

TRANSCRIPT

Rachel

(00:00:03)

Hello and welcome to the Wordwise Coaching podcast. I'm Rachel Goodwin, an executive coach, and for this series I've chosen some of the common areas I focus on with clients and have invited fellow coaches and experts to explore them with me. In my work with clients, I aim to help them improve their performance in the workplace. It's really rewarding to see the difference coaching can make, and I'm now excited about reaching a wider audience, sharing experience and advice, and hearing your thoughts. So please do visit RachelGoodwin.uk where you'll find suggested reading around today's podcast. The top tip summary and all the other episodes.

Gerrit Pelzer is a highly experienced executive coach and managing director of Vivo Consulting. He's also the co-host of the second Crack Leadership Coaching podcast. Gerrit has recently contributed a chapter to a new book, *Brains Inspiring Businesses* and it's his expertise in the field of coaching and neuroscience that will be exploring today. We'll be discussing how emotions and relationships are at the heart of successful leadership.

Gerrit

(00:01:14)

Emotions are nothing but neurobiological processes, so we can, for instance, evoke a physical fear response in a person before they actually feel afraid.

Gerrit

(00:01:25)

While we might believe we are thinking beings who feel we are actually feeling beings who think the shouting boss in a corporate meeting activates the same brain centres as the tiger in the bushes. It wasn't me, it was Rachel, right? So when you see this, there is fear at work. There is again, a lot of wisdom in the body. The emotions are nothing soft. It's hard biology. The brain is also the organ of adaptation. If you treat your people like heroes, it increases the chances that they become heroes. It's not.

Rachel

(00:02:04)

You can wave a magic wand and make everybody brilliant.

Rachel

Welcome, Gerrit, and thanks so much for joining me.

Gerrit

(00:02:41)

Hi, Rachel. Thank you for having me. I'm excited to be here.

Rachel

(00:02:45)

Great. Can we start off by you just sort of telling me a bit about what's brought you to where you are now. So your career path getting here.

Gerrit

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I mean, that is obviously a relatively long story. I try to give you a short version. So by education, I'm a chemist, and after university I started working in the chemical industry.

But even though my background may sound rather technical, I've always been more interested in the people side of work and in questions like what actually makes good leadership, what makes good team work, and what motivates us, right? What makes you and me get out of bed every morning and do the things we do? And perhaps more interestingly, what sometimes keeps us from doing the things we say we want. Every 1st of January we have this New Year's resolutions are we want to exercise more, eat healthier, and and and. And in this moment, it's a genuine thought, right? So what's getting into the way there? And then after it was about 12 years in this industry, I made a career change. And it's now also already about 14 years that I work as an executive coach.

Rachel

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And then what brought you to Applied Neuroscience?

Gerrit

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So I mean, I love coaching, but one thing that has always frustrated me in coaching is that I don't think we have a proper knowledge base in the field of coaching, and then sometimes in coaching schools, it may come down to just listen to your client.

Gerrit

(00:04:19)

You ask some powerful questions and then miraculously, their lives will change. And I don't know about you, Rachel, but for me, I quickly realised that it's often not that simple. And I thought, well, how can I become a better coach? What else is there? And then I thought, well, what is coaching all about? And I think the essence is we want to help our clients to achieve positive behavioral changes and changes that lasts. Right. And then the scientists in me asked what impacts human behavior and isn't then in every action, isn't the brain somehow involved? And then consequently, if I understand better how the brain works, shouldn't I be better equipped to help my clients change their behaviors in ways they desire? And since then, I've been learning as much as I can about applied neuroscience, and that has highly influenced my coaching.

Rachel

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That's so interesting actually hearing you say that, because I agree that the incredibly strong emphasis on finding the right questions and clients will find the solution. Obviously there is huge value in that, but I've always felt that there is more that we can do often to help clients.

And especially I come across a lot of coaches who it almost feels like, you know, if you stray from that, that you're breaking the law, and I think developing a flexibility and being able to share with the client what could be getting in the way is immensely valuable.

Gerrit

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Absolutely, yes.

