



Conscious Life presents

# ANXIETY SUPER CONFERENCE

## Transform your shadows

Guest: Jamie Catto

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### **[00:00:10] Alex Howard**

Welcome, everyone, to this interview where I'm super excited to be talking with a good friend of mine, Jamie Catto. Firstly, Jamie, welcome. Thank you for joining me.

### **Jamie Catto**

Thank you for having me.

### **Alex Howard**

We've crossed paths a few times over the years in different places, but we haven't actually done an interview like this, I think, before. So it's nice to have a chance to explore together.

Some of you will know Jamie through different ways. Jamie is someone that I see as having lived a few different lives in different chapters. Originally, his work as a musician, particularly in Faithless, and then transitioned into *1 Giant Leap*, which I think was one of the most impressive creative projects that I've ever seen, at least.

And then more recently, his work around creativity and running groups, and also one on one, that's a force in coaching as well.

There's lots of different directions we could go here and Jamie and I were just saying, where do we go? Because there's so much we could talk about.

But I think the piece to start with, which I think is actually really at the crux of a lot of the anxiety that people experience, is this idea that much of the time we have parts of ourselves which are suppressed, they're oppressed, we're not in touch with, we're trying to be something else.

Jamie, I know in your work, particularly your work with transforming shadows, the impact of that on our mental and emotional wellbeing is significant.

### **Jamie Catto**

Absolutely. I began doing workshops just about creativity, Bring Your Dream project into the world, and then noticed pretty quickly that unless somebody's there as the unedited, unapologetic, juicy, present version of themselves, there's not going to be very much great creativity going on.

**[00:01:57]**

A lot of people are so inhibited by, they say that speaking publicly is more scary statistically than death, which always reminds me of the Jerry Seinfeld joke that means in a funeral you would rather be in the casket than delivering the eulogy.

When we have such a suppressed feeling of, if I stand up, people are going to think I'm arrogant, people are going to think I'm mediocre, people are thinking I don't know what's going on, people are going to notice my vulnerability. All those things which we have made illegal and unwelcome about ourselves are suddenly huge stress points.

So it began as a thing for getting people to be fully in their wholeness creatively, and then I realized that I was enjoying that part more than the actual stuff about the Bring Your Dream project. So all the workshop studies started becoming about the shadows.

And shadows for people, people often think of their shadow as their dark side, but it's a misinterpretation, really, as far as the model we work with, which is the shadows are the things you have hidden away in the shadows. It's the things we've suppressed and tried to hide away.

And when you claim them back, it's not just about neutralizing anxiety, they come with huge amounts of treasure that we froze up when we made our standing up and being excited about an idea, illegal, or our sexiness or our confidence, all these things people want to not stick their head up and have it chopped off and therefore play very small in the name of not triggering people or being rejected from the tribe.

So a huge amount of treasure comes with it. It's not just about neutralizing anxiety, it's about really claiming so much fun and sensuality and genius and friendship and laughter and all the things we want more of. Particularly intimacy. Because the more of me I'm hiding, the less intimate and connected I'm going to be with you. So the thing we all crave so much, which is a deeper connection, is top of the list of what you get back, which is feeling more connected to the other humans.

### **Alex Howard**

I particularly remember times, particularly in my 20s where I had a lot of ideas of who I thought I should be and what was acceptable and what wasn't acceptable, and so in a sense, this attempting to be this idealized self or this idealized persona. But of course, when we do that we know in our hearts that that's not true. We can feel the inauthenticity. And actually that constant fear of being busted, it causes a great deal of internal turmoil.

### **Jamie Catto**

Not only that, not only the imposter syndrome, but also, and this is almost worse, is that when you then love me for the fake mask I gave you, I can't even fully receive that love anyway, the thing that I manipulated to get, because I know it was through false circumstances.

So it screws us up on both directions. One, it makes it difficult to even stand there and be fake. And secondly, when the manipulation works, we don't get the satisfaction of the actual real deeper connection and love because I sold you a mask.

## **[00:05:05] Alex Howard**

So to take a few steps back in terms of some of the story of how this gets set up in the first place, I'm sure a lot of people that are watching this, listening to this already resonate with that. Just that phrase, 'imposter syndrome' is so good because I think a lot of us have felt that at times, but where does this come from? How does this get set up?

## **Jamie Catto**

Well, when we are growing up, our culture is kind of strange, we've normalized it, but basically our parents and carers who mirror to us what is and isn't okay about us, what is and isn't welcome about us, they do it through love withdrawal most of the time and shaming. Certainly when you and I were growing up. We're getting more conscious now.

