



Episode 47 – Emotion at Work in Shame in the Workplace Chatting with Francesca Cardona

Phil: Hello and welcome to the Emotion at Work podcast, where we take a deep dive into the human condition. Now as the regular listener will know I am exceptionally interested in the interplay between identity, which includes both how we see ourselves and how other people see us. I'm interested in the negotiations that take place and all of the emotions that come with them. Identity emotion we've featured on the podcast before with Professor Dawn Archer in episode 12, Jessica Roberts in Episode 10, Georgie Nightingall in Episode 5 and SJ Lennie in Episode 2. Oh, yes, with me in Episode 24. And today we're going to look more specifically into the emotion of shame. So I don't think we've ever really taken a deep dive into a particular emotion so far, so we're going to go into shame in the podcast today. That's going to link to some other episodes that we've got coming up, so we've got another guest in the pipeline, where we're going to talk a bit more about shame as well. So enough from me, let's get our guest on the air. So I'd like to welcome to the podcast Francesca Cardona. Hi Francesca, how are you?

Francesca: I'm very well thank you, Phil, hi.

Phil: Thank you so much for joining me on the podcast today, I'm really, really excited to have you on as a guest.

Francesca: Thank you.

Phil: And as per usually for this podcast again as a regular listener will know, we always open with an unexpected yet innocuous question. So my question for you, Francesca, inspired by what's happening outside me over the last few days is, what does winter mean for you?

Francesca: As you say it's a very special winter and it means waiting to be honest, waiting for the summer, waiting for this pandemic to be less bad on all of us, waiting for a vaccine, waiting for warm weather where I can use my garden and waiting to go to Italy. I hope to go in the spring when I will be vaccinated.

Phil: Okay, wonderful. I'm really fascinated by that idea of waiting. I've never thought about winter and waiting before, waiting for the spring or waiting for things to come back together. Because winter for me I associate with things being stationary or maybe in stasis, it's like it's a moment for pause and where things maybe slow down a little. I suppose that goes against what I've said off air when we said hello each other, because I've had a manic morning before getting together to record the podcast today. I suppose when I look out at my garden I see things almost in stasis, like they don't really move, they don't grow. Once the leaves fall off the trees it just stays stationary. But maybe that's because they're waiting for the spring as well maybe.

Francesca: Yes, I think my bulbs that I put in a big pot the other day I also wait for a bit of warm weather as well.

Phil: If I take that theme of waiting then, if that's all right, so one of the things that we talked about before, as regular listeners will know, before I record the podcast I always have a call and a chat with the guests before they get online. One of the things that you mentioned was about using emotions as evidence and because it's me and I'm fascinated by emotion and my business and podcast is all about it, I really loved that idea. I'm linking that with waiting because sometimes I think it can be easy to take things at face value without necessarily looking at what's going on at a deeper level, and that's where the emotion aspect could come in. So when you mentioned about using emotions as evidence, can you tell me a bit more about that, Francesca, because I really love that turn of phrase?

Francesca: Sure, I think it's one I would say of the key tools in my trade which is about being in touch with emotion in my work with an organisation, with individuals. And the way I use the terms is connected to the idea of emotion, not just in terms of emotional intelligence, the knowledge of our emotions in an organisation. We experience strong and difficult emotions, but it's the sense that emotion can offer you some intelligence about a situation and challenge, in a sort of detective sense. I think if I'm correct, detectives have what they call the golden hour, when they go to a crime scene and they look at it and they try to sort of in a way engage the feeling that is there. Try to see what should be there, what is not there and that's how they start their investigation. I always feel in my work that beginnings are really important and really significant. So we often say with my colleagues everything is there at the beginning if we're able to see it. And beginnings start with all the initial emotion we experience in a situation and we should wonder why we feel encountering a group or someone feeling lethargic or feeling anxious or feeling impatient, this is a sign of a dynamic that is going on under the surface.

Phil: Well there are some wonderful, I must compliment you on your ability to turn a phrase, there was some lovely phrases in there, and one I would like to go back to if that's okay is you said in the beginning everything is there. So in the work that you do then, where is the beginning often or where does the beginning happen? In my head I'm thinking is it you have a first meeting with a client or a first meeting with a team within a client organisation? What would be the beginning for you in the work that you do?

