Episode #28 - Dr. Shubhendu Kulshreshtha - Thriving Through Transitions (Expert) Transcript

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Podcast Introduction and Mission

Welcome to the Startup Support Surgery podcast, where we light the entrepreneurial spark in medics and healthcare professionals. Join me, Dr. Jo Watkins, GP, business coach and co-founder of The How People, on a journey to discover where your medical know-how meets the business world.

This will help you find some clarity on how to balance work, passions and family so that you can gain more freedom and control over your life but also continue to help people, which is actually why most of us went into medicine to start with.

Embarking on this entrepreneurial adventure is not easy. It is a roller coaster of emotions, but it's hugely rewarding and exciting in the process. Drawing in on my 20 years of blending medicine and business as a GP, I am here to share experiences, insights and lessons.

Expect lively chats, expert interviews and real life stories from medics who have taken their own path. Let's break free from traditional healthcare norms and explore more innovative ways of making a real difference to people's health and wellbeing, along with paving the way for a brighter future for us as healthcare professionals.

Oh, don't miss my free PDF called From Stethoscope to Startup, which is an 11-page guide in the show notes full of practical help and advice. This is your roadmap to kick-starting your journey with us.

Enjoy the Show. Welcome back to the Startup Support Surgery podcast. Today we are diving into the world of leadership, resilience and impactful careers.

with our brilliant guest, Dr Shub, as he is known to everybody on LinkedIn and everywhere. Shubs is a certified executive coach and emergency medicine physician who brings a unique blend of frontline medical expertise and executive coaching to the table.

He has qualifications and certifications of quality improvement and communication impact coaching. Shub has lived and worked across seven organisations, six cultures, two countries and gives invaluable insights along the way.

Shubs coaching philosophy is all about empowering clinical leaders to navigate complex transitions, enhance leadership effectively and thrive under pressure.

Whether it's crafting non-traditional career paths or making high stakes decisions with clarity, Shube is calm, empathetic and action orientated and is a trusted guide for so many.

In this conversation, we are going to discuss impact. We're gonna discuss passion. we're going discuss purpose. And we'll also discuss what it's like to be a medic on social media and how to deal with uncertainty.

My random fact about Dr.

Guest Introduction: Dr. Shub and His Work

Shub is that he is an expert in making French toast. That is what you've been doing since the age of four, and I guess anyone in your family that wants French Toast, you're the man, is it right?

Absolutely. Every Sunday morning, especially. Really? I love it. Are you a maple syrup fan or a bacon fan? Personally, I like a savory French toast with bacon and maple sirup.

My wife likes a cheese stuffed French Toast. Cheese stuffed? Oh my goodness. You're talking to somebody that loves eggs in any format that I'm yet to have a Cheese Stuffed French toaster.

That's got to go on the menu. It's definitely I'm going to claim it as my invention because I came up with it. So some cream cheese inside two pieces of bread, a bit of salt and a French toast.

Oh, wow. Okay. That sounds amazing. I love it, right? So Shub, I've given everybody a little bit an introduction. Tell us yourself, who you are, how you help.

Let's sort of find out how this has all come about because you were a great, great medic in a in an entrepreneurial space doing amazing things. So first of all, thank you for joining me and then tell us all about who you are.

No, thank you for having me. It's absolutely fantastic to be here. So I'm Shubhendra Kulshresh. Everybody calls me Shobh. I am an emergency physician and IMG because I grew up in India.

But the big chunk of what I do now is some executive coaching for clinicians. Think of it like a bit of career strategy for developing a non-clinical career.

And by that, I also mean sort of leadership innovation roles within the NHS or within a hospital setting. And I do that one-on-one in group settings. And the idea is that I really think clinicians want to make an impact, really want make a difference.

That's the one thing that we all really strive for. Um, and it's being taken away from us more and more every day, every year. So I want give that power back to clinicians, help them figure out what their purpose is and create a strategy that gives them the career that they want.

Amazing. with all sorts of different doctors, any particular sort of group of people or all the sorts people that you work with. So it's clinicians, so that's doctors, nurses, physios, any frontline clinicians.

