

Episode 84
Emotion at Work in Poetry and Business

00:09

Phil Willcox

Hello and welcome to the Emotion at Work podcast, where we place emotion at the heart of the people, the processes, and the place of work and we create workplaces where people feel safe, optimistic, and confident. And today is a first. It's a first for this podcast, but it's not a first for me or a first for our guest, but it will be a first for you, fair listener, I think, anyway, because today we are talking about emotion and poetry in the workplace. And our guest is a wonderful poet and a creative executive coach specialising in neurodiversity and a business poet with 25 plus years' experience as a HR director and passionate about all things development and the founder of the Poetry in Business Conference and it is a pleasure to welcome Kate Jenkinson to the Emotion at Work Podcast, hello Kate.

00:59

Kate Jenkinson

Oh Phil, it's brilliant to be here. Thank you. That was a stonking introduction, wasn't it?

01:04

Phil Willcox

Well, I said it because you're a stonking person. You say that's. I can only work with what I have, Kate. That's all. Thank you.

01:10

Kate Jenkinson

Well, I hope to live up to that. Now.

01:13

Phil Willcox

It's wonderful to have you here. And we'll tell the. We'll sort of let the guests. Let the guests. Let the listeners even hear a bit more about how we. How we first met and kind of how we know each other. So we will. We'll pick that up as we go. But what I'd like to do is to begin today with, as we always do, with the Emotion of World podcast with an innocuous yet unexpected question. So it's a question that our guests never get to know what it's going to be in advance. And it's our way of getting to know our guests a little bit more without doing the classic blind date, what's your name, where do you come from? Type stuff.

01:47

Kate Jenkinson

Sounds good.

01:48

Phil Willcox

So does that sound okay?

01:49

Kate Jenkinson

Yeah. Yes. Exciting.

01:52

Phil Willcox

So, my innocence question for you then, Kate, is what is a view or a vista that you never tire of seeing?

02:01

Kate Jenkinson

Well, the quick answer is a sunset.

02:05

Phil Willcox

Okay.

02:07

Kate Jenkinson

I can lose myself completely in the sun's rays as they retire for the evening, because that's when I actually feel most alive. I love the night and the shadows and the colours of the evening. So, yeah, never tire of a lovely sunset.

02:34

Phil Willcox

Okay and the colours of the evening. That, that. I mean, that almost sounds poetic in and of itself. Tell me a bit more about the colours of the evening, if you wouldn't mind.

02:49

Kate Jenkinson

Oh, I don't know if you've noticed, but the evening sky is very rich and colourful. So I can think of a sunset I saw in Whitby, to the backdrop of the abbey, with the abbey silhouetted against the colours. And the colours of that evening were pink, dark purple, very similar to my logos, actually, yellow and blue. Yes. In fact, we may have just reproduced my logo. I love them. They're so evocative and for

somebody who, I don't make images in my mind's eye, I love to see colourful, natural beauty and that's what a sunset is, all unique as well. They're all different.

03:41

Phil Willcox

Okay. And it would be a sunset over a sunrise, then?

03:46

Kate Jenkinson

Yes, because I've. First of all, I've struggled to see sunrises.

03:53

Phil Willcox

Okay. There's a pragmatic bit of being out of bed early. Yeah. Okay.

03:56

Kate Jenkinson

Yeah. I'm not a morning person. I'm much more likely to see a sunset. Much more likely to see a sunset when I'm on holiday as well. And they seem to have a lot more beauty around them. And sunset has weaker colour in the sky. I think we don't get the painting of the sky that we do with a sunset.

04:22

Phil Willcox

Wonderful. Fabulous.

04:25

Kate Jenkinson

Very poetic. I have written poetry about it.

04:28

Phil Willcox

You have?

04:29

Kate Jenkinson

Of course. Yeah.

04:33

Phil Willcox

And is there a, is there a metaphor in there for you as well, or is it, sort of straightforward as, you know, I just love the colours and yeah.

04:44

Kate Jenkinson

No. Let me tell you why I love a sunset. Hope is the sunset on an imperfect day, the sleeping rays resting and re-energizing darkness, consuming all our fears. So in the morning, hope dawns and reappears. There's something very restful about the ending of a day. That's why I like it.

05:11

Phil Willcox

Wonderful. And was that. Was that a poem? And it's in there as well. A little snippet of.

05:18

Kate Jenkinson

It's a little snippet of one of my poems about hope, which I wrote and released during the pandemic, actually, with a, I don't often do this, but I associated it with some photos on my phone, the sunsets, because I like to take pictures of them and it got quite a few views during the pandemic because it was about trying to help people find the hope in what seemed to be quite, as we use the word a lot at the time, unprecedented situation for people.

