



Learning to access a healing state

Guest: Joanna

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Anna Duschinsky - [00:00:15]

So welcome everybody, to this next in our series of recovery stories, and I'm very happy to be here today with Joanna who is a therapist and is here to talk about her own recovery journey from chronic fatigue.

So welcome Joanna.

Joanna

Hi, Anna.

Anna Duschinsky

Hiya. So I know Joanna well anyway, because she's part of our therapeutic coaching training course, just finishing your level three or coming to that point at the moment, aren't you?

But I know you have your own kind of journey really to this point. So what was going on for you at the point where you, I guess where you crashed? I'm always going to say when you first got ill, because for a lot of people retrospectively, there's a real build up. But at the point where you really realized that something was not okay, what was going on for you at that point?

Joanna

Yeah, it's interesting you say that because I think, like you say retrospectively, you look back and think, oh, gosh, I think I could see it right back then, or other people could see it right back then.

Anna Duschinsky

Yeah.

Joanna

But yeah, when I really realized that something quite different was going on for me, was about three years ago and I'd been, taken on a full time job as a counselor in the primary mental healthcare team, so I was working a lot of hours and lots of clients, the clients were great but then there's the paperwork and all the rest of it. And I was doing a lot of that in the evening. And I had three children at home that were teenagers. Quite a lot going on there. They were doing exams and quite difficult times in their lives. They need quite a lot of support children of that age. You think it's going to get easier but actually quite a lot goes on at that phase.

So I was kind of very busy with that. And I recognized that the job was becoming too much, it was a lot as well as managing the children. So I changed jobs around that time and I started working in a hospice in the bereavement team. And I only took on a few days, you know, I was like I need to do a

bit less. I need to look after myself a bit here. But there was some sickness in the team and I ended up taking on more than I meant to. And also, it was a very different area for me. I hadn't actually worked in bereavement before.

And also what was going on for me at that time was I'd recently remarried. My husband was in the RAF and soon after we got married, we heard that he was going to be deployed to the other side of the world for six months. And it was a shock, really. I mean, because he hadn't actually been deployed for long periods of time for years. So it was like, oh, gosh, why is this happening right now?

And I just couldn't even really think about it. And I think it was, you know, I was working with people who were having to say goodbye to people forever. And it was kind of reflecting that I was having to say goodbye for a short period of time. So I think I was like hanging onto it because I was just like, these people are having to really say goodbye. And I've just got to deal with a separation.

But I just couldn't deal with it. I couldn't even think about saying goodbye. I just couldn't deal with it on some level. So that was going on as well. So it just feels like a lot was going on. A lot was going on emotionally for me back then.

Anna Duschinsky - [00:04:24]

Yeah. I mean, it sounds, I mean, it's a very intense place, environment to work in. It's such a typical theme, we see it so often, that actually we aren't, we'll get to this, I'm making the assumption, obviously we've spoken, but if we aren't completely aware of what's going on for us, sometimes what we do is we just kind of go deeper into patterns that we're already running, helper patterns or achiever patterns. So I love the idea that the previous job was becoming too much so you put yourself into an environment which for most people would sound really, really challenging. Even as you say, you're not theoretically full-time, but that really emotionally challenging environment. And as you say, with the three teenagers and the marriage and dealing with all of that.

So a huge amount going on for you personally at that point in time. And what started to happen? What were you becoming aware of?

Joanna

So I noticed when I started the job because I love something new, I love a new job and a new project. Normally I'm really creative, really buzzing, really full of energy, got loads of ideas. And I had a tiny bit of that going on, but I couldn't follow them through. I was kind of like, gosh, I want to get involved in this, but I just feel really tired.

But then I noticed that I was meeting new people each day, meeting different members of the team. And the next day if I met someone I couldn't really remember whether I'd met them the day before or I hadn't. I was starting to not really recognize faces very well, my memory was poor. And that hit me really hard straight away, because I started to panic that I'd make a mistake and not recognize a client if they walked into the hospice or that I'd get something wrong and offend someone or worse, you know, I'd get something wrong with a client.

