

# Episode #227

## That Conversation Matters with Janine Van Someren

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[00:00:00] **Susan:** Well, today you're in for an absolute treat. Two Irish women. This hardly ever happens on Life Beyond the Numbers. Janine Van Someren, you are so welcome to Life Beyond the Numbers

[00:00:14] **Janine:** Oh, thanks for inviting me, Susan. And, yeah, nice to see an Irish name there in Ni Chriodain. yeah. Dia dhuit and conas atá tú and all of that

[00:00:23] **Susan:** Oh, wow. ni ceart gearran inniu, but I'm glad it's the weekend. I really am. almost the weekend anyway. so Janine, we met through, like a lot of my guests actually, we met through Practical Inspiration Publishing, and your book, The Wellbeing Advantage: Seven Transformative Habits to Thrive in Work and in Life, has just recently come out.

So congratulations

[00:00:52] **Janine:** Yay. so it was launched over Easter. So Easter Monday, was the launch. And yeah, I've been thrilled with the response so far. it's landing well with lots of different people. So it's, as you know, it makes an author smile when it reaches audiences above and beyond expectations

[00:01:08] **Susan:** Doesn't it though? It does. There's something fabulous. in one way you have no control over where it goes or doesn't go, but in another way it's like when you see the fruits of your labor in people reading it and commenting on it, it's just, it's fab, isn't it?

[00:01:24] **Janine:** Yeah, it's been great. It's been great. and opened lots of doors and given me the opportunity to chat to your lovely self. So yeah, not only the book, but the Practical Inspiration community has been phenomenal.



so yeah, you can see how when life opens one door, you're never quite sure what else will open, and this is one example of why saying yes to things and going outside your comfort zone really does bear amazing fruits that you can have no idea what they are

[00:01:50] **Susan:** That's so true, isn't it? isn't it brilliant as well? Because I always think, if we don't know what's around the corner, then we'll go around the corner. But if you knew, you might never go because it might not be what you want or you think you want.

[00:02:03] **Janine:** yeah, stay curious.

[00:02:04] **Susan:** Yeah, stay curious. Exactly. Now, what I love about your book really, is you're taking, I think, f- what I see in it is you're taking what you learned in an incredible life and career, which we'll get into, and added that to science.

And it's not that you didn't have the science already, because I know you did. But then you've turned that knowledge into practical action, which is often the missing piece, I think, when it comes to anything in our lives. We get what we're supposed to do, but we don't always do it. So congratulations on actually making that practical

[00:02:47] **Janine:** Yeah, that, and that was one of my really big, wants for the book. I come from an academic background. I was a lecturer and a researcher for many years, and I feel like the book was written nearly in two drafts. So the first draft was quite academic and research-heavy, a lot of data, and I loved it.

it was great. but realizing that this book isn't necessarily for me in particular, I wanted it to be for anyone who felt like life was getting just a little bit too heavy, and they wanted a companion, a piece of work that they could bring with them that would really help them navigate the day.

So I stripped back the academic-ness, if I can say. Is that even a word? and really leaned into telling the story, so explaining exactly why these various habits matter, and very simply, how you can add them to your life without them being another thing to add to our already threefold days. And with the



added addition of if you by any chance have a wearable, I'll help you track that habit and get some insight from the numbers.

And if wearables aren't for you, there's loads of reflection, and the reflection questions are designed in the same way I use them when I'm working with clients who don't like wearables. It is just really thoughtful questions that you can have as a journaling task at the end of the day or at the end of the week.

Just something you can ponder on when you're gardening, when you're going for a walk with the dog, whatever it might be. I never wanted it to be something heavy, and, "Oh, Jesus." The world has enough wellbeing books, Susan, that, they don't need more information. What they need is, how can I use the information I already have?

people know I need to move more, I need to eat better, I need to sleep a little bit longer maybe or have better quality sleep. We know that, so mine was very much I'm not gonna tell people how to, do what they already know. It was, here's why that's important, and some really easy ideas that I know from my research absolutely will turn the dial and make the difference.

[00:04:59] **Susan:** A- and that's it, isn't it? the seven habits are all things that we're probably aware of, but you've made that more obvious. it's kind of like, ah, yeah.

[00:05:12] **Janine:** And, we'll come to the wearables a bit later, but I'd like to go first 'cause, you've mentioned you had an academic career. So you've spent years, studying what helps people perform at their best.

[00:05:26] **Susan:** And perhaps what readers might find surprising is the line, "No amount of knowledge could protect me from the reality of my own body and mind reaching their limits."

