

# HR insights podcast

## Series 8 | Episode 8

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*PSA: This transcript has been written with assistance from AI.*

### **Executive coaching, blind spots, and building trust**

[00:17.6]

Welcome to HR Insights, the podcast topical discussions with and for our global HR community. hi, everyone, my name's Stuart Elliot and I will be your host today on HR Insights, the podcast. Thank you ever so much for listening. Today we are going to talk about executive coaching and whether you've actually ever considered it.

[00:37.5]

We are joined today by Nina Donovan. Nina is actually a friend of mine and a listener of the show. She is also the head of UK and Europe at OSC Leadership Development, specializing in coaching for senior executives and facilitating leadership development teams through change.

[00:54.4]

We obviously all know what executive coaching is, but I think it's something that has really increased in its presence over the last five to ten years. Nina is a really good listener. She's lived and worked in, in Asia as well as the, the UK and Europe, and brings a really lovely technical insight to, to what I think is a, a fascinating area.

[01:15.3]

I hope you enjoy the show. Thank you so much for listening.

[01:24.8]

Hi Nina, welcome to the show. Thanks Stuart. Nice to be here. Perfect for our audience. Do you want to give a little intro into you and your background? Absolutely. Thanks. Yes, so I am an executive coach and leadership development facilitator. I am formally an investment banker for my sins and working in investor relations and also corporate critical communications, supporting a range of leaders, in public listed firms, managing crises and A.

[01:54.7]

But I saw the light. I retrained as an executive coach after doing my master's at Insead in change, which was just mind blowingly brilliant. So yeah, very cool. How long were you in investment banking for? So investor relations and corporate broking.

[02:11.8]

I was doing it across about 10 years. And then I was focusing more on the communications side. The latter part of my first part of my career. Very cool. And you're obviously, we know each other from you being in the UK and we don't live too far from each other.

[02:27.9]

But you were formerly in Singapore, correct? That's right, yes. So I worked across the uk, Hong Kong and Singapore, advising leaders, in those different markets. So it was a fascinating, brilliant time both personally and professionally just to see the range of different cultures and different leadership styles and how that has affected the, the way the macroeconomy is working at the moment as well.

[02:52.4]

And just seeing how China was growing, it was just fascinating. Yeah. When, when were you there in Hong Kong? I was there from 2008 to 2014. Yep. And then Singapore from 2014 to 22. Yeah. So a long time.

[03:07.8]

Always funny when I hear people that lived in Hong Kong exactly the same time I did. And then you think the circles you work in there sometimes and then you don't meet certain people when you're there as well. It's quite, it's quite funny. And tell us more about the company. Tell us more about sort of what you do globally. Great. Yeah. So, so I work for a firm, Global osc and we are a leadership, development firm.

[03:28.8]

We have executive coaches across the globe, We are applied psychology and applied neuroscience approach to our coaching and so we like to support leaders on quite a, deeper level. But we also work on leadership development programs, and supporting leaders both across the Asia, the US and the uk. Yeah.

[03:51.4]

Because you people dotted around. Is that right as well? That's correct. Yeah. Our network is over 100 coaches across the globe. Yeah, that's, that's pretty impressive. And outside of Work. What do you do outside of work? I am a mum of two. I have, they keep me on my toes. They are how old?

[04:08.2]

13. No, gosh, just turned 14 and 10. And they're both avid swimmers, so I spend a lot of time poolside watching them. Very nice smell, chlorine a lot of the time. Yeah, yeah, it's wonderful. It's hot, sweaty work sitting poolside. So it's a.

[04:24.1]

Yeah. And early starts and late evenings. So they train very hard, bless them. Yeah, that's, that's very cool. But you're also a bit of a gym bunny as well, is that right? I am, yeah. I do love a bit of, a bit of weight training and used to be a CrossFit person, but I'm a little bit old for that now, I think. CrossFit's hard.

[04:40.5]

It is, it's full on. Yeah. And I don't want to get injured now I'm getting so old. Yeah. Did you do that in Singapore? They didn't. Is that right? Yeah, that's right, yeah. Yes, very good. Not, nothing like having a good sweat in the jungle, I tell you that. So, yeah, Singapore is very, very hot for that. But that's, that's very, that's very, very cool.

