Episode #49 - From Aeronautical Engineer To Empowering Women, with Authenticity and... 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. Today on the podcast, I'm delighted to welcome Sarah Pratt, who is a leadership and development coach and trainer, Who is determined to create a world in which women are empowered by joy without guilt, shame, or judgment to lead, inspire, and create positive change in their worlds.

As you will hear, Sarah's experience spans over 20 years and across industries, including healthcare consulting and higher education. She began her career as an aeronautical engineer before shifting into designing employee skills, progress and talent programmes.

In 2020, she waved goodbye to employment and launched her own business. So, Sarah Pratt's random fact is that in her first job, she managed to break the Eurofighter Typhoon, which is a plane.

Is that correct? It is the plane, it's a very dinky little one-person plane! How did you manage to brake it and why were you there? So my educational background is I graduated in aeronautical engineering, so first The plane I happened to choose was a European project.

So different parts of the plane are designed and built in different countries. And then we have to put it all together like Lego.

Sarah Pratt's Career Shift and Typhoon Story

Depending on which IT system you were using, you got different measurements. When we put all it together from a design engineer perspective, It was quite clear that the legs weren't going to fit in the holes in wing.

Small problem if you want to take off and fly kind of in a fuel-efficient way. You normally tuck the wings, the, legs up into the wing, yeah, not going.

Brilliant. you don't put that on your CV then? I don' put it on my CV, that's true. And you know, what was I, 24 or something? Yeah, it was like, Oh, holy shit, I've done this wrong.

I messed up here. And then I can remember my entire male team sitting behind me going, oh, and then these like flurry of conversations happening over my head with me, going I'm going to be fired.

Oh my goodness, that's priceless. Right. And we have got a lot to talk about. We've got to cover a little bit about that aeronautical engineering into leadership, which is why we're here, what we are here to discuss.

But, um, thank you for coming. It's, it's really, really lovely to chat to you. I have a couple of examples of conversations like this on the podcast where I've basically been introduced to somebody by somebody else that I really trust.

Um, we've just hit record and we just chatted because we were connected by Charlotte Maldari, who is on one of the earlier episodes that I will reference below.

You've been working with her and your LinkedIn profile. I've being doing the same. She's great. she said, you two have got to meet. Here we are. So just tell me a little bit about what you do now.

Obviously aeronautical engineering is in the past. We might come back to that, but what do you now? Effectively, I help engineer businesses. And I help people find their way forward through them.

Specifically, I tend to work with women. I do work guys and people of all genders and preferences, but mostly I work women, and I am a woman, that I've lived that journey.

And it's two things. It's one about systemically changing the workplace so that we can all thrive. Not all burn out, not all mask who we are, no all have to kind of play the game in order to be successful.

and second to help individuals find what it is, what is their passion and their purpose on the planet that can be in a workspace. whether that's self-employed or employed, how can they do that in ways that feel true to themselves?

So they can finally do it without the mask. They can finely do and if they want to be potty-mouthed, be putty mouthed. If they wanna do in their pyjamas, do their in pyjamas.

if want do all over social media or not, or, I have them find the courage and the confidence To be that creative person, to be the innovative person to, be provocative person.

Whether they're delivering VA services, because they are brilliant at organisational systems, or they leading spiritual communities, all there in charities where they all flipping the needle upside down on a social change impact project.

Or they actually have, I did some work with the Royal Marsden with breast care units. where they're having, you know, they are handling really heavy emotional loads and care deeply about what they doing.

I think that's probably true of most of my clients actually. Or they in big four consultancies and they lead billions of pounds of business and super smart people that are ambitious and driven.

And they changing the government and changing society and impacting the way that work works. I'm really lucky and I love that, you know, we talk to niche, aren't we, as business owners, I don't really have a really strong, the person is doing this niche.

It's the, person knows that there's more and they want to give more without giving all of themselves. And this, like the way that you've Given those examples, I guess that's happened organically over a period of time of doing this, those different opportunities have opened up to you.

How did you go from aeronautical engineering into this different space, this leadership space coaching space like you say engine, helping businesses engineer their needs.

How did that happen? It worked because I took a role for a year when I finished engineering, I moved back to the UK, and I take a roll with a charity.

And I was able to do more of a people development people engagement type role looking at change and looking how do we develop the organisation within a region.