[00:05:43] **Janine:** Yeah. what's been really huge about the process of writing this book, and when I was first approached to write it, it was very much from, s- I'm going to say like an academic point of view or a very, "This is your work, and tell us what are the habits that people can use to prevent burnout, yada, yada, yada."



And then in the process of writing the book and reflecting and going deep, it's that knowledge that, actually my lens on high performance and wellbeing has definitely been altered, in a good way, Susan, by my own really massive challenges with my own mental health and wellbeing. So probably about seven years ago, eight years ago, I experienced a period of maybe two years of clinical depression, which you know, I talk about how the, the body whispers before it shouts.

There was probably a cloud looming for quite a long time before it really landed on my head. and a series of quite debilitating panic attacks led for me to really take that pause and go, yeah, no amount of knowledge, no amount of knowledge can stop if their mental health crisis is going to happen.

But by pausing, by getting professional help, and subsequently using this new lens and the insights that I have from high-performance sport and research in health and wellbeing meant that I have this greater empathy and compassion for the person who says, "Do you know what, Janine? I have been doing everything right. I eat well, I sleep well, I exercise loads, but I just feel absolutely shattered, overwhelmed, exhausted. What am I doing wrong?" And that's where my experience is, listen, I've been there, I know

[00:07:46] **Susan:** And that really does come across in your book. So when you say there's lots of wellbeing books out there ... Of course there are. But the ones that are personally motivated and driven beyond it being a business book, but actually I can help because I've been where you're standing now, or where you're headed if you're not paying attention to you.

And I think that comes across as well. You're not trying to ... Like you said, you're not telling people how to live or what to do. It's like this can happen to anyone. And I suppose, Janine, you've had an incredible, professional tennis playing when you were a kid and all of that, and I'd love to hear a bit about that as well, but you didn't see that coming.

Would you even have thought perhaps that you were immune to anything like that happening given the way your life had been?

[00:08:45] **Janine:** Yeah, I would say definitely there is that idea of, mental health or mental illness or poor mental health, I should say, that's for other



people. That's for people who, live under difficult circumstances. Their environment is different to mine.

I, I was living, a very comfortable life with, healthy, happy children, a supportive husband, a really lovely career that I absolutely loved. And my biggest learning for that, that I would say to people is just because you're passionate about your work or, you love your job and you love your life doesn't mean that you're immune to illness or burnout.

and particularly burnout, I guess, would be the flag there 'cause people think, "I love my work. I, I absolutely have an amazing career, and it's purposeful with meanings, and it, it's aligned with my values." That absolutely doesn't mean you're not at risk of burnout. In fact, I would say, if you love it so much and are giving too much, you're possibly more at risk of burnout.

so yeah, I definitely didn't see it coming. but my self-awareness of what my normal, baseline levels of happiness or energy or capacity, I would've been fairly tuned into that and would've known this isn't normal. and again, like I say, I was definitely triggered by, literally by those actual panic attacks to, okay, now this is excessive.

This is beyond the norm, even in the sense of I haven't been feeling well for a while. This is my body really. it was shouting at me.

[00:10:22] **Susan:** And it's something that I've learnt as well, is that we tend to normalize how we are. And when things ... Like you say, you love your job, so you work an extra 10 minutes a day, which becomes a half an hour, which becomes an hour, and suddenly there's no time for you. and we all need to recharge.

And back to the life of a professional athlete, because no one would ask them to keep playing without a break

[00:10:51] **Janine:** Yeah, absolutely. there's a halftime in a football game for a reason. There's a chai- a sit-down in Wimbledon at the end of every couple of games for a reason. It's not just for advertising. the structures of sport were designed before people thought, "Oh, actually, that 15 minutes would be very commercially viable for our company."



It was like, no, it's absolutely needed. and that's just one of the ways in which, high-performance sports is brilliant. it prioritizes recovery

[00:11:17] **Susan:** Yeah. Or seasons even.

[00:11:20] **Janine:** Yeah,

[00:11:20] **Susan:** things are seasonal, like the football takes a break throughout the summer. the track and field picks up then. There are things that don't happen all year round when it comes to professional activity like that

[00:11:33] **Janine:** Yeah. and high-performance sport really leans into that. you have training programs. every year the, the British Olympic Association, the English Institute of Sport will readdress what's our four-year plan for the Olympic cycle, and every athlete within that cycle readjusts their plan for that four-year peak for the next Olympics.

that is absolutely necessary, and it's something that does, it does get forgotten in normal life. I think athletes know it works because they are, they're physiologically tested. There's psychology. There's a huge amount of science involved in understanding each individual athlete, so they have a really good understanding of, when you're essentially going to reach your peak.