Francesca: Literally the beginning is the first contact, could be by email, could be a telephone call and they already give you some clues about how the person or the team or the leader engage with you. And then of course when you go into a building, to meet people, also the building in a way speaks and the way a room is arranged and where people work or don't work. You feel maybe ignored, you arrive and nobody knows that you're expected or there is a very warm welcome. So all of that and of course it's not just observing what's happening there, but also what is your reaction to the individual, to the environment, the situation. Do you feel intimidated? Do you feel too close to the person? Do you feel curious? Do you feel oh gosh this is quite boring I'm not sure if I want to do this? So all of that. I think we were talking about expression, is a mentor of mine who's a lovely man called Harold Bridger and he was an organisational consultant and psychoanalyst. And he always talked about listening to the music behind the words. So something like when you listen to song or an opera, might be a language you don't know, but if let's say the music is good, you can tune into the main message that the music and whoever has composed it wants to convey to you. So you don't have to understand all the words. I think I try, not always successfully of course, but I try to engage with the music and the noises of organisations. And you can link this idea with the concept that is using psychoanalysis which

is the counter, which is when you as a therapist in a way help experience some emotions that come from the client or from the patient in this case, to connect that idea.

Phil: So if it's okay I'd like to stick with that idea for a moment and listening to the music behind the words, and in a way I'd like to try and get a bit practical with it, if that's okay. Because I think it might be interesting to hear how you do that. Because I say that because there's a lot of things that I know I do and in the past have done, that have been quite intuitive and when I've then reflected on or thought about well what is that I'm actually doing? What is it that I'm noticing? What is it that I'm picking up on? What am I doing that's allowing me to be that detective or to hear the music behind the words? I guess I'm curious about that a little bit more if I can. What strategies do you use to help you listen to the music behind the words?

Francesca: Yes, I think obviously there isn't a recipe, it's a question I think or a state of mind and I think one thing that I've really tried to apply is not to look for solution and in a way accepting that I don't know. Accepting that I am quite ignorant of a situation and trying not to give immediate answer, even if the team or the client, they're quite eager to take you in that direction, to ask for advice, and also you should give advice at some point. But I think to immerse yourself, like anthropologists do, immerse yourself in a situation and understand it. Of course try to avoid prejudice, so that's why it's important in a way that you know enough of the organisation to have some basic understanding. But I think sometimes you know too much, you already come inevitably with prejudice. To be quite fresh and try to not immediately come to conclusion or think oh they should do this, they should do the other, but really keeping an open mind. And that requires a lot of discipline and also try not to sanitise some of the emotions that you might experience, because you might want to say oh just forget what I'm feeling at the moment. But that can be an indication of something that is going on in that particular situation and that particular team. And then using it to try to understand what is going on. Eventually what the client needs and what might help him or them to feel better about the situation, find some kind of step forward towards some changes, address maybe some traumatic event that they have had to face and so on. A lot of the organisations I work with, not all, but are in the public sector and of course as we know and health service. The challenge of the task is huge and that has an effect inevitably on the people who work in those settings.

Phil: Yeah, definitely. When you mentioned it earlier, that was another area that I got my attention, but there were two things, so one was about noticing what isn't there, and I'll come back to that one in a moment if I may. It was the bit around noticing how it effects you and how being in a certain environment or being in a certain situation or being present in a certain meeting, noticing how that affects you. Again I like what you said about not sanitising yourself in terms of saying well I shouldn't be feeling that or that's not okay to feel that. Because that feeling or that sensation is an important point of information if nothing else for me. The bit I think I would say I've fallen foul of in the past is I've assumed that because I've felt a particular way, other people or maybe everybody else in that situation has felt the same way that I have. So that's a lesson I've learnt over time, that it's important to notice how I feel but also it's important to remember that's just how I feel, it isn't necessarily how everybody else feels.

Francesca: Yeah. A small example that comes to mind is someone who got in touch with me and for some coaching. I felt really grilled in terms of my qualification and my background, my experience.

