do we help people work with it, because I think that would be a useful thing to explore. Are you saying stuff people already know? I think it's probably stuff that folk inherently know maybe or they experienced it through the work that they do, but it had certainly not been the focus of the formal learning whether it would be academic or otherwise that I've done around change or organisational change or organisational development. It's only recently in the last probably 5 maybe 10 years that this kind of emotional aspect of it had been involved. And even then it's when people talk about people like Kotter or Kurt Lewin or whoever it is and they don't talk about identity concerns or belonging concerns or control over our work concerns and all those sort of things. So, I agree with you to a point that I think people know but also if I think about our listener, I think it's been part of their work, but I don't think they necessarily had that help or support. Certainly, I didn't get it any way.

Julie: Yes. I think these types of conversations were completely weird for your average MBA student. So we teach business, we do. You're going to get a Master in Business Administration and we're going to teach you. I think this is changing a little bit but it's still very much that if you want to run a successful business, it's bottom line. I have a memory which I adore. I did my masters in organisational change at Ashursts Business School a few years ago and you spend 3 years really thinking about change and writing about it and really going on about it, and we met the MBA guys in the bar and they were like *Yay, we've just done change*. And they spent like 2 days. We are soaked in all the theory and the permutations and they did it in 2 days. And there are a lot of stereotypes that I could now fire out about the MBA guys and girls that we met but they were pretty much apprentice-esque in lots and lots of ways. So my point is, I think that we don't teach business, we don't teach success, we don't talk about capitalism in terms of emotional or social cost often and in my view we ought to. I think we are now entering a time we are thinking about our ethics and our resources and how we are with each other. It's probably more pertinent than ever and more challenged than ever as well. So from my perspective I think I've been talking about this forever. I think I've always looked at identity and belonging and power and those sort of things in my practice. I'm a sociologist by trade, way back in the day and I think I've been trained to look at that stuff and maybe it is coming more into the forefront now. Maybe after years and years of trying to do organisational change, this doesn't really seem to hold very well. People are looking for alternatives. Maybe there's a rise of emotional intelligence in the system. I don't know but it feels like a good time to be practicing the type of work that you and I do for sure.

Phil: Absolutely. I agree. Like you I am fascinated by the sociological aspects of it. Although I came at it in a different way. I did sociology at A level but I hated it. It was all about Marxism and Leninism and all of that stuff and I thought no, that's not what I want. I want all people-based stuff. I didn't want the big societal stuff. I do get the importance of it and how they interact and how they work but what I find interesting about the work that you and to a certain extent I do is the interplay or overlap of those identities: the micro-identity that the individual has and negotiates for themselves within the workplace, then you have their internal representation of their identity and how that is negotiated because it's not always consistent and there may be slight differences between the vision of the self they negotiated in the workplace and the version of self they see within. Then you've got the identity of the other organisational structures which could be within the function or within the department. And then you have the organisational identity as a whole and the extent to which we take on or we subsume different aspects of those different identities so that when we're talking on behalf of Finance or on behalf of HR or on behalf of the organisation as a whole we hear it or I hear it in people's speech "with my finance hat on" or "with my HR hat on" or "with my organisational hat on". They're talking about those different variables and aspects of their identity. But I guess the challenge is that I'm less sure that there is a deep appreciation of those different aspects of identity, how they interact and how they interplay with each other and how all of that is to a certain degree chucked up in the air when organisational change is happening.

Julie: Yes, I think that's right because most of us don't spend vast amounts of time sitting around mulling on an organisational identity. Most of us are just cracking on with it and it doesn't come up until it comes up. Most of us are just going to be travelling through life just cracking on with it and then something happens and there is going to be an organisational restructure. Hell's teeth what does that mean for me? And then there's the safety thing. You become unsafe and it throws up a