05:49

Phil Willcox

Yeah.

05:51

Kate Jenkinson

Yeah. So I did. It was a poem.

05:55

Phil Willcox

All right. And we got. We got a snippet off, so maybe we could get good. Maybe we could close the show with the full poem. Would that be something you'd be willing to do?

06:04

Kate Jenkinson

I'm happy to always share poetry as you know, Phil, it's. Yeah, hold me back.

06:10

Phil Willcox

Okay, well, in that case, we'll close the show with that then. So when we get to the end of the, when we get to the end, what we'll do for our listeners, we'll kind of, we'll do the, kind of sign off and say goodbye and then I'll hand over to Kate to finish the show and then we'll fade out the music as the, as your poem ends and then you'll be the end to the show today. Okay, sounds okay.

06:29

Kate Jenkinson

Yeah, sounds lovely.

06:31

Phil Willcox

Wonderful. So we first met in 2017 when I put on an event in the Rain Bar in Manchester.

06:42

Kate Jenkinson

I remember it well.

06:44

Phil Willcox

Which was titled HR's Open Mic Night.

Kate Jenkins.

That's right.

Phil Willcox

It was, it was an opportunity for anyone and everyone who worked in HR who wanted to perform in some way, to come together, we had a resident band, we had a DJ and then we had, I think we had two poets that night. I think you were one and then we had a gentleman who was the other poet that we had. We had myself and Mike Collins in a rap battle.

07:09

Kate Jenkinson

That's right.

07:09

Phil Willcox

Although I kind of sang rather than wrapped, but that was okay. Ian Petigrew sang and yeah, it was a wonderful, wonderful evening. And yeah, I just remember your poetry really sticks out for me as one of my highlights of the evening. And, and so I suppose what I'm interested in is what is it about

poetry for you that fuels kind of the passion and I know in particular for poetry and business as well. So maybe there's three questions wrapped up into one. So let's just begin with the. What is it about poetry for you?

07:51

Kate Jenkinson

I could go really deep. I've got the option of starting it's creative recovery. So for me, poetry always was my creative recovery from the workplace, which in hindsight feels quite negative experience of the workplace. And I'm not saying I did have a negative experience, but I found that the focus in work is very much on efficiency and short-term results. And my way of experiencing the world is maybe different from others or maybe not. And that's something that we might discover. I need that creative space to make meaning of what's happening, to understand and embody what's happening around me. I absorb a lot. I'm very sensitive to the workplace and I needed a way to process what and express the emotions that I was absorbing in the workplace. So without poetry I wouldn't be well. So basically it's my route to being a whole and, well, human being. And I offer that thought to others whether it might be one of their routes too.

09:11

Phil Willcox

Okay. Has poetry always been there for you?

09:19

Kate Jenkinson

Yeah.

09:20

Phil Willcox

I first got introduced to poetry when I was. Well, that's not true. So that would be, that would be factually incorrect. My first kind of memory of writing poetry and really immersing myself in poetry was in when I was doing my level. So I did English literature for one of my levels and within that we did Shakespeare sonnets.

Katie Jenkinson

Yeah.

Phil Willcox

And I really enjoyed Shakespeare Sonnet. So whilst I'm. Well, if I was to say I hadn't experienced poetry before that would be inaccurate because I would have done in many different ways. But I think that was my first kind of deliberate and purposeful exploits into it, I think is probably what I would say.

10:02

Kate Jenkinson

Yeah.

10:03

Phil Willcox

And so I think what was behind my question was, has it always been poetry for you or has there been other outlets that. Where you. You've gone to find that kind of creative recovery for you?

10:14

Kate Jenkinson

That's interesting. I say I like to go to writing workshops. So outside of the workplace, I'd connect with my sister, my mum. My mum writes poetry and other forms of writing. And we used to just enjoy going together to these workshops. And it was always poetry I would be writing, whether it was a memoir workshop or something else. I kind of couldn't help myself. And I understand that better now. I understand that because of my neurodiversity. So the scientist in me has gone, well, I've been curious about everything my whole life and I've kept that curiosity open. And as the world of neurodiversity has introduced new language and new concepts, I can understand why that has been the case for me, but I'd also say that poetry is there in our primary school years in the sort of rhyming couplets of like, nursery rhymes and things that help soothe our nervous system. And so poetry has always been that kind of soothing activity that I've needed because my neurodiversity is super sensitive to things. So I've always reached for it, either writing it or listening to others whose words and cadence really help soothe me or make me laugh. There's the humorous side to it as well. It's really good fun. I love wordplay. I can't help myself. Again, it's all part of the way my brain works is to take a word and find out how many anagrams I can make of it.