I wondered I thought it seemed unnecessary. She had my name through the chief executive of the organisation so I expected that would be something enough. But then, and I felt quite annoyed as a result, and then I realised that when I finally saw her, that she was projecting into me what was her experience in the organisation. That despite her training, her qualification she felt very much sidelined by her boss and felt actually very much lacking on confidence. The fact that I acknowledged that I was feeling an annoyance but also I noticed that she was grilling me, was quite helpful when we had to explore why she found herself in that position, what was happening with the organisation and so on.

Phil: So I said just now that I wanted to pick up on the noticing of things that aren't there, but I think I want to park that for a moment and stick with the example that you just gave there, because I think that links into the title of this podcast then about looking at shame in particular. Because one of the things that you talk about in your book, is you make a distinction between organisational and personal shame, which I thought was a really interesting distinction to make. I was wondering if you could tell me a bit more, sorry I was thinking I should probably say, so your book is called Work Matters, and within that then it's talking about a lot of the experience that you've had in the consultancy work that you do. Is that right? Would that be a good summary of the book?

Francesca: Yes, absolutely. It's a lot of stories about my work with clients, with teams, with leaders, individuals, yeah.

Phil: I think that's wonderful because I think I read sometimes is more of the theoretical or some of the more conceptual ideas that sit behind it and what I really enjoyed about reading your book was the narrative aspect of it and the story telling aspect of it. I felt like I should give that context before I went to the question, in your book then you talk about organisational and personal shame, which I thought was an interesting distinction. Could you tell me a bit more about what sits behind that?

Francesca: Sure. I think actually the two are linked, shame often effects the organisation and the individual, so I almost feel that the possibility of shame often leads organisations to act too quickly and get rid of someone, so the bad apple without thinking enough. But also the individual who feels shameful because he feels that he or she has been seen as doing something wrong or as being as experienced or competent. And then that sometimes leads to a collapse of confidence and competence. And that I've seen it a lot. I must say I always link, well often link a lot of what I experience with clients with my own experience, because I also I'm sure feel you might have some times where you experience shame in a situation. I remember that I was dropped, many years ago, from my course, a leadership course where I was teaching quite suddenly, I didn't understand why it happened. And I thought it was quite unfair and badly managed. I felt, despite I felt that, I felt still quite ashamed and exposed. I think that gave me a clue later on to engage with the issue of shame with individuals of an organisation. I felt more tuned in and often is the case, if you have an insight into your own reaction, to a situation that you might shameful or other situation, of course I'm much more able to link with your clients experiencing the situation. Feeling of failure can avoid very gritty feelings and strong emotions and that could be also linked of course to individuals' background, their own personal history, their own vulnerabilities. And also is linked to organisations who are not well functioning. So I think some time if you've got the combination of an individual who is, let's say, a bit more vulnerable,

has got a complex personal issue and the organisation is quite dysfunctional, is the perfect storm for let's say a disaster.

Phil: So you're absolutely right, there have been times both in the workplace when I was employed and since then, where I've been ashamed of the things that have happened or mistakes that I've made. One of those was when I was quite young, so I was 20 and I did something in a job that I had where I really should have been fired for what I did, and I wasn't thankful which was a bonus. But the shame for me in that one initially translated into anger and really angry at myself for the mistake that I made. It was a proper schoolboy error, it was an easily preventable mistake that I made and was a mistake where I definitely should have been fired for what I did. I then got very angry, angry at myself, angry at the situation. And then that anger then fuelled a real drive and a thirst for understanding more about emotions. Because my mistake was I was really angry at somebody and I voiced my anger in a way that was quite hurtful. And I was really ashamed of the way that I did it, but it certainly then started me on a quest, as it were, to understand more about emotions and how they work and how they affect people and what they do, and how they do it? Because I guess the degree of shame then was a huge driver for the further emotions then that took me on the quest to where I am now I suppose in a way.