whole bunch of questions that perhaps you hadn't had to ask before and perhaps needn't to ask before and I think that's perfectly fine. I would worry if there was too much sitting around thinking about this stuff. I think life is often too short for such things. However, where I think I have those conversations most often professionally is when I'm coaching folk. Whatever the presenting issue is at the beginning of the coaching arrangement, whatever it is that we are ostensibly working on inevitably we end up working on identity. I think it's probably because I do tend to work with people who are going through some semblance transition or getting ready for promotion or in a job and starting to think about how the hell do I do this job or whatever. A number of people I've worked with had returned to work after some sort of mental health episode and are returning in a changed state, post maternity, and so whatever the presenting issue is at the beginning we almost inevitably end up working with identity. We end up working with who am I now, who am I in this, what is my authority, my power, my narrative within this organisation? How do I operate effectively and make a mark or get on with people or whatever. It very often comes down to identity. Arguably that's because you are working with me and I am going to ask you questions about it, but I think if you ask lots and lots of coaches, they would say the same thing.

Phil: Yeah. Again, whether it's because you and I have similar interests, for me it's often the same. It always comes back to the identity aspects of who am I now and who am I in here and how does that work and how does that fit with who I was and who I might have to be in the future.

Julie: Yeah. And what am I not allowed to do? Or what am I allowed to do? And can we play with that? That's always a nice invitation. I'm not allowed to. Really? Ok.

Phil: Earlier on you talked about helping people or organisations codify, explain and helping people through this stuff. If I may be so bold to ask what are some of the strategies or approaches that you might use then to support with that? I guess coaching is one of them.

Julie: Ok. It's my new favourite thing, I think. I wrote a blog a little while ago about organisations, fighting folk and digital transformation and other organisations. I think one of my most favourite things at the moment is looking at how do we codify, simplify and explain some of the cultural things that are happening to people. It's doing some work to kind of make obvious some of the invisible hand stuff that can play out in organisations and those power symbols and whatever. The typical way of doing that at the moment is some sort of enquiry. Doing some one to one conversations and doing some group conversations as well to ask about what it is like to work here, to get people to explain their experience of leadership, of relationships, of how do we communicate with each other, what is the best way to engage with you. You would be astonished at the number of times you sit in rooms with people who go "if you really want to engage us, do it this way" and then you look at all the engagement strategies that are running and go ok, none of them reflect what people are asking for. And you just kind of hang out. I'm not allowed to say hang out because that makes it sound like we are just sort of playing. I need to make it sound much more professional.

Phil: Ok. Can you promise me one thing though?

Julie: What?

Phil: Can you promise me you'll never use *face into*? Can you promise me you'll never use that phrase?

Julie: *Face into*?! What does that mean?

Phil: What you would describe as hanging out with or sitting with is when you have to address or…

Julie: Like *leaning in*? Is it that type of thing?

Phil: Yes.

Julie: Listen, I can't promise anything. If I've been working with an organisation that regularly uses the term *leaning* or whatever I tend to find that I'll end up saying it and then once I stop working with them, I have to sort of decompress slightly and go no, that's not my language. In a chameleon fashion I have sort of adopted it for a wee while and then I've got to get rid of that. I have yet to pass on *gnarly*. That's definitely one of mine, but if I discover an organisation that is now regularly using the term *gnarly* to describe their organisational change, then perhaps my work here is done, I don't know [laughs]. In those enquiries we are fishing around for leavers for pearls. What is happening here? What is the phenomena that people are experiencing? And then there is an odd moment where you have to sit down with all the data and go through it and go "ok, so leadership here are some of the things that are happening". The leadership would then go "we don't know why we brought you in; we already know that". But then the magic I think is in helping them understand why that phenomenon is happening and sometimes the interpretation of the phenomena is that this is a terrible thing for the business. So if I give you an example, I have a client I work with at the moment and we identified they have long term organisational memories so collectively they have a really strong identity, many of them worked there for many years and they can tell you things that happened in the 1980s, the 1990s. There has been some frustration in some of the newer leadership that this kind of sitting around organisational memory stuff is inhibiting and actually it's giving people quite a strong identity, it's giving people strong roots, they are less likely to change. What it means is that the changes that are coming in would have to be carefully thought through and possibly introduced at not the rapidity that the leadership would like and that can be an inconvenient story sometimes. The leadership are sitting there thinking this is really annoying. You're speaking for them. We don't want them to be attached to the past. We want them to be future focused, if you really want that to happen then just take your time of it and give it an extra 6 months and then let's put the time in. That's what you're working with. That's the material that you're working with and you can choose to pretend it's not but then it probably won't work so how about we pretend that it is and build in a little bit more time here rather than having to deal with large scale dissent? You just make your case according to the enquiry. Enquiry comes out, there are some recommendations, you can explain the phenomena and then typically it's about having some areas of focus. Where should we focus our attention? If we genuinely want cultural change then where are the areas where we want to focus on and I do say to clients it's a 3 to 5 year thing. Not necessarily working with me for 3 to 5 years. I don't need to be there for the whole thing but if you are serious about it, it won't happen in 6 to 9 months. It depends on the size of the organisation, of course, but it does just mean that if you're a great big organisation, it takes a while.

