

Episode #217 This Universal Human Experience

Rachel Morris

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[00:00:00] **Susan:** Well, today I am delighted to welcome Rachel Morris to Life Beyond the Numbers. Rachel, you're so welcome.

[00:00:07] **Rachel:** Oh. I'm really, really pleased to be talking to you, Susan. I've been looking forward to this conversation.

[00:00:13] **Susan:** So have I, and Rachel and I met because we both won highly commended books at the Business Book Awards

[00:00:23] **Rachel:** we did.

[00:00:23] **Susan:** And we've both been published by the same publishing house Practical Inspiration Publishing. But of course, like anything, once we got talking, we had all of this other stuff in common because our books while the theme may be similar, the concept, it comes at it from a completely different angle.

And we're not just gonna talk about books today. I would like to kick off with the book because I think it will really take us in places. Rachel and Rachel's book is called Working Mother, and I'm not a parent. I think most people listening will probably know that, but just in case I'm not a parent and I read this book and I suppose what I got from it is.

At the heart of it, for me, it was about transitions and people navigating that space between either making a decision and taking action or getting a promotion. I mean, there were so many avenues it could take in a workplace. And now I don't wanna take away from it being about mothers either, but what sparked you in the first instance to write this book?

Maybe we'll start there, Rachel.

[00:01:33] **Rachel:** Well, I think what sparked me, Susan, was I found myself with some information based on some practice research that we've been doing for a long time, and I thought, I'm holding something that could be useful for somebody else. So it felt genuinely like there was a moral responsibility for me to offer it out there in case it was useful for people.



And I think it's really interesting, although this was placed because it had been parental transition research we'd been doing, and it was based very specifically on the most vulnerable audience, which is the working mother as far as all statistics are concerned. The principles in the book are universal because they're about the human experience and for me, the human experiences. A universal one, and the book aims to address core aspects of something that we all experience. So fear, learning boundaries, identity, all those different principles. So I know many of the things that I ended up writing about for this particular audience are the same principles that we'll use with C-suite execs in boardrooms. You know, there's no same principles that I'll use with my own family and friends and people will use with me. So this. Universal human experience, I think is really, really important.

[00:02:53] **Susan:** It is. And that's kind of fascinating, isn't it? Because let's say I'm a, a leader in an organization and I'm not a. I automatically almost self-select out thinking I'm not going to understand what this person's going through, or I'm not willing to have that conversation. That's nonsense.

[00:03:12] **Rachel:** total. Yeah. Yeah, yeah. Yeah. And isn't it interesting how the work environment can put people through into almost a process kind of mentality and take away that human element, which is actually, I know how to talk to somebody when they're scared, or I know how to talk to somebody who feels like a massive change is happening and they're not sure about how they're gonna navigate it.

And when we can trust our own human experience and we can trust our skills, then actually the conversation is very natural and. More often than not in workplaces. I'm sure you experienced this too, Susan, in your interactions, but if we can take the job titles away, if we can take the process away and say, that classic, if this was a friend in this situation, what would you do?

And therefore how does that translate? Most people have got the skills, they've got the empathy, they've got the experiences, they know what to do in these, what are quite significant situations.

[00:04:08] **Susan:** Yeah, and I guess as well then it's not about giving the right advice or saying the right. Thing, it's actually just about meeting the human in front of you, because I'm not a parent, so I don't know what it's like to go through so much of what parents go through, but yet I could really relate to most of what you wrote in the book.

And, it's such an interesting dilemma I think that we hold.

[00:04:36] **Rachel:** You know, and it's even listening to you there, Susan, you think actually, and all first time parents will say they dunno what it's gonna be like to be a parent either, you know? And so that learning on the job, that working it out is definitely a shared experience.



I used some of the principles that sit in the book about handing over. So how a person hands over for, A chief exec who was going on a sabbatical, an eight week overdue sabbatical, and I used exactly the same principles with him. 'cause it's like for anyone taking time out, the experience is gonna be the same. How's it all gonna cope without me? Is it gonna be safe? Is it gonna be okay? What if it falls apart? What if it doesn't fall apart? How do I feel coming back? They're all the same questions that people are asking themselves just in a slightly different context.

[00:05:23] **Susan:** I think the thing that stuck with me most reading the book, not maybe the thing that I hadn't ever considered myself, and I look back at the people I worked with that came back from maternity leave because you talk a lot about maternity leave and people returning to the workplace was to actually onboard people again.