Usually the people I work with end up being doctors and they're often about four to 10 years after registration. So after they've gotten a bit of clinical experience and have gathered some more skills and then realized, oh wait, there was a lot of other things that I used to do, a lots of things I enjoy doing and I want to build something of my own or actually do more with this to make an impact and make a difference in the world.

How did you get into this? Emergency medicine? How did you get into this world? Oh gosh, yeah. So yeah, I grew up in India and I never thought I'd be a doctor.

Went to med school constantly thinking about what else can I do? How do I get in to industry, pharma jobs? Everyone says, oh, you're only valuable once you've got some clinical experience.

I bit my tongue and said, okay, let's keep going. Decided to do emergency medicine because I felt like those were my people and just got along with them.

And then came to the UK for specializing in that. So I've been here for the last six years, did the whole, you know, getting your foundation competency signed off, applying for reg training and all of those bits.

And, a few years into that, when things settle down and you're kind of in a bit of a rhythm of saying like, oh, your ARCP is coming up. You're doing all your usual bits, And then there was just this nagging sense of something missing the whole time.

And I said, I was looking up towards this consultant career and I had this realization that maybe it's not taking me to where I wanted to be taken to.

I also saw that people and especially GPs had the ability to really build a portfolio career that always intrigued me and there's a lot of options and abilities.

So I need to figure this out for myself. What am I doing when I get to the end? What I am doing with my consultant And the only options kind of given to me were like, oh, you can do pre-hospital emergency medicine, or you know, pediatric EM, ICU, a couple of these other things, and if you really want, become an event medic, which are like doctor plus roles.

And I said, that's really nice, but I don't think I want to do more of medicine. I wanted to something leadershipy, you know, and I've been involved with the outcome leaders program from the beginning as a participant and then in the short life working group and really passionate about clinical leadership.

Anyway, long story short, I decided to really take on a journey with my own coach. And in the process of leaving medicine to go into management consulting, um, figured out that the thing that I was missing was the want and the ability to make an impact, which is what I realized everybody else is searching for as well.

So I'd actually decided to completely quit, give up my training number, go into management consulting, got myself some interviews off. And the process of doing that was when I realized that the real value lies in the change you make in world, the impact that we create.

Um, and to give you an example before, before this realization, I kept asking people, been networking my way into people working in these firms and saying, what else can I do?

How do I actually get a job in management, consulting for example? Um, and they all sort of said, Oh, work in your CV, do another course, think about doing an MBA.

Um. And this was all fine until one day when I was learning how to do my CV. Something hit me and I realized that my CB doesn't talk about the impact I make in the world at all.

It talks about, oh, I did like two cycles of an audit and presented it at a national conference. But so what, like, what does that achieve? What is the difference that made in world?

And that really clicked something in me. And I went back and I changed my entire CV so that those two audit cycles became, oh, recognized and improved workflow in the emergency department, saving over a thousand clinician hours.

The moment I did that, not only did it change my CV, but it changed the way I was speaking to people, the ways I introduced myself. There was a purpose driving everything that I had done until now.

And I was able to show that and, you know, without doing any additional courses, MBAs or anything, and I started to get referrals and connections that will be putting me into these jobs.

And, I said, Hey, it's all about really being purpose-driven in terms of what you want to achieve.

Finding Purpose Through Career Change

So then I took that. and said what if I flip it on its head and instead of being, purpose driven in my CV, what, if i'm actually purpose, driven and everything that I'm doing from here onwards.

And I was really intrigued by that. And the key to it was actually trying to figure out what that purpose was. In that whole journey took me down a different route.

It took down the route of trying figure what my strengths are, how do my experiences all to come together? What my purpose is, what Ikegai is what Simonson XY is and all of those things, that old journey really uncovered a lot of things for me.

At the same time, I decided to do a quality improvement fellowship, which was sort of like halfway house to management consulting. And it was really good because they gave me a methodology and I thought this

methodology was what was going to help me make some progress or some changes in the healthcare system that actually stuck.

But what I realized was that at the end of it, it's all about people. And the way we were doing the quality improvement was through quality-improvement coaching.

So people would come to us and say, I've got some ideas, some abilities, and we'd coach them in using this methodology to implement change that was sustainable.