Francesca: Yes, I can imagine. I think sometimes is the possibility of exploring it, understanding where it comes from and there's a colleague of mine, not colleague but someone in my field called Paul Hogget, which makes a distinction between what he called depressive shame and paranoid shame. I think the idea of depressive shame in a way as quite a helpful emotion because we can learn from having made a mistake from our disappointment and we are more open to resolve what has gone wrong and meet our goals. Well paranoid shame is a much more corrosive sense of humiliation where we feel we're not good enough. So it's all or nothing and so we feel quite useless. I think the intervention that I tried to make when I am faced with clients that bring a difficult situation where some of their mistakes has been exposed or they were promised something that hasn't happened, and they feel not recognised and shameful, because everybody expected them for example to get a promotion or something like this. I try to help them to move into this depressive shame position, which is more in terms of okay this has happened, it's not a tragedy, it's something that you can find a way of understanding and get better at it. Rather than either blaming someone else, which is often the situation, they've got a very bad boss or a terrible organisation, it's all their fault. It's never completely their fault, it's always a combination of the two. Or the despair and the wish of giving everything up, I can't stay here, it's terrible I have to disappear. So it gets very polarised, they tend to just say what is your priority? What is the organisational priority? What can you do about it? But sometimes it takes a long time to help a person to get there.

Phil: Yeah, you used the example of Joe in your book don't you, someone who was promised a new role but then was passed over and then trying to shift them from the paranoid shame aspect to the depressive shame aspect.

Francesca: Yes, and that was an amazing example because this was someone who on the whole was well positioned, was quite senior and felt very much part of the organisation, almost a surrogate family. And then this happened and he felt so humiliated because everybody expected him to get the role, but in an excessive way. Then you can see in a way the combination of his personal history, he

had a quite complex background. So in some way there was some feeling that despite his success he was still a bit of an imposter. That incident made it much more powerful, the feeling that I shouldn't be here, I'm not really worth what I thought I was. This was also combined with the organisation, it was very competitive and to some degree quite ruthless. In a way, as I was saying earlier, it was a bit of the perfect storm and sometimes personal, organisational or in this case organisational shame, but you can't just look at an individual, you have to look more broadly at that it's also a systemic issue sometimes. So it's not just an individual who might not be good enough but there is also the culture of the organisation that contribute to a difficult situation.

Phil: Yeah, definitely. I'm a big fan of understanding and reflecting and/or considering the systemic nature of things, which I know I want to come onto and explore with you a little bit more later. I'd like to take a bit of a detour into shame a little bit more if that's okay. In particular it's around the potential association or the association that I've made through some reading that I've done, between shame and disclosure. And it was when you used the phrase, when a mistake was exposed earlier on, one of the distinctions that I make in some of the work that I do is between guilt and shame. One of the things with shame that I often find is that the preference or the tendency with their shame, is to hide that and actually to not disclose it and to keep that shame hidden or to keep the cause of that shame hidden, rather than be something that is open or something that is disclosed or something that is openly talked about. I read a lot in the general, and this is an unfair generalisation but I'm going to make it anyway, I read a lot in the workplace rhetoric around mistakes and how organisations should be embracing of mistakes and making it safe for people to make mistakes and we need to create safe places where people can make mistakes in the right way. Theoretically I get that and I support that because I think humans are fallible, us human beings we make mistakes all of the time and the more we hide those mistakes, because potentially of shame, the harder it is then for individuals to learn, for organisations to learn, for teams to learn and so on. But there is almost like there's two forces that are almost pulling against each other, which are saying we want a culture where people can make mistakes and it's okay to do so, versus when somebody does make a mistake they are often then, and I can't remember the word that you used earlier on, but they're exposed and they're maybe vilified or they maybe hung out to dry because of the mistake that they've made. When actually what they've done is they've just been human and they've made a mistake. I guess I'm talking a lot and not really asking you a question, so let me try and see if I can formulate a question in my head. In your experience in the work that you've done, is unearthing shame a difficult task because people tend to hide it? Is that something that you find? I think is my question.

Francesca: Yes, I think as a generalisation you can say that. My sense is, and maybe I was being quite simplistic in for the sake of this discussion, but if you have an organisation where there is a good enough, I use good enough as the term that is used by psychoanalyst who talk about good enough parenting, but if not a good enough management system that I feel that people feel more able to be open about mistakes, interesting enough in Joe's case, there was a transition, he was with a new manager, so the trust relationship wasn't there. And maybe in come the new manager, leader, didn't understand what it meant to Joe this promotion. He didn't understand the consequence that could have happened as a result of not getting a job. Luckily he was in coaching and I think, I'm not saying that I solved the situation, but I helped him to go through what happened and try to unpack it, rather than being completely paralysed by that experience. But I think good management, good structure are key for more transparent, more open organisations. So if you go beyond the cosmetic mottos of

an organisation, if you've got people who are managers who are psychologically present, who are there for the people they manage, that makes a huge difference I think. I've always found that when is the case these difficulties can be overcome and sometimes you can bring something new or better.