But if you got it right and you obeyed and you were fitted with the model of being a good boy or a good girl, the love lines were open and it was all safe and smooth. But then when you transgress those things, you had it pulled away, either through a cold look, it's heading off, maybe something even more emotionally or even physically violent.

So what happens is that when you give something great, like love and survival, and then take it away and then give it and then take it away, give it, take it away, no matter how much of a Buddha you are, that creates addiction inside the human organism. So we all became approval addicts.

Therefore, every time we got shown something that was so-called unwelcome, and we didn't know to distrust them, that they were just having a bad day or they were badly educated by their parents, like never look vulnerable or never look too confident. Wrong rules, but we didn't know that at the time.

So whenever we did something that they didn't like and that historically showed us got love taken away, we would try and edit those bits away and suppress them and only show the shop window, the brochure of ourselves and all the bits that seem to work and get love and not get us told off.

And over days and days and months and months and weeks and years of that, so much suppression and so much anger was naughty. We weren't supported and upheld in our natural fiery rage, even though it's a totally natural part of the human spectrum. We weren't supported in our tears because that stirs up other people's tears. And it's like, stop crying or I'll give you something to cry about, because they didn't like that feeling either.

So two major, those are just two great examples. Also being sexy. Most people, if they were exploring themselves age 3 or 4 on that sofa, someone would walk in, a grandmother, oh stop that! Dirty, whatever. Now they think their sexuality is dirty for the rest of their life. Huge parts of us, our tears, our rage, our sensuality, our sexuality, our confidence to speak publicly, we were shown was unwelcome and so we edited it away and didn't show it to anyone anymore.

And over years and years and years, we think that's who we are. I'm not creative or I'm not sexy, or I'm not angry, but beware the anger of the quiet man because of the body's incredible healing system, it's constantly trying to make itself whole. I don't know how, but it just seems to be constantly trying to make itself whole.

**[00:07:59]**

So we can't amputate those parts of ourselves. We can only suppress them. And therefore, life's genius has a way of trying to give us opportunities and bring them back, often in appearing to be self-sabotaging ways because we're in such resistance.

We've made a map of ourselves where we've edited ourselves so much, we've made dragons around the edge of the map going, I'm not this, I'm not that. No. And we've seen them as dragons when really when we approach them, which is what I love about the workshops is, they're so fun and there's such a relief to all be in the crazy together. You approach the dragon and you realize it's not a dragon at all. It's like a child's chalk drawing of a dragon and one sort of (blow) and it's gone, bringing back treasure.

So it's like you asked, how does it happen? It happens through the repetitive hiding in our childhood of things that we thought would get us rejected.

**Alex Howard**

I love that metaphor of the chalk blowing away. That's really great.

In a sense, also, when we create these masks or these ideas of who we need to be, I think it's also often the case that our sense of safety in the world is tied to the idea that we need to be that way.

And often those expectations, it's often a high bar.

**Jamie Catto**

It's a PTSD reaction at the end of the day, it's a trauma response. Somewhere deep down we believe, if I transgress that thing, even though I made the decision when I was 6, I've been living religiously by ever since as if it's a truth, so I could be 46 and still have that 6 year old that thinks it's going to have a major PTSD flashback if I look vulnerable or I look like I don't know what's going on. So it becomes a huge thing. Absolutely. Festering in the dark.

**Alex Howard**

The idea of who we need to be to be safe is also then what keeps us trapped. It's an odd thing that we're working so hard to be a certain way, but the way we're trying to be is actually what's perpetuating the cycle of suffering.

**Jamie Catto**

Totally. And the irony is, and what I'm constantly persuading people in the groups, the world wants the actual you. That's the mad thing, is that when you fall in love with an artist or someone, you don't fall in love with their sanded down, homogeneous appropriate side. You never met anyone and go, have you met Brian? He's so appropriate.

It's the edgy kind of people who look comfortable at their edge that turn us on. And that's the very thing, our eccentricity, our quirkiness, our uniqueness that we don't want anyone to see, which is the very thing that will make people love you. And the people that don't love that side of you aren't your people. So let them see it and leave, too. Also it's beneficial.

**[00:10:43] Alex Howard**

It's so interesting, actually, just as you speak, I'm thinking about particularly music, because that's part of your work. There's so much effort these days that seems to go into polishing musicians to be perfect. From polishing public image and to literally polishing, auto tuning vocals to make it all sound so perfect. And yet almost consistently, the people that truly define the industry, almost by definition, it's because of their imperfectness that we're drawn to them.

**Jamie Catto**

Absolutely. It's like an animal in the wild versus a trained pet. You can watch animals in the wild endlessly. They're endlessly fascinating because they don't care whether you're looking at them or not. A trained pet does, and therefore is boring.