Phil: Absolutely. Sorry. I have lots of things in my head and I'm thinking of picking just one.

Julie: The other thing about codifying and explaining is finding ways to show people what you mean about the cultural experience that are not necessarily words on a board type. There is opportunity to use video, to use visuals, to use creative methods and methodologies to feedback and show elements of culture in a different way in particularly to boards or any senior people where quite often the status quo is that they're given their information in a particular way and you're not allowed to do it differently. Again, I think one of the things that we are trying to do is to work slightly counterculturally with some of the leadership team so that we can see how you can do it and how that can work to capture people's attention in different ways. Recent forays into that is something as simple as Zooming a PPT. You have a 6-slide PPT and actually just doing a PPT and taping the PPT and sending them a video of the PPT and talk them through that. That's about connection, they are seeing and hearing, they are not just getting a 2-dimensional PPT cold thing that they are used to getting. You have PPTs that are pretty, look good (you know what I mean they need to be simple and have visuals on them) but also just do a very brief video that goes alongside them so that you're delivering your information in a more face to face way. I've been playing around with all of this stuff and this is about again an iteration for me from my practice because I've got a background of doing a lot of dialogic work, group work with people, working together and speaking truth to each other. A couple of days ago I started properly reading "The Culture Code" which is Daniel Coyle's work only to discover that things around safety, belonging, shared risk and vulnerability and a shared sense of purpose are the things that you can encode into a culture which make a difference to how well people will work together, how successful they are likely to be in coming up with solutions and getting on with each other and all that kind of stuff. There is some method to all of this as well.

Phil: You mentioned "The Culture Code" by Daniel Coyle and if somebody wanted to find out more about the dialogic work that you mentioned, where would be a good place to go? Or who would be a good person to read to find out more if they wanted. Sorry. I'm just thinking do we need to explain what dialogical work is? I know what it is because you and I talked about it in the past but I wonder if it would be useful to explain what you mean by that and where people could go to find out more. That was a very long question.

Julie: That's OK. If you want to look at dialogue, it is this thing about how we make meaning between each other. It's the work that we do between each other. It's not a monologue. That would be just me talking at, and dialogue is talking with. If you want to look at the more kind of beautifully esoteric stuff, look at Buber's work which is the "I and Thou". For really practical stuff I quite like William Isaac's work on dialogue and then there is famously David Bohm's very lovely writing. Bohm was a physicist and was very interested as well in the sort of spaces, those liminal spaces where we create things. All of that work has stood me in good stead for the culture work which is just kind of forming and emerging now and largely some of that comes from Bill Isaacs's metaphor of a container. One of his experiences was being in a steel works in I think Detroit and realising that he was walking under these enormous vats of molten steel and people were operating safely under basically molten steel and if anything had broken or been breached, these guys and girls would be dead. And he was very curious about that as a metaphor. What are the containers that hold the hot stuff in organisations? What are the conditions that we need to do to create conversations which are tricky or difficult or honest or emotive in order for us to be able to move things forward? It's often very beautiful work,

it's also insanely practical. Whenever you're working with a group of people you try and build a container of trust of enquiry. When any facilitator worth their salt tries to set down ground rules or intentions, that's partly what they are trying to do.