I thought that was so crucial actually, because even if you're out two days, you're going to miss stuff. And when you're out for eight or nine months, the people that are still there can even remember what was going on when you left, you can, and you've missed everything in between. And what it reminded me of a little bit was I'm obviously, I'm Irish and I live overseas and have done for like years and years and years and years now, and every time I go home, people just assume I know everything that's going on,

[00:06:15] **Rachel:** Yeah.

[00:06:15] **Susan:** and I mean from the local shopkeeper to my friends because you don't know what you've missed out on.

[00:06:23] **Rachel:** It's interesting, people talk about everything's constantly changing, but actually it truly is, you know, as you say, if you're away from somewhere for a week or two, or, and certainly in an organizational perspective, Anyone coming back from any leave, whether it is sick leave, whether it is, sabbatical, whether it's parental leave, any of those types of situations can come back in.

Their team may have changed, the strategy may have changed, where they sit may have changed. it's like this sense of, A person coming back to something that has remained static and any sense that the person has remained static too. my client, he went on his sabbatical, he came back and he had had a whole heap of life informing experiences by the time he came back, having finally spent eight weeks with his family, and actually he is not the same leader coming back.

He looks the same. He may sound the same, but so much has changed and I think. If we can acknowledge this continual movement that we have in ourselves and around ourselves, that actually everything is transitioning all the time, then actually we are much better equipped to be sensitive with how we, enter situations ourselves and how we help other people who might need some support.



[00:07:36] **Susan:** Yeah, it's so much easier said than done because we don't notice most of the time. I think that's what it comes back to, isn't it? To some extent Rachel is, life just keeps going, right? It is that if you wanna call it the, hamster wheel that you know, it is just constantly moving and it's only when you step out or stop or question that you notice it doesn't have to be like this or, yeah. And. This epidemic 'cause it is some sort of epidemic of busyness that we live in doesn't help.

[00:08:15] **Rachel:** I was talking this. She lives in, France and we were talking this morning actually about organizational cultures and we were talking about, our experiences of, busyness and the reward that can be attached to busyness. that actually being overwhelmed can actually be considered a good thing.

People talk about giving more than a hundred percent, which is a numbers lady you will know is just such an obscure concept. Anyway. but this, I think it's very interesting that we can reward busyness. And one of my own, supervisors said to me very, very early on, Rachel, we are called human beings, not human doings.

And there's a very, very, very good reason for that. And you think learning to be, and certainly learning to be in a phase of transition when it can be really, really uncomfortable, is an incredibly hard thing for most of us to do. Incredibly hard, and I think it requires patience with ourself. It requires self-awareness.

It requires sitting with that icky bit that feels really, really, really uncomfortable. we reward people being in control. We reward people being plans. We reward. So, you know, when it feels very ambiguous for a person when they're experiencing change, either within themselves or around them.

it's not the norm, is it? It's not the thing that people have adapted to. We've adapted to. So how do I get a sense of control within that? And that's really, I think it's a real dilemma for people.

[00:09:37] **Susan:** It is I suppose my philosophy or outlook is that we're actually in transition from birth to death. You

[00:09:44] **Rachel:** Yes.

[00:09:45] **Susan:** know, that life is one big transition, and of course there are several inside in that, and yet we always look for the results. So. I don't know 'cause I haven't been pregnant, but I'm guessing that when some women get pregnant, that all they want is to have the baby and not go through that part almost.



And then the kid to be grown up and then, you know, it's like we want the result. And, and that's what you say about the uncomfortableness? The, the reason we know we care about things often is because it's uncomfortable. Because if everything is just going day by day, where's the difference in life?

Where's the, this is meaningful to me, or this is helping me to grow? there's nothing is there then?