So it's the same with artists. And that's why we always find that often when we're releasing things, you use the demo because when everyone was suddenly really uptight about it sounding perfect because it's a really expensive studio, the red light fever, they call it, when you know you're recording, it takes you out of the moment. But when you were just rocking along in the demo, and we knew this bit wasn't going to be used so you're really relaxed and have fun, you play your best music.

It's something quantum. They say the observer changes the experiment. If you're watching yourself too much, you can't be the natural thing that everyone's going to love.

**Alex Howard**

Well, it's funny, I think about particularly some of the earlier rock bands, and it's like they just did what they did in a grubby garage or basement, and then suddenly record labels spent a fortune trying to recreate that sound to try and make people sound cool.

**Jamie Catto**

I know.

**Alex Howard**

So, one has the recognition that they've got these different masks, they've got these different shadow parts themselves in their shadow, which they're hiding and bearing. And yet sometimes the very recognition of that can be anxiety inducing, because then it's like, well, who am I if I'm not the person I've known myself to be? That can actually existentially be quite a vulnerable and quite a scary place.

**Jamie Catto**

Absolutely. Which is where playfulness is such an essential ingredient and why I've made it so central to the school of insanely gifted, and everything, is just like when you're mucking around and laughing, you tend to return to that younger feeling, the safety of feeling younger, not the anxiety of feeling younger. And there's a lovely intimacy of people laughing and heart opening together.

So it's important to seek out people you feel safe to be playful with. This isn't something you want to do exposure therapy on in front of, necessarily the people at work to start with, because that's not an environment where historically you feel totally safe. Better to do it with your kids. Shadow play and all

that stuff is really great to do with the people that you feel safest with. Don't leap straight into, I need to rip off all the masks, and look at the real me, everyone. That can be just as traumatic.

### **[00:13:46]**

Little steps, little tiny expansions here and there, being a little bit naughtier, being a little bit more mischievous, being a little bit cheeky just land those tiny, tiny moments. It's an amazingly expansive quality that they can have just by little, tiny, tiny moments.

A lot of people get worried that, oh, I'm so fake. I need to be this other thing. Like it's black and white, I have to go from 0 to 100. And this stuff is very, very delicate. It's very wound up in a lot of wounding and painful moments from our childhood. That's why we suppress them.

So sometimes when we embark upon the journey to release ourselves, I often think what we're doing when we're working with people is like those activists that are unwrapping a bit of blue plastic around the flipper of the turtle and putting it back, but in the unwrapping, it's got sore edges. You have to be quite, the inner children in us, they need very gentle encouragement because we're talking about very young parts of us.

No little kid ever was thriving by being dragged along non consensually into experiences. So it's very important to be very gentle whenever you catch yourself at things, be very loving and find every so-called failure adorable.

My favorite teacher is a guy called Ram Dass, and he distilled his whole life teaching into the four words, 'I am loving awareness'. He didn't say, 'I am awareness'. It has to be loving. If you catch yourself and bust yourself being fake or bust yourself in whatever way, you have to find it sweet and adorable and just like you would with a little kid, very encouraging, not dragging them into situations and exposure therapy. Very gentle and loving. It's so important.

### **Alex Howard**

Well, in a sense, one of the psychological structures becomes often the glue to these sort of fake selves is that critical voice that we all have, the inner critic. In a sense, the more we judge ourselves, I guess the more we need those masks to try and defend ourselves from that judgment.

### **Jamie Catto**

And the inner critic actually has a really amazing function if treated consciously and lovingly. Because all these voices, and I call it headfuck FM, all the different voices, the radio station that never stops and all the DJs are all different voices, like the critic, the slave driver, the victim, but they all think they're helping in their own young, immature way.

But there's a way to harvest each one of them, and that's what we do on Transforming Shadows, especially like the inner critic, most people are governed by the thoughts and beliefs that are deep in their unconscious mind, when your and my, Alex and Jamie personalities, have very little access to that stuff. And so when we decide to not show up for something, it wasn't because we thought, oh, I don't want to do that. We just feel a bit tired or not really in the mood because the unconscious has decided we're not doing that and has just made it unattractive for us.

## **[00:16:31]**

So many of the beliefs are like, they won't like me or I'm not sexy, I'm not likable, I'm not for social consumption, whatever. I'm not cool. They're so deep in the unconscious and they govern our lives so much. So much of decision making happens there.

The great thing about the inner critic is if you really listen to what it says, and we do a game where we actually write down what it says, then you flush, like flushing the pigeons out of the bushes. You've got out of the unconscious onto the page the actual beliefs that are running your life that you didn't realize was there.