So I felt pretty tense pretty quickly when I started to realize that my memory wasn't so good. I hadn't had to write notes really with clients. I could see clients and I'd see them the next week. I wouldn't feel like I've forgotten a word. And I was thinking without that memory and with no time, as usual, how am I going to not make mistakes. And I don't make mistakes. You know, it was one of my patterns. I don't make mistakes. So the threat of getting something wrong felt big.

Anna Duschinsky

Again, so more pressure as the symptoms started to kick in the level of fatigue, and it starts to show up cognitively, the pressure just amplifies for you by the sounds of it.

And what about the fatigue? I know talking to you actually by the sounds of it, that had been there for potentially quite a while, right? Tell me about that.

Joanna - [00:07:21]

I think fatigue had been something for years and years, I mean, I've been going to the doctor repeatedly over maybe 20 years and saying, and actually I had the same doctor for most of 20 years and I'd literally turn up once a year and go, I'm no less tired. I'm just so tired all the time. I'd be walking up to school to collect the children and I'd see a hedge and think that looks a nice place to go to sleep. And I could have fell asleep walking. I'd just be trying to put one foot in front of the other, and thinking in a minute I'm going to have three children to pick up that are all going to want to tell me about their day. And I am desperately tired.

Anna Duschinsky

That had been going on for years by this point?

Joanna

Yeah. Yeah. And the response was just, well, of course, you're a single mum with three children. I had my own business then, sometimes three or four little jobs as well to make money work. And yeah.

Anna Duschinsky

So I mean, that's interesting as we start to build the picture, right. That actually the years prior to that sounds extraordinarily intense. And your way of dealing with that was just to get on with it by the sounds of it, just to do more, to work more, to be all of that, right?

Joanna

Well, I quite often thought, even when I was starting to get the beginnings of this cognitive problem, I actually, in myself, I thought, I think I'm just a bit unmotivated, you know, I need more stimulation. So I took on a level 7 supervisors course that meant I was away for every third weekend and studying every spare minute and I had extra clients to take on.

And yeah. So I tended to interpret it as something I needed to sort myself out a bit, get a bit more motivated, take something else on to stimulate me a bit, get me going.

Anna Duschinsky

Retrospectively, with the benefit and obviously all the work that you've done in hindsight that you now have, where did that pattern come from? Obviously, being a single mom and in that situation, there is a kind of, you have to, right? But where do you think that kind of pattern came from?

Again, it's one that we hear a lot, that sense of, well, you know, I'll often hear people before they crash say something like, well, I thought I was just a bit lazy or I needed to get fitter or I needed to motivate myself. So I did. I decided to run a marathon, or for you, you took on extra training.

There is this mentality of just, I'll just do more of what I'm already doing, the pattern I'm already running, to try and fix it. But that real kind of doing, achiever pattern. Where do you think that came from with the benefit of everything that you've learnt?

Joanna

Yeah, I think I mean, yeah, we are a doing family. Right from children we were always doing. If you laid in bed, you'd lost a day and it wasn't a good thing to lose hours of the day that you could be doing something. So, as a family, we'd be up and we'd quite often have big projects on for the weekends. My parents were renovating houses and renovating cars and we'd all help and we'd do stuff together,

big projects. And then like a kind of exhausted feeling in the evening and a meal together, going well, we've done a good day's work. That was our culture.

Anna Duschinsky - [00:10:58]

OK. And it's, I mean, lovely, lovely stuff about that, but really kind of focused on the activity as you say, and that, I suppose, then became your way of being in the world. That's what you learnt.

Joanna

Yeah. Yeah.

Anna Duschinsky

And within was, not necessarily in childhood, but it sounds like there was also, which kind of has to be the case for us to get to a point of fatigue and we'll come back to how bad it got for you, but there has to be a disconnect, right? There has to be a point where the doing or the achieving or the helping becomes kind of more important than us and our emotions and our physical well-being. At what point did you start to recognize that that had become the case for you?

Joanna

It's really difficult to say because as a counselor you're in therapy all the time, so I was in therapy at the time. I kind of knew a lot about my emotional state. I knew quite a lot about, you know, was very self aware in many ways, I think I learnt not to take much feedback from my body that's when, to me I felt like I was cut off at the neck. I knew a lot about what was going on mentally, and I probably placed my emotions in my head as well. I was like everything happens up here.