So it was just a matter of like everything happening at the right time. And I said, you know, I love the coaching aspect of it. I loved figuring out what my purpose is.

and it all just came together and said I have to become a coach. So I decided to take up the executive coaching training certification, all of those bits.

Yeah. Just realized that what I really enjoy helping people with is getting that clarity to make a decision to move forward. That clarity, to figure out where that career is going to be.

yeah, that's such a great story. So many pieces along the way have been a nudge of a door and an opening of the door. And then, you know, or a notch of door, a look of that door then shutting the doors again and realizing it's not the one you want to go through.

Yeah. I think it is really important that people see the story behind what you're now doing. Because obviously it clear to everybody that follows you on LinkedIn and that is part of your world how passionate you are about helping other people find their purpose and support them along the way.

But the reason is, you know, all of these steps that have got you here to this point. enable you to do that so brilliantly. Did you have your own support when you talked about finding your strengths and Simon Sinek and knowing your why and your Ricky Guy and all of these things that I, you know, at the basis of the beginning of my program, what you do, and what many people do?

Because we've got to know that before we build on it. did you help with that or did work that out yourself? No, so I did have help. So I think, I'm going to go back to COVID times when I was commuting about an hour 15 every day.

And I, like many of us, was feeling quite dull and low because of everything going on. Uh, and I came across, uh, Paul McKenna's happiness podcast. Every day he'd get on a new guest to talk about the happiness and like what gives them happiness in their life.

worlds and really experts in what they did. And that kind of opened my door to saying like, actually, there's purpose behind what people do and what actually gives you happiness isn't the things you achieve, but the journey along the way, like by typical way.

But also open the door too many other podcasts. Then I was surrounded by podcasts that showed me that there is a different way of thinking and a way being.

Um, so I had gone to PSWS, um, professional support and wellbeing and I said, I want to figure out my career. Can you help me with maybe, maybe a coach?

And I knew that we had, as trainees, we have coaching services available. Um. And. I got triaged at the first time they said. Well, you don't really need a court to speak to your supervisor.

They'll tell you what your options are. Uh, and. Okay. Cool. Then like a whole year later, having decided to quit medicine and gotten myself an interview and all of those things, You know, I think I really want to figure this out.

Can you give me another coach, please? And so I got a coach and we did all of this. I had already by then done my

own Gallup Strengths Assessment. And then we do a couple more exercises.

We did vision boards. we figured out what the future looks like in terms of what I want. Took that journey and yeah, that help was really transformative for me.

Yeah, and it really can be, can't it? Hugely transformative. you know, people can see the impact that it's had on somebody close to them or somebody they hear from, then maybe people, you can think, well, what on earth is that going to give me?

And I should be able to work this out on my own. But it, but it also just that, the support showing you the way, gently sort of nudging you forward and knowing that the answers are normally within us.

It's difficult to pull that out, particularly when we've been on a conveyor belt since the age of you know, 13, 14, all the way through. And you talk about this journey.

When you went into medicine, it sounds like you always had this passion to do something different. Was it a family? Did medicine run in your family, was there a lot of pressure on you to it?

No, It was just something that you ended up doing. Yeah. I come from a family of mostly engineers, I would say. Um, actually going back to the French toast for the longest time I'd wanted to be a chef and have an uncle who's a Chef.

And he said to me, well, you know, if you become a chefs, You're going to work odd hours. You can work on holidays and nights and it's going be weird.

It's a tough life. And now I say to him that look, I'm doing emergency medicine, which is odd hours and nights and a tuff life as well. So for the longest time, there was a brief period when I wanted to be a fighter pilot, um, Which was probably just my uncle inspiring me.

So I came from a family of people who worked for the government, for service, engineers. And medicine for me kind of was like a decision about eight or nine months before starting uni.

Till then, I still remember I was in India, you've got all of these sort of coaching institutes, they kind train you for entrance exams or like national exams.

And I would finish school at five and after school from five till eight p.m., three hours, I'd go to this coaching institute, just like lugging a heavy bag and carrying loads of books and sitting through these classes where people would just basically go over the entire syllabus and we'd practice loads questions.

I was doing all of this and I thought, is this really taking me to where I want to get to? Like I'm putting in all this effort, where is it taking And that was probably the second time I had looked at my career in that way and said, what do I actually want out of this?