And unfortunately, in today's crazy corporate world, the corporate athlete is expected to be at their peak every day. it's just, not only ridiculous from a scientific point of view, from a physiological, psychological point of view. we know that the repercussions of that are a broken system. It just doesn't work

[00:12:42] **Susan:** it's so true, isn't it? It's it's the, it's a natural human response to a system that is out of whack. It is not people that are broken, it is the system that is broken, and we're doing our best to keep up with it because we can't see another way. And it's really interesting what you're saying about the cycle, of the four-year cycle, and I guess data, right?

So you're tracking data of athletes, and wearables, you mentioned earlier on. Wearables are fairly ... I think the first time I started counting my steps was



probably about, I know it was about 2013, 2014, 'cause it was when I turned 40, so that's in my head. it's not something I hang everything on or anything like that.

But ... And that was a little step counter. it wasn't even on the phone. So wearables and that data is relatively new, and people love data. look at the world. We love data. But it's what we do with it that counts. So- Are people using their wearables how they could, or are we just obsessed with data?

[00:13:58] **Janine:** so a quick answer would be no, they're not using them how they should. the potential and the use that these wearables have are amazing. Unfortunately, people use the data as a score for their day and begin to think "Today, I've had a good day," or, "Today, I've had a bad day." So they use the data as a score.

The data is absolutely not a score. the data is simply providing information that allows us to make better decisions, and it is the decisions that we make as a result of that data that's important, far more than what the number actually means. And when I work with clients, I work really hard on removing the numbers from the conversation, because the numbers matter less than the conversation they create.

[00:14:55] **Susan:** And as this line that somebody gave me on the podcast years ago that I just love is, "Numbers don't make decisions, people do." But we often look at the numbers as if the decision has been made by the number, and that's just a perfect illustration of it there. So how do people respond to this, Janine, when they this insight?

[00:15:20] **Janine:** the first thing I would always say to people is forget about the numbers. So when I'm working particularly with clients, I take over the managing of the numbers so they don't have to. So we- what we don't want is data overload, people who are, like, the worried well, health anxiety.

all of those issues of the worried well or the health anxiety, you literally feed that worry with data, because you have more information to worry about and overthink about. So one thing I would say is try and remove the numbers and the scoring, and try to think about it as these insights are literally a reflection, are telling me about how my body is coping with that particular day.



But what you really need to ask yourself is, "What are the habits or what are the things that have gone on that day that have led to my body responding in this particular way?" And really understanding that the numbers that you might get from today, so your s- sleep score maybe from last night, Susan, might be a poor sleep score.

that score is a reflection of not only what's gone on the night before you went to go to bed, but probably a week of experience, and environment, and workload, and hassle, and essentially nervous system dysregulation in a bad sleep score, that no amount of numbers can really understand your own personal experience.

So the data really is about giving you an insight that allows a conversation to take place. That conversation can be with yourself. You can journal and you can reflect. You can have a really good chat with your mate who's keen on the data as well. But I would definitely encourage, it's the conversation that matters about your habits, your environment, your lifestyle.

That conversation matters much more than any number can tell you

[00:17:26] **Susan:** Oh, that's probably the best line of Life Beyond The Numbers ever, Janine. So yay. Not that it's a competition or anything. But we've said like most people know what they should be doing, but they're not.

[00:17:43] **Janine:** Yeah.

[00:17:44] **Susan:** and it's an age-old, it's everywhere. We see it in everything we do. It's "Oh, I should clean the kitchen, but I don't," or whatever.

[00:17:51] **Janine:** Yeah

[00:17:54] **Susan:** But health and wellbeing really is everything. there is something about that's the foundations, and you'd even go further I think and say sleep is the foundation of all of it

[00:18:07] **Janine:** Yes, sleep would be the foundation, bedrock of habits. we know it's used as a torture mechanism for a reason. it, it shuts down every



aspect of our body's systems. But what I would say for the person, who has, I know what I should do, but I'm not doing it, the good thing is about whether or not you're journaling about how am I feeling, what's my capacity at the moment, how did I wake up feeling tired, did I wake up feeling refreshed, the numbers will give you an idea of what that is.

But the numbers matter because they allow the conversation to happen. for me- I have people coming to me really when they've gone beyond the point at which their capacity is, has been reached. So unfortunately, the majority of my clients I'm meeting when they have been working in a state of high-functioning burnout for a significant amount of time.

And they know that, and they've reached perhaps the point where they've been on yet another holiday where they've been ill, or they've had yet another occasion where they literally just weren't feeling great, and they know that their inner spark is gone. And somebody usually says to them, all my clients at the moment are personal recommendations.