[00:10:34] **Rachel:** No. No, and I think that's very interesting, Susan, about, maybe that uncomfortableness shows we care. I haven't particularly thought about it that way, and I think, you know, I think that's really interesting. I think the, I. The sense of uncomfortableness being such an unfamiliar space for many, lots of people talk about vulnerability, they're big words that are talked about, but actually that sense of sitting with the unknown, which is just a huge part of so many life transitions, whether we're talking,

Entry into parenthood, whether we're talking, taking on a new role, entering a new business, whether we're talking, dealing with bereavement, whatever those changes, those significant changes might be, that ability to stay and stop and be with the unknown. in transitional, principles, there's often like a, a neutral zone that's talks about in the middle, and it's this piece of when what we've known

is no longer, but what we are about to have hasn't yet come. And there's like this funny bits in between and it can be called a no man's land. it's often described as being very, very disorientating is. And none of us like feeling disorientated. It's a really, really uncomfortable feeling, and it can last. People who are listening, if they've been through significant life transitions, they will know that that disorientating nowhere can last for significant periods of time, and that's deeply uncomfortable.

[00:12:04] **Susan:** It is deeply uncomfortable and I think that we as a society. So let's broaden it out as a society. We're uncomf or unfamiliar perhaps with distinguishing between what's uncomfortable and what's feels unsafe.

[00:12:23] **Rachel:** Yeah. Yeah,

[00:12:24] **Susan:** And so we get caught thinking, I have to solve this because I'm unsafe here. When actually being uncomfortable is about just, just going with it and allowing it because we don't know what's going to happen anyway.

We never do. Even if you're told as a, when you're pregnant that you're going to have a girl, you may still have a boy, and I know people that, that's happened to.



[00:12:50] **Rachel:** Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, there's no certainty. And human beings look for certainty. Hey, we definitely do. We definitely do. And maybe there's something in this as well, you know, Susan, about supporting anyone who we can influence in our lives. So whether that's parents bringing up children, whether that's leaders and line managers, but actually us helping those around us, whether we're mentoring people, helping people around us actually to sit with that uncomfortable. I know as a coach there's times when you can be team coaching, really super experienced people who can use all the buzzwords about avoiding burnout and being vulnerable and all those difficult things. But actually, I. The wrestle that can happen with helping them to see that, letting go and, actually just being is all that is needed at that particular moment in time.

Some people look at you like you've grown two heads, you know, so maybe we've got a responsibility out you to help people learn that sooner rather than later.

[00:13:50] **Susan:** I, well we do, but where does it start? I think a lot of where we are, we're in chicken and egg territory often with things that, ideally the education system would help people understand this. And I can see there is a lot more coming in about emotional regulation and helping people to cope with being human, because that's what it comes back to is human beings being human, but.

A lot of what you write about in the book and a lot of, I think what we're talking about here is tied to emotions, fear, guilt, overwhelm, loss of identity, and people either trying to avoid that or override it, shut it down.

[00:14:32] **Rachel:** Yeah.

[00:14:34] **Susan:** What happens when we have those approaches?

[00:14:38] **Rachel:** Yeah, it gets worse for sure. It gets worse for sure. anyone who has experienced with grief will know that actually you can't bypass it. And the rule of thumb is that actually you have to move through it. And that is, really difficult, really, really, really difficult. And with any life transition, whether it is a person leaving their role because of redundancy or settlement or burnout or any of those kind of things, that the, the emotions that surround it are super heavy and often very, very acute.

You talk about guilt, I think shame can often be a really, really big one. and fear. Always plays its part, doesn't it? Good old fear popping up there always. and what we know about these emotions is they kind of thrive in the dark. So stick 'em in a corner, shove 'em in a dark cupboard, and they're gonna love it. They're gonna mm-hmm. They're gonna grow and they're gonna multiply and they're gonna get bigger and bigger. If we shine a light on those emotions, however uncomfortable, we think that is going to be, we know that they start to change their form. They can start to alter.



And so as with all life transitions and significant life transitions, particularly if the change has, triggered a transition that we didn't want, so a sudden death from somebody or being settled outta a business and we didn't actually want to leave, so we've got a huge amount of emotions going on there.

the only way, the only way is to face those emotions and work with them and address them. I think my maybe hopeful word of support though is that actually people don't have to do it by themselves and actually people mustn't do it by themselves. because there are beautiful, supported ways of moving through those processes. It's still hard work. It still takes time.

[00:16:25] **Susan:** And that that word hard, I think is one of the words I hear most in coaching sessions when things really hit an emotion rather than a nerve. I'd rather say when things hit something that is core to somebody's either a belief system or identity or the transition they're in and they're seen. the feedback I'll often get from clients is, this is really hard.