Once you've got them on the page, you can go, oh, I'm not welcome or do I want to live as if that's true anymore? And if the answer is no, then you can start doing some inquiries, all kinds of ways to inquire to dissolve those beliefs that are running our life. But you can't do it when they're in your unconscious and when you're triggered.

So the inner critic offers us this amazing way of bringing the unseen into the seen. And then you can go to Byron Katie's website and go through all her great questionnaires which dissolve limiting beliefs incredibly, lots of other things you can do to address them, can't do it when it's in the unconscious.

So, many of these voices, they hurt, so we turn away from them, they hurt so we suppress them, they hurt so we're like, no, no, no. But actually if we dare to turn towards them and we're the school of turning towards and even become a wine taster of them, be willing to feel the uncomfortable feelings in our body, be willing just to snorkel around the edges a little bit, the amount of treasure and insight and illumination that is the reward, is massive.

## **Alex Howard**

As we start to have that awareness, and the insight, and it starts to reveal itself in that way, often, although I think there can be a relief of the fact we're getting closer to ourselves, there can often also be a lot of feelings and emotions that are unmetabolized and unprocessed, that sometimes people's way of responding to those feelings is to go back into their mind and escape to that place of analysis. What do you find helps support people in just staying with and just being able to welcome and be present to all of that?

## **Jamie Catto**

Well, I would say, do the inquiry when you're not triggered, when you're having a lovely time with a bunch of people out on a workshop where you're all having fun together and you're feeling relaxed and you're not feeling triggered and you've got the solidarity of other people in the same field who are also curious about it all.

Then that's a great time to do it because you're not triggered. You can go, oh, well, I really believe in this all the time. I never thought of that. Or the certain structures. You can lead people down the garden path to notice certain things. To try and do it when you're triggered is the worst time to do it. You can self soothe at those moments, but you're not going to get a really great insight because you're probably triggered into fight, flight, freeze or fawn, or fornicate I think is the fifth one.

## **Alex Howard**

I think you mean the fawn response.

### **[00:19:27] Jamie Catto**

My first thing is, it's all about gentleness and lovingness and peacefulness and not rushing. We've got this whole thing about rushing to the finish line. We've also got a thing about ticking things off lists. And we believe that once I've done this stuff, that it should be gone from my life. And that's just not how this stuff works. It's not how forgiveness works. It's not how any of the neuroplasticity patterning of our brain works. It comes back and you need to meet it again.

You have to be super patient and super loving and treat the whole thing as if you're dealing with a 3 year old child, and you won't go far wrong.

And the other thing is, we live in a very comfort addicted culture. We've grown up looking at TVs that say, get a headache, take a pill. Everything about our culture tells us that if something is hurting, something must be wrong.

And actually, often when something is hurting, something is right. Your body is doing some very well needed discharging. It's like a valve. And we need to feel some discomfort in our lives for illumination purposes, for discharging old constipated, emotional poo purposes, for having the vulnerability to reach out to other people purposes, for having the empathy that I've helped this pain and I can see you're in that pain, let me hold you in that pain empathy purposes.

There's all kinds of incredible treasure through pain. But because we have a blanket. No. If it feels bad, it must be wrong. I need to get rid of it. Run to an addiction, run to a suppression cork and somehow escape it.

So to really be a willing participant in some of your edgy feelings is a prerequisite to doing this in a safe way so that it doesn't build up and build up. Because it wants to do it in a safe way. It taps on the door, but if you are constantly rejecting this company, not today thanks, then it bangs a bit harder on the door. No, not today. We keep saying no until eventually the universe has to smash the door down to get to us. And we go, what happened with my life? Why am I getting divorced and bankrupt? Well, you were probably given five other opportunities to turn towards this earlier.

And I feel that people talk about Karma as some sort of punishment thing. But I look at Karma more like by any means necessary to reach you. And if you won't let us reach you in the gentle or slightly, we're going to have to break down the door to get to you. It wasn't preferable. No one wants to punish you, but sometimes it's the only way to reach certain people and themselves.

### **Alex Howard**

Well, it's interesting because I think what's also implicit in what you're saying is that often we see anxiety as something broken and wrong to fix and get rid of. But actually, of course, anxiety can also be a communication from our heart, from our soul to say that something is out of alignment or something needs attention.

### **Jamie Catto**

Precisely. Bashar says, when you play an out of tune note on the piano, you don't run away from the piano to never play it again, you tune the note. Pretty much everything I believe that's presenting, is the part of the body's genius best shot at trying to bring our attention to something that no matter how much of a twat we're being, no matter how much we're acting out, there's always a legitimate need underneath it that needs to be met in a healthy way.



**[00:22:34]**

That's where I was trying to find it, like, yes, you're being an alcoholic or yes, you're screaming at your children, but what's the panic under there? What's the need that's desperately trying to get met underneath that acting out behavior?