11:53

Phil Willcox

Okay, okay. And then I guess the contrast that you made then was that for your experience of the workplace was one of process. No, sorry, of efficiency.

12:14

Kate Jenkinson

Yeah.

12:14

Phil Willcox

And so poetry then was a sort of creative recovery option for you.

12:20

Kate Jenkinson
Yeah.

12:22

Phil Willcox

And now you're the founder of, and last year we had our first ever poetry and business conference. We've got a second one coming up this year in November 14th.

12:32

Kate Jenkinson
Yeah.

12:34

Phil Willcox

And what inspired you to want to put the poetry and business conference together?

12:38

Kate Jenkinson

It was the conference I wanted to go to that nobody else was putting on and so.

12:44

Phil Willcox

It was a selfish requirement.

12:46

Kate Jenkinson

Totally, totally selfish. I wanted to hear the keynote speaker that I invited, Claire Morgan, who wrote the book what Poetry Brings to Business. I wanted to hear her speak, and she didn't, as far as I could see, have any conferences that I could get to because she tends to do in person. So I thought, I'll create one that's online and accessible for myself, and I'll invite everybody who's been on this journey with me. So in 10 years ago, when I started my own business, I was networking and I wanted to be memorable and I wanted to connect with people who are like me. So I would have as my introductory pitch, hi, I'm Kate. I'm a creative executive coach, and I'm exploring the power of poetry to make a positive impact in the workplace. I found that people didn't connect with the coach bit. They either connected or disconnected from the second. People either, it's like Marmite. People either like or hate poetry at the surface level. And so I'd connect with people who were like me. It was really powerful way to have an interesting conversation with people. So the conference was 10 years of interesting conversations condensed into a day. And it was also an ability to showcase something I believe in passionately, that there should be more paid jobs for poets. Poets are often the stereotypical starving artist in the attic, creating tremendous works of art that people think they should consume at no cost, but, you know, not paying anything for the value of them. And I don't

agree with that. I think there's an economic benefit to reading, writing, reciting, enjoying poetry spoken as well as written.

14:51

Kate Jenkinson

So that was what the conference was showcasing, all of that to show people that poetry and business is a thing and to help people stop reinventing it and thinking that they're alone. What I found was I created a community. I didn't expect that. I'd always wanted to have a community. I didn't know what that would be I'd tried previously to establish a creative oasis. I called it a community for creative exploration.

15:19

Phil Willcox

Yeah.

15:20

Kate Jenkinson

But when it comes to poetry and business, my passion is unending. So, again, so much that even though it's just me at the moment putting this on, I'm doing it again this year, so it didn't put me off.

15:34

Phil Willcox

Yeah. And rightly so, I think.

15:37

Kate Jenkinson

Thank you.

15:39

Phil Willcox

But even in that sort of brief summary that you gave there were. There was a lot of emotion both in, in some of the language and also in your voice. You know, you could, you could hear it in what you were speaking. And earlier on you were describing how you would use poetry as a way to process and express the emotions that you were feeling.

16:05

Kate Jenkinson

Yeah.

16:05

Phil Willcox

In the workplace and what you were engaging with.

16:08

Kate Jenkinson

Yeah.

16:11

Phil Willcox

And I guess from a self, from a kind of lived experience point of view, when I think about and in particular performing poetry. I think so. Oh, maybe I saw. I say that maybe writing it as well. Although I do quite enjoy writing it. Certainly when I started to think about using spoken word poetry in the work that I do, there was a lot of, yeah, emotion that came with it in terms of fear of, you know, are people going to judge me for this, sadness in terms of, am I going to lose my credibility and, you know, lose some reputation with it? Yeah, actually some happiness in terms of the excitement and the joy from both preparing and performing the poem.

17:02

Kate Jenkinson

Yes.

17:02

Phil Willcox

So, yeah, I feel like, with, for me, anyway, with poetry, there's an awful lot of emotion that happens with it. And so I guess what's your experience then when you've done, when you have done poetry in business. Yeah. What emotions do you experience either? Maybe personally? What have you experienced from others when you're looking to do that? Some of that work?

17:30

Kate Jenkinson

I have to say, the whole range of them. Phil, I have to be honest. I think poetry is a vehicle for our emotions. So if it can't convey all of them, then it's kind of not doing its job, which is as a container, a channel, a vessel, and, you know, it can take you from one place to another. That's what I love about it. It's transformational in the moment of somebody speaking poetry with meaning and heart, you can transform a room from disengaged to engaged. So I've experienced poetry myself only as a transformational power for good, because that's how I use it. That's how I experienced it when I was younger. It doesn't have that emotional connection for everybody. In fact, like I said before, I've met people who, when they've heard I'm a poet, they go, oh, I hate poetry.