They go, "You should talk to Janine. There's something going on there." And in order for us to start working together, if people are up for it, I'll say to them, "Are you interested in seeing what your body is dealing with at the moment?" And that's very much where the data can essentially, Susan, cuts the chase much quicker.

'Cause I could be chatting to them for a month before I realize what their lifestyle is but if I have them using the wearable, I just need three days. That's all I need. And if I get that three days of data, Janie Mac, it is like a bolt of lightning to the conversation because you can't unsee the data.

So I, I have clients, like Beth would be a recent client of mine. Not her real name, obviously. but say for example, Beth, someone who is working really hard, who works in pharma, has a couple of kids, parents live close by, and has been working, long hours for quite a while. She's in her early 40s.

She's been promoted. So she's been giving more than she needs. She was reaching the point where every time she went on holiday, she was ill. Now, it might have been, like, a pretty innocuous cold. I'm not talking about someone being, extremely ill. But y- when your body has the opportunity to pause, if you



have been in that high-functioning burnout state, that pause causes a collapse of a lot of your systems.

So you'll have mates who you arrange for Christmas drinks, and you'll think, "Geez, they never come for Christmas drinks. They are always ill." That, they always have a cold at Christmas. and that's a real sign that they literally have been going since their summer holiday no break until Christmas. They stop at Christmas, and then they crash.

and the same thing happened for Beth. So she was in this cycle of being on all the time, and then she ha- would have a break, and that break would cause a collapse. and seen in different ways, and hers was a unique experience, but it led to her going to the GP, and the GP saying, "You are showing all the symptoms of burnout, and I would recommend you take a couple of weeks off work and really-" Focus in on your recovery.

she had a really great GP. I, I don't know if but burnout wasn't spoken about really by GPs. the World Health Organization didn't classify it until 2019. Like seven years ago, the world's decided that it was a thing. so she was really lucky she had a great GP, and she was also really lucky that she had a really good friend who said, "Have a word with Janine."

And when I saw her, she was able to tell the story of, "This is how I'm feeling." And I introduced the idea of, is it worth us having a look, getting in under the shell and seeing what's going on in your system, with three days of data. Which is basically I'm looking after that, not her.

But she gets from the information like an X-ray of her day. And one of the most startling findings for her was that although she was sleeping at night, so she fell asleep really quickly, Susan. She was like 10 o'clock in bed, gone, She was waking up the next morning and feeling tired and not knowing why.

And when we looked at the data, she was getting 45 minutes of recovery at night. 45 minutes. So the message here is just because you're asleep does not mean you're actually getting recovery. If your system is on all the time, if your nervous system has been working at capacity and beyond for an extended period, it literally doesn't shut down at night.



It remains in that wired state. So your body will shut down. You will collapse and sleep soundly for seven hours, and in that time, your system is still in a low level of activation. And when your nervous system doesn't shut down, we can quantify that. Like I could literally tell her how many minutes of recovery she was getting.

And she couldn't deny the importance of change. And it goes back to your thing of people know what they should do, so how do you get them to make that change? So for me, the starting point is awareness. So you can tell me all day and all night how tired you are, but until we really figure out what does that actually mean for you and how does it show up, you can dismiss it by, isn't everyone tired, life is hard, and I've got young kids.

actually, the numbers bring a spotlight on that awareness. And yeah, like I said, you can't unsee those numbers, and it is the massive trigger for change.

[00:24:14] **Susan:** It's like the bank balance being depleted, isn't it? It's "Oh no, I need to do something about it." the black and white is, is hard to argue with. And I suppose something I've always thought about, Janine, because, what you're talking about there, it, I, I- so much of it is familiar to me from years ago.

And the one thing I learned when I would go on holidays and collapse, and then come back and feel not relaxed or rejuvenated or anything, is that holidays are never meant for recovery. Holidays are meant for enjoyment. And I think so many of us go through life using our holidays to recover from work, and you miss out on so much

[00:24:57] **Janine:** Yeah. So holidays, weekends, bank holidays, they're full of the craic season. We're out, we're having a laugh, we're having a couple of drinks, we're meeting up with friends, we're going to a barbecue, we're going to a kids' soccer game. We're then gonna drive and see the grandparents. And oh, there's a festival on, and oh, I must pop into that.

we fill our weekends as much as we fill our holidays, and we combine that with great food, and a lot of it, a couple of drinks, and maybe a couple more. And we're getting up in the morning, and we're making sure that we get to see the most of that day, and we're worse when the weather is good.



in good weather I always think it drives people bananas. we're delighted with life, but also we're trying so desperately to make use. I need to value this good day, so I'm gonna get 45 washes on, and the laundry will be out in the garden. And then I need to mow the lawn, and then geez, the beach is only, what?

it's only 40 minutes away, and then every Tom, Dick, and Harry from London is on the road to the beach. And all of a sudden, all of a sudden, what a really beautiful day. And yes, you've accomplished a huge amount, but your body is absolutely knackered, and by the end of the day, you lie on the sofa and you say, "God, I'll have a couple glasses of wine now, and I'll sleep well, and it'll be lovely."