Rachel

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And especially, you know, some of what we're going to be talking about, I think it makes so much logical sense that that is so helpful. It opens a new way of thinking.

Gerrit

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Very true.

Rachel

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So what factors would you say have brought neuroscience into the coaching world from your experience?

Gerrit

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Yeah, I don't think I can answer this in general. So for me, it was this ambition simply to be a better coach and noticing that what I had learned in coaching school was just not enough. And then I started reading a lot of books. I remember maybe the first one was by Rick Hanson, *Buddha's Brain*, and then later on I did some courses on neuroscience in the context of coaching. So I never had the ambition of becoming a neuroscientist.

Gerrit

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I was only interested in the application side of work. And then, of course, I mean simply the progress in science analytical tools, if you wish, like nuclear magnetic resonance imaging, that allows us to look, so to say, into the brain while the person is still alive. That has, of course, brought us a lot of progress. And while I'm saying this, what I find immensely fascinating is, I should add, I've been living in a Buddhist country for 20 years, and it's fascinating that when you look into the Buddha's teachings that are 2500 years old, the modern neuroscience today merely confirms what the Buddha knew already saw such a long time ago. So while I'm a big fan of science, I think we should not rely on science all the time. And sometimes it's equally, if not more important, to also go back to our inner wisdom, to

practice introspection and develop our self-awareness. Maybe we get the same results that we get from neuroscience.

Rachel

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Yeah, no, it's so true the way the two of them match up.

Rachel

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And I remember when I was first drawn to mindfulness, my interest was piqued by the fact that one could actually see that it was having an impact on the brain, and that there was research around that. I think it's the two together, but it's really coming back to your own personal experience and how you benefit from it. That, I suppose, is the most important.

Gerrit

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Fully agree.

Rachel

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And so what would you say are the key concepts that leaders need to know about the brain to support themselves and their teams?

Gerrit

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So when I think about what is leadership all about, then for me that means leadership is all about creating the conditions for people to be their best. And so that starts with the leader, him or herself. How can I be my best self at work? But then also kind of influencing others? When I say influencing, I mean that in the most positive way, not like manipulation. Again, how can I help them to be their best? And this has a lot to do with what we often refer to as soft skills.

Gerrit

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But in the tough business world, many people just focus on the results and the processes. And still in the 21st century, a lot of it is very transactional at work. And people may accept that, for instance, relationships and emotions are important, but maybe not at work. But then when I can explain to people that, for instance, emotions are nothing but neurobiological processes which impact all our behaviours, then suddenly they become more open to the idea that our emotions also play a role at work. And that's why the title of my chapter in this book that you mentioned is *Soft Skills Through the Lens of Hard Science Why Leaders Need to Know About the brain*. And same applies for leaders as for coaches. You don't need to become a neuroscience expert to be a great leader. I've boiled it down to three key elements. The first one is that every brain is unique, which has a huge impact on motivation and stress. Then the significant role of emotions at work and ultimately at the end, then also the importance of human relationships in the workplace.

Rachel

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I think it's really interesting when you talk about bringing the idea of emotion into leadership, because often when I work with leaders, they've been busy working their way up the career ladder, progressing, learning, becoming more senior, but haven't necessarily stopped to really think about who they are as a leader and the impact that they're having. I always say to people, the more senior you get, the bigger shadow you cast and the more impact you're having around you. And unless you're in touch with that, you can't manage it. And so much of this comes back to the brain and emotions. So I'm very keen to hear if you want to just talk us through those concepts, that would be great.

Gerrit

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So what we call the emotions is actually nothing but neurobiological processes. And they come with a number of characteristics. One is that emotional processes take place much faster than cognitive processes in the brain. And these emotional processes, they often take place without

our conscious awareness. So we can, for instance, evoke a physical fear response in a person before they actually feel afraid.

Gerrit

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I think that's immensely fascinating. And even though this is on a non-conscious level, all these processes influence all our behavior and decision making. And I don't know if she was the first one, the neuroscientist Jill Bolte Taylor famously said, while we might believe we are thinking beings who feel we are actually feeling beings who think, and so for leaders that that means while we often try to leave the emotions outside of the workplace an understanding of our emotions, and that means my emotions as the leader myself, and then of course, the emotions of the people I'm dealing with every day. An understanding of this is actually mission critical for successful leadership.