From Engineering to Leadership Coaching

And that was a bit of a gamble and it was like, I'm really passionate about what they do. it's only a year's contract while I look for what I wanna do and where I want to do it.

And I got I think about three months in and I was like, I need to ask for Thursday afternoons off so I can go back to university part-time and re-qualify.

So I did a master's in human resource management. I went broad because I didn't know where to focus. It felt safe at that point in that age to go Well, if I know about HR and law and in recruitment and development and reward and payroll and stuff, I've got choices.

It took me probably about 10 minutes to work out. I can do sickness and absence and I could do an investigation and a disciplinary. Intellectually, that's possible.

Doesn't light my fire. Yeah. And I went down there, the training. Training, as we used to call it in the antique times, went into training and training development.

Is that coaching now? Is training coaching? Then we went to learning and development, then we go to people development and talent development leadership development career development.

All of those different titles. Now I still talk about coaching and training. That's what I do. I offer one to one services, I offers programs for groups of people, whether that's open to the general public or it's within an organization.

And you work for yourself now. I do now and it's been through, actually my next job post charity was in the healthcare sector. I worked for a facilities management company that looked after lots of NHS.

outlets, can I call them that? Everything from outpatient units to GP practices to big major hospitals, so I got to see a little bit of your world from a non-medical perspective.

I guess that flipped, I went into consultancy after that and then into international business schools before I kind of went in the middle of Covid, oh I can't do this anymore I just need to get out and I need do my own thing.

So this is year five of being my own boss in its 100% nature of employment can be. And that is something we are going to talk about, because before we hit the record button, we were talking about the difference between being in an organization as a leader and then being self-employed, solopreneurs, starting something different as the leader.

I'd love to take more with you about that, but you talked about women wearing masks, you talked about needing the courage and the confidence. Is that something that you see lacking a lot in the women that work with?

Lacking, I find a really difficult word. I think all women are courageous. You know, the fact that we leave our front doors and we travel and get to places is courageous in a lots of the places that that need to be.

the fact that we go through childbirth is courageous. The fact we date people is courageous. We put our hearts on the line. Now, that's not a uniquely female experience or feminine experience.

The workplace came around, particularly in this third sector kind of environment where we've come away from agricultural work and piecemeal work. It came out of men going into offices and into organised structures.

So it was designed about the man, a bit like the car is designed around the male safety model. There wasn't somebody that went in a really Machiavellian, you know, how, designing it that way and saying, we're going to make it really hard for women to be part of this place.

It wasn' that it's just custom and practice has built it. And we've added in little bits along the way that make easier, like flexible working, enhanced maternity leave.

Some of the new policies that are coming in this year are brilliant. But we haven't really changed the way work works. It's nine to five predominantly.

I know in healthcare that's a little bit different, but the shift pattern hasn't changed or adapted for women, or in a way that makes it easier for woman to stay inside those kind of careers.

We haven' t really change the ways that we reward things. Its our metrics. You know, we talked about it's GCSE results day to day. I remember my grandparents going, you get a fiver for each grade A and that was a lot of money back in the dinosaur years.

We haven't really got out of that, we prioritise in terms of what we recognise at work as typically masculine ways of behaving. We don't tend to prioritise what it is that's the feminine way that we bring into leadership.

We want collaboration and cooperation and we want harmony and want to be able to nurture people to do their best and to grow and hit their full potential with their feminine skills.

but they're often sort of wrapped up into delivers results, which is usually evidenced by I made this much money or I saved this time or saved patient hours or whatever it is.

It doesn't tend to be, I sat with Joe once a week and Joe got better at doing X, Y, Z. She's now got more confidence, she does it on her own and she's flying.

both of those are really important and valuable in the workplace. So the courage is there, it's not recognised and rewarded in a natural way, would be what I would say.

Yeah, and it is not measurable or is it measurable? I think it harder to measure. How do you measure harmony? How you can measure innovation, creativity, collaboration, compassion, all super important in super, super important in the workplace, but really sticky to try and to go, well, you're better than they are.

So you get more points on your score at the end of the year than you do. This is really interesting stuff, isn't it? And you are talking about the work place.

Women, Work, and the Problem with Masks

And I think when you know, predominantly, maybe people are thinking about that corporate space, that, think about how this can be put into your own GP practices, healthcare settings as consultants.

particularly in male-dominated specialties. But I'm also really interested in these feminine ways of leading when it comes to starting up on your own.