I'm finding this so hard, and I think it's fascinating because I. That's what keeps it quiet, I think in a way, Rachel, because you're never going to go into a meeting and allow those feelings to come up because you won't know how to deal with them. And then once we get practice at at pushing that down, when you do let it up, you don't know what's gonna come out

[00:17:20] **Rachel:** Uh, it gets scarier 'cause it's been hidden in that cupboard getting bigger and more furious. And I think there's also something here, Susan, about language. So, if we think about emotions and the range of emotions, there are actually, we are very, illiterate, most of us when it comes to our emotions, so we will say happy, sad, angry, scared.

we use a very basic, basic level of language, and I feel really, really strongly that actually there's something about helping people. And I apply this to myself as well, to be learning the right words. So that sense of that feeling, that somatic feeling I have. but actually what, how would I label it?

How do I articulate that? What does it mean? Because there's a big difference between fear and despair. There's a huge difference between, contentment and joy. we might call them both happy, but they're very, very different, aren't they? They're really, really different emotions and I. Frequently we'll work with clients on kind of expanding that emotional language.

My children, interestingly talking about the education system, my children from, and they're in state school education and being maybe year one, so they were probably about six at the time. They would come home and they would talk about their guard dog, which was their name for their amygdala.



They would talk about their watchtower, which was their name for their pre prefrontal cortex. They had these little glitter bottles that they would shake. To explain that they were feeling a little bit funny at that moment in time, and then they'd watch it settle so that you could have the conversation about, see it passes.

It all passes. They were coming home from school with that, and we used to put on the fridge all these emotion words. And so when they were going, I'm really angry, we'd go, okay, let's just go check its anger. Let's just have a little look at all these different words that it could be because. most of us weren't shown that certainly when I was brought up in the seventies, it wasn't a, hello.

You know what? You didn't talk about things in that way. so I am very hopeful that actually over time, as generations pass some of this, understanding our emotions, understanding how they work, and being able to articulate that, I think it will start to change and will start to develop.

[00:19:35] **Susan:** absolutely my hope as well. And, when I was writing my book, because the subtitle is How Accounting for Emotions Tips the Balance at Work and. Lisa Felman Barrett, who's a neuroscientist and psychologist, has written how Emotions Are Made this book, and it's amazing. And her premise, I guess at the end is emotional granularity.

Literacy learning more emotion words is the answer to wellbeing because actually once you can put a word to it or label it, you can begin to understand it. And another person whose work I really admire is, Dr. Mark Bracket who has a, a tool called Ruler. And again, it's about understanding, regulating and so on your emotions and.

I think what I find fascinating when we talk about emotions, Rachel, and, excuse me, I really noticed this during the coverage of the Olympics, it's that we tend to associate emotions with negativity. So when, somebody says they're very emotional, it's never like that, they're bursting with joy. It's always that they're fair, fearful, or.

Nervous or something like that. And I always say like, if it's, if you're feeling emotional, could you expand on that? Because it's like, I feel like food, but what kind of food do you want to eat? It's not really a good enough description. So in a workplace or as an individual who's navigating the workplace, how do you become more familiar and less on the back foot of your emotions and learn to use them all.

[00:21:27] **Rachel:** So I feel that most of us, and again, I put myself in this, we've gotta put in the hard yards, we've gotta put in the work, And I work with a therapist, I work with two supervisors. I have great set of peers, I've got several mentors, and they challenge me to think, Rachel, what's happening with you right now?



how would you describe what's happening? I've spent. Decades, Susan, learning about, oh, when that bit happens in that part of my body, that's 'cause I'm feeling a little bit anxious. Or, what am I feeling anxious about? How do I tell people that that's how I'm feeling at that particular moment in time, in a way that feels safe or appropriate for the context and for the environment?

Or maybe sometimes I don't. Maybe sometimes I say, I know. You will know that I'm a really pro-choice with behavior, But actually sometimes I may say I notice I'm feeling it, but actually I choose not to share that, and that's okay too. because it isn't the right environment or I don't feel supported enough, so I.

I feel we have to put in the hard yards. You know, it's like a whole stream of activity, a whole nother work project is that piece about who am I, what makes me who I am, how do I know certain things about myself, and how do I start to articulate it to other people? And personally, I feel that that's a, a lifelong quest.