And yeah, you've had a lovely day, but if you've been doing that after a week, a month, a year of really hard work, then, make that choice, but just be aware your body is going to need significant time to pause. So again, what I work with clients is don't wait until the weekend. have an amazing weekend, and have a super holiday.

I'm all for it. And we can do that if we build recovery into our every day, 'cause actually, the data shows really strongly that we get our worst recovery at the weekend. Saturday is the worst day. In the hundreds of thousands of data sets from the technology that I use, the data shows that Saturday is the worst day.

So I think, we control the controllables, and the controllables are really pretty much h- how I live on a day-to-day normal basis. And so we just try and think of, what are the habits that I can do on a daily basis and still have that awesome weekend and a great holiday, and I can do that if on a normal, every day I just make tiny, small adjustments that allow those, ah, those beautiful moments of recovery that happen with, cheers, a nice cup of coffee At 10 in the morning, give you a little bounce, get you up to lunchtime.

Enjoy it, but enjoy it in the garden for five minutes. Step away from the desk. Enjoy it with a mate at the canteen without your mobile, and have a good old gossip. Your body will love it

[00:28:06] **Susan:** And I think like common sense, which of course I have a friend who says common sense is knowledge and experience. But there's something about common sense that all of this, like it's back to the we know



what to do. And- If we give ourselves that moment, I think that's the thing, Janine, perhaps. Once you allow yourself, give yourself the permission that you don't actually need, but you give yourself that cup of coffee outside for five minutes, you actually start to crave it before long as well.

It becomes the habit easily, because ... And what you said about the nervous system, that rest and digest piece is so important, isn't it? And that peppered through your day makes a huge difference

[00:28:56] **Janine:** Yeah. and I should also say there as well that, someone who's using a Garmin or a Fitbit or a Whoop or an Oura Ring or blah, blah, blah, whatever you wanna use, you will realize that your body battery will go up and down during the day. And I would say rest and quality recovery isn't necessarily from sitting and doing nothing, and you don't have to be a Buddhist monk and be meditating in the garden.

the scores and the information that I get from my client's X-ray of the day, it's a visual of what your day looks like. I have beautiful data looking at someone at work, at the desk, writing reports, and the quality recovery they're getting there, and I'm not joking, is equivalent to sleep. So they might be sitting writing a report for 45 minutes, and I can see from their heart rate variability score, exactly how that is comparable to a 20-minute nap or the start of a sleep cycle.

So finding rest isn't about stopping life. We can find moments of really high rest and recovery within the structure of the workday. So it's, for me, I will talk to clients about how do you find flow at work? What does your flow state look and feel like? And because the, the average Joe Blog in the office is working from the shoulders up, everything is in their head, and they forget to think, "Oh, how do I actually feel from the neck down when I'm doing this work?"

And, for any- anyone, I would say today, when you're in work, literally just have a think, "What stuff, what thing was I doing at work today that allowed me to completely lose track of time?" And that's your benchmark. If you're doing work that you suddenly think, "Janey Mac, that, how did that 45 minutes go, or that hour ago? Wow, I've just, I've done great work. I've really enjoyed that," that's flow. our challenge is because of distractions, notifications, dare I say colleagues, stuff interrupting us, that will disrupt the flow state. And it takes about 11 minutes to get back into a flow state if you have been



distracted. So for clients or for any- anybody at all today, if you're looking to find flow state, I would say just literally turn off your phone or put it in a drawer and get out your work and block out time and say, for the next 90 minutes, I'm gonna write this report," or whatever it might be, and I guarantee you, you m- be surprised- At how quickly that time goes.

And I can guarantee you, because I've seen the scores, that you are finding flow. That equates to recovery. That equates to increasing your capacity, and therefore, your work and your day is significantly more sustainable than it was before

[00:32:11] **Susan:** That is amazing, isn't it? It really is. And we talk about engagement in the workplace, and that's the other thing, isn't it? As a manager of people or as a leader of people, if you have that knowledge, then you're also ... You can create the circumstances and the conditions and the environment to enable others to have that space.