Because so many medics that I speak to and that support and I help, many of them have got children, young families, they are wanting more from their professional lives.

They've maybe been in the same job for quite some time. they've maybe retrained in something else along the side of, you know, something has sparked or re-sparked, should I say, that curiosity and that love of learning.

And they say to me, I want to have that flexibility and freedom by running my own business. Yes, there is a huge amount of flexibility in freedom that is available when you are in control of your own time.

But leading ourselves when we are working on our own is a struggle. And I'd love to talk to you about that because I know so many medics struggle with time management, procrastination, you know, what do I do today?

Let's talk about in terms of work and in term of all the hats you were talking about us wearing. Brilliant. Let us go back a step first. One of the things I knew about the meds that I work with are they are deeply passionate about other people.

They're in the, they are driven by a desire to serve and to make things better and fix. And I'm very glad that is a tray of medics. Please carry on doing that.

Don't take that away. What we tend to be less good at, particularly ambitious, smart women than all medcs are, we tends to do that for ourselves. We will go to the effort of making sure our kids eat a healthy meal and then we'll eat the bits around the edge and snack on something not so great out the fridge.

Or we know at lunchtime, we definitely didn't get that healthy lunch time meal because we've been in a rush and so we're drinking the protein smoothie or whatever it is.

We tend to be less good at being compassionate about ourselves. So business is a bumpy road. This is my fifth year. I thought this year and I said to my business coach this is the year I understand it.

Couldn't be more wrong. It's yet another unique different year, and i'm still learning like what the heck do I do when this happens? Bringing compassion to ourselves when we've had very structured, very target-driven careers in organizations that are regulated, whether they're in the true form of regulation or in terms of legally, we've had all these boundaries put around us that kind of limit and give us a benchmark for what we're doing.

I think when we become self-employed, that disappears. And whilst you could say to yourself, oh, I want to make 50,000 this year, or I wanna be a six-figure business and work four hours a week, whatever some of the magic that I've yet to find, but it's certainly out there according to social media.

From a hammock and barley, don't forget. Yeah, cocktail in hand, let's go the whole hog. The ability to be compassionate for ourselves during that journey and to really care about our needs, not just the pursuit of targets, I feel like that's a really big shift and we've had this Maybe not constant, but we've had from the little girl era, where it's like good girls do their homework.

Good girls get 10 out of 10 in their spelling Sarah through to, you know, it. know 11 plus exams for some parts of the country in the UK it's then you know what can you take for GCSE depends on what you get in that that magical summer exam that you Take when you're what 13 maybe four just heading into 14 it that pre-defines your life you, know in, that moment I didn't get biology or I did get Biology I got German but I Didn't Get French it We've had that structure in place for a really long time, and we've a lot of people telling us this is what good looks like, this what acceptable looks.

You take that into university, you take into your career. When you become self-employed, who's telling you that? You have to tell yourself that. I got the same as last year plus a bit.

That's a step in the right direction. Maybe it's not six figures in the hammock and barley with the cocktail this year, but it still out there. I can still get it.

If that's what I truly want, if that is the measure of success. Um, I mean, that a whole different podcast. What is measure success? We can talk for the staff.

And for me, it is that piece of self leadership where we have to go. if I was talking to a colleague, what would I really say? You're knackered and exhausted.

Take the afternoon off and go to bed. Your brain is fuzzy. Go for a walk and get some fresh air. Do a handstand and then get the blood back to your head.

Going scream at a song at the top of your voice and let out the frustration of the whole thing. And then come back your desk and try and work it out. Be compassionate to yourself, darling.

We didn't feel as good at that because we weren't allowed to do that at work. Or we were allowed do do a little micro, like go for a cup of tea, love.

Go and sit in the staff room for 10 minutes. Weren't allow some of that expression of ourselves. So I think compassion is one of the big things around self-leadership.

And I also think that we have to tell ourselves in our own self talk that were talking ourselves out of stuff sometimes. In the workplace, you talk to a manager, a colleague, sit on a bench outside the front door and a mate says, it's going to be alright darling, we'll go through this.

In your own business, that can feel quite lonely. So self-leadership becomes around self care. self-compassion, because that's where you get your self worth and your value and self esteem and the confidence to go out there and go, hey, you knew me as a GP, as nurse practitioner, a physio, now you need to know me like this and I'm still just as good and still so excited to be with you and do this stuff for you.