Phil: Wonderful. Thank you. Also then as well as adding to my Julie Drybrough inspired vocabulary of *gnarly* we also now have *oodly moodly* and *hell's teeth* as well. They've been 2 of my highlights.

Julie: *Oodly moodly* is one of those that sounds lovely and Scottish too. Yes, I do say that. What was the other one? *Hell's teeth*? [Laughs] A definite nod to my father on that one [laughs].

Phil: A slightly biased question. As the enquirer or the facilitator of the aspiration of these areas, do you find yourself being drawn into the organisation, into the culture, into what is happening and what is going on as well?

Julie: Yes, I think you have to be wise to that. There are all sorts of things that can happen to you. Again, as a human beast I seek connection, belonging, identity so I seek reinforcement within my client systems, and the risk is that you start to collude. Any consultant who spends a period of time with a client, they start to like them, they start to go *maybe that's not so bad*. No, they really can't do that. Yes, they talk about parallel process and there's things that happen in the organisational system that you're working with and you suddenly discover that you're in the same conversation with one of the leaders that you've seen them play out internally so you've been brought in to help them make the change and you suddenly discover you're in this. They set up a bunch of hoops and fences and suddenly you're realising you're not allowed to do your job. Ok we need to have that conversation. I work with a supervisor. I have somebody who I team my practice to and they look out on both my coaching practice but my consultancy practice as well. And that is somebody whom I trust greatly who just helps me look out what is going on and who just asks me questions about it. It allows me to stay curious about some of the stuff that is playing out. For me that is really important. I know that not everybody does it, but I take it pretty seriously. I am a real geek about my work by the way. I am really serious about the work that I do. I am fairly light hearted about it at the same time, but my work really matters. I'm realising this as I get older that this kind of matters to me.

Phil: I thought you were going to swear there again. I thought you were going to go for *this shit really matters* but then you stopped yourself.

Julie: I was nearly but I am trying to be good.

Phil: Even with the wide-open door that I gave you at the beginning, bless you!

Julie: I think I managed to not swear.

Phil: Yes, you have. You've done really well. I don't think I've ever heard of somebody using a supervisor for their consultancy practice. I'm wracking my brain to make sure I'm not making a statement that it's not true. I hear of it a lot for coaching practices and I have one for my coaching practice, but you made me think I don't use them for my consultancy practice in that way. There are some friends and colleagues that I trust and that I talk about my work with and that I ask for

thoughts and opinions from but not in a formal supervision way. That's an interesting thought. I've never thought about that before.

Julie: I don't know. I thought lots of people did it. Or maybe I'm just turning grandiose. It helps because I think I do a lot of work by myself. Gloriously now there are more and more people that work alongside me but there is a lot of the work and the thinking, contracting and the negotiation and stuff which sits with me and it's just a really helpful conversation to make sure that I am not falling into some of my more regular traps around selling myself short, doing myself down, you know, or whatever, maybe the old imposter syndrome that kicks in every now and again with everybody. I think often I am brought in to be different and to make a difference if I possibly can. And I'm not saying that to sound very pompous but being different and holding your difference if that's what it is that you've been brought in to bring, it requires something of you. So again, if I'm talking about identity and belonging. I'm often brought in not to belong, to not identify and I think it's wise to think about that stuff and what it does to you, what it can do for you. You could go a bit bonkers if you're not careful. Who's to say I'm not? [Laughs]

Phil: Another thought that's gone off in my mind then is thinking back when I was working within an organisation would I have thought about having a supervisor/individual that I would go to and check-up my practice with? Yes, I might have a line manager there to support me and maybe I would have a coach that I might work with and that might help me but I guess I'm just putting myself in the place of somebody working within the fields that we are working within an organisation, and it's a thought that would never have occurred to me and I'm now sat here thinking actually could that be hugely beneficial for individuals? As an independent consultant I thought about it and I got a supervisor for the coaching practice that I do, I got people that I trust that I talk to about some of the consultancy work that I do but would I ever have thought of doing that if I was working within an organisation? I don't think I would because it's not part of what's laid out as a thing to have.