Phil: Thinking about the recovery from the shame side of things then, so I guess I talked earlier on about how my recovery from shame was fuelled by anger at myself and the situation, and beginning my quest to find out more and just to assimilate as much knowledge and information and skills as I could. What sort of things have you done or do you do with the individuals or organisations that you work with to support them with recovery from shame?

Francesca: So first of all is exactly what you did and after the anger, which I completely understand because I had exactly the same reaction as you did when I was dropped from that course, so angry towards the organisation. When you pass that sort of period in which you're really angry, cross with whoever done something that you feel wasn't fair and so on, and then as a result you felt very shamed. I think it is first of all is acknowledging your part in it. There always is an element of you in terms of you might have too high expectation, you might delude yourself about your skills. There's always something that you contribute to the issue. So in a way I think this is the first step and not doing what we say in my trade the splitting, so that you split, the organisation is responsible or I am fully responsible. But as I said at the beginning there is a coordination. So it's really creating a space where you can unpack that and see what is me, what is organisation, what is my boss? And then what realistically can be done about a situation? What is the bit that I can expect? What's reasonable expectation about the other people involved? And it's also coming back to reality but it needs unpacking and also sometimes it needs to connect in an individual to something that is deeper than that. As I was saying in the case of Joe there was something profound about his sense of worth because of very difficult background, he had very distant parents and left to go to university to never return back home basically. It was someone although who has done very well, he didn't have a firm base and then so when something like that happened, he felt much more troubled that maybe someone could have been more confident, might have shaken that off and consider that one of those things that happen, maybe a bit disappointed. But he wouldn't have felt so threatened. I don't know if I've answered your question [laughs].

Phil: Yeah, you have. So it's the unpacking and acknowledging your part in it, acknowledging others parts in it and others I'm using in a loose term, that could be individuals or the organisation or acknowledging others parts in it. And then thinking there's a third step, well what realistically can be done then? What realistically can be done to improve or change or learn or make better or whatever the next steps might be? You also reminded me of a situation where I was working with a senior team and the stimulus was or the stimulus of the story I guess, is that one of the team had a breakdown, for want of a better phrase, a breakdown in the workplace and they needed some intensive help and support to get better, and to get back to the point where they were fit again. And what I found really interesting, and I can use the interesting frame looking back, I got really angry at the time actually, a number of the other members in that team and their colleagues said oh I saw this coming, like I've seen them change physically over the last few weeks or I've noticed this change in them or I noticed that change in them, I've noticed they're doing this, I noticed they're doing that, and it's a shame they couldn't deal with it. I was like you do realise that everything you've just outlined is in my head you being complicit in the creation of this situation? You've noticed these changes and behaviours, you've

noticed the changes in attitude, you've noticed these changes in appearance and yet you did nothing with them. So we as a team need to now reflect about what's our role in this then? What's our role in this outcome that we have now? So the outcome we have is this person struggling and then they need some help to get better. All right, but what's our role in it. And the team didn't want to face that, it's not something they wanted to explore I said well, no, because we have a role to play in this as well, we're that person's colleague, we're their team and yet individually so and so and so and so and so and so, you've said to me that you've noticed changes but you've done nothing with that. So, yes, that individual needs to make some changes but surely we as a team have to do the same thing. That was a really tricky conversation to navigate because again I risk the generalisation, but the team were really resistant or reluctant to engage in that discussion.

Francesca: I can't agree more and I think there's always so much linked and it's very interesting how people, organisations, team members, leaders sometimes turn a blind eye. And then surprise-surprise something happened. But in a way everybody will know that knew that something was going on, they didn't want to see it. And I think to acknowledge the link, to acknowledge that you are interconnected, that if we are someone working in an organisation, whatever happens to you is connected to a team, to your leader, to the whole organisation, to the task. So you can't just see an individual in isolation, it's all connected. And so I completely agree with your perspective, I think that is very important. And ideally maybe I can come with a brief example...?