And I know the results are going to amazing. That feels a bit like you're standing outside in Trafalgar Square naked. Absolutely.

Self-Leadership, Compassion, and Beginner Mode

And that is the biggest thing that I see again and again, this visibility, you know, being able to go out there and not having the backing of, You know this is me, but, I work for the NHS and you'll find me on, in clinic corridor E and someone else is going to pay your bill.

It's going from that to this, is a thing I've built this. I am this I stand for this and actually, I need to go out there and tell people because no one else is going to do it for me.

Yeah, tell them and then take money from them. Like, oh my God, you know, there are very few businesses where we actually handle cash, we handle transactions in that kind of way where it goes in my bank account.

So money is a big one, but visibility, yeah, definitely. And it's allowing yourself sometimes to be in beginner mode. You become a real specialist in whatever career you've come from, but particularly in medicine, you become such a specialist, in your field, even as a GP, I think that is still a special skill set, really.

Allowing yourself to be a beginner again, as business owner, You mentioned procrastination, I certainly did a lot of that. I faffed about with this colour of orange or that colour, this blue or blue on my website.

And it's allowing yourself to go, well, maybe I didn't quite get it right. And maybe, I've grown into something different. Yeah. Just the way like our fashion trends, you know, what I want to wear at 15 is not what we want today.

How do we allow ourselves to evolve and go? Yeah, the start of my business, that was right, That was the product. That is the service I wanted to offer.

Ooh, now I want to do it differently and allowing us to keep going back to that beginner mode. Yeah, you're never going to feel the same amount of confidence and ability to get it right.

I mean, I get sort of an imposter syndrome, not impostor syndrome but I feel uncomfortable every time I go to work because I'm like, right, another day, like anything can come in.

And I hope I can manage everything that comes in and I don't get that so much in my in my business work now, but I certainly at the beginning did. And the idea is that you're supposed to look back on your first social media posts,

your attempt at a website and feel, you know, five years later you look back and go, Oh my God, what was I thinking?

It's awful. And that means it's great. That means you've started, that you got on that journey of doing and improving, which is the only way you can get this right.

You can't just build in a dark room, something that's wonderful and hope that people will come when you get it out there. It just doesn't work like that.

So I love this. this self leadership, like it's a self awareness, isn't it as well? It's like, you know, how do I work? Am I better in the morning? I might better.

In the evening, what sort of people do? Do I need around me? What's going to fill my cup? what gives me energy? Well, it really doesn't. And even just giving yourself that time to understand yourself a bit more.

You know how often do you see people, I certainly know that I needed a complete break, but how like step back completely. It's almost like their brains are so full that actually shoving a business on top of it, it would be a disaster.

Do you see that and sort of encourage people to stop? Yeah, and I think that's in the pre-business bit where people are starting to side hustle. You know, I'm doing my full-time job or almost full time job and adding these bits, you know I am qualifying as a coach, qualifying a Pilates instructor, a qualifying an XYZ practitioner.

they do that a bit on the side and then the site wants to there's a big bit of activity and like there some potential oh well then I quit my job then we go from something occupied a few hours is now going to occupy your week that can feel like quite a leap and a different kind of overwhelm it's the overwhelim of If I'm really successful, how the hell will I cope with that?

There is just me. At that point, it's often just, me and you go, I'll get a VA. They're like, and I get some to do my socials. And then it is like well actually at the start, you are the IT department, the HR department the marketing department.

The event planning department you're everything in your business right down to the tea lady. A little bit later on you can start to make choices about who else do I bring in and there's that part-time couple of hours a month retainer all those kind of things which you've got the ball rolling but at the beginning it's quite lonely so success I think is an overwhelm as much as what if this totally fails because that's humiliating I've been a really successful whatever and I gave it all up for something that I clearly love But I can't make a business.

I come pay the bills. That's a different kind of overwhelm. And both of those, I think, create what you're calling the imposter syndrome. Create that sort of inner critic piece of like, "I can do it.

This is not for me. If I do do, it what the heck? How do I follow on from that act?" In a way that we don't have that so much, i think in the workplace, because typically there's the salary that comes in regardless.

Typically, there's a workload plan of some description. Not always fair and not always realistic, but there is some level of planning that says you can handle this many patients or this, many surgeries or these many appointments.