18:26

Kate Jenkinson

As if it's okay to say to a poet that you hate something that they are. You wouldn't do it with any other identity. I don't think if somebody came to you and oh, hi, I'm a woman. Oh, I hate women. You wouldn't say that, would you? Be your natural response. And yet it really is an identity. So as a poet, poetry brings me joy, it brings me friendship. Everybody I've met who equally would describe themselves as a poet, there's a connection that we've made, and I think it's because it's the embodiment of emotions. So, yeah, all the emotions. When I initially started talking, you know, saying that about I'm putting poetry into business, I got all the range of emotions back from people, usually negative ones, actually. Like, the two things don't go together. So that's been, some of it was like, yeah, Kate, that'll never work. Some of it was, yeah, that's just ridiculous. I even hear today my finance director wouldn't sign off an invoice that had the word poetry on it. And I get all of this resistance and negativity, and I'm just. I used to respond with anger because I knew it to be differently. I had a different relationship with it. But now I respond with curiosity and love. Because actually, if I can demonstrate that this is something powerful because of the emotion I have, which is love, with the poetry that I'm reading, consuming, sharing, whatever, then that actually is more. That is where true connection comes in. That's where true engagement occurs. That emotion is one that brings people together. Hate can do it. But it's. I think Brene Brown's work shows us it's false connection. And so I moved away and made a very conscious choice to move away from being angry and being upset by people who said that they hated it or didn't like it. And I'm curious to understand what their relationship is that they have such a strong reaction.

20:54

Phil Willcox

Yeah, because there could be a hypothesis that the experience of poetry and the almost the. So I'm going to say something and then I'll explain what I mean and then I'll come back to it. So the requirement to make it mean something. So what I find interesting is that we are all, you know, anyone who's listened to this show knows that I use the phrase that humans are meaning making machines. So we will make things mean something. So, and you know, I encouraged that earlier on when I said, is there a metaphor for the sunset for you? You know, I was asking, I guess both you and probably the listener as well to, you know, to make some meaning from something that is, that doesn't have, doesn't necessarily something that doesn't intrinsically have meaning in it, I was asking you and the listener to make some meaning from it, I suppose.

21:55

Kate Jenkinson

Yeah.

21:56

Phil Willcox

And we do that all the time as humans. You know, we see someone else's facial expressions, we see somebody else's behavior. We, we see a sight, we smell a smell, we hear a sound and we make it mean something. And so then when you're asked to make a poem mean something, I wonder if the resistance to, you know, what's my, I hypothesise what's behind that. And is it big? I wonder if it's

because there is an implied expectation to make a meaning from it. And, and sorry, I will be quite in a second because I also wonder the same about art in particular sculptures and paintings and things like that some people say, oh, I don't do art. And do they not do art because of the, I don't know why they don't do art but one hypothesis would be that there's an expectation on making it mean something. Like if you stand in front of a picture in a gallery, I've had somebody come up to me and go, oh yeah, what do you think to that? And I'm like, nothing. I'm enjoying looking at the picture. But it, you know, it isn't evoking anything in particular for me that at least that particular picture. Yeah, wasn't. Anyway, sorry, I'll stop now. And yeah, that's what you think.

23:19

Kate Jenkinson

I think. So lots of thoughts. I've been trying to write them down so I don't lose them. So when you say humans are meaning making machines, my thought on that is, yes, because we're engaging the poetic side of our thinking. Poetry is about meaning making. It's about metaphor, it's about tangibilising the intangible. Which is why I loved it, because I found that in hr, if you could help people connect with their feelings, then they would more likely understand why it was important to do something and the impact what they were doing was having on other people. So actually I always have had a poetic way of speaking and by that I mean making meaning as well as applying the logic of efficiency. So there's, you know, two sides to the way we think, logic and poetic. And there always has been. I'm doing a lot of reading around this at the moment and studying around neurodiversity. Neurodiversity and creativity. You know, poetry is a development tool for the brain. So the reason we study it at school is not necessarily to like it or appreciate it. It is to help our brains wire that meaning making side of our brain effectively with our logic making. So I always feel that if people cut off that interest in creativity, meaning making, then they're losing the ability to use half of their brain effectively. So, yeah, we are meaning making machines and we do it through our creative art. That could be the visual art, like you said, or verbal art like poetry or songs and it seems fascinating to me that we can all of us say there is a music genre that we like, but we don't know the different genres of poetry, which is basically lyrics. Music is lyrics and sound together, whereas poetry is just the lyrics with the same cadence, meaning making, that kind of thing. So whenever anyone says they haven't they don't like poetry, my brain translates it to mean, well, I haven't found their poetry yet because they, and I ask them, do you like music? Is there a lyric that sticks in your brain that you know, you either like or don't like? That's poetry as well.