Phil: Yes, please do.

Francesca: Someone referred to me, a doctor who was accused of bullying and basically they didn't suspend him but they decided that he needed some coaching. So it wasn't what we call an easy assignment, because for this person what can I do? It might be perceived punishment but I think the work they tried to do was first of all again to try and see what was his responsibility and what was his organisation's responsibility. But also in my contract with the organisation I said okay I'm prepared to see this individual and see what is behind his behaviour, but I want to be able to come back to you and tell you what I've picked up, that the organisation might have done differently or maybe some of the mistakes or systems aren't in place. Luckily enough in this case the person was very open minded and so when I finished the work with this individual I went back to the organisation, I said I think you should think about these issues, which in a way belong to you not to the individual. Yeah, so the individual might have been a bit of a bully but also the organisation has some responsibility for this. It's not always possible because often an organisation wants to dump you on people who think they are a troubled individual and they create trouble. But it's never just this story, there's more stories and different ways of looking at that.

Phil: Yeah, definitely and that dynamic, I don't know the word I'm looking for, I feel like it should be nature but I don't think that's necessarily the right phrase. That the interconnectedness I think is something that is often overlooked and, yeah, I think that's been a really useful exploration, thank you. And thank you for sharing your example as well. I guess just to close that last example off if I can, I've had similar discussions with some colleagues that I work with, say for example getting involved in some culture change work or organisational change work, where I've been asked to come in and support the implementation of a change initiative or a change programme. When I then, to put it politely, when I rub up against some of the systemic challenges within the organisation, some clients

are more willing than others to want to listen to and explore some of those systemic aspects that I might rub up against. I suppose I'm putting myself in the listener's shoes now then and thinking all right then, Phil and Francesca, you're saying that these systemic aspects are important but not necessarily organisations or teams want to hear about those systemic issues or those systemic aspects. How do I approach that then? How can I approach the conversation about some of the systemic aspects of an organisation if the organisation doesn't want to hear it? I know that wasn't necessarily a question that I said I was going to ask you in the podcast, but I guess I was just thinking if I was in the listener's shoes it might be useful to have maybe a couple of tactics or some techniques or some approaches that they could use, if they had to address some of the systemic side of things, what might we recommend? I guess that's a question to both of us but I'll leave the floor to you first?

Francesca: I think as in all these things there isn't a recipe but I think what I will say to always have in mind that there this is other dimension and try to make it more visible for the people around you. Try to pick up this tendency of I think personalised issue in organisation, which I think is quite common unfortunately. And see that of course the person sometimes has got a lot of responsibility for something has happened, but there is always a dimension that is wider. And what we haven't referred to is of course the task of the organisation is that sometimes it's very challenging, it's very difficult. So in a way become very defensive and they don't allow themselves to be open and available. There is the context around us that is also important. I was thinking the time we're living now organisation around a different kind of pressure. So that also has an impact, we are in a pandemic. All of that has an influence and we are all affected but all affected differently. But my only suggestion would be keep that dimension, broader dimension alive and don't put it aside but make it part of the conversation we are having, if you are in an employee, if you're a leader, of course if you're a consultant or a coach.

Phil: I agree with you, there's no recipe and there's no set format that I think you could take. I think the things I would share then would be 1) so one of my phrases that I use a lot is there's always more going on than you think. There's always something else, there's always more to it, it's never as simple as you think it is because again as humans we like to make things simple, we like to quote one of my friends, a guy called Cliff Lansley, we are cognitive misers, we're cognitively lazy, if we can find a shortcut then we can find a short cut and a simple answer, we'll find the shortcut and the simple answer. So using that as a way to engage a conversation, to say what else could be going on or what else is going on or what else is at play, what else could be happening as a way of coming at it? And then coming into the three steps that you talked about earlier on, acknowledging what's the individual's part, what's the organisation's part, what's the team's part and so on? Could be one way of doing it. I think my other one and I'm now thinking I've been primed by your detective analogy that you used earlier on, but is to have some evidence to support the possible connections that you're making. So one of the things I noticed when I was working with a different organisation, I was there on a fairly long term assignment, I was doing three days a week for nearly two years. One of the things that I noticed was that Mondays could be really hit and miss. So Mondays as a day in the office, Monday was always my office day. I always committed I'd do one definite day in the office which was always a Monday and then Monday was meetings day and I never got any work ever done, I just did meetings all day, I ended up with a longer to-do list at the end than the beginning. Anyway but then I'd have a day at home, then I'd have my third day of the week would either be in the office or at home depending on where I needed to be. I kept finding that my Mondays could be really hit or miss and