And then, like you said, I ran and went to the gym and started running longer and longer distances or walking huge different distances as well. And so you push through, your body is like, I don't like this, I don't want to do this anymore. And you're like, no, there's going to be more you can do it sort of thing. So that's why I felt, feel the disconnect was I don't think I was very holistic in my approach to looking after myself.

Anna Duschinsky

That's interesting. And as you look at that and begin to, as you have a lot over the last few years, what's your sense of how that came to be, how that came to be really?

Joanna

Well, yeah, I think I just, I suppose it came from being tired so much and having to override it and I had three children in five years young, so, you know, I was just pushing through from then and I had quite severe postnatal depression. So it was, you know, a lot of the time I wanted to stay under the cover. I had quite bad anxiety at that time.

So, and I sort of learnt that if I gave into depression and anxiety that was not OK, it was going to be really difficult for me and for the children, and I couldn't give into it. I must keep going. And I found with things like anxiety, I don't want to challenge myself. I think, like, I absolutely hate going through the car wash. And if I was having a particularly anxious day, I'd think right, I'm going to put the children in the car and go through the car wash. Then it's about as bad as it can be. I'm still going to survive it. So it's yeah, I used challenging myself as a way of getting through anxiety and depression, not giving in.

Anna Duschinsky

And it sounds like in everything in your life that you would challenge yourself in every area, in your work, physically, what you're talking about in terms of the gym, you would push. At the point where

you felt like giving up. You would say, no, I can do more. I'm going to push more. So it sounds like, as you say, that there was that general approach. And I absolutely hear what you're saying as well in that situation that you were in, there was almost no other option, right? Giving up or staying in bed was not an option with three small kids who were relying on you.

It's a really interesting, though, isn't it, that differentiation, as you say, that you had quite a lot of awareness, obviously, through your all your therapy and all of your training of yourself and your emotions, but you had this kind of way of dealing with, this way of approaching yourself and your challenges, which was to push. And your body, I guess, bore the brunt of that for really quite a long time.

So you've talked about the kind of cognitive symptoms that were the first real warning sign, I guess. And how bad did it get before something changed and you really took some steps to look to heal?

Joanna - [00:15:46]

Well, yeah, I mean, I think even before the cognitive thing, I'd had like really bad IBS and I'd had some heart problems which had been investigated, but I kind of saw them as something else that was going on. And they were a couple of years before this period, where the cognitive symptoms happened.

And then I had a couple of quite bad anxiety attacks and so then it was a struggle to see whether I was having a phase of anxiety, but I knew I wasn't, I've had anxiety, I've had depression, I know what they feel like and it doesn't feel the same. I wake up feeling positive. I wake up feeling I can do things. And then my body won't do them. And I couldn't make myself exercise anymore. I couldn't, you know, I just really couldn't do it.

And I was trying to drive to work and it was becoming not natural. You know, I was having to think through and think, how do I do this? How do I operate the car? Yeah. So things that you would just do naturally were becoming a massive effort. Just everything became a massive effort.

Anna Duschinsky

OK, so at what point did you seek some support and how did you go about beginning that process of changing it?

Joanna

Well, I went to the doctor quite early on, and, yeah, she wondered if I was having a period of depression, so I went on antidepressants and that didn't work. Well it didn't help at all, it made things a lot worse. And then we just kept discussing what could be going on. She'd been my doctor for a long time. And I started to do some research and I talked to friends who had ME/CFS and I began to wonder if that was what was going on. I could just read the symptoms and go, yeah, that's all happening to me. I've got the tummy problems, the heart problems, like if I did anything I was so fatigued afterwards. I just paid the price for any pushing, you know, or the cognitive symptoms.

So I was like, well, this sounds like me. So I just took those to the doctor and I was like, could this be what's happening? And she referred me quickly to the ME clinic. And I rang them and said, can I have a quick appointment? I'm trying to hang on to my job here. I don't want to not be able to work. I need to know what's happening and I need to know how to manage it at work.

And so they saw me quite quickly and confirmed that they thought it was ME/CFS. So that was kind of the beginning of saying, well that's what it is.