26:09

Kate Jenkinson

So I guess I'm on a mission to help people find where the poetry is and to find their poetry, because I think when they do that, they will open up lots of different possibilities for themselves to enjoy the world around them. And the world includes the world of work. And the reason I think people don't like the question about poetry and business is if you start to try and make meaning of work and why you work, you might not actually enjoy what you're doing.

Phil Willcox

Ahh, okay

Kate Jenkinson

So I think we apply a level of conscious thinking and choice about, well, actually I don't enjoy being an accountant. I know I'm making money here and it's reliable and, you know, it's consistent and it keeps me in that level of survival, but actually, if you ask me to make meaning developmentally, you're asking me to go up Maslow's hierarchy of needs and self-actualise in the workplace. And I'm not sure that's actually what I want to do with that job. I just want to do that outside of work. And so I think if we actually get into finding our poetry in work, it opens up possibilities of being more fulfilled in the workplace or recognising that you aren't.

27:34

Phil Willcox

Wonderful. And so when you think about some of the work that you've done then, is there a particular or are there particular sort of projects you've done or relationships you've worked on or something that really sort of sticks out for you as something that you're quite proud of? And you know, that that was something that meant something to me or the people that you worked with.

28:05

Kate Jenkinson

I think I try and do everything at that level, so there's meaning in everything. I try and do everything at the level of it having meaning. Proud of. I think there are two things I would say there. The proudest thing I did was not in the workplace, and yet it ultimately helped somebody who's very important to me find their career path. And that's my daughter. My daughter is a visual creative. So she's. She did art at a level, but she also struggled at school because of being neurodivergent and it not being identified as such. And so she found it really hard to work to be judged by others to a standard. And she's very bright. And she ended up with an eating disorder and I suppose the most meaningful work I've done is writing poetry to help me recover as a parent of a child with, you know, a condition like that, and having the poetry help me recover. And then for her and I to have the visual artistic work that she did during that time and my poetry accepted for publication in an international journal of art and poetry and it was their first mother and daughter collaboration.

29:51

Phil Willcox

Wow.

29:52

Kate Jenkinson

That was something at the time I was incredibly proud of, but also I recognised it was helping on my route to recovery and helping her on her route to discovery. That's a nice little poem there.

30:07

Phil Willcox

There you go. That was lovely.

30:10

Kate Jenkinson

This is because my brain works like this, Phil. It just writes poems. The beauty of this was that she and I then did some coaching work together using her artwork for her to find where her passion lies. And her passion is in the visual arts. And over the course of the last three years, she has been able to identify a career path which has seen her end up as a tattoo artist. There's not a traditional career path, but I think I'm most proud of her seeing me maybe as an inspiration to not let go of your innate creativity and not believe the lie that you can't make your creativity your business and your life. She's on a career path that she will, she's already, after a year and a half been identified as a finalist for newcomer in the newcomer category in the first convention she went into. So her work is of a standard already and I'm so excited to see where she goes with it as a, probably a business owner in the future, an entrepreneur, a beautiful creative artist. So I'm most proud of her.

31:44

Phil Willcox

A wonderful story.

31:48

Kate Jenkinson

It's true. Yeah. I'd love there to be more career paths for creatives that allow that full bodied experience of being entrepreneurial and successful in your chosen career.

32:15

Phil Willcox

And maybe not in a way. No I won't say in a way and I suppose what I would recognise then is that's something that you have done as well.

32:30

Kate Jenkinson

Yes.

32:30

Phil Willcox

So it's not just your daughter that's achieved that you have achieved too.

32:35

Kate Jenkinson

Yes and I tend not to look at my own achievements in that same way because I this kind of view that I just do what makes me happy. When I, when I came out of the corporate world fully during the pandemic, because I'll be honest, I had this phrase in my head which was, I am tired of playing this game, I cannot play it anymore. I want to do things more things that make me happy. And that was it, that was kind of my inspiration. Plus the other thing was I wanted to do all things development. I'd realised in the corporate world the HR role becomes a facilitator of performance rather than a function that can help strategic development of people in line with the organisation development in some organisations anyway and I felt I didn't want to just stay in that machine environment where people are disposable and where you know, there's a select few that are identified as having potential and talent, when I know that everybody's got talent. I couldn't switch off that part of me that wanted to see everybody realise their potential. And I don't think I should. So I went into my own business for coaching whereby the people that work with me, I'm purely there to help them realise their potential, whatever that might be. And I've never been happier, so I think I made a good choice.