the pattern that I deduced was depending on the behaviours that were displayed, by the senior team in the meeting room, because there was a meeting room in the office that was glass walled, so everybody could see in. And depending on how that meeting went and ended, seemed to correlate with whether my Mondays could be a hit or a miss day. Because when it went well and they'd have a good meeting then they tended to be a hit day. But when those meetings went poorly and they had a bad meeting, then they tended to be a miss day. And what I noticed was the emotions would emanate or they'd almost come out in waves from the meeting room. So as people were arriving into the office, they would see that the senior team was sat down around this table and they'd be watching, maybe not like watching like they were watching a TV, but they'd be noticing what was happening and noticing how people were interacting with each other, when they were talking and then when the meeting would end. Again you would notice how different people left the meeting, did they storm out and stomp out the office and get their head down on the desk or did they stop and say hello to people on the way, and some of those things. The conversation I had with the team was almost presenting my case, maybe a bit like in a Columbo way maybe.

Francesca: Yes.

Phil: But to say this is what I noticed. I noticed on these different occasions these things have happened and then this has been the feeling in the office that day. And on these other days these things have happened and this has been the feeling in the office on those days. To what extent are you aware that the way that you guys interact and how you are with each other then resonates out into the office? They had no awareness at all and some of them, she said, "I don't think that's right, Phil." A said, "Well maybe it's not, this could just be my view. But based on what I'm noticing and what I'm picking up on this is what I think." So we then changed the strategy and we moved the location of the meeting. I said, "Well can move the meeting instead of you doing the meeting in that office where you normally do it, can we do it somewhere else?" Because there was a number of different teams in the organisation, so by moving the senior teams meeting from one room to a room in a different part of the office, meant that nobody else saw what was going on. So if they were having a meeting where the marketing team is, nobody in marketing cares about the senior leadership team meeting, so nobody is really watching them or paying any attention. But what it meant was they were then much more even Mondays after that, there wasn't this spiking of this up and downness of how people felt that day. It was really interesting to see and experience. Sorry, go on.

Francesca: No, very good. The thing about evidence is very, very important and it's one of the things I teach as well as the consultancy, I and my colleague will always talk about evidence before formulating hypothesis about what is our understanding of what is going on. I think accumulating evidence that helped you to give a, in a way, well informed response of input and looking for those I think is quite essential. I liked your story.

Phil: Oh, thank you. So I think what I'd like to do is if it's okay is to start to bring us together and start to bring the podcast to a close, if that's all right? There's one area that I wanted to explore a little bit more because we talked about the shame side of things a lot and in your proceeding chapter to shame, you talk about vulnerable leadership, and I know there's quite a popular researcher and practitioner out there, a lady called Brene Brown. And she talks about the links of vulnerability and shame and I wondered, because those two chapters follow each other, so you've got vulnerable

leadership as a proceeding one and then shame is the one that follows. I guess how do you see vulnerability and shame going together, I think is the question I wanted to ask before I then started to bring us together and close off the podcast, if that's okay?