And then once you know what the legitimate need is, you can set about meeting it in a healthy way. You're right. This trying to get rid of mentality is the problem rather than curiosity and welcome and going, what's going on here? As you would with a car if it was acting up, as you would with a piano, as you would with everything except yourself.

### **Alex Howard**

One of the tools that I know that you also use, is dialoguing with these parts of ourselves. That as we start to recognize, and I want to echo something you said earlier, which I really liked, which is that, it's not parts of us that are our shadow, it's parts of us that are in our shadow. That's an important distinction that you made. But how can we start to actually communicate with and build some understanding with these aspects?

### **Jamie Catto**

It's really just through willingness and listening. So in Taoism, which is the ancient Chinese super cool, they came up with Tai Chi and acupuncture and all kinds of really wonderful helpful stuff. They break down, you've all seen the Yin Yang thing, they break down the binary existence we're in to Yang, parts of ourselves where we go out and penetrate things and we do things and we use our will. That's pretty much how we've all been trained in school, to meet the thing, impose our will on it, get it how we want it.

There's another whole side of us which is less controlled, which is the Yin, which is the receptive side of us, which listens, which is curious, which is impacted by things. And that isn't a tool that we have been particularly trained in, but in this kind of stuff is our absolute secret weapon.

Because when we drop into silence and space and just listen, we hear amazing things. You can agonize about certain problems and decisions you have to make in your life and make great lists of pros and cons, but actually if you just stop and empty and listen and put both hands on your tummy and ask the question, is this the right relationship for me? You'll know your truth within 5 seconds. You may not like it, you may not act on it, but just by sitting in silence and listening to ask yourself questions, you kind of know the truth almost immediately when you listen in silence.

So asking questions and then sitting in silence and just listening, there's a greater field and don't be too woo woo about it, but there seems to be a greatest field of genius within us that answers questions beyond our self cherishing ego, pros and cons mind. We have an access there.

So one of the ways we work with in dialogue with, let's say you've got something that's really bothering you, a shadowy character or a lump in your life that keeps repeating, that feels out of control. First thing we do is welcome it in. So just first of all just fully change our attitude to it, that we're not trying to get rid of something, we're trying to be curious to integrate something.

And the moment we start tuning into it and beckoning it, welcoming it rather than pushing it away, if we have a sense of being somatic, the somatic side and feeling the sensations in our body. If we're just having a gentle body scan while you do this, you notice when you think about that anxious angry

thing or whatever, you'll notice somewhere in your body begins to contract or say hello, like your solar plexus tightens up or your throat feels funny, you start noticing where inside it kind of lives.

**[00:26:07]**

You start breathing gently in that place and that's like you found the place where it lives in you and then you can ask questions like, what do you need? How are you doing? What do you need? What do you want to tell me? What's going on? You can just say how can I support you? What do you want more of? What you need less of?

And you almost imagine that that place in the body has a mouth and you just listen as if it's a little character that lives in there. And something, you can, once you do it a few times or even sometimes immediately, you get a real sense wow, this is like a 5 year old or wow this is like a 12 year old. It's amazing how it's like dying to talk to you.

So it's like these parts of ourselves through our bodily symptoms, through our emotional wobbles are trying to get through to us so much that the moment we turn towards them and give them our ear, they're like they cannot wait. It's not a complex thing you have to be trained in, they cannot wait to communicate to you.

So just the ability to sit in a listening, curious, welcoming, non judgmental space and just ask the parts of the body or the feelings, what they need, what's going on? We have a bunch of questions that we ask. What do you want more of? Because often these parts of us are young parts that took the job of protecting us too young.

And something happened when you were 6, when you felt ashamed so you made a little 6 year old that lived inside you and is scanning the horizon for anything like that to ever happen again. And anytime something looks like it's coming over the horizon, it flushes your body with cortisol and anxiety.

So that 6 year old needs to be lovingly relieved of duty. So the moment you found it and you've asked some questions, you need to say, hey, you're 6, I'm the adult, I'm going to stay awake for this right now.

Because usually when these parts of us get aroused, the adult in us falls asleep and the young part takes the wheel, and now we're operating from the thoughts and agenda of a 6 year old. So to stay awake in those moments, not get what I call, spiritual narcolepsy, when you get triggered, to stay awake and say, hey, no, I'm going to take this one, it doesn't feel comfy.

And actually, I encourage people to buy presents for that little 6 year old. Say, hey, what would you like as a gift? A Man United shirt. What do you want to do more of? Dancing, coloring in, swimming. Give them their childhood back.