And I didn't really know if I wanted medicine or not, but I knew I want to do something with my hands. If I was going to put my time like the next five or six years into learning something, I'd wanted to use that for the rest of my life.

At that point I said I don't want be an engineer who just eventually does an MBA, stands behind a desk and manages people. So that's how I ended up saying, medicine's not that bad actually.

Amazing. Now tell me, so obviously you've taken this other journey. We sort of met over a, you know, a combined love of purpose, entrepreneurship, business.

How have you found sort running your own business, getting out there, marketing yourself, showing up, attracting clients, how have found that whole process?

Because that's something medics struggle with a little bit usually. Yeah, it's been an entire new world. And in a way that got me really excited. To be honest, I've enjoyed the whole journey and I'm still enjoying the journey.

I know that many people don't like the thought of it, but the ability that you have to be able to make a change in the world and reach people and unlock opportunities for yourself through doing that and learning those small skills is really exciting for me.

I think, so I've been on LinkedIn for many, many years. And it was sort of, I want to say January of last year when I said, hey, let me actually give this a shot.

Let me talk about something once a week. I didn't really have a strategy, a topic, or a thing. Didn't know I could get clients through LinkedIn. But then I came across more and more people like yourself and just a fantastic community.

Um, and I was very nervous and anxious because of all the trolling that happens on Twitter and Insta and a couple of other platforms.

Building a Coaching Business and Community

Whereas LinkedIn is different because everyone's got their real identities on there. Everyone's called their network around them. everyone has got the work linked to who they are and everything that they say.

So it's a very, very professional network and everybody is very encouraging. Even if they want to disagree, they will disagree in a professional manner.

And I think the feedback that you get that we all kind of look for from social media is a lot more reliable than many other platforms. So I've absolutely enjoyed it.

It's been amazing. And it's changed I, think a, lot in the last year, I was, probably around the same time this time last, year I decided to commit to that being my platform of choice.

You know, I really find it incredibly supportive. You, know people often when you move into a different area outside of the medical world, it can feel quite lonely.

And several of my clients have just suddenly been like, Oh, found my people. Like here they are, you know. Um, so it's, its, It's been amazing, hasn't it?

I think to see that. No, the algorithms have really changed and like you're getting personalized content. So when. Talk about something it reaches people who are like-minded.

And that ability has never been there before. I think with AI and all of this new change, it's fantastic. Brilliant. What about community? How important do you think it is in terms of entrepreneurship to have community and people around you?

A hundred percent. I mean, I generally tell people that when they want to do something outside of medicine, they don't need to a course. And yet that's something that I did.

That was a mistake I guess I made before figuring out everything else. But what that did for me was give me a community. So the whole coach training happened as a massive cohort of fellow executive coaches and people who were doing fantastic things already.

And as a result, we did a lot of barter coaching. And so people asked me, do you work with a coach? And I say, yeah, I work. With like multiple coaches at the same time, because we work on different topics and different things simultaneously.

Um, so it was, it think it, was around the surrounding myself with people who were doing something bigger and something different that kept constantly opening my eyes and encouraging me and helping me realize that it's possible.

So a hundred percent, when it comes to entrepreneurship, without having a community, you're kind of just stuck and taking action becomes harder and harder.

Yeah, absolutely. So tell us about what you're up to. Tell us, about who you work with and whether you've got anything exciting in the pipeline in terms of being able to work, with new people if they're interested in what, you got going on.

Yeah, absolutely. So I guess as far as my coaching goes, there's a lot of quality coaching that I still do. A lot work with IMGs and leadership that's still focused.

But for 2025, we've gone into the realm of non-clinical careers. And so far, that has been a one-on-one work. With that filling up, I'm now opening up new things.

One is a self-paced course that people can take. It's like an entry level, just get to know me, get the information that i've got. a couple of the big domains of having a high impact career.

So equity, influence, and purpose. I think the overlap of those three really help you create a successful non-clinical career, so we cover that in the online course.

And then beyond that, I'm opening up a new group program. It's called the Clinician Impact Actionship. so it's kind of like a fellowship, but really action-focused.

it is a very small group cohort. i'm open up for beta testing at the moment at its lowest price ever. Um, and basically that gives people the ability to join on, go through six sessions, which will cover really the key drivers for a successful transition of your career.