Julie: And who says that you need a supervisor for coaching? Who says we need any of these things? If it works for me, it's one of the things that helps me remain clean(ish), confident(ish), thoughtful(ish), is that I have somebody who I meet probably every couple of months or so. But I write as well because writing is a big part of my reflective practice so I tend to write this has gone on, and there is this wee thing that keeps happening, and this client says I cannot work out what is happening and I cannot work out why I'm not getting traction or I've put in this idea and I know that there's a real nugget in here which would be useful and it's just not being listened to and I'm feeling very much like I can't speak the truth in this situation unless I'm being seen as whatever. I'm not going to start a gender conversation right now but you can see the world through gendered eyes and some of the stuff that can play out you can start going "is it because I'm a girl?" And all of those sort of things. And for me it's been really useful and affirming and challenging to have those conversations safely outside of friendship groups and connections, outside of anything else really. It's quite a clean space for me and I value it immensely actually. It's a wee bit of self-indulgence in some ways but it's a bit like going to a spa I think. It just allows you to de-something, de-stress, de-clutter, whatever it is.

Phil: All right. A couple of things that I noted down which I just wanted to add in. This is where I run the risk of doing blatant stuff but anyway, let's roll with it. Previously on the podcast we had Monica

Parker on Episode 23 and she talked about some of the ways that within her company hatch they gather that cultural data that isn't kind of words and text and bullet points. One of the things I really liked about what they do is they use an app called Fido which is a photography app so people use it to capture pictures of things that have meaning for them in the workplace which I thought was a very interesting and a nice thing to do. Julie mentioned impostor syndrome, and if people are interested, Episode 17 of the podcast is with Amanda Arrowsmith and is about the very topic. If you're not sure what that is and if you want to find out more about that, then you can head back to Episode 17 to find out more about that as well. And I think I want to wrap it up if that's all right.

Julie: It's OK with me, my darling. Absolutely grand.

Phil: There's been loads and loads of stuff in there which I think has been useful and interesting for me and for the fair listener as well. I'll pull all the stuff we talked about, the Martin Luther King quote and references to the dialogic work like William Isaacs and David Bohm, I'll pull that together and put it in the show notes as well. And "The Culture Code" by Daniel Coyle. I'll put all of those together in the show notes so if anybody wants to read more or find out more about those things, then they can do that as well. Also if there are any other Julie Drybrough inspired words that have come out of the podcast for you, fair listener, please feel free to get in touch.

Julie: Oh, no, don't! No! God, we're doomed.

Phil: Oh no, sorry. I couldn't resist it. Sorry a couple of standard questions. Is there anybody that you would recommend that we should go and seek out to get on the podcast? Anyone you think oh, yes you should go and talk to them because they would be really interesting.

Julie: I tend not to answer those questions partly because (a) I think you're doing very well without me so that's fine and (b) I don't like singling anybody out. Just get somebody who's really anti-emotion. Get somebody who's super cold who's just like "this is all a bunch of bollocks". Get them on. Because that I would listen to [laughs].

Phil: OK.

Julie: Counter cultural.

Phil: All right, I will write that down. Beyond what we've talked already are there any books or any other resources that you would signpost people to other than what we said that you think would be useful or you think we've talked about as we made our way through.

Julie: My standard response to that is seek stuff out, use your social media and your algorithms to seek things out that perhaps you've not linked up before. I would put some time aside every month or so to just read widely, to be nosy and curious and disappear down certain rabbit holes for a wee while. Go where the curiosity takes you. There is so much out there at the moment and it can be overwhelming but just think about what interests you and go seek.

Phil: Ok. Wonderful. Thank you. In that case then, is there anything else, lovely Julie Drybrough, that you are thinking, feeling or would like to say before I pull the podcast together to a close?

Julie: No. I think I am replete. Thank you very much for the opportunity and I'm off to grin and say thank you to bus drivers.

Phil: Thank you. Good. That's what I like to hear. Thank you very much.

Julie: I'll see you soon.

Phil: See you soon.