Rachel

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I think that is so interesting, this idea that we are triggered into a state that is going to govern everything, and unless we're aware of that, it can take us in all sorts of places that are extremely unhelpful, actually.

Gerrit

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Yes.

Rachel

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So do you want to tell us a bit more about what can be done around that, about being taken into that triggered state and how we can control it or manage it?

Gerrit

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But the question is not difficult, but it's very difficult to answer, and it's highly complex.

What I've seen can help people because let's face it, I mean, as you indicated, there are many people in the corporate world who get almost detached from their own emotions, and then starting a conversation around emotions can be very challenging with these people, because you are kind of at different levels. And what I find helpful is when you can give people a framework, and a downside is, while we have a lot of advancement seen in neuroscience, over the last century, we could say neither in neuroscience, nor in psychology, nor in any other field that I know of, have been the experts able to agree on what the emotions really are. So we need some kind of model to start with, and I tend to use a model that has been created by Doctor Paul Brown, who sadly passed away earlier this year, and he uses a model with eight basic emotions. And in this model we can distinguish basically two categories. We have on one side of the spectrum what we call the escape or avoidance emotions, or sometimes also called survival emotions.

Gerrit

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And these are fear, anger, disgust, shame and sadness. And then on the other end of the spectrum, we have the so-called attachment emotions. And these are more on a continuum love, trust and then joy and excitement. And in between those two we have startle or surprise. And I think what is important to note here as well is that while obviously we experience some of these emotions as positive excitement, joy, others are negative fear, sadness, biologically such a classification does not make much sense. All these emotions are good because they have helped us evolve as human beings over millions of years. And one aspect here is many neuroscientists will spell emotions e hyphen emotions, indicating that emotions provide the energy for action. And one of the emotions that is probably best understood is fear, because it's so easily triggered. And again, fear has helped us survive over millions of years. And evolution wise, evolution is rather slow. And even though in our modern day world we actually have the same brains as our hunter gatherer ancestors.

Gerrit

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And if you imagine at this time we were maybe hunting with our tribe and I don't know what we were hunting, maybe a mammoth. And if this

mammoth escapes, then it's not a big issue. We can easily go one day or even more without food. Right? So the mammoth escapes today, we get another one tomorrow, maybe. But if while we are hunting we overlook the tiger behind us only once, it's game over. And that is what some people call the negativity bias of the brain. We are always on the outlook for danger or potential threats. Am I safe or not? Am I safe or not? So we're always looking for this tiger in the bushes, and then if we perceive a threat within milliseconds, the brain will prepare the body for this ancient fight or flight response. And what is very important to note here is that the brain shuts everything else down in this moment. So when we're literally running for our lives, the digestion stops. We're not thinking about food or anything else.

Gerrit

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All the energy emotion goes into running as fast as possible. Now, why is that still important today? As our lives have changed again, our brain has not changed that much. But what I just described with or let's put it this way, maybe we don't encounter so many immediate threats to our lives nowadays, but the same applies for the social context. So we are also always approaching other people. Am I safe with this person or not? Can I trust them? And I don't want to go too much into the details. But at least in the past, there was also often this concept of low parenting. So that means children were not necessarily raised only by their biological parents, but by other people in the group. So it's very important, right? If you are the mother of the child and cannot trust this other person with my child or not. So we've developed over again millions of years these cues to read other people. Am I safe or not? Is my child safe with this person or not? And so, in other words, bring it back to the corporate context.

Gerrit

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Let's say the shouting boss in a corporate meeting activates the same brain centres as the tiger in the bushes. And so remember that once my brain initiates this fear response, my energy goes into survival mode. And again, the people in the meeting room, they don't necessarily run out of the room or slap the boss in the face, but we see the modern flight response in the form of low employee engagement, higher rates of absence, high employee turnover, or blame culture as a great example. It wasn't me, it

was Rachel. Right? So when you see this is here at work. Once we are in this survival mode, this energy that goes into surviving is not available for other tasks or for instance, creative thinking, innovation, or simply for optimal performance at work.