34:16

Phil Willcox

Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. And if the listener's thinking then. So how do I find my poetry then, Kate? How do I find that? What might be some actions or some recommendations that we can give to the listener in terms of how they can find their poet or poetry?

34:43

Kate Jenkinson

I can do some really practical stuff like, I mean you don't even have to spend any money, go to your local library, you know, if you aren't already a Member, Join it. That's. That's a delight. To think that more people might patronise their local libraries and get the biggest poetry anthology you can find. A modern one. Try and pick a modern one because there are so many poets whose voices are out there. And you might read the anthology and just find one poet that you go actually that really resonates. Go and buy their collection. That's a really practical way of not having to spend too, any money at all. You know, encouraging poetry in your community and hopefully finding something that works for you. That's the page poet. Go to an open mic. Now. You talked. We met at the HR open mic and why there hasn't been more Phil since then, I don't know. I'm just putting that out there. It was a brilliant event. We should do more HRs open mic. It was amazing. Go to an open mic event. Sometimes you've got a mix of poetry and music. And the spoken word is so much more engaging than the written word for somebody like me. I don't make images in my mind's eye, so when I read something on the page, if it's full of visual imagery, it doesn't connect. But when somebody speaks poetry, if they perform it, if they embody it, you feel the emotions in it. It's far more moving to hear spoken word delivered in an environment that is intimate. An intimate environment. You could go to a festival that might be having a poetry slam. The only caveat I'd give you there is that those poets are trying to entertain you. And so you might not experience the full range of poetry that is available. But if you want fun and entertainment and quick thrills, go to a poetry slam. How else might you find your poetry? You know those moments when you're in flow and time just passes and you let it go? What's happening? Take a moment to notice what's around you, the beauty of that moment, the truth of that moment, and write it down. Because that's the

poetry in your life. That's when you are having a poetic moment, when everything is aligned. So poetry doesn't have to be what we learn at school. It doesn't have to be written down. It can be the poetry of a moment of flow. There's something in appreciative inquiry called the poetic principle. And it's, the poetic principle is what you focus on grows. So wouldn't it be wonderful if we all focused more on those moments of flow? Because then we would have more of them. And this is why I think poetry is antidote to the ailment that businesses suffer, which is unexpressed emotions, unheard feelings. If you could find those flow moments in business and focus on them more rather than the pain points or the problems, which is what a lot of organisations teach us to do. The founder of that organisation focused on flow first or he wouldn't have an organisation that connected with people, that people were passionate to buy services from. So it's getting back to those moments of passion flow and focusing on them and then you get more of those. That's the poetic principle. What you focus on grows. So you can find your poetry in many different ways. It can be words, it can be moments.

39:02

Phil Willcox

Okay, so we had. So the poetic principle from appreciative inquiry is one. Yeah, find what, where you experience that flow, focus on that so in turn it can grow. If you want to be entertained then maybe go to poetry slam because, you know, to have a bit of a laugh and be entertained, then a poetry slam can be a place to go. An open mic night generally. Then yeah, would be good and in addition to that there's head to your local library, find an anthology of poems, preferably current or more current, I think you said.

39:45

Kate Jenkinson

I think so, yeah. A really good publisher for that kind of thing is Bloodaxe Books. They tend to do more spoken word poetry, but that's my preference. Again, it's a genre of poetry and even spoken word breaks down into different types. But, you know, that's a, I'd say there's still a language, ironically, that we need to develop in poetry that helps people understand how to access it. So we haven't made it as accessible to people who aren't initially inspired by what they encounter at school, maybe. And so we've got a bit of work to do, which is what I try and do by coming onto a podcast like this to try and say, you know, it isn't all figured out or thought of through. I'm really interested in having conversations with people who are curious about how they should or could find their poetry still.

40:44

Phil Willcox

Okay, thank you so much, Kate. And is there something else or something more than that you might think about in terms of actions or recommendations for people if they want to try and find their poetry?