I'm better now than I was 10 years ago. I hope in 10 years I'll be better again. and I'll understand more, and that's probably because I'll have had some quite strong transitions in that period of time and the school of hard knocks. And I will have been forced to confront some things that actually I might also want to hide or I might also want to ignore.

but that is life, isn't it? And isn't that, that's what living and walking this, this path is,

[00:23:04] **Susan:** Absolutely. So why do we wanna keep it outta the workplace? Rachel? Why is there such an emphasis on not bringing, yeah.

[00:23:11] **Rachel:** because everybody's so scared. And, and you know, I, I believe if we could accept that we are messy, human beings are messy, Hey, we are not. And I'm not just talking about my hair. I can't get it neat. It's like we are messy and, and we wanna keep it out of the workplace.

'cause the workplace doesn't like messiness does it? We like it neat. We like it neat and tidy and in a process and what have you. I think the irony is the messiness beneath the process is far more complicated if we do it that way. So I don't think we've got the courage more often than not in the workplace to allow it to be explored.

[00:23:49] **Susan:** that, what a great word. Courage. And I think the messiness is showing up in absence. In disengagement in all of these things. Conflict, I mean, there are endless numbers of unhappiness at work, and unhappiness is such a catchall phrase anyway, but the messiness, the reality of the messiness is showing in organizations that go bankrupt, for example, or staff end up suing their employer, whatever it is, or people are just miserable



[00:24:20] **Rachel:** so many, so many. And, it is just ironic, isn't it? 'cause it just feels so shortsighted. My least, I dunno how your listeners all respond to this, but I'll be truthful about it. my least preferred word is professionalism. Because it just feels, to me, it's like, okay, so put a smiley face on darling, meeting yourself up.

Put a smiley face on. Just pretend it's not happening. Just get on. Just get in line. And you just think the minute we start doing that, what are we denying? And if that's the stuff that manifests, it's only going to get harder.

[00:24:51] **Susan:** And who's decided anyway, that that is the definition of professional.

[00:24:55] **Rachel:** Exactly. Exactly.

[00:24:57] **Susan:** You know what I mean? It's like professional to me, it's being able to show up as you are and handle it all. Sometimes knowing when you need support to handle it all or not sometimes, but knowing when you need the support to handle it all. Knowing that you don't know everything and knowing that it's okay to sit in the unknowing.

[00:25:20] **Rachel:** Yeah. Yeah. Do you know I've been doing a lot of work on burnout recently, Susan, and looking at that as an experience, and actually the real risk with burnout is, it's such a common experience, but it remains so hidden. It remains so untalked about, and. It's another one of those that, the minute it's behind the scenes, the minute it's hidden, because people aren't allowed to be struggling at work in inverter, commas, don't feel like they're allowed to be struggling at work. It just escalates and escalates and escalates, and escalates. And then we do get to the situation where it can't be hidden anymore, and then comes to shame and then people go away it feels to me that the problems come when we leave them too long. When we let things go, we can catch potential burnout. If we can catch it really early on, then actually what we can do is we can start to address it and we can start to do something with it. And it's much easier at that stage than when it's much more advanced. And so many of these things, if a person can say, I'm feeling really uncomfortable about this situation, or I need to have this difficult conversation, the sooner we can address those things, actually the easier they are then if we leave it and leave it and leave it and leave it,

[00:26:30] **Susan:** Yeah, and often it's our own thinking. Anyway that causes the problem. We think

[00:26:34] **Rachel:** It's always

[00:26:34] **Susan:** be a difficult con. It is always us, isn't it?



[00:26:37] **Rachel:** me. Whatever happens in my house or my work, it's always just like, yeah, it was me. I did it. It's me always.

[00:26:43] **Susan:** and I also think with burnout, having gone through it myself, that when you just don't know what's going on with you,

[00:26:53] **Rachel:** Yeah.

[00:26:54] **Susan:** it's really hard to bring anyone else into that conversation as well, and. I think workplaces, and look, workplaces don't do anything. People do things, but people in workplaces will legislate by bringing in a policy and whether that's like a maternity policy or it's a return to work policy or a parental leave policy, and they think that that's enough and.

Really, we don't need policies. you know not to murder your colleague, as one of my HR leaders used to always say, so you don't need to write it down. But so much of this stuff we inherently know as people and when we do make checklists and we, we outsource our humanity to that piece of paper.