There is something it's not right in the NHS. I totally get that. So not writing it, But there was some in our own businesses, the reason. You know, I was hoping to take next Tuesday off.

Now I realize there a pitch that needs writing. because that client and that piece of work is really important. I'm really engaged with it. And I will give up what was going to be my time off on Tuesday afternoon to do that.

Yeah. But I have to manage that Yeah, yeah. Equally today on the other flip side, you know, I was supposed to doing a GP surgery today and it's results day and I and i was like, oh, i definitely can't do.

So I just cancelled it was a locum shift. And I thought, well, I know he's going to be out with his friends in the afternoon. So I'll just be on zoom between 11 and three and I will spend 12 and 3 and spend the morning with him.

And today, you know, we went down for a swim after the results with all the kids and walking back up. I am hugely proud of all my kids, but it's not about results.

It's about those moments of time that I can then witness and spent with them. And then I can jump in, do three hours work this afternoon and do some more this evening.

So it's that, that flexibility and freedom does come, doesn't it? Once you start moving into this business space and you can, what I call build that life-first business, you know, your children and your non-negotiables, and then you build a business around it.

But you talked about, before we hit record, you talk about women having this multi-focus thing. And I do feel like I've got four kids and I'm still doing the day job and helping lots of people.

You talked most medics having the desire to make things better. I am the ultimate fixer sometimes to a point, to fault.

Juggling Roles and the Mental Load

Where do we go wrong or how do improve this sort of juggling ball multifocus thing that most of my clients and myself seem to do and I'm sure you do. Yeah, I think there's two things that you're raising in there.

One is that, you know, we go back to evolution, the caveman went out with a spear and went hunting. The women went together in a pack with baskets with children strapped to their hips.

And we did that together. There's our multi-focus. We were doing childminding, community activity, finding food and firewoods, to save people's hunger and need for warmth.

we were kind of juggling a lot of stuff and we always have and I think now we're in a world where women can come out of their homes and go to work, I know there are parts of the world that are saying differently at the moment, in the UK it's perfectly reasonable for a woman to wish to have a career and to act upon it and be the primary parent and i'm not saying that disrespectfully to dads but typically mums are the people that get on the WhatsApp group with the PTA that's like, we need you all to bring in a can of beans tomorrow or you were going to dress up like Ronald Dahl characters or whatever it is.

It's, like when do I find that by tomorrow? I'm at work. I am the other end of the country. What are we supposed to do? That mental load, and we measured it during COVID and COVID was hideous for medics, I totally get that.

The UK's National Statistics Office looked at it and questioned a vast sort of sample population of women across the UK during and after. For women, the mental workload had shot up enormously because we were trying to do homeschooling, do our day jobs.

We might have been able to take our kids to a local school if that was possible for key workers. We were juggling the chaos of work and the load of, and then we went home to have relatives saying, oh, I'm not putting a mask on.

I don't wanna, Oh my God. That dip hasn't come back to what it was pre-COVID yet. Because kids of that era learn this is what mom does. because dad was on his Zoom room and typically looked away.

Now, not all dads, I'm not suggesting that, but the workload at a population level for women hasn't come back down. So we're still juggling dentist appointments, braces, I wish you all children with good teeth, brace appointments are a ball ache.

We're juggling all the different stakeholders at work, we then juggle a side hustle or an embryonic business or even

into our own full-time self-employment.

juggling being five different roles in it because yeah I've got to fix the website today and I need to make a new form and i need, to get in and send an email out and, I, need schedule some marketing and oh I actually got, talk to a client today.

and I've already put in my non-negotiables that become a bit of a chore. I'm going to get my swimming or I am going go to yoga or do some breath work and meditation before I start work.

And I will light a candle and get a teacup and do journaling. There are all valid things to do. They become chore because they become task, they stop serving us.

Or another thing to hide behind. I'm so busy, there isn't time for me to do anything else. That's what I spend my time doing. Yeah, I had a client earlier who's a meditation teacher and I said, you know, your ideal client.

I know I need to meditate. It would be really good for my brain. Like journaling I find really helpful, but I don't make myself do it regularly. But it gets shorter if I've got other things to do.

And I cut corners on those non-negotiables that I much better as a parent, as partner, business owner, human. But those are the things that get dumped because I don't have time for them.

And it's partly that programming again. We're programmed to be the last in the line. So the martyr archetype, if you think about it from that perspective.