41:01

Kate Jenkinson

Well, of course they should come to the poetry and business conference, Phil, shouldn't they? Because that's a condensed experience. Because I'm just one poet in business or business poet. There are many of us. When I first joined LinkedIn about 10 years ago, I searched and found one other. You search now, you'll find lots of people who put their poet identity in the title. There are so many ways it can show up. The conference is about helping people notice poetry and business and decide for themselves what they would like to take from that and, you know, experience more in the future. So we help them create a poetry toolkit of their own at conference. That's the aim. In between each of the sessions there's a play break. So I don't know about you, but I'll often go to a conference and it's one session straight after another and it's overwhelming. And I thought, well, again, if I'm creating a conference that I would like to go to, I want to have time to reflect on what I've just heard and play with some of the concepts and apply them. Because I learn by, through my own creativity. If I can create something new from the thing I've just heard, I'm going to learn about it better. So the conference has an hour session, an hour's play break, an hour's session and hours play break with some exercises you might want to try to learn some of the concepts or ideas to play with some of them in between.

42:37

Phil Willcox

Wonderful. And it's happening on the 14th of November 2025. It is, it's virtual. And I'll put a link in the show notes to anybody who is interested in getting a ticket. So we'll put a link into where you can get tickets.

42:51

Kate Jenkinson

Thank you.

42:52

Phil Willcox

In the show notes as well. Okay, So on the 10. Do you say 10 years? 10 years since.

43:02

Kate Jenkinson

In business? Yes.

43:04

Phil Willcox

Yeah.

43:04

Kate Jenkinson

Entering my 10th year now.

43:06

Phil Willcox

Okay. So you've come this far then, Kate, over those 10 years. What's next?

43:13

Kate Jenkinson

Well, gosh, that's exciting. So I decided that, like I said, we don't have the language that we need or the career paths that would help other younger creatives or business poets find their way. It seems a shame we have to sort of make it so hard. So I'm going to establish something called the Association of Business Poets. Poets tend to be a niche in other communities. Like if you have a speaker association, you'll have speakers, but then you'll have those that might use poetry. You've got the poetry school and then you've got like, well, the spoken word artists who are kind of. So always seems to be this little niche of another community. I want to create our own community, business poets where people who've got like a business discipline, like I'm an HR and Development professional and also a poet. I apply poetry in a different way than maybe others do in business. You might be a marketer and have poetry as your passion as well. You would apply that in a different way than I would. So I want to create this community. It already exists from the last conference, but I want to create a place where we can develop this practice together so that in the future, Phil, when people go, oh, we've got a conference, we've got our photographer, we've got our poet, it becomes just as normal as that. It's like we've got our visual imagery person, we've got our verbal imagery person who's going to capture the emotions of the event as well as the pictures. Because I don't believe there are some phrases that are unhelpful, like, you know, an image. What does it. What's the phrase? An image is better than...

45:00

Phil Willcox

A thousand words.

45:01

Kate Jenkinson

Yeah, exactly. If you pick the right words, say them in the right way, you can create as rich an experience as you can with a picture. So, and that's because I don't have the mental visual imagery. That's why this is so important to me. If you want to engage me at an event, have poetry. So to be neuro-inclusive even, I'd say it's something that organisation should really think about. So the future for me is that poetry becomes the norm. That poetic way of communicating is something that we recognise. That the word doesn't create this anxiety or anger or defensiveness or resistance from people because they've seen another way for it to show up and help them engage in the workplace and feel at home. That's the future. Who knows?

45:57

Phil Willcox

Yeah, love that, Kate. So the Association of Business Poets.

46:03

Kate Jenkinson

Yes. We have just started to gather what that looks like, where we're going to be and we'll be saying more at the conference. If people want to be part of it, wonderful. I want it to be co-creative as well. So although, you know, I'm the one that feels I'm talking about it at the moment, I want others to come on board and be confident, to talk about what it is, how it shows up. I don't want this just to be my idea, I want it to be co-created from as many business poets as possible. And with that in mind, I recruited a business poet to help me with communicating the poetry and business conference. So I'm trying to put my actions, you know, where my beliefs are.

46:52

Phil Willcox

Yeah, absolutely. Love that.

46:56

Kate Jenkinson

Okay, thank you.

46:58

Phil Willcox

So before we move, then towards the end, where we get, I'm really excited to hear your poem. Is there something else then? Something else? Oh, no. There's one question before that. So one of the questions that I ask as we segue into the end is what has surprised you about poetry and business?