And well really, I mean, the really difficult thing for me then was that they didn't feel a very positive prognosis or any kind of steady, regular treatment. I was going to be seen, I think, four or five times by the ME clinic, two months apart. And I was like, what am I supposed to be doing in-between? Who's going to help me? Like, you know, and my husband was away by then for six months. So I was kind of

like, look, I'm not well enough to be left. What's going to happen to me? But there wasn't anything.

So that's when I started to search around for other treatment. And I came across Mickel Therapy and had a few sessions with a Mickel therapist, which was a little bit helpful. It was really different to anything I'd done before because it was very directive and I was used to Person-centered therapy, which is very non-directive. So it was a shock in one way, but what I realized I didn't even have a process. I didn't feel like I had a healing process. I didn't feel like I'd always had to Person-centered therapy and I'd always given, that's what I do as a therapy. And I'd always felt in the right environment, people have a healing process and I couldn't find mine. I was like, wow, it's just missing. I don't know how to heal and I don't how to get better.

Anna Duschinsky - [00:20:40]

Yes. And it sounds I mean, again, I think what people often find is they've had one, and look you had a much broader, I think, training sense because of all of the therapeutic experience that you had. And yet still really interesting to hear that. You knew what a healing process looked like, you should be, but you couldn't connect to how to heal.

And again, listening to everything that you said so far, I think it sounds like all the methodologies that had worked for you so far in your world that had got you through depression, that had got you through anxiety, it wasn't working at this point.

Joanna

No, no, exactly, and I was really confused, I was really like, I know how to do this, you know, I know how to look after myself. I know what to do. But it didn't work. It wasn't working at all. And actually, I was kind of like, I actually need someone to give me some very, a very simple understanding of what's happening to me. And I need to get some simple steps forward.

Anna Duschinsky

Right. So Mickel Therapy sounds like it gave you a little bit of direction, which perhaps was useful at that point because you were feeling, by the sounds of it, quite lost at that point?

Joanna

Yeah, I can't really remember a lot about it, but what I remember was that it was quite strictly about boundaries and so it helped me respond differently to my children and have some better boundaries. And it was quite clear, you know, it was quite like, this is what you're going to do, and I was like, OK, at this point I'm just trying it.

Anna Duschinsky

Really interesting, and boundaries by the sounds of it, from what you said about giving, therapeutically and with your kids. Tell me about that. Tell me about that kind of giving mentality that you were in at that point.

Joanna

I think I just have you know, one of my values was that I'm always available to my children, that I will always put aside whatever I'm doing or whatever is needed and be there to listen to them and support. I mean, we're talking emotionally, they would laugh because, like, practically, I'm not that great and they had to do it themselves, like practically I knew they had to help me. And so practically we shared tasks very well and things like that. But emotionally, I was just like, I'm available to you. You can talk to me about stuff if things are difficult.

And yes, I think, and I suppose I'm like that for friends and clients and everything like emotionally, I'm here for you, I'll put aside things and I'll be here and make space for you.

Anna Duschinsky - [00:23:42]

Which is, again, I mean a beautiful quality. In fact everything that you talk about, the doing, the achieving, the challenging yourself, the giving, and that's what people say, you know, is it not OK? These are beautiful qualities, they're beautiful values. What would you say to somebody now about all of those? Which are lovely traits. What would your comment be on that now?

Joanna

Well, I mean, I've just realized that I just wasn't showing that to myself, I was not going, no actually, I don't have that to give right now. I was pouring from an empty cup, if you like. I just would give, no matter what resources I actually have to do that.

Anna Duschinsky

Isn't that the interesting piece? It's the idea that we give or that we challenge ourselves, we push. Which are all, at certain points in time, great things to do. That can be absolutely what we need at a certain point. And perhaps, as you say, for you during depression that actually was a good approach. And yet it's got to be sustainable, hasn't it? And sustainable is about where it comes from. As you say, if we're doing it from a place of no resource, then that becomes completely unsustainable at that point.

So that gave you an idea of the boundaries and by the sounds of it, enabled you to create a bit of distance or space or perspective.

Joanna

Yeah, I mean, it was that directive that it just said to me that's wrong, it's not sustainable. And I was like, OK. So I mean, as I said, my process wasn't good. I don't think I fully understood what I've got to do differently. But I just knew I had to say no sometimes to sort of say I can do that when I've had a rest or whatever but I can't do that now. It was quite simple. This is the time I've got for that and it's not yet. Quite simple, really.