I'm the eldest of all the grandchildren in my family and I can remember, I had to set the behaviour, like, you're the role model, Sarah, of the girls, so we're half boys, half girls.

We're a neat split, but I am the oldest of us. You've got to help put dinner on the table. And I'd be like, well, the boys are outside playing football.

It's not fair. But we taught that. That's what good girls do. To be accepted, to be loved, that's part of it. You go to the back of the queue. I'm sure you've done it where you do the kids birthday party and by the end of you realise you haven't had a drink and you didn't eat anything, but everybody else is sated.

And i think that is really true when we become self-employed. it's really easy to step into that martyr I think really disempowering place to come from because it's not about me, it is about my clients, I'm here to serve, and I feel good when I serve.

And that's all true. I have that entirely in my business. I've got one lady that's taken to message me. She's going through a really bumpy bit and she's messaged me around the clock.

And I will answer sometimes knowing that I shouldn't really be answering at nine o'clock at night, but I wanted to have a good night's sleep. If I can just give her a little emoji and She goes, okay, it's all right.

I'm heard, I am seen. Do I do that on a regular basis? No. How do we get out of martyr? We have to find the opposite. we have to find an empowering way of being from a feminine.

So I work with a group of archetypes that are specifically feminine leadership types. The queen, the mother, lover, warrioress, and the sorceress. And you go, well, they don't sound like very worky things.

Well, sorcerress is all about creation. She's all innovation. It's about trusting that little niggle in your tummy that yeah this is the thing to go after it's the warrior s she gets shit done that's her job like she leads the troops into battle and a specific battle not all the battles she knows how to time it mother is about nurture and development and growth and compassion lover is, about the charisma and they're like come and play with me it is going to be fun queen is most obvious because she's sovereign she sets the vision and she says this where we're heading This

is why we're doing this, this is the benefits of doing, do you want to come on board?

Do you wanna be part of this? So she's great at social buying, she is great creating loyalty with her realm, her people.

Feminine Leadership Archetypes

All of those are really important in self-employment. They're important, in employment. I think they're really, really really when you're self employed because there isn't a training and development part.

There isn' a mentor that goes, Jo, I watched you have that conversation. Have you ever thought about like why that bit didn't land? There's nobody to do that.

We are literally flying by the seats of our pants in solo, which is why the disempowering archetypes pop up. What are the other disempowering archetypes?

So I call them superwoman. She's the one that's got, you know, I think 1980s working working women where they've got you the big head doing the shoulder pads and the lippy and they got the baby under one arm and a briefcase and their mobile phone.

That's what I mean by super woman driven by fear that it's all going to go wrong. Should we found out she won't be good enough? So she does everything and burns herself in the process.

Victim, I can't do it. I don't know enough. Um, i'm never going to know it enough, nobody will help me. i am all on my own. And then the other one is bitch.

She gets really angry and that may not be within her own business. It might be when you open the door and go, who left the toilet seat up again? I've told you.

Or, you know, the dogs at the dinner off the table. Bitch can also be it yourself. You're so stupid. It's that negative self-talk that we sometimes eat, you're stupid, can't cope, never going to do this, not as good as Joe or Sarah or whoever the next person is that's in your space.

They're easy to fall into because solo employment can be so terribly lonely. When you are working in an organisation, whether that is a DP practice where you a relatively small number of people, or you're in a massive seven-story hospital, there's people around.

No, we don't always like all of the people. I totally accept that. But there are people that you can do the eye-roll with or that can go, do you just need to vent that out, my love, and get it off your tits?

We don t have those coffee-cooler moments. We like the person next to you where you can go, oh my God, you won't believe what I just saw. Or you wouldn't have believed the question, I've never been asked that before.

And we all have that, that's a nice surprise in our long careers. When you're self-employed, You can be sat on your own in a room, eight hours a day, more than eight hour a days.

You could be sitting in the hotel room because the service you provide is local to the client. Well, solo travel to weird hotels around the UK, trust me, is not all that exciting.

It's not even exciting when you're doing it around Europe and the Middle East. No, it does sound really exciting for one or two nights when nobody wants you to cook baked beans for them or anything.

Yeah, that's true. How do we move forward from there? How to find the ways of behaving that allow you to lead your business, from compassion, courage, nurture, spaciousness, just the pause.

The pause to be able to go, what the heck is it I'm doing this week? To get our heads straight and go does that fit in with everything else I need to do?