Francesca: I think vulnerability can apply both to individuals, leaders and organisations. I think you might feel vulnerable and then in a way I think I referred to it earlier, you might be much more in a way exposed or prone to shame. But if you are someone who has an inner strengths but also a quite robust sense of your identity, and I could talk at length about the sense of cause of attachment, you are someone who has experienced as a child a strong attachment and then you're able to later on in life to feel worth and strong in your identity. So you're less vulnerable to shame, people who don't have that and for different reasons, you might feel much more likely to experience shame the way I was describing, in a paranoid way which is you see it as whatever happens as an attack to you and to your identity. While if you are more confident in who you are, you of course experience it differently. And that applies to an organisation because if you have an organisation that on the whole is quite solid and has got a quite robust management structure, and I think I make a comparison to leaders as almost parents of organisations. So in a way leaders will take up a parental role, "parental" of course, in relation to staff. So they can be reliable and people can rely on them. But of course it is less likely to happen but that doesn't mean that it doesn't happen, but the consequence of it are less strong or less disruptive and nowadays of course shame, you are shamed in the media, in the news. I have a client for example who's been named in the media and that is quite devastating, because you're not talking about the public of my example, the Joe example, because that was within the organisation. But if you are exposed for example outside really, where millions of people that's very difficult. But again if you've got an organisation that can support you that can be minimised, if you're someone on the whole feels quite confident in your skills, in your work, you might find it difficult but you could recover. But if you're someone who is less confident and feel more vulnerable inside, that might be really problematic.

Phil: Wonderful, thank you, Francesca. That was a very nice summary, I liked that, that was good.

Francesca: Thank you.

Phil: So what I'd like us to do then is bring us together I think. So one of the ways that I tend to wrap up the podcast then is to ask around any books or resources? So maybe books as well as your own of course which I'll put a link to in the show notes. Are there any books or videos or talks or research papers that you think it will be good for the listener to go and have a read of or to look at?

Francesca: Apart from my book, I think the book in my kind of world that has been really seminal is *The Unconscious at Work*, which is called *Tavistock Approach To Making Sense of Organisational Life*. And is edited by Anton Obholzer and Vega Roberts, and it's published by Routledge. There was the first edition in 1994. The first edition was mainly really for people working in the profession, health sector. The second edition has got a section, quite a rich one for people working in private sector in business.

Phil: Wonderful.



Francesca: That's I would say is the most obvious and one of the qualities of this book is that it's very accessible, it is written in plain English and very clear and I think there are a lot of vignettes, a lot of cases. So I certainly think it's something to recommend to a lot of people.

Phil: Wonderful, thank you. I'll make sure I put a link to that one as well as your book in the show notes then. Anything else?

Francesca: There are lots of books that are of interest. There is another one I think it's called Working Below the Surface, it's again done by a group of colleagues in the Tavistock Tradition and it's very interesting book as well. I had in mind because I thought you said you might want some recommendation also from people to invite...?

Phil: Yes please.

Francesca: So one is Vega Roberts that I mentioned, who is a colleague who is the co-author of Unconscious at Work. And the other one is, which is relevant to your podcast, is a clinical psychologist who is now an author and writer, she's wrote this wonderful novel called A Good enough Mother. And published by Faber & Faber. Also last year 2019 and it is the story of I would say the interconnection between personal and professional life of Ruth, who is a psychologist, psychotherapist and what happens, the complexity of life at work. And also at home in terms of her personal life. It is sort of a thriller but not a thriller but in terms of in a way your podcast, Emotion at Work, I think.

Phil: Wonderful, that's fantastic, I will look up both of those people, thank you very much. If people wanted to get hold of you, Francesca to find out some more, is there a way that you would like them to do so, I could put a link to your website in the show notes, would that be the easiest way if people wanted to get hold of you and find out some more for them to do so?

Francesca: Yes, I think the obvious way would be through my website where there is my email and also LinkedIn, I'm on LinkedIn. So that would be the two public spaces. I would like to hear from anyone who's interested putting a conversation, yes, that would be great.

Phil: All right, I'll do that then I'll put a link to the website and to your LinkedIn profile as well. I think all that remains then is for me to say is there anything else then, Francesca, anything else that you're thinking, feeling or want to say before I close us off?

Francesca: I think I've enjoyed this conversation very much, I felt a bit anxious as obviously because I'm not used to being interviewed. Preparing and doing it made me think a little bit differently about what I've done and what I wanted to say. And maybe the key thing is in conversation with you is this constant, you said what else, and I would think of a constant interplay between things, your environment, organisation, personal, professional. What else is there? And is an invitation not just to your listeners but to myself to try to do that. Which I tried to do but to be reminded I think is important. And thank you for having me.

Phil: Oh thank you so much for coming on, I've really, really enjoyed it. Yes, it's been great to have you as a guest, Francesca, thank you so much for coming on the Emotion at Work podcast.



Francesca: My pleasure.