Um. And then also get introduced to many more like-minded people. So those sort of people are you looking for, for that, that group, are looking to people that are, they're out there sort looking at leadership options, maybe where you were five years ago, you know, sort.

That sort person, do they have to be at any point in their career? Yeah, so this, this really is going to be the best thing for people who've already dipped their toes in something outside of medicine.

So maybe they've done a course in say AI or health tech, or they're done, a leadership course, all they have done are QI certification and they got some additional skills that they want to make the most of.

And ideally takes, take that in control in terms of where they wanna take their careers. Or perhaps a part-time role or consulting or something of their own, whatever it may be.

but they don't really have an idea of how to make that happen yet. Um, what's the problem that the solving was the unique value they bring to the world.

For those people, I'm assuming that usually the people I've worked with so far have been about four to 10 years into their clinical career. But if you're not, um, so I'll open to that.

I guess if somebody who's understood that there's value outside of medicine and you want to to happen for yourself, uh, yeah, come speak to me on LinkedIn.

Great. Amazing. So what about the, what, about, the difficulties? What about. The downsides of running your own business? We've talked about collaborating in community.

And I think obviously you were a walking example of just the learning and the passion that comes from doing something that you've, that, you really enjoy, but what.

About the. Difficulties. Are there any downsights compared to a busy shift in A&E? Oh, that's a tough comparison. I'm tempted to almost say no, there isn't.

But certainly, of course there is. Um, I think one of the biggest upsides for me in emergency medicine is the fact that when your shift ends, everything ends.

You completely switch off and you're just, you know, just enjoy your day. you are at home. Yes, You're tired and fatigued and it takes 24 hours to recover from a night shift, but you free.

Whereas when it's entrepreneurship, There really isn t a deadline. And what I've been really bad with recently is trying to close my day at say five or 530 in the evening.

And I tend to just keep going, especially if there's like a really passionate idea or something new that you want to create. It's very easy to keep just going and that balance in your life that want create is just really up to you.

So the food you eat, how well you take care of yourself, and how much you sleep is all really to up you and it's quite difficult when you're the only one sort of guarding your time.

And I think there's a huge element of not knowing what's gonna happen, not know where things are gonna head to. I mean, medics, we deal with risk all the time, but we're actually super risk averse.

We don't like not to know what is gonna to happen. And so there's definitely that element of it, which is new for both for me to deal with, but also for my wife to dealing with.

Like she's never seen me be so uncertain about things and she is never happy with me going one way for a week and then completely changing direction the next week because something new has been uncovered.

So I think it's difficult, not just for, me but for the people around me. It's a different journey, absolutely worth it. Yeah.

Advice on Non-Clinical Careers and Burnout

And, you know, it is that freedom to do whatever you want that creates those difficulties with boundaries and certainty, isn't it? Because actually, one of the things that we do have to have is this experimental approach to what we put out there in the world.

I say to my clients, just whatever your create, hold it quite lightly, because it might not be accepted in same way that you think, or it may be It may be that you sell all 12 spots in five minutes, but the chances are that, you might not do that.

And it's not a rejection. So we've got to hold this stuff lightly. We've gotta be able to twist and turn and adapt to what is required. All with this lack of knowing whether something is going to pan out as we want.

I try and avoid this word success because, what's success? You've talked right from the beginning about impact and how important that is. So is selling 12 spots on your group program, does that make it successful?

Or if there's two people on the group programme and those people go on and have a huge impact in the world, is that more successful. We have to hold that lightly and that's difficult for everybody around us.

But what would you say to somebody that is out there thinking about doing something different, whether it be in leadership, within the NHS, but in the private sector, starting their own business, doing to do with, with health tech, which I'd like to come back to.

But do you have some kind of gems of advice that you would give to somebody in that situation? Yeah, I think, and this is, i don't like giving advice, especially as a coach, advice is hard to get right and often not what's needed.

But if I were to give some advice, then I would probably say, stay curious for a bit longer. And I guess this is stolen from Michael Bungastania. He writes about the advice trap and talks about staying curious a little bit long.