Anna Duschinsky

So yeah, so it was a bit of help, it was a first step. And from there, what happened next?

Joanna

Well, I just searched around a bit more and that's when I found the Optimum Health Clinic and I just signed up for the free chat straight away. I was like, well, there's nothing to lose here. And I also saw there was a nutrition area and I'm very interested in food and health and yeah, the sort of environment. And, you know, I have quite a strong feeling that I'm responsible for my own health. And it's kind of like, I'm trying to take responsibility here, but I don't know what to do. And it felt like the clinic was going to give me some psychology area that I could work in and something around my nutrition. And I was like, good. These are two things I get are important. I'll pick this up. So I picked up both. And worked with both a nutrition therapist and a psychology therapist.

Anna Duschinsky

Yeah. And so looking back on it, obviously you've had a journey through all of that, and I know through that you also came to the course as well. And I know talking to you that you feel that's also been supportive in your journey and in your recovery.

So from where you are now, what do you feel have been the biggest learnings that you've taken away from that process?

Joanna - [00:27:36]

I think when I first started the therapy I only had succession. So, again, I just took some really simple ideas. And I mean, one of them was that it wasn't what I was doing that was making me so exhausted. It was the state that I was doing it in. And I mean, that just resonated with me straight away, because if I was going to go for a walk, I was, you know, going through this process of I want to go for a walk, the dog needs a walk. But what if I start walking and then I can't walk? What if I get exhausted? What if I need to sit down? What if this happens? And then I didn't even start the walk and I was already exhausted. So I was kind of like, yeah, I get that. I can see that I'm doing that. So if I just go for the walk without thinking and I kind of trust that it's going to be OK as long as I make it short enough.

And I immediately saw a change. I was like, now I'm getting out for a walk every day. A tiny walk, a little walk, but I walk. And I'd carry just a few things so if I needed to sit down, I've got a plastic bag to sit on. And I tried to just reframe how I saw sitting down, it wasn't a failure, it wasn't me being ill, it was I'm going to sit and count butterflies for five minutes, well that's fine.

Anna Duschinsky

Right. Which is really interesting. Some really interesting pieces there. The first is, which obviously we see all the time, is the level of anxiety that develops around activities in case we might crash, in case we might feel ill. What does it mean? So all of that preemptive. So in essence, you've done the walk and it's all gone horribly wrong before you've even left the house right. And emotionally and energetically that's exhausting, as you say.

So a big piece there around shifting your mentality and the state that you're doing the activity, that's really interesting. And then I like your piece as well around reframing rest, reframing like sitting down and what that meant. And I know I've spoken to you before and you said actually you're pretty sure you didn't know how to rest or what that really meant.

Joanna

No, I'd been told I've got to rest, but I thought rest would be like listening to the radio or watching TV or somebody taking me for a little drive in the car. But I actually couldn't tolerate any of those things. All those things were exhausting when I was first ill. I couldn't watch TV. I couldn't have any sound. I couldn't cope with light moving past my eyes or anything. So I had to learn and understand that rest was complete, you know, meditative rest. Focusing on my breathing and just being.

And that was incredibly hard for me. I found it, and also because as soon as I rested and focused on my body, I realized my body was in agony and it probably had been for a long time and I'd been ignoring pain. So it wasn't fun to sit with first.

Anna Duschinsky

It's not fun to sit. So how did you cope with that? What do you do with that recognition that you were in pain, that you were exhausted, that there were symptoms and all sorts there and it was uncomfortable to be with. How do you deal with that?

Joanna

Um, I did a lot of sitting outside. I got my chair out in a sunny spot and I think I sat there for six months most of every day, just like focusing on the bees. Because focusing on my body and breathing was really hard for me. I found if I was focusing on really simple things happening around me, the birds, the bees, what I was growing, which again, friends would do or my mom would do the hard bit of gardening, but I would sort of do little bits of it and watch things grow.