[04:57.2]

And I suppose the shift, I suppose to what you do now from, From I suppose the business side of things. What prompted that? So I went through a massive change personally. I was working in Hong Kong as an expat. I had my children while I was in Hong Kong.

[05:14.6]

And at the same time my father passed away. And so everything that I thought I knew, about myself, about my identity changed. I just had a massive period of my life where I was like, this doesn't fit. I don't. I'm not the person I thought I was going to be.

[05:30.9]

I'm not the person I thought I am. And so I was fortunate enough to get support. I was, I did a lot of work on myself. And through that I found the masters, at inseada, it was Masters in Change, it's called. And it was run by three psychoanalysts.

[05:46.5]

It was designed by three psychoanalysts who, obviously worked on a one to one basis with leaders. But then they realized, you know, what an organization is full of people with lots of different psychodynamics. And it was just a really fascinating course to work on.

[06:04.6]

Not only thinking about yourself as an individual and other people, but then thinking of yourself in the context of others. You're thinking of yourself in the context of teams and then in the organization. So they coined the term system psychodynamics. And so that was really eye opening for me because I did a lot of thinking and exploration on the psychodynamics for myself, but also thinking about how do I combine that with my corporate career and my professional experience.

[06:30.2]

And so that's why that brought me to, the coaching world that I'm in now, where I like to work with leaders who are also going through change and struggling. Perhaps because it's difficult. Right. It's really difficult. And I imagine at that time you mentioned, obviously with your father passing away, like as an expat, he was overseas, was he?

[06:48.4]

Well, he was in Malaysia. Right. I was in Hong Kong. So fortunately at the time I was in a million miles away. Not a million miles away. Yeah. So I was able to travel a lot whilst he was very, very sick. But I was also a brand new mother. I had a 10 week old baby that I was strapping to myself and off to the airport again.

[07:06.3]

So yeah, it was a really challenging time Then did you walk away from your job at that time? I was on maternity leave. You on maternity leave? Okay. At that time. But still that's a job in itself. And then you're trying to study at the same time. Well, no, the study came later. Right. Okay.

[07:21.4]

So the study came a few years later. So I put a brave face on it. Right. Like we all do when we are working, when we are trying to, push through. And that's what we do. And we think we should have all the answers and we think we should have, the strength of character to be able to do all of that stuff ourselves.

[07:38.3]

But the reality is often you can't. Yeah. And so it took me a couple of years to be able to get help and to realize that I needed this more support. But it was through that that I was able to then start thinking about, you know what, maybe this career that I was in isn't working for me anymore now that I had changed so fundamentally.

[07:59.2]

Through my parenthood, through my personal, you know, loss. Yeah. And also doing that when I was overseas in, in Asia. And so, yeah, big change. And you mentioned, obviously the company that you're at now, you do the leadership development part as well as the executive coaching part.

[08:17.7]

Can you just sort of highlight some of the leadership part, some of the frameworks or programs that you work on there? Absolutely. So, I mean, we take a very tailored approach to Organizational need, obviously, but because we take an applied psychology and applied neuroscience approach to it. So we do think about supporting leadership teams when they're going through change.

[08:37.2]

For example, we work with a, large Asian and FMCG company. They spent millions on an agile transformation program and they had all the scrums in place, they had all the different structures. And the reality was is that it wasn't going as smoothly as they'd hoped or that they had anticipated.

[08:55.1]

And so we were brought in to support the global leadership, the leadership team. We did individual coaching, we did team coaching, but then we also did a broader program where we were helping managers understand maybe why there is resistance to change, why there is this drop off in productivity, all those sorts of things.

[09:16.9]

So helping, helping them see the people in their teams as individuals who might be struggling with the change that's going on. Because companies often take change as a collective project. Right. And they don't see that the individuals within teams are each going to have very individual reactions to it.

[09:37.6]

And the way they respond to change will be very, very different, to, to the way a leadership team might expect. Because you know what, the leadership team has been working through this massive transformation project for years before they start trickling it down to the, you know, the shop floor, as it were. Yeah.