I think what that translates to is. When you're looking at stepping outside of a clinical career, really spend time on thinking about the problem that you can be solving, whether that's an industry role, an entrepreneurial journey, a leadership challenge.

Really think about how valuable that problem is. We tend to jump to solutions and management plans and products and ideas. I'm sure you probably have loads of experience with this as well.

defining the problem and getting clear on what is it that you're solving is where the true value lies. And the solution is only, I mean, it's only part of delivering that.

But yeah, the Problem Definition is whether value lives. I think you are absolutely right. There's a lot of noise at the moment around innovation and tech.

You know, we're recording this in March 2025. Um, and it feels like the last six months AI has really moved things. And I think there is a tendency for medics, particularly if we're feeling we've got that degree of burnout or I can't do this forever.

I. Sometimes there's this grass is greener. Like actually what I'll do is jump out of the frying pan and straight into the fire, which is entrepreneurship, innovation, huge amounts of money, tech.

all of these things being thrown at people as potential answers. What would you say to people in that kind of world about this? Have you come across that sort of thing before?

Yeah, it's really interesting. So when I first started to talk about coaching on LinkedIn, a lot of people reached out to me and the kind of coach I am is very go, go go coach.

Like you want to achieve something, you wanna make a difference. Let's figure out how to do that and take action, whether that's a quality improvement project or whatever it is.

But if you're in that space where you are really looking for an exit and you burnt out and really struggling with the way things are in medicine and fatigue, and that is really, really tough, then that isn't the place where I would be the right coach for you.

And in fact, I almost said like, i'm not a burnout coach because I can't help you get back to zero. Um, and oftentimes taking these leaps and taking those journeys outside means going into from a negative to a big positive, because you're going to have to put it in a lot of work, both internally and externally, the mental work and.

you know, the people work behind it is quite extreme. And sometimes that's not the change you need. Sometimes what you needed is just a bit of break and, and stability, I think is a big part of it.

I there are different challenges. So yes, you're not going to face the patient emotions and the risk of death and risk litigation if you go into these other fields as much as you would when you got to medicine.

but you're also not going to have the same sort of camaraderie and job security and familiarity with your environment when you go to the other side. And I think that needs to be taken into account.

Yeah. Familiarity, job, security. Yes. I Think going into a situation in the world of tech or business as somebody that is struggling with burnout. Most people talk about, I'm not a burnout expert either, but I've You know, Claire Ashley, who works in the burnout space, there's lots of amazing doctors, but they talk about it being like a two year

recovery really, um, properly.

And I think people fail to have this break. Um, and I, you know having a break from work because you're off sick with burnout is not the same as being well and having.

But going from that into particularly this high, high stress, higher money innovation world, I I think you really need to stop and think. I'm thinking back to some of the decisions I've made.

I think I would do that again myself, just pausing for that little bit longer. Is this actually the right thing to be doing at this time? So thank you so much for sharing that.

So what we will do is we'll signpost everything in the show notes. Anybody that wants to contact you, where are they best messaging you? Where do you like your messages to come?

Generally on LinkedIn, I'm very active on Linkedin. I appreciate some of the people might not be on linkedin and they're on Insta. On Instas, at Shub says impact.

i've also got my website, which is coachwithshub.com. So they can, i guess there's a little form there. They can drop or email me. Amazing. Well, thank you so much for your time.

Contact Details and Closing Remarks

Keep doing brilliant things. keep in touch, keep sending direct messages. But I love being in your world. And thank for you time today, Shab. Thank you for having me, Joe.

This was fantastic. I hope this episode has sparked some new ideas or challenged your thinking. Transitioning from medicine to business is not easy. It's about adapting our skills while embracing the unknowns of entrepreneurship.

it can be nerve wracking, but remember you are not alone on this journey. Please feel free to reach out to me via direct message on LinkedIn or Instagram, or just shoot me an email at joe at bendylegs.com for support.

And don't forget to grab the free PDF from the show notes from stethoscope to startup, which is your go-to guide and resource for diving into entrepreneurship.

Many thanks for tuning in. I will see you next time. Thanks for spending your precious time with me. This has been a Monkey Pants Productions Podcast.