And, um, yeah and I cook in really tiny chunks. So I was growing things and then making it into food. So I just started to kind of connect with things in a really different gentle way so that every day was kind of gently paced and I got a lot of joy out of really small things. That was a real change of pace for me. And I suppose, I mean, sort of asking me as well how I do it, I actually had to grieve. I went

through a massive grieving process. I think I spent a lot of time grieving my, a lot of loss and my husband being away and the children leaving home. And I think I had a lot of grieving to do. And I think I gave myself the privacy and the space to do that.

Anna Duschinsky - [00:32:50]

So for you, again, it's a theme that we come to quite often. There was a correlation. It sounds like what you're saying is there was a correlation between the pain, the fatigue and the grief, the emotion that was being stored in the body. Did that feel true to you?

Joanna

Yeah, I think it was overwhelmingly grief from just thread after thread in my life and I didn't feel I had a right to it. It never seemed like I'm allowed to have this grief for these things because it always seemed to belong to someone else. It was someone else's bigger grief. You know, that was my father's mother, so it's his grief or it's, you know, with lots of things I just sort of never, I felt, oh, there's someone else for whom this is even bigger, like the children with me splitting up with their dad, that was like, that's their grief. You know, this is their pain to have. I've got to be supportive and try to cope.

Anna Duschinsky

And as you say, that role again, you know, your role is to give. I'm guessing, for your dad was to be supportive, was to be there or to be good or whatever it was. And with your kids was to be, as you say, supportive. So never really having the space with any of that to fully feel it yourself or give yourself permission to grieve it. And in this moment of calming everything down, being forced to, you allowed yourself finally permission to re-engage with all of that and to be with it, by the sounds of it, for the first time.

Joanna

Yeah, I mean, certainly I've done a lot of grieving over things like the end of my marriage, I felt grief for years, so I felt I'd grieved. But I think it just still was really in my body. I maybe sort of cognitively understood it and done a lot of talking about it and thinking about it. I think it just existed in my body still. That's the only way I can explain it.

Anna Duschinsky

And it's such an interesting dynamic, isn't it? You know, that you were, it's not like you were unaware of it. You were aware of it. You talked it through. But as you say, that difference between being able to talk from here, which is where you're showing it a lot, and actually the physical experience of it, the being in the body and experiencing from there.

We say a lot, all of those great lines like, the body tells the story. The body holds a lot, which we know. And so interesting as well to recognize those different levels at which we need to process. That cognitive is important. Talking it through at that level is important. But there are other levels which we need to experience our emotions as well.

Joanna

Yeah, I think that's definitely what I've learned and experienced over the last couple of years with more focus on my body. In my healing work I've been tapping and EFT and things that engage my body with healing. Which is really different for me. It's really different from how I've worked before.

Anna Duschinsky

So another level of healing almost, right?

Joanna - [00:36:35]

Yeah. Yeah, yeah. I think so. Yeah. And I mean I definitely used to think that everybody kind of experiences life from an out of body experience, somewhere out there. It took a long while for me to realize that, oh, people actually exist in their body, that's interesting.

Anna Duschinsky

So some really powerful take homes there around your relationship to your body, presumably, has massively shifted in this time.

Joanna

Yeah.

Anna Duschinsky

And by the sounds of it, your relationship to your world. I know you say, it's your term so I apologies for using it, but you talk about your gentle life, and I love that terminology and listening to you talk about you engaging with your plants and the world around you in this much gentler pace. So that resting and that connection sounds like it's been a massive change for you as well.

Joanna

Yeah, so it's been a really important part of it for me is, you know, I sort of, a couple of years ago I was sat thinking about, on New Year's Eve it used to be all New Year's resolutions, all achievey stuff or like what am I going to this year and a couple of years ago, I was like, that's not going to work for me anymore. That's not what I want to do.

And yeah, I just made a promise that every day I would look after myself and the planet and that helped me so much because I'm just like if I get a bit lost on all this, or I'm getting pulled into old patterns, I'm just like, right, what are your priorities here? And those and my priorities work, for me as a really simple way of living.

Anna Duschinsky

I like it as well, I mean, talking to you, it's clear as well you needed a new simple methodology. You talk about it a few times that you needed a healing process. And it sounds like within all of that, within that connection to the body and as you say, your planet, you found that healing process. So where do we find you today? So what is life like for you today?