And above all, another great step, which I feel really proud to have discovered and has been incredibly healing for people, is even though it is a big deal that you're soothing your inner child when it's triggered, a lot of people only do it when it's triggered. And therefore the inner children parts of ourselves that are trying to integrate, they learn that they have to create a problem in order to get met, like all kids.

**[00:28:53]**

So it's very important to keep checking in with them even when you feel good. So when you're enjoying an ice cream or a beautiful sunset or petting a puppy or whatever, keep bringing them into the nice experience so they get that this year is safe and nice today. They're living in the past. Keep bringing them into a safe, lovely experience of now and then they don't need to create such huge dramas to get met.

### **Alex Howard**

My experience also when working with this material, was there's something also that's deeply relieving, in a sense, to not just realize that these aspects or parts of ourselves are not just dysfunctional, broken parts, but also there's wisdom and there's holding within them. It's almost, I think, a move from being in a civil war where we're battling with ourselves, to actually feel this holding and this support from within ourselves.

### **Jamie Catto**

Exactly the first thing we do on the workshop when we do dialogue, and the first thing we do when we find it difficult being your character is, we thank them because they think they've been helping for so long. And actually the strapline for the workshop is, 'Turn your demons into employees'. Because that's all they really want to be. They're not against you. They're really trying to do their best with their often 6 year old take on things. But for the best information they have to hand, they're trying to help. And so they just need new data.

Often these kinds of behaviors, they never got told to stop. The example I often give, is you imagine the 6 year old who is the youngest of six siblings, the youngest of six brothers and sisters. When he was little, he had to elbow everyone out of the way and grab the food and shout and be very dominant just to survive. Now the guy is 36 years old, that behavior is not working for him anymore, but it was a survival necessity when he was little. But that little character he invented then never got told to stop.

So what we often need is to go back and say, hey, thank you. I did need you to be like that before, but I'm an adult now, I don't need that job done that way anymore. What could you do instead now with your skills that would be useful to my life now? So it's like repurposing them.

### **Alex Howard**

That's beautiful. Well, what also comes to my mind in a few different ways is that doing this work takes courage. It takes the willingness to go to some uncomfortable and some tricky places. And often one of the impacts of anxiety is it disempowers us. It leaves in a place that we feel unresourceful.

And you're someone particularly that strikes me as someone who has, at various inflection points in your life, taken brave and courageous decisions in terms of things that you've done in your career, things that you've initiated and made happen. I'd love to hear your thoughts on, you said earlier around, we've got used to being comfortable. And what do you notice supports courage and helps people go to those more, both internally and externally, go to those more challenging places?

### **[00:31:59] Jamie Catto**

Well, first of all, as I said before, doing it when you're not feeling triggered. You feel more confident when you're with a group of other people who are also into it. There's a field of energy of everyone doing it together.

The second thing is that it really only, and I don't want to be too gung-ho about this, but my experience is it only really takes courage the first time because when you've done it once, you realize it wasn't that big a deal. It's much more of a phantom than it is a difficult thing to do. That when you do it, is that what it was. It's a bit like when we confess things on workshops, tell me your most unlovable thing. And people go, okay. And then they share it, and everyone's like, what. I do that three times before breakfast.

So a lot of the stuff has become a phantom hidden away in our own minds. And yes, you did it once and it was a big deal, but when you've done it once, you go, wow, that was actually, not only a lot easier than I thought, a lot more enjoyable than I thought and it created empathy and connection with everyone else and we had a laugh. Oh God, I've just put down a boulder.

Doing it with other people who aren't finding it a very big deal, I think, is a massive one in places where you feel trust. And don't start with the big stuff. Whenever I'm on the workshops, I say, okay, I want you to think of a time when you felt shame. Don't pick an eight, nine, or a ten please. Pick a three or four or five. Let's just learn the template very easily.

The psyche doesn't actually need you to choose the great moment when you were abused as the in point to the work you need to do. You can just choose the time where they laughed at you because you wore colorful clothes or your dance moves. You can choose fairly smaller things and it has the same actual healing effect as if you chose the massive thing. It doesn't all need to be massive punching pillows and catharsis in order to have huge healing effects.

So just really have expectations, aim low, go gently. We call the Insanely Gifted School, the School of Low Hanging Fruit. Just do the easy stuff. There's no kind of boldness, it doesn't get any prizes. Just do the really easy stuff, and then you might get a bit of confidence and start doing some heavier stuff if there's any left.

But often the heavy stuff translates through the easy stuff, and you can heal incredibly heavy things through incredibly easy stories, oddly. It doesn't require the whole 'no pain, no gain', 'the more it hurt you, the more hard it is'. It doesn't actually mathematically work that way. Just the willingness to even turn a quarter turn towards it, the angels can't wait to help, you know what I mean? There's a lot of support and people want to help.