[00:27:42] **Rachel:** Hmm. Very much so. They, I know, you know, back in the late naughties when lots of the work on authenticity and things like that was coming out. You know, you, you go back to the core principles of that and the idea of knowing yourself and showing yourself. So knowing how you enter and knowing and, and, and then what you share.

So how you show it. And there was definitely a, a sense that authenticity has a skill about it. So when to show that aspects of you True principles of authenticity for me are very much about that. It's about me being able to be and bring all those things I've got about myself into any interaction, whether that's a workplace interaction, whether that's a parent child interaction, whether that's a social interaction or not.

And. It feels to me there is huge fear in a lot of environments about people being able to be their true self. I have clients who, let's go back to the parental transition space where the mothers or fathers adopted, you know, people will hide their babies off screen. they'll pretend that the baby hasn't arrived or the child isn't there, or the child hasn't existed,

People will hide the fact that actually they're finding that return to work incredibly challenging because it's coincided with children starting school and they're all totally full of flu and they're embarrassed. They've gotta take time off. And what doesn't happen is they don't go actually, but that person over there and that person over there and that person over there, and that person over there is probably navigating exactly the same.

And if we could actually talk to each other about it, maybe that's where we see, maybe that's where we see, Properly, properly authentic. Susan's choking in the background,



properly, authentic conversations taking place. And it applies to burnout too. for every person burning out in one office, there will be a person in the office next door who is feeling very close to burnout themselves.

[00:29:31] **Susan:** I think I got so excited.

[00:29:33] **Rachel:** Shall I keep talking while you?

[00:29:35] **Susan:** No, no, no. I got so excited because you're like speaking my, my, my beliefs into being and that, I was watching recently, I can't, I think it's called in the Age of Disruption or something. it was a movie on Netflix and it's about, somebody going to work in the White House and the world's about to end.

[00:29:55] **Rachel:** Yep.

[00:29:56] **Susan:** And they have to lock their phones in a security room before they can go into

The incident room where they're, you know, saving the world. And when they know that the world's about to end well, that's what it seems like.

They break the rules and go and get their phones because every single person has a family that they're thinking about. it shows this story from several different people's views. And what you see, or what I saw most in that was people's humanity shining through in times of crisis and. Everybody's going through something like you've just said,

And if we had that, I don't understand why we don't have that. Because when we're going through something ourselves, we'll forgive ourselves often, but we won't have the same compassion towards somebody else. We'll think they need to follow the rules, but it's okay for me to go to the dentist 'cause my tooth is really aching or whatever. And there's so much about this right and wrong at work or rule keeping. It's very schooly.

[00:31:10] **Rachel:** Well, sometimes I feel actually people are harder on themselves. I couldn't possibly go to the dentist.

As part of looking into burnout, who, who put off surgery because she just got a particular thing to do and then got, had to go and have a whole heap of emergency surgery. it's like, but actually you say to people, what would you suggest your friend does?

And everyone's super clear about what they'd suggest somebody else does. Okay. So why can't we offer ourself that same level of care? And I mean, I always come back to fear and I open the book with talking about fear, which seems ironic when you're writing a book for.



brilliant women that are also gonna become parents and they're working and all that different type of stuff.

And it's like, okay, Let's start with fear. 'cause you know what stops people behaving in an incredibly natural, intuitive, authentic way is fear. And whether it's fear of being seen a particular way, fear of not being seen a particular way, whether it is fear of not belonging.

Often fear of, I'm gonna be different if I do it this way, or I won't be conforming. Fear of consequences. And you just think, actually, if we could accept that there is fear attached, and then if we could challenge our perception of that fear. How scary would that be really?

Or actually, how likely is that? How awful would it be? And ask ourselves those types of questions that may be, I believe people have it in them. Most people instinctively know how to help somebody when they're struggling at work or instinctively know when something doesn't feel right to them.

'cause they'll come out of a meeting and think, God, that was awful. And it's likely to be the structure of the meeting as well. But that to one side, it's likely to be something behavioral that happened in that meeting. And people know this. Know this, So I think what's interesting is why we often feel like we have to swallow it down or why we often feel like we have to turn away and look away.

And it suggests to me that actually 'cause we're fearful of what would happen if we didn't do that.

[00:33:04] **Susan:** Yeah, and there was an article in the New York Times, maybe two years ago now, and it was. Viewing kids in school. I think they were between nine and 14, and their biggest fear was job loss. Getting fired. They haven't even left school. They're like so small. They barely know what jobs are. So we have this, yeah, this real fear of losing our jobs.