Rachel

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I really love that description. I think it is just so astonishing that we feel like we've evolved so much, and yet the brain is still behaving in a way that it was behaving millions of years ago. But just to understand that in itself is hugely important, because, you know, what I hear there is the brain is almost thinking, right, okay, I've got this, I know what to do, I know what hormones you need, I know you know. I know the physical attributes that I need to trigger now and actually they're just not relevant but you can't stop that. But if you tune in, I remember when I first started coming across this sort of thing and I, I've realized that the first sensation I have is my stomach kind of flips. And just knowing that, because now when that happens, I'm kind of like, oh, I'm not, I'm not at my best now I'm in a triggered state and just those split seconds do make a difference, I think, because you're just recognising where your body's going and recognising that maybe it's not really where you need to go.

Gerrit

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I think that's a wonderful example, because there is, again, a lot of wisdom in the body and the I think you're already relating to this subject of how can I regulate my emotions? And it goes exactly into this direction, noticing them in the first place, noticing the bodily sensations associated with this. And then the more I develop this, the sooner I can interact with it. And I feel reminded of, Steven Porges, who coined the term vagus theory. He talks about the term integral, which is picking up these bodily signals. And I feel reminded also how powerful these emotions are. I was last year, I had also to undergo an MRI scan for medical reasons, and there was a longer one. And again, intellectually I knew I was safe, but being for an extended period of time in this confined space, I suddenly noticed my heart was racing. And I think we can make this connection again to leadership. Leaders need to understand that the emotions are nothing soft. It's hard biology if you will,

and it influences all our behavior. We can't leave them, let's say at the factory door.

Rachel

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That's really, really interesting. It's so interesting. You mention an MRI scan because I had to have an MRI scan and I hadn't done any research. I didn't really know what was involved at all and I went in and as soon as I realised it's not the most pleasant. And I remember thinking, right, I've really got to, I've got to connect with my breath here. I've got to really regulate. And that's what I did. I mean, I hadn't really thought of it until you mentioned it in those terms, but it is your body kind of saying, this isn't normal. What are you doing in here? And then you are having to tell your body, no, it's okay. We're going to be all right. And trying to get that communication between the two is not easy.

Gerrit(00:21:41)

It's fascinating.

Rachel

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And then the other thing that has made me think about this is some of the work environments that we work in. I'm sure you've had a shared experience. You know, they are high paced, they're high pressure. There is a lot of difficulty around relationships. There can be blame, there can be anger. And if that's your day to day experience and your body is constantly reacting to that, you're actually in a chronic state of all of these sort of stress hormones and that kind of thing circulating.

Rachel

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Yes. So it's physically damaging as well, isn't it?

Gerrit

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It is. And you're giving me so many cues. You you probably need to slow me down with so many ideas that we could talk about. But there's a wonderful example, actually, we go back to the biology. So the moment the

fear response is triggered, I mean, a lot of things are happening, but one is that cortisol is released and many people think, oh, cortisol is very bad for the body. Yeah. But when you're running from the tiger, it helps you. For instance, it releases more blood, sorry, more sugar into the blood so you can run faster. But the thing is, we evolved for this high level but short term stress. So once we ran from the Tiger and hopefully survived, that's it then we are probably safe for an extended period of time. Nowadays we typically have less of these peak stress events, but there's this permanent low level of stress. In other words, in the worst case you have this cortisol always in your bloodstream.

Gerrit

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And cortisol is, I also forgot to mention, this is actually a chemical that helps you wake up in the morning. So typically in your body cortisol levels are elevated in the morning. again a good thing. But if that's throughout the day and at night you can't sleep well and then you end up in this vicious circle, you can't sleep well. The stress is still there. You can't perform well because you didn't sleep well. So the next night, what's going to happen? Sleep is even worse and this is very hard to break. And the second aspect is you, I think you use the term something around pushing, and this was my cue because I work with many leaders who say, oh, but, you know, sometimes I need to push my team and say, I'm not so sure. It depends a lot on how, because if the people perceive this pushing as stress, or in other words, the fear response gets triggered, then the energy again goes to survival and people are not at their best.