And I know when I facilitate groups and they're all like, "Oh," like I'm ... That often what they want is space. people ... I think it's back to we know what we need, but we still don't do it, and it's that ... And, like for me, I, like I can't even have chat on in a Zoom call when there's more than two people because

And when there's only two people, we don't need chat on a Zoom call. You know what I mean? Because I can't handle those type of distractions. And I think when you know what works for you, that's what's important as well, isn't it? So it's a balancing act. There's we're all individual. We're all unique in the way we understand what space means to us or what flow means to us.

But once you know how to get there, then let people get there

[00:33:26] **Janine:** Yeah. it's something that we work with companies and we talk about in terms of resilience architecture. So a company can look at their processes, their structure, and really think, do they have things in place that re-allow their employees to be resilient? And by resilient, I mean are they able to recover and work well at a capacity that, that suits them?

And it can be things like time blocking meetings, making sure that when emails are sent out, they might all be blocked and go out at a certain amount of time,



so an employee isn't afraid that they're gonna miss something. 'Cause quite often, especially with younger employees, they, they keep checking their emails just for fear they would miss out on something.

So really, there's ways that companies can do that allow blocks of time for their employees to really do that deep work that's needed. And then there's time for, constructive idleness, like that beautiful sense of, "I'm just gonna shoot the breeze here. I'm gonna go for a coffee with a colleague.

I'm gonna chat through things." creativity and, build- building connection will occur in those spaces, but there needs to be a balance of space for working at capacity and space for recovery. Without that recovery piece, you are creating an unsustainable workforce. They will not be able to keep up with their capacity, and what you'll end up with is a workforce who are present but absent, so that sort of idea of a presenteeism.

Yeah, they're there, but they're not doing a whole lot because they're far too worried about missing things, checking on their notifications. And that type of activation of the nervous system is, oh my God, like it, it is so detrimental at every single level of creativity, decision-making, focus, attention, ability to work to time, all the criteria that makes someone a great member of staff

[00:35:28] **Susan:** we really have gotten it so wrong. And I studied commerce in university, and I blame everything on this one course, which was industrial engineering or something we, we studied, and it was all about right first time. And, and that's fine if it's an assembly line, but people are not an assembly line and are not designed to work like that.

And which brings me to design, Janine, because I think that's what you get at as well, is that we need to design our wellbeing habits. They don't just ... Willpower won't get us there or discipline

[00:36:05] **Janine:** Yeah, absolutely. the world is busy enough. If you're just waiting for wellbeing to happen to you somehow, then it's not gonna happen. And also, if at the moment the majority of people are designing wellbeing and what they perceive as wellbeing, quite rightly, but they design it into the start and end of their day.



they'll do something good maybe in the morning, and then later that night they might go to a fitness class, or they might... Yeah, whatever it is they're doing. So people are bookending wellbeing to the start and end of their day, and that's best case scenario. I'm not saying that's bad.

That's, best case scenario. But what you have then there is someone who has spent maybe nine hours sat at the desk. Okay, they leave work and go to an exercise class, but they've spent maybe seven, eight, nine hours sat at the desk, and all of that sitting is, sitting is the new smoking.

they might have well have just s- sat in the, staff room smoking for the day for the damage that it's doing to their health for sitting consistently. So the idea is that you build wellbeing into your day. So these are, like, tiny little habits that you do within the day, like taking regular breaks, making sure that at lunchtime you're eating food that doesn't cause, this sort of crazy energy rollercoaster later in the day, taking movement snacks throughout the day, every 90 minutes.

You don't have to go and walk five miles and do a park run. It could be as simple as just stretching at your desk, like doing a yoga move, fidgeting at the desk. a, be a fidgeter. Move around. Allow your spine to work. but habits. They're habits, and they should become very much just part of your every day.

just tiny little things. the best tip that I would say to someone who sleeps badly would be, stopping your caffeine at 3:00. really avoid that sort of late afternoon coffee that you think will just push you towards the 6, 7:00.

I would say, actually, you'd be much better off opening the window and getting a blast of cold air than having a coffee at 3:00. You'd be much better putting on some awesome music and just getting your adrenaline going, or ring a funny friend and have a chat. but if you're managing your nervous system, if you're thinking, "Gosh, I'm not a great sleeper and I'm waking up tired," that 3:00 coffee is, it is an alarm bell for me when clients are drinking coffee late on.

So that would be one of my sort of top tips in terms of managing your nervous system. Don't poison it.



[00:38:45] **Susan:** Don't poison it. And I often think just run up and down the stairs. It's like it's so simple, but everything is moving with that. And you have to pay attention as well, so it's yeah. and there was something you said, I, and it's just, it's floated by Janine, but, if, we've covered a lot of different things here, and actually, what I wanted to ask you, out of the seven habits that you have in your book, which one perhaps challenged you the most, and which one was just like, "Yes, okay, now I've..."