And that's often the thing that people will say to me in a session is, I can't say that 'cause I'll lose my job. in the UK we live in a society where it's quite hard to lose your job, but we still have that fear.

[00:33:44] **Rachel:** Mm. And I think it's what the, what the job represents. it won't invariably be the job itself. Will it? It will be. 'cause the job represents, it forms part of my identity. Identity, I think is so critical and the way we link ourselves with our work is completely understandable. But, it does become a huge part of who I am.



I've supported people who have left professions, which really have institutionalized them. nurse as people have worked in the NHS people who work in education systems, and it's like, if I'm not that. Whatever that title is, then who am I? What am I?

And women always told me, all parents, but particularly, Females about to give birth and become mothers would say, but if I, then I'm suddenly a mother as well, then I'm not the work person that I was. And if I'm not that, then what will people think of me? And that sense of, I can't possibly lose my job.

I think it's really interesting 'cause we say if we can work out what the job represents, then actually we might get closer because status. Income, all security, belonging, community, sense of worth, achieve parents' dreams. sense of validation by people. They're actually usually the real things that mean that a person will hold onto a job that if they break it down on paper, isn't one that they would've applied for if they were applying for it.

Now isn't making them happy, probably isn't worth it. When they think about the effort they put in and the money they get out, but they will hold onto it like everything. Everything matters. and it's interesting that disconnect between their cognitive response, which is on paper and the emotional response, which is, you know, but I can't possibly.

So I think that fear is really, really interesting to explore. And we all have that. Hey, we all have that in us.

[00:35:24] **Susan:** We do. And it's, it's also just societally shared, isn't it? Because what you were saying there brought to mind a time. Now I actually left every job I had without another job to go to, and I would just get to the stage where I would just go, that's it. I've had enough, I'm out of here. one of the last times I did it, I remember a friend of mine, her husband, saying to her.

Well, Susan doesn't have any kids. If she had kids, she couldn't go and do that. I know. But it's so interesting because that's the view that society takes. And I remember my parents not being happy that time and everybody's kind of going, but you can't do that and you need a job, you know, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

And we take notice of what people tell us rather than following what our desire is.

[00:36:13] **Rachel:** Hugely, hugely. I had a client recently tell me about a decision she was making to do with her work, which was to leave, before she walked out or got fired. So to try to leave on good terms and do her good. Leave an environment that really, really. Isn't healthy for her. It's causing her inordinate amount of stress.



She's very, very close to burnout, but her mother had said she was angry with her for making that choice. and it had paused everything. Paused everything in its tracks because mum being angry with her was far too significant for her choices, which she knew heart and head were correct for her.

Were gonna be made, and so. That will still play out that situation, that's still playing out. And I think that sense of, what are we trying to prove in any of these things? This was something that I, and for the record, I wasn't a person who was always like, I have to have children.

I would've been, you know, it was just, I was blessed in my view with the two that I've. Well, don't tell them that. 'cause sometimes I think I'm blessed with them. but actually the, the judgment I found when I became a parent, the, oh my gosh, the stigmatism there was around me being a working parent. I chose to go back to work when Mike eldest son was six weeks old and I had to, 'cause I'm self-employed and there are no maternity benefits so, and also I wanted to, and I know I talk, about this in the book, but the judgment that I received from some of the most surprising angles, and actually to the point that people would say to me, you will damage your child because you have done this.

it was Susan. It was astonishing. And I think if we translate that again into a broader context, it plays out. that lady saying, mom was crossed with me, angry with me for these decisions, and you just think this pressure to be something that other people expect or need you to be for them, their needs, not yours, versus what is your, Head and your heart and your harar actually telling you yourself, so what's your whole being telling you? Because you will instinctively know, and that is going to feel right. Then once we've got that, the question becomes, okay, so how do we develop the skills so that we can articulate it?

How do we find the courage so that then we can use those words that we found? Because usually when you put stuff out there it's not as bad as we think it's gonna be either. And the people who thought that I was making the worst decisions ever, they don't matter as much to me. I thought they did, but they don't.

[00:38:45] **Susan:** And also it wasn't about you anyway. it's always about the other person, isn't it? I remember when my sister was pregnant. I do think people think for some reason, society feels it can offer more advice to pregnant women or go around and touch their bellies or whatever, and to when they enter the workforce than any other situation. I mean, I find it quite astounding. Yeah.