Gerrit

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And that's why I will say leaders need to avoid triggering a fear response in others. This can be through being overly pushy, a raised voice, a facial expression, and what do they need to do? Instead, we spoke about the attachment emotions. So and that maybe starts with forming trust based relationships and then goes further into excitement and joy. So in other words, how do I avoid triggering fear response? And on the other hand, how do I nurture the emotions of excitement, joy, and trust?

Rachel

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You know, you think just logically, if you're in a team and you're constantly trying to navigate your environment, to stop your manager being triggered because you know that there's going to be, you know, the impact on you, that's not a place where you're going to be feeling relaxed, creative, engaged. So it's not helping anybody really.

Gerrit

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Yeah. It's a classic, right? When you ask people when are you most creative or when do you have your best ideas, it's usually not when the timer is ticking behind you and you know you have five minutes left, what happens? You panic, right? But when people are in the morning under there and under the shower, that's where they have great ideas and that is when they are relaxed, right? They are in a safe environment.

Gerrit

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There is no stress, no fear. and then this is where innovation happens in the bathroom.

Rachel

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It's so true. I always have my best ideas in the shower. So if leaders can create that safe environment whenever possible, they are creating a place where people are going to be at their best and they are going to get their best from them.

Gerrit

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Yeah. And you know, it doesn't mean that we everything is cozy and we are not results focused and we're all friends here. Let's not be so harsh. It doesn't mean that at all. On the contrary, it's the conditions for peak performance.

Rachel

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Yeah. So it's not going around giving everybody a hug and a high five. It is about achieving what you want to achieve, but doing it in an effective, efficient way. Can you think of any examples, maybe of how you have used this in a in a real life setting with a client?

Gerrit

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Oh, possibly too many.

Maybe I start with one in where it's more about just applying the concept itself. I once worked with one engineer who was maybe the stereotype of an engineer, very process task oriented, and one of the complaints of other people was that she was not really building productive relationships. And then in one session, we spoke about this model of eight basic emotions. And what I again and again see is that these very smart, highly intellectual people, they grasp these concepts quickly. And if you can explain them, the logic behind it, the biology behind it, they are more ready to accept it. And I was immensely impressed when in the next session I spoke with her, I was going, yeah, you know, I had a conversation with one of my direct reports, and I noticed how he was coming from a place of sadness. And then I was thinking, how can I move him more towards excitement and joy? And I was, wow, you know, she grasped that much faster than I did. So that was a wonderful example of the concept itself. And then let's say in the pure application, so many examples.

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I mean, it often starts with leaders understanding their own emotions better. Like I said earlier, many have really learned in the corporate context to disconnect from their emotions and pay more attention to those and then realizing, how do others respond to me? And what can I do actually to make this connection, to build trust with people, to nurture the relationship we're having. And yeah, once they understand that, it is more the excitement and joy that drives peak performance rather than the pushiness. People are more open to letting go of this and switching to the other side.

Rachel

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And also, I suppose it's about treating people as individuals. So because often I think you have said this, you know, clients may say I need to manage my team better, but in managing your team, you need to manage the individuals within the team and to make sure that you're connecting with what's going to work for them.

Gerrit

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Very true. The question that I very often get asked is similar, but it's more like, how do I motivate my team? And often I answer with a question, well, what motivates you? And then once people start coming up with a list of motivators, so to say, they realize, oh, it's quite a long list, right? And this list is different for everybody else.

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So the question can't be, how do I motivate my team? We need to ask how do I motivate this individual. And it comes back to the uniqueness of the brain. So while we essentially all have the same components of the brain, the brain stem, the prefrontal cortex and whatnot, each brain is unique. And this is not only based on our genetic disposition, it's also based on how we're impacted by our unique life circumstances. Because what people also underestimate is that or let's put it this way, the brain is also the organ of adaptation. So the moment we are born, we are depending our life depends on other people, right? We can't go when we're hungry to the refrigerator and get some food. All we can do is cry and then hopefully somebody comes and takes care of us. But so very early on, the brain learns, what do I need to do to survive? And so we learn to adjust to our parents or whoever we grow up with. And then later in school, we adjust to peers, our teachers and, and end.