Can I flex? Allowing yourself to flex. I have this lovely phrase that I call plant pot time. You can't see it off the screen. There's a big plant next to, on the end of my desk and I talk to the plant.

Not really talking to plant, I'm just talking through and working through my head. What are the priorities this week? What do I, what are my must-dos?

And get really specific. If I do nothing but these three things this, week that's what I I've got this many meetings this week or I'm delivering this program this weekend and I need to get away early because I want to go and do that thing at the cinema with so and so or, I wanna get to Pilates or i wanna do the groceries early cause it's a bank holiday and i don't wanna be in there during the bank holidays.

They're all my non-negotiables or non movable items and then I can look at what else comes around it. Yeah. I could talk to you for days about this. Well, I give you my tip.

So you can download the free trial version of it off their website. You don't actually have to buy one and you print your own. It's very exciting. That's a bit of a geek thing for me.

Like the smell of new books. Stop doing daily planning and move to weekly planning for my business. And I decide every morning where I fill the gaps in my schedule.

So a little bit like you were saying today with your plans, I knew I had a call first thing. I have three hours of gap. Had a coaching call, air call and I've got another coaching called afterwards.

What did I feel those three with? I looked down the to-do list. And said, what's most important? And what do I most feel like doing? When I did it daily, having to carry stuff over that I was trying to remember that must get done before Friday, I felt that really draining, really drained.

When i was employed, daily planning was essential because I had a team of people. I have internal and external stakeholders in a way that is very different to self-employment.

My biggest stakeholder is me. And am I actually enjoying the way I'm doing it and what I am doing and the people I do it with? I think there's so much that comes up in what you've said then.

So much about the archetypes and what I'm hearing, and you mentioned it a couple of times now, is something that I really sits with why I am doing what i'm doing.

And that's the requirements for people and community for as you build your businesses. That water cooler moment, coffee morning, morning coffee moment that you would get at work.

I feel like my Zoom calls with my community gives that opportunity for people to go, oh my God, this is driving me insane. And I think we've got to find our people, haven't we, as solopreneurs, people running our own thing potentially on Zoom all day without any interaction with anybody.

We've gotta find out groups. So, you know, how important do you think community is to business owners? Super, super, like beyond super important, and I it's twofold.

I think it's important to be around other entrepreneurs, whether they're in a similar line of work to you or something different. Often there's something really like, oh, well, I wouldn't do it that way in my business, or that isn't a problem in our business.

So what's my version of that? And it helps you just think more broadly about you and how you're doing in your business and what you are doing your in business And I thinks it is important that you hang out with people that do

something like you.

Not from a, oh, no, the competitors, important, but there's collaboration opportunities and there is all this in my world. There's a new scheduling tool out there.

Oh, has anybody tried it? Like, you know, we don't have to use Calendly, there the Q&T or there Planly. Sometimes you get like a whiff of like, a way of doing it or a piece of technology that will help or this platform's dead for that, use this tactic.

Community, Co-Working, and Finding Support

Some of that kind of trusted advisor piece around, so MySpace coaching and training, I hang out with a lot of people that are in HR, and I hung out a with lot people in people development.

because they do something analogous to me. They know what the latest trends are. they know, what's happening in terms of lengths and durations of training, budgets and all that kind of stuff.

That's important. So I hang out with the London coaching group, for example, they meet online and we meet in person every now and again. And it's just nice to sit in a room and go, how's it for you?

What's and somebody will do a key speech, you know, we'll have a kind of a learning theme this month, that sort of thing. That's really important to me.

I'm also in a business mastermind and we're all completely different. There's a lady in America that does something very similar to, me but she's America and I am Europe, so we play in different ponds.

that's great because she gets it when I talk about my challenges. But she's also great going, come on, Sarah, what's the story you're telling yourself here?

And helping me on Pick It because she knows it. Whereas I also, I have a floral artist in my pod group. I'm a jam jar floral artist, I literally buy it from the supermarket, take it out of the plastic, stick it in a jar, and I am not good at that at all.

I love it, it's beautiful, like I don't have the eye that Leanne has where she goes, oh yeah I've been buying disco balls this week, what? And she's making terrariums out disco ball, so I think it is brilliant, but we have different issues.