[00:39:10] **Rachel:** And I wanted, certainly in the writing that I've done about it, Susan, to say there is no right way in this. It is only about you finding your way because medical professionals, health professionals, other parents, anyone will have their view and they will be very, very, very free to offer it.



And that is an overwhelming amount of information that comes to people and The messages in the book are written to say, okay, so let's shut out all of that noise. Let's connect you to your sense of self, and then you will find your right way. So important. And again, I think if we can translate those principles out into other life and work environments, shut the noise, pause the noise, connect a sense of self, and then you will know, and then you set about finding out how you make that happen or how you communicate it.

[00:40:03] **Susan:** And it is simple, isn't it? It's not necessarily easy. But it is quite a simple divining mechanism that's there to tune into. and I think that really comes across powerfully in your book. You keep bringing that message back that it's about your way, you are the one, it's your way and that so resonates as

[00:40:27] **Rachel:** glad you heard that, 'cause that's important. I

[00:40:29] **Susan:** And, and I also think you've written it in such a conversational. I mean, I dunno how you achieved it actually, because it is so nicely articulated. So much of yourself in it, in a way that it's relevant to anyone. Like I've said, it's definitely has to be relevant to parents. I'd say at any stage of, of working as a parent and our mothers in particular.

And I, I won't say you're like a big sister or, someone holding my hand. 'cause it's not, it's not, I, I don't wanna underplay it either. But there's a very wise, thoughtful guide. Perhaps that's what it is. You're very, and that comes across beautifully and I don't think anyone would ever feel they were being lectured to given advice as such. It's like, it's like, okay, so. We're going in this direction. These are the things to consider. How are you now?

[00:41:26] **Rachel:** Yeah. Yeah. And I'm such a huge advocate for all of us being well supported. You know, that scaffolding around a person, that bench of supporters. I talk about it a lot. I talk about it in all different work contexts, including in the book and that sense that actually, Everything is better if we're not doing it alone, And it doesn't mean we're constantly having to be needy for things, but knowing people are there if or as, or when we need some help, seeing something that we can't see ourselves or we need some tips about what another person might have done, or we just need some help finding a word or acknowledging or sitting with that icky feeling and saying, this doesn't feel very nice right now, does it?

And somebody, being with you as that happens, with Pack Animals. Hey. So often it feels like we navigate very difficult situations in isolation, and that piece doesn't make sense to me.

[00:42:19] **Susan:** And that probably comes back to a fear of feeling worthy to involve other people or something as well. So we're back to, we circle around fear. Rachel, I think we could talk all day. I know we could actually.



[00:42:32] **Rachel:** Well, we can do, we can keep this one going, Susan, afterwards.

[00:42:35] **Susan:** Absolutely. But if someone would like to know more to read your book, to work with you, Rachel, what are the ways to connect with

[00:42:44] **Rachel:** So connect with me on LinkedIn. So it's Rachel Morris on LinkedIn is a great way of finding out more about who I am, how I speak about things, the views I have, the work I do. if you check out [www dot motion learning dot. Com](http://www.dotionlearning dot. Com) then you've got all our podcast information of our own.

You've got articles that we've written. You can find out more about the different types of work that we do there. So I would say they are the two starting places. And on everything you will find my telephone number is there and my email is there, and I say to people, I genuinely don't put them there for fun.

It's like, reach out. So I can't say I need to. To work with people who support me if I can't be there for other people as well. So I think it's, yeah, please reach out, ask questions, get involved in the conversation. It's all a dialogue. Yeah.

[00:43:31] **Susan:** And your book widely available.

[00:43:33] **Rachel:** And the book is, yeah, I forget about the book. Don't forget about the book, Rachel, the book.

Thank you. Susan. Working Mother is widely available, so you can get it on Amazon, you can get it in all your well-known bookstores, as well. So Working Mother by Rachel Morris, that's where to get that book.

[00:43:50] **Susan:** Brilliant. Rachel, it's been a pleasure. We went all over the place

[00:43:54] **Rachel:** I loved that. Thank you.

[00:43:56] **Susan:** thank you. And I'm sure we'll do this again sometime.

[00:44:00] **Rachel:** Yeah. Thank you, Susan, for the invite.