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And so a unique brain is shaped. And that is why not only everybody is motivated by different things. It also means we come back to the stress response. We often neglect that stress is also highly individual. So a situation that may be for one person, completely overwhelming, maybe just the circumstances that another person needs to thrive. So it's immensely complex, but at least what we can do is understand this concept and try to apply it in the best way we can.

Rachel

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What that makes me think is sometimes I think leaders can be incredibly well intentioned and make a suggestion or make a comment that is intended to be helpful, but just because of the way that individual, you know, maybe previous life experience, work experience, it doesn't land in the right way. And often it's about just asking the question, isn't it? Because you can't know exactly how to help people unless you understand a bit about where they're coming from and just asking those questions to feel your way into it and to show that you do want to help just make such a difference for ideas.

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I know you're very specific about you use the term regulate, I think, rather than control or manage emotions, which I really think is very important. So can you talk a bit about how we can regulate when our brain has taken us to this place?

Gerrit

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It's not as easy. Like here are the three steps and then everything will be fine. So I think anybody who really wants to work on this should prepare themselves for a longer journey. And I think it starts with what we mentioned earlier. Being aware of your own emotions and people could start with looking at these eight basic emotions, you know, can I label these emotions? Do I know the difference between, for instance, anger and fear because they can be related at some point in time? So am I able to identify those? And then, like you said, being aware of the bodily sensations. And then perhaps just to give an example, if I know there are situations where maybe whatever anger gets the better of me, then noticing, okay, where exactly does it start? And maybe it starts somewhere around the stomach, and then we realise how it's moving up over time.

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And then I feel my neck tightening and once.

It gets there, it goes.

So identifying these signals and when I'm maybe in a conversation or in a meeting, bringing part of my awareness to these signals and then developing a strategy, how can I deal with it? Like you said, maybe in other situations in the scanner, mindful breathing and it can be any relaxation

technique. So I think this is a start. And then I would say everything is quite related. Everything around a mindfulness practice can be very helpful. And that is probably a very useful starting point.

Rachel

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Yeah. And I think it's one thing doing something in the moment to try and regulate, but it does make it so much more effective if you have a practice. Oh yes. It's like your body kind of then tunes in. It's like, oh, okay, I know what you want me to do. I'm reading the signals because I get those signals quite a lot. If it's just in the moments of crisis, my sense is the body is like, well, I'm not quite sure what you're doing here.

Gerrit

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And the word you just use signals, that's so important. These emotions want to signal you something. It is a process. So people need to also have patience, and they should not get upset when they realize I know now I've been practicing for three weeks and it's still not working because the emotions can be extremely powerful, especially in extreme situations. And I would argue it's impossible to experience maybe sadness through the loss of a loved one and then trying to intellectually put that aside. So don't beat yourself up when your progress is slow. But I'm sure when people practice, they will make progress.

Rachel

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Absolutely. And also, I think if you are tuned in and you acknowledge your emotions and you can name your emotions, it's maybe easier as a leader to potentially in extreme situations to flag that up and say, look, I'm going through quite a lot at the moment, so I'm trying, but I'm not at my best because nobody can be perfect all the time. And being able to show that humanity and that vulnerability, I think, is a fantastic leadership quality.

Rachel

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Yes.

Gerrit

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Very nice. Yes.

Rachel

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Now there was something about generating these attachment emotions. There was an example that you referred to around an experiment that was done at Harvard that I just found really fascinating. Would you be able to tell us about that?

Gerrit

(00:35:40)

The experiment you were referring to was done, I believe, in the 1960s by a Harvard professor, and he went to a school where he had the children do a kind of aptitude or intelligence test. And then later on, the teachers were told which students were expected to bloom academically and intellectually based on the test result. And then indeed, these children were retested a year later. And these students who get the better test results, they showed indeed intellectual gains. And their teachers described them in many positive ways. But the irony was so even though the test was a real test, the identification was completely random. So let's say Rachel had a great test result. Gerrit's result was less than stellar. Then the teachers were told Rachel had a great test result, and Geritt had a great test result and a year later, both of us performed very well.