Joanna

Yeah, I mean, it's still very much kind of based in that I spend a lot, I kind of look after myself as a matter of, it's like I'm so committed to it, so that's the first thing in my diary every week is I put in my self care, the things that I want to do, the things that I feel look after myself most. I put those in.

I eat differently and grow our food and spend a lot of time out in nature at a slower pace. I've got a camera now, so instead of striding out to clock up all the miles that I used to clock up, I take my camera, I take it slower, I look at things in detail and yeah. So everything sort of done at that kind of slower pace. And I do a lot of that in every day and just really gentle, joyful things. Watch the birds in the garden, take a cup of tea out and sit in sunlight on my face. So I get a great deal of joy out of really small things.

And then I'm adding back in some of the things that I did before that I loved, such as therapy. So I'm doing the therapeutic coaching course, I'm beginning to take on clients again which is just really important for me to go back to work in a sustainable way.

Anna Duschinsky - [00:40:56]

Right. So as you say, it's now taking everything that you've learnt and applying it in your world. I also love a couple of the things that you said that I think are really important. First of that idea of commitment, keeping that commitment to your self care as your priority in every day and every week. I think that's so different to how we are learnt or how we learn and how we are taught to live, right. It sounds like that's a massive piece. And I love that idea of it being a commitment to yourself as well. And as you say, to the broader world as well.

But the other thing I love in what you're saying is the idea of it being self care. For a lot of people, I think they'll throw in self care because they know they have to, to recover. But actually, it sounds like it's become really the guiding force, and it's not just about survival recovery, it's about joy, it's about what you want to do, as well as just what you have to do. Now, I think that is a really important differentiation. That shows a different level, doesn't it, of self care within all of this, which is really interesting.

Joanna

Yeah, I think joy and connection are probably the biggest things that I've learnt is how much joy I can get in a much simpler lifestyle. And by living a much simpler lifestyle, I don't need to earn what I used to earn. It unpicks that relationship between achieving, earning, spending. Mostly on things to make me feel better because it's so exhausting.

But now I can find a lot of joy and connection in a lot simpler things. And it's not that I don't feel drawn to the old patterns, because I do, but I recognize them really quickly, like I can feel with my family home this week, I could feel resentment yesterday and I was like, OK, resentment means I'm doing too much and everyone else needs to step up a bit. I notice feelings really quickly. And I think that needs something doing about it immediately.

Anna Duschinsky

Yeah. You're responding in a way that you wouldn't have before.

Joanna

Yeah.

Anna Duschinsky

And so what next for you? Obviously returning to work in a sustainable way, which I know you're doing at the moment. And from there, what are your dreams? What are your plans?

Joanna

Well, I'm starting my new little business, which is called The Gentle Company, so that is to help people who want to live a more gentle life on themselves and the planet. So I feel at the moment a lot of people are, and with this time of COVID and everything, a lot of people have connected with perhaps how more simply we can live and have, you know, perhaps had, well, just a kind of forced change of pace and lifestyle. And for me I had that when I became ill. So, yeah, I'm hoping to help people to make those changes themselves. Maybe before they get to quite where I got to.

Anna Duschinsky

That's always the dream, isn't it? Can we get there before everyone's completely crashed and unable to function.

Joanna

I'm sort of growing my vegetables, growing my herbs, putting them outside the front of my house

with a way of getting to my website, sharing my recipes and just kind of, and I'm hoping to generate some community projects around sharing food.

And one of the things I noticed when I was a single mom was like, I either had too much food that I didn't have time to cook or no food, no help. I live 9 miles away from a supermarket and I'm going to have to put three kids in a car. So, yeah, community sharing of food and not wasting food, is what I'm interested in.

Joanna

I'm starting to get creative and ideas again, which is a good sign that I'm feeling a lot better.

Anna Duschinsky

That's a great sign, isn't it, when you've got creativity and the energy to do something with it as well.

Well, listen, thank you so much for sharing your story and all of those beautiful insights. I think some really important stuff there. So I really appreciate it and I know there will be lots of people out there who will really resonate, connect, and I'm sure take a lot from it. So thank you for sharing.

And thank you, everybody, for watching and listening.

So thank you, guys. Take care.