That's the one"?

[00:39:19] **Janine:** I'd say the one that challenged me the most was morning routine. I say that as a mother of teenagers. And someone who's busy beyond work. So life is busy. But definitely it was the most challenging, but also the most rewarding. I would have usually, up until maybe five years ago, got up when the boys need to get up, and I would get up with them, and the ball would start rolling, and we would be gone, And that comes with its own challenges. Like it works, but it's quite challenging because literally you're waking up and your nervous system is, "Okay, let's go. We're on." So my research, and like I said, I was h- going through my own challenges, it was that idea of I need to really manage my nervous system now.

I need to really look at starting the day in, from a place of balance. So now my favorite habit of the day is get- is getting up half an hour early. And the habit starts with just setting the alarm for half an hour earlier. I don't overthink what I would do in that time, so I'm not then going, I'm going to do 10 minutes of meditation and 10 minutes of yoga and 10 minutes of journaling."

The trick with a habit is break it into its most fundamental part. Like what part of that habit really needs to happen that allows a knock-on lovely ripple effect of potential. And by setting the alarm half an hour earlier, it knocks on that potential of, gosh, what could I do in this half an hour? I guess my non-negotiable is I'm not doing anything for anybody else.

I don't do the dishwasher. I don't make lunches. I don't do laundry. It is just my half an hour. And usually it involves yoga, so I put a YouTube video on and do yoga. But quite often it is just sitting on the sofa with the cat. Quite often it's reading. But crucially, it is completely relaxing and completely selfishly all mine



[00:41:23] **Susan:** Oh, that's lovely. And, I bet you there... Oh, and the other one, the one that you found the easiest maybe before we

[00:41:31] **Janine:** Yeah, probably the easiest and it probably reflects my circumstances with regards to I, I have my own business, it would be the balance, finding balance to my day. So I have more control and I'm sensitive to that when I'm working with clients. I have more control over my day and therefore I can find that work-life, work-life fit.

it fits well together. I'm really flexible and that would be, like, the key thing there for anyone who's looking at trying to structure or manage things that are controllable and maybe uncontrollable in life, in their work life. It is being flexible with yourself, so not being too rigid "Oh, I have to go to this class," or, I have to do this thing at this time."

I would say allowing flexibility and, yeah, for me, that's pretty easy because I manage my own diary. So yeah, it's, that's my easy one. It's an easy win for me.

[00:42:24] **Susan:** And, there might be people listening who are, like, feel like falling apart now. The thought of, taking a half an hour in the morning to myself, or balancing my day, or whatever it is, and because what we've talked about has resonated. So if there is someone listening, Janine, who, who recognizes themselves in this conversation and knows what they should do, but doesn't know where to start,

What can they do? What's the first simplest step for someone to take?

[00:42:58] **Janine:** The first step I would take is look at your evening, and I say the evening because it tends to be the time when you have most control over what you can and would like to do, or would like to change. So I would say the hour before bed, I would ring-fence that as a non-negotiable time that you control, and you decide what you would like to do.

A very obvious one that people will be aware of is not to be on their, digital devices. So a digital detox or a digital sunset, some people say. But I would say just put away your phone, maybe even give it to somebody else. So to, people leave it in the kitchen then go make a cup of tea, and look at it.



So I would say that evening, that one hour, really focus on managing where your heart rate is at, making sure that you're completely relaxed before you go to bed. So don't wait until your bedtime to be relaxed and ready for bed. Give yourself an hour before bed, and very consciously, maybe at 9:00, say, my phone is going away."

Still watch TV, and again, my advice there would be, watch absolute bubblegum TV, something really easy, absolute nonsense that you can lose yourself in. But really begin to focus on, this is my downtime, turning down the lights, watching that bubblegum TV. And for some people it might be having a warm cup of cocoa.

But I would say, as much as possible, create a space in which your body is turning down, so you're leaning into that rest and digest, that sort of de-stress state. That is crucial to allow your nervous system to switch off, to really tune down when you go to sleep, so that you're not like Beth, where, yes, she's asleep, but still on.

For me, the very first thing I did with Beth was look at that one hour before she went to bed, and really focus on giving her body very clear signals that I am safe, I am well, I am loved, and I am ready to slow down and go to bed. And the psychology behind that, and again, it's the conversation that comes from, that, that sort of coaching chat, is really important in managing that regulation of your nervous system.

So yeah, that one hour. If you're gonna do anything, the one hour before bed will have the most significant immediate impact on your overall wellbeing.