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So it's extremely interesting that, oh, let's put it this way, the interpretation of this is that it was the attitude and the behavior of the teachers, based on the expectations they had of these students that led to the improved results, not the predisposition of these children. And the implication here at work is if you treat your people like heroes, it increases the chances that they become heroes. If you treat them like children, don't be surprised if they behave like children.

Rachel

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I really like that idea. I just think it's so amazing and it kind of makes sense. I know myself if somebody says to me, oh, that was absolutely amazing, it's just a confidence boost and you just lean in and you go for it and you think, I'm really great at this, so then you become better at it. I mean, I suppose it's always important to say that you're not going to get that with every team member. There are going to be people who just don't rise to the challenge. But if you know that you have a strategy to build relationship, to encourage, to bring out the best in people, I think in a way you can then be more confident about thinking, well, that's not working, and maybe this isn't the right place for that person. It's not, you can wave a magic wand and make everybody brilliant.

Gerrit

(00:38:03)

I'm glad you're making this remark. As always, such studies, they are interpreted in a certain way, and then we tend to oversimplify into black and white. What works all the time and what never works and reality is more complex. But, you know, I've seen that work out in in a real life scenario at work, when I was still in the corporate world, there was one team that I was not particularly fond of. And then at one point in time, they got a new leader. And I saw this leader always demonstrated his confidence in this team. Like in a meeting, he would talk positively about people or assign a person a particular project and I was are you sure that person can do it? And it was like magic, within a couple of months I could see this team flourish. So yeah, it works not only in schools but also in the corporate world for sure.

Rachel

(00:40:33)

I found that such an interesting conversation and the way that you've applied all of this learning, I think, is going to be incredibly valuable for listeners to bring an extra dimension, maybe to how they think of themselves and how they conduct themselves in the workplace and give them greater confidence, really, to step into leadership with a clear idea about how they can have a positive impact.

So thank you so much for your time and for sharing all of that.

Gerrit

(00:41:01)

Thank you Rachel. Thank you for this nice comments. I hope it will be valuable. I thoroughly enjoyed our conversation and wish you best of luck with the podcast.

Rachel – TOP TIPS

(00:41:11)

Thank you very much indeed. We've covered a lot today, so let's take a look at some of the learning and tips we can take from this conversation.

- Applied Neuroscience can play a hugely important role in coaching, understanding how the brain works can help clients with behavioural change to unlock their leadership potential
- Progress with scientific analytical tools such as MRIs has accelerated our understanding of how the brain functions (and findings from modern neuroscience appear to confirm the benefits of ancient traditions such as Buddhism.)
- Leaders need to be aware of the impact they have on the people they are leading and emotions play a huge role in this.
- Gerrit introduced a model that identifies 8 key emotions
- Those identified as Escape or avoidance emotions – sadness, shame, disgust, anger, fear
- Those identified as Attachment emotions – love/ trust and joy/ excitement
- And those who can fall into either avoidance or attachment – startle/surprise-
- We still have the same brains as our hunter gatherer ancestors – it perpetuates a strong survival instinct, the brain is scanning the environment for threat –.
- Once the brain initiates the fight/flight response our energy goes into survival mode, stress hormones are released

- In a triggered state our energy is not available for high level functioning such as problem solving – creative thinking – innovation or optimal performance.
- Leaders that can regulate their own emotions can avoid triggering the fear response and nurture attachment emotions, this will support the creation of a healthier more productive work environment

Rachel

(00:39:50)

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Rachel

(00:40:33)

Gerrit, I found that such an interesting conversation and the way that you've applied all of that learning is going to be incredibly valuable for listeners to bring an extra dimension maybe to how they think of themselves in the workplace and give them greater confidence really to step into leadership with a clear idea of how they can have a positive impact so thank you so much for your time and sharing all of that.

Gerrit

(00:41:08)

Thank you Rachel, thank you for these nice comments. I hope it will be valuable. I thoroughly enjoyed our conversation and wish you the best of luck with the podcast.