The thing I want to say about courage is it will take a lot less of your courage than you think.

### **Alex Howard**

Interesting. Also, you've spoken a few times about the importance of that gentle, soft place. And you talked earlier about the more traditional phallic, Yang kind of push, push, push, push, push.

And this Yin quality of approaching ourselves in a softer and a more spacious way is not always easy for people, I think. And I think part of the reason why people find it difficult is we often try to solve the problem with the same approach that created it. And what I mean by that is if someone experienced harshness, they think the way to solve harshness is to be harsh on themselves for example.

**[00:35:28] Jamie Catto**

They've been internalized. However we were treated when we were young, we normalized that. We didn't realize that they were ignorant or they were violent or they were tired or they were not very nice. We just normalized it and therefore we've all internalized. That's what the inner critic voice often is, is the internalized voice of your critical dad or teacher or whatever.

So the default position, you're very right there, is to not do it in a kind way. And it takes a very definite decision and repetitive practice, because neuroplasticity of the brain, which is the pathway we will usually go down, is etched through repetition.

So if you've got 30 years of treating yourself unkindly, you're not just going to learn what you and I are talking about today, and in a week it's going to be gone. There's still going to be that tendency to do it the not kind way.

So we have different ways of playing with that by tying a bell to the ankle of that voice. We play with that voice and we play with the voice settings. So we have the voice being critical and then we turn it into a fascist dictator. Then we turn it into a cheesy game show host going, "You ruined everything. Your life is a complete waste of time". Then you turn it into a spoilt whining child, then you turn it into a drunk or a stoned person. And you disrupt the repetition of that voice so the next time it comes in, it might come in as a cheesy game show host and not be able to hook you.

But you have to really be rubbing your chest and treating yourself in an adorable way over and over and over again, and other people. And let them treat you that way too. Everyone has to be much fluffier and much less judgmental and something is at stake here. And it takes practice to be kind to yourself. It's a funny planet we're on. We've also been raised in such shaming ways and our culture is so shaming as well.

The very fact that, this may be a bit edgy territory so you can edit this out if this doesn't feel appropriate, but the most unforgivable people on this planet are pedophiles, people that are sexual or hurt little children. We have no forgiveness for those people whatsoever.

But you take any one of those people, they were all once a lovely baby. Every abuser was once a lovely baby. Something happened to them that made them ill, where they didn't get the right support. Now some people got abused and luckily did find the right support or the right self help book or the right counselor, and they didn't become an abuser. Lucky them. That doesn't make them better. Just means they were luckier, in my view.

Some other people were constantly beaten or raped or hurt or abused and didn't get the support and became an abuser. They were unluckier. But the fact that we would have, "string them up, I say", it doesn't seem to fit the actual reality.

If you take a person like that, when they were 3 they were being abused, and do you feel sorry for them? Yes. Oh my God. When they were 6 they were still being beaten and abused and no support? Yes. Oh my God. Sympathy. Then they were 14 and they hurt the girl in the class next to me, do you feel sympathy? I'm not sure. Now they're 19 and they did something awful. No. No sympathy. At which point along the line is the moment to lose our compassion for that person?

So I think we need to have high security hospitals more than prisons and change our attitude around that condemnation. That's a very extreme example.

**[00:38:46] Alex Howard**

Well, I think the point that you're making is that there has to be a boundary and what isn't acceptable in terms of someone's behavior. But what you're also speaking to is that there is a complex narrative behind that behavior. And if we can't have a dialogue about that, we're not going to be able to address some of those issues. And therefore, in a strange way, we're also perpetuating some of those cycles.

**Jamie Catto**

And the dog that has rabies that bites you is still innocent in its own way. You've still got to put the dog down, you've still got to keep these people off the streets, you've still got to protect the society from the fallout of their woundedness, but it's woundedness, not maliciousness.

I don't believe I could be... If anything ever happened to one of my kids, I'm not saying I would be able to apply what I'm now saying to you, by the way, but I don't think that anyone who does those things is actually really enjoying it on a core level.

**Alex Howard**

I think I have to confess I don't know enough about the data and the research to truly hold this part of the conversation. But I think what I will say is that the inability to have a complex conversation because we have very simplistic black and white perspectives, doesn't allow us to really inquire into what we need to them to be able to have a deeper and a healthier understanding to ultimately help everyone have less suffering.

**Jamie Catto**

So, I was really bringing that in to come back to what we were saying about people treating themselves badly, is it takes a lot for us in our culture, we're very quick to condemn ourselves, others. We're very quick, like Gabor Mate says, to go to the negative take. We go straight to the negative. They're saying that because they don't respect me.