And I do not have kind of zero contract staff that she has, the people management piece of it. I'm really glad I don't have that, to be honest. But it's really interesting hearing, like, I have people that do work for me because they set up the room at a client, for example, or they provide the lunch at the event, and they handle meet and greets at doors and the venue, that sort of thing.

I didn't employ them, they don t work me, but I had to manage them and set the expectation and how I want it to happen. she at least has a contract with her people.

So it's that sort of thing that those two things I think are really important. And then the second piece is it is just good to hang out with people make your place of work and take it somewhere different.

We've just come out of A level season in our house and it's like go study in the bath. If that feels good, lying in a dry bath, go and do it. if you want to go sit under the apple tree, it doesn't matter where you work.

Yes, of course, when we're doing private consultations and that kind of thing, yes, that's important, you can't do that. But go work from the library, from a co-working space, I'm based in London, I like going and sitting in a National Theatre and occasionally you spot a famous person and it's like, whoo, makes my day.

You know, David Tennant walks past or something. But it is sitting with other people that are working. Yeah. I love a library for that reason. Love a Library.

Got my favourite libraries that I've always worked at. Like you say, just once a week, taking yourself and your computer and whatever you need and just moving.

can make the world of difference. And you might just have that little sideways conversation of like, can you look after my computer, I'm going to the toilet, and you come back and say thank you and he's like sorry so much for interrupting and they go no actually I need a break, i'm gonna get coffee, do you want a coffee?

And then you just from somebody else that's kind of doing what you're doing differently. But it's like, yeah, I get it. Let's have a chat. That's a great point.

Absolutely. Brilliant. I mean, just I think you are fantastic. There's so much juice here. I would love to talk to you endlessly about, particularly about the archetypes thing.

and I'm just addressing my inner superwoman, martyr, victim and bitch. And I am currently turning them into the queen, the sorcerer, and the warrior and mother, was it?

The sorceress, lover, warrior, mother and queen. Lover, love it. I assume there's transitions between those all the time in our lives. At different times of our life, certainly in the child-rearing time, we might be different to the menopausal time.

which might be different to the 20s. I think there's a whole nother conversation there, but… Because our vision changes. What do you do when you're 20? I wanted to go travel the world and make some money, because I was broke from being a student for such a long time.

Yeah. Like, I did seven years, and differently to how a medic does, what I do seven in total. But I also wanted travel. All around Europe and the Middle East.

And I got really bored of it. And it's like, I just want to be at home now for a bit. I moved to business schools where they brought the international audience to me, and I didn't have to keep going to them.

That was lovely, not leaving my house for basically six months of the year. It is different. Right now I'm doing a little bit more travel, off to Sweden in a couple of weeks to do some work there.

But I am really excited, it is going be a real novelty, get out of London and do work. Yeah, my Swedish is pretty rubbish.

Closing Thoughts and How to Connect

We're gonna do it in English. So now I'm doing a bit more again, because actually I can be away and nobody really, people do care. Nobody really cares that I am not here.

That's okay. My queen is challenging a different religion. She's taking me in a difference way. I didn't really have a queen when I was in my twenties, if I really honest.

A bit of a workplace queen in terms of I could be the boss at work, but not for me. We have all of these things at the same time. Yeah. How do you access it and are you pulling on the right one at a right time?

Fascinating stuff here. I'm just thinking about my pathological need to have a mortgage and settle down. you know, between the ages of 28 and 32. And now my pathological need to just own one pair of shoes, one trainer, and wish everything fitted in a van and disappearing off and traveling for the rest of my life.

Those two are just different parts of the archetypes coming out. That's all. It's okay. We didn't know what we didn t

know. Now we do. and we're going to keep finding stuff out, you now?

That s the exciting thing. The journey doesn't end. So Sarah, it's been brilliant having you here today. How do people get in touch with you? Where's the best place for them to connect with?

You and obviously we'll be linking you in the show notes as well. Fantastic. So I am most active on LinkedIn from a professional, serious perspective.

Just be really careful. My spelling is S-A-R-E. E-R-A-T-E. If you put a H, I'm a French porn star and that's probably not the sort of support you're looking for.

I have disappointed a couple of clients in not being her. We don't look alike. Also I am on Instagram or very creatively my website sarahplatt.com. And that is where you can find out about my coaching.

Wonderful. Thank you again for coming along. 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 start up which is your go-to guide and resource for diving into entrepreneurship many thanks for tuning in i will see you next time thanks This has been a Monkey Pants Productions Podcast.