47:21

Kate Jenkinson

What surprised me about poetry and business. I get surprised when people have that visceral. When it doesn't sit here because I'm so immersed in as a scientist as well. Evidence based, it's almost like, but the logic and the evidence that it does make a difference and does have an impact. You know, the reason people are so anti-it, is purely emotional. And so that still surprises me now when it happens. My brain goes, I can't understand where your resistance is coming from. You must have had. I have compassion. I feel you must have had a terrible experience. And it might be one that people often quote is, you know, being asked to dissect poems at work. At work at school, to pass an exam and that sort of pressure expectation that you need to get it right when to be honest, poetry is all about exploration and discovery and I said to people when they're on my workshops, because I do poetry and leadership workshops, the first rule of poetry is there is no rule. Because if you think you need to do something a certain way for it to work, yes, if you want to be published as a poet, yes, if

you want to get into a journal as a poet. But if you want to express how you feel, there are no rules. And I think that helps people feel a little bit more comfortable that they can't get it wrong. And again, with appreciative inquiry, I use a lot of the principles in my coaching and leadership development. Words create worlds. So what words you use create the environment around you. So if you wanted to choose a better world to live in, then find some words that you can use to paint that picture.

49:40

Phil Willcox

Wonderful. Thank you, Kate. All right, so we'll put some links in the show notes to the poetry and business conference where people can go to get tickets. We'll also put a link into the, I can't remember that I didn't write down the name of the person you mentioned earlier on, the person who you wanted to speak at a conference and so you got them as the keynote for the poetry and business.

50:05

Kate Jenkinson

Oh, Claire Morgan. Yeah, Claire Morgan. Her book. Yeah. This is an exciting thing. Sorry to interrupt. At the conference we're being sponsored by the Poetry Pharmacy. The Poetry Pharmacy make pills with poetry in them. Poetic remedies to lift the spirits and they are an easy entry into poetry. I should have said, if you want an easy entry into poetry, buy some poetry pills. These are happy pills I'm showing Phil at the moment, and they're sponsoring us. And they've created a bookshelf for the Poetry in Business conference. So any books that previous speakers have recommended, any books that could help you find your way into Poetry in business are on that bookshelf and it's supported by the Poetry Pharmacy.

51:00

Phil Willcox

Wonderful. Fabulous. So if there's something else, then. Something else, something more, Kate, that you are thinking, feeling, or would like to say before we start to pull this together.

51:09

Kate Jenkinson

I want to say thank you, Phil. I think it's always a joy to be able to speak from a passionate place and to share some of the stories. Genuinely. I'd be here all day talking about this passion. So you need to close this down, I think, now.

51:28

Phil Willcox

Oh, thank you. I mean, and what I've really enjoyed is I think if I was to go back through and listen, you've created at least three, if not four poems, I think, as you've been speaking our way through. So one was, I'm tired of playing this game, I can't do it anymore was the beginning of one. And then,

another one, when you're talking about flow, is another one that sticks out. So what I'll do is I'll go back through in the edit process and put like maybe some mini poems.

52:03

Kate Jenkinson

And that is beautiful because that, folks, is called found Poetry. And you can do. And this is, this is the joy of poetry, isn't it? You can find it anywhere. So, exactly, yeah. Thank you. I really look forward to seeing that.

52:20

Phil Willcox

Wonderful. Okie dokie. All right then. In that case, to bring this episode of the Emotion of Work podcast to a close, I would like to hand over to Kate Jenkinson, who is going to share a poem with us now.

52:33

Kate Jenkinson

Thank you. So to finish the small verse that I gave you before. And it's not a long poem. So...

Hope is the sunset on an imperfect day.
The sleeping rays resting and re-energising darkness, consuming all our fears.
So in the morning, hope dawns and reappears.
She accompanies me in every new and challenging experience.
Her belief and sheer resilience to cope with life's ups and downs.
I feel her gentle presence.
Hope holds my hand and whispers affirmations.
Her reassurance understands recharging my determination to survive, inspiring my curiosity.
Hope keeps me alive.

53:31

Phil Willcox

Wonderful. Thank you so much. So I wanted to leave the pause at the end so we can because I'm literally going to end the show on that.

53:37

Kate Jenkinson

Okay.

53:37

Phil Willcox

Yeah, that was wonderful.

53:40

Kate Jenkinson

There is a scientific experiment which was done to understand the impact that poetry has on our brains. And using FMRI scans at the end of life, it was shown that hope, that poetry inspired hope. It was one of the few things that could do that at end of life. And so it's used therapeutically. So the science of where poetry is used and when it's used and you just think businesses aren't. See, I've gone off on another tangent now, but that is something. You read that and you go, why aren't businesses realising the power of this anyway?

54:28

Phil Willcox

Yeah, I'm with you.

54:30

Kate Jenkinson

You are. Thank you. Thank you for being with me. Thank you for letting me be with you.

54:35

Phil Willcox

Thank you. Thank you for being here. Loved it.