I had a thing when I was parking my car in Spain and I was late and I couldn't be bothered to park properly so I kind of wedged up against this Church wall where I was obviously not meant to park. And as I was getting out of the car, this guy walked past, it was a Sunday morning, I was going to a cafe over there. Guy walks past and says something to me in Spanish, pointing at my car.

And I immediately assumed he was saying, you can't park there. Who do you think you are? So immediately I was like, who do you think you are telling me? I didn't get aggressive with him but in my mind I thought, F you.

Then I got out of my car and I looked at my car and my bumper was actually on top of the bumper behind mine. And this very kind, totally fair enough guy said, hey mate, your bumper is on top of the car. But my assumption immediately was, don't tell me what I can do. So it's amazing how quickly we go to the condemning negative version.

**Alex Howard**

I think also what you're saying, which is important, is that when we feel like we're being attacked, whether it's an internal attack or it's an external attack, the immediate place we go to is one of

defense. And that's healthy on one level because we may not have had that defense and protection as a child that we needed. The problem is when we become defensive, we also often lose empathy and we lose the ability to self-reflect.

### **[00:41:51] Jamie Catto**

And we make assumptions, often straight to the assumption that isn't necessarily true, but it comes true in that moment.

I always joke on Facebook and say scientists have proved that 83% of my upsets with other people were based on misinterpreting their intentions. People are generally trying to be helpful. Even your critical mother who makes you feel like, mom, why don't you trust me? People get very upset with critical parents, but in their mind they're being protective and helpful.

### **Alex Howard**

It's funny you give that example because I remember many years ago with my mom, various different ways where she did things which I experienced as her saying, you're not grown up enough and I don't trust you enough, despite the fact that I was in my mid 20s.

But what I used to do is I used to hear in my mind, I'd say to myself, this is my mother's way of trying to tell me she loves me and she cares about me. And to try and respond to that intention rather than the behavior which I could be reactive to.

### **Jamie Catto**

Now expand that out to the rest of the world. Pretty much everyone will volunteer, very few people will volunteer things to put you down and be shitty to you. People generally are geared towards harmony and being helpful.

### **Alex Howard**

And in a sense, it's interesting, there's the micro of our own internal experience, but there's also the macro of our experience with others.

And to take it back to, we've got a few minutes left, to take it back to this point around transforming these shadows and these repressed places in ourselves, what you're really saying is that, the more we can approach those from a place of curiosity, of softness, of playfulness, that that's what can invite the transformation. Not the judging, the shaming and the rejecting.

### **Jamie Catto**

There's a great character, who I'm sure you've come across, called Dr Rupert Sheldrake. He's the dad of Merlin Sheldrake who wrote the wonderful mushroom book, *Entangled Life* that everyone loves. Dr Rupert Sheldrake came up with the term "morphic resonance", which is that everything has its own frequency.

And therefore when I come into a room and I'm really bolshie, angry and self righteous, I'm vibrating with that frequency, I'm more likely to awaken that flame of your version of bolshie and self righteous, and therefore we're going to have a fight.

**[00:44:09]**

So in whatever you're putting out, things fall into that frequency. Just like if you put two violins in the same room and you strike a chord on one, the other violin will start playing the same note, the strings will vibrate on that frequency.

So when you meet these parts of yourself or other peoples', with softness, curiosity and kindness, you're much more likely for that vibration in them to be the thing that comes forth. And that's such a lesson for life in all ways.

**Alex Howard**

That's beautiful.

Jamie, for people that want to find out more about you and your work, what's the best way to do that and what's some of what they can find?

**Jamie Catto**

Easy to find me on, [jamiecatto.com](http://jamiecatto.com). There's stuff about music and films. There's stuff about workshop things, there's a teacher training. There are all kinds of things to join in.

I do a group twice a week called The Lovely Gathering, which is a free group just to come and just share presence and chat. And there's not much workshop stuff, but just people come and read a poem, share how they're doing, behold in love and presence. Really fun. And that's free twice a week. Very easy to find.

I'm on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/jamiecatto) and on [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/jamiecatto), pretty much. I'm not a hidden away thing. We have a 100% inclusive business, which means anytime you want to come and join in with any of our stuff, there is a price tag on some of it, but if you can't pay it, no one's going to exclude you because of money reasons. So there is a price tag on things, but no one's turned away for paying less.

So, it's very inclusive and it's very un woo woo. It's just like for everyday people just to come and be everyday people together and drop all the hiding and the masks and the nonsense, and just create a culture of self inquiry and a culture of holding each other in what we all really want, which is a deeper connection.

**Alex Howard**

Beautiful. Jamie, thank you so much. I've enjoyed this conversation. It's always fun to spend time together.