[00:45:37] **Susan:** it's so funny that you say that because I'm ... It's not that it's funny, it's it ... For me, sleep is everything. it really is. it's so prioritized. And this week, I, and I hardly ever do anything in the evenings work-wise, but this week I ended up doing something quite late at night, for me, and trying to get to sleep then was just, the whole thing just went out the window, just like that.

And I always find that fascinating as well, is no matter how well we've slept for a few days, the night you don't have a good sleep, you still feel terrible the next day. that one thing will throw so much out the window. So you can't save up sleep. It doesn't work like that. it's a daily thing.



it isn't like sleep really well for a week and then take a night off from sleeping. No.

[00:46:28] **Janine:** Yeah. If you imagine it like you've just gone on a long-haul flight that day, you've literally just put your circadian rhythm completely off balance. So there's no amount of "Oh, I had a great month. I've had a wonderful month." But yeah, if you've then flown from London Heathrow to New York, you're then gonna absolutely feel it, and no amount of recovery before that is gonna help you.

So yeah, the circadian rhythm, which, is the backbone of our body systems, is really sensitive, and it wants us to work in rhythm with daylight which is coming through as two of us are chatting here. But from you working late, your circadian rhythm has been completely thrown in a daze.

It's like previously it was managed by a beautiful orchestra of Mozart music, and calm and relaxed, and then you had some crazy rapper or Eminem take over and conducting the whole body system going, "Yeah, work now. Let's go." And your body hates that. Like it really hates it. So yeah, people are gonna work late and, things come up, and you have a good night out, or you're working or whatever it might be.

It's just being conscious the next day. So still get up at the same time. So if I'd been chatting to you beforehand, I'd have said, "Still get up at the same time the next morning, get back into your normal rhythm." But within the next day, maybe have a lunchtime nap, maybe really lean into herbal teas as opposed to any caffeine that day.

the temptation is, "I need coffee because of last night." I would say override that temptation because your system is still wired, and you just want to calm down that system so you don't... I've used the word poison, but yeah, you don't want to put something into it that it's gonna struggle to digest.

You want to just be thinking, "I'm gonna eat warm and comforting food. I'm gonna have a nap. I'm gonna read a nice book. And tomorrow night, maybe instead of an hour before bed, maybe two or three hours before bed, I'll start winding down. I might even go to bed a little bit earlier 'cause I know, you're gonna fall asleep earlier."



but yeah, we often have those nights and again, that's just life, isn't it? They happen. No worries. It's just what do we do when they happen. How can we recover afterwards?

[00:48:43] **Susan:** And when they flip the other way, when they are more common than they aren't, and I think that's what we have to look out for so that we live our best lives

[00:48:53] **Janine:** Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. our wellbeing will be sustained, our performance will be sustained by managing exactly what normal everyday busyness is through incorporating really lovely recovery moments during the day. And like I said before, that's not necessarily becoming a Buddhist monk, but absolutely in the normal run of life, if you can find time to discover what work gives you flow, and discover what rest activities really supercharge your battery, then you've got that beautiful balance of energy and capacity maintained, and recovery being exactly tailored and personalized to your own life circumstances, and that's the ideal

[00:49:42] **Susan:** it's that kind of saying, isn't it? If you love what you do, you'll never work a day in your life. And it's not about just loving what you do, it's that love while you're doing it, that, that flow state, yeah. Janine, we've definitely run out of time. If people would like to know more about you, where to get your book, what's the best, the way to, to find that out?

[00:50:05] **Janine:** Yes, they can I- look at my website, [thewellbeingadvantage.com](http://thewellbeingadvantage.com). They can definitely, follow me on LinkedIn, @janinevansomeren. DM me, ask questions, be curious. You can tell, love a chat, so get in touch. And yeah, I'd be really open for, any potential, collaboration, connection.

like yourself, Susan, I'm all about community, any way I can help, yeah, you'll find me through The Wellbeing Advantage

[00:50:35] **Susan:** And I'm sorry because we didn't cover half the things I think that we were going to do. And because I really did wanna hear about your life in tennis and everything 'cause it's fascinating. But I'm sure that LinkedIn Live interview still exists with your... Yeah, so maybe what I'll do is I'll put a link to that in the show notes as well, so if anyone is interested they could go back.



And this was a conversation that Janine had around the book launch. And you've had such an interesting career, your PhD, everything. It's so worth knowing more about, and maybe I'll just have you back for another conversation sometime

[00:51:08] **Janine:** Yeah. I'm always here for the chats, Susan, so you know how to find me

[00:51:13] **Susan:** Brilliant. Thank you so much, Janine, for that.