[09:55.3]

And I suppose then you're dealing with companies that are going through, I suppose call it a high stakes environment or high octane environment and I suppose do that, does that, do those environments I suppose influence leadership in terms of how they act and react?

[10:10.7]

Absolutely, yeah. I mean when you are in a fast paced business or high expectations as a leader you're going to feel that you have to own that and respond in the same sort of tempo. But the reality is often you can't. Right. You don't always have all the answers.

[10:27.1]

And that's a common misconception that when you become leader you expected to be the oracle. The reality is, you know, you're going to have a team around you of brilliant people. But it's so tempting. You want to own that and you want to hold that glory.

[10:42.4]

Right. The reward, you want the dopamine hit by solving all the problems. But actually that's a lot of responsibility to put on one person. I have a client, he's a CEO of a financial institutions group and he, you know, it's lonely at the top and he's like, I don't have all the answers.

[10:59.5]

What if I don't know what to do? Right. And it's stressful. Yeah. And so how do we. How do you, as a leader, become okay with saying, well, what do you think? Right. And not having all the answers and not, solving all the problems yourself.

[11:16.4]

But how can you actually share that? Because you're a leader. You're not God. I think that's the one I hear, hear the most. Is that that sort of loneliness at the top of, like, who do you go to, even just to talk something through or get an understanding of it?

[11:32.4]

Because if you talk to the wrong person internally, that can give the wrong message, or, even if it's just an idea or thought that you're thinking about, it can create an unease internally that you don't want to get out. Exactly, exactly. And. But it's also, you know, how can you be an authentic leader and say.

[11:51.3]

And express your vulnerability? Because people want to know the real you. Right. They don't want to think that you are just this human robot, but they want to also be able to see that, well, you know, it's okay that Stuart doesn't have all the answers, because we're going to work on it together. Stuart definitely doesn't have all the answers, I can tell you that now. But you are right. Like it is. You're absolutely right.

[12:12.0]

Like, we joke about it, but you don't have all the answers. And I think, we're only a relatively small company. I remember even just starting the business, how it felt like I was doing so much learning on the job when I began the company. And I feel that that must be the position that a lot of leaders are in.

[12:28.7]

Yeah, 100%. And so who do you turn to, as you say? You know, you can't necessarily always say to your colleagues, I don't know what I'm doing. Yeah. And you can't say that to your chairman. Well, yes. Sign of weakness. That was the initial response.

[12:44.0]

You sort of think, I'm, showing weakness and I don't want to be seen that way. Exactly, exactly. But actually, so how do we manage ourselves in those moments? And often you get leaders who, when they feel weak, when they feel uncertain, what do they do? They might suddenly start becoming really controlling or they might suddenly start becoming really aggressive or bullying or overpowering. Right.

[13:05.0]

When I was working, looking after financial institutions, companies during the financial crisis, you saw a lot of leaders behave in a very unsavoury way. Right. And. And people didn't dare speak out against it because they were terrified for their own jobs. Right.

[13:21.2]

And so how do you, how do you manage people like that? Yeah. And, and through doing my training, I, instead of thinking, well, this is a bad person, actually got me to think, really, wow, you know, what's going on for that individual? Yeah. And thinking about them as an individual on a deeper level. Right. Why?

[13:39.9]

What is it that's really triggering them and how can we help support them? Because no one leaves the house in the morning thinking, right, I'm going to be a real pain in the backside and I'm going to make everyone's life miserable. Right. But actually we go out with the intention that we think, you know, I've got a lot on.

[13:56.7]

I want to make the best of this opportunity and I want to, you know, help solve these problems. But because they're so stressed, they're going to start behaving perhaps in a not very pleasant manner. And so helping leaders think about, Helping leaders think about what is it, you know, that, that I'm doing that is perhaps not inspiring the best response in other people. Yeah. Right. We can.

[14:20.3]

We know what our intention is when we behave in a certain way or we say something, but we can't control how the other person responds to it. And so helping leaders be able to think about things like that, and that all makes perfect sense. Actually, we're digressing a little bit from some of the questions, but out of interest, and this is just a totally random question, do you see leadership styles come through depending on economic conditions?

[14:41.7]

So if it was you mentioned the GFC just then, did you see a different type of leader come through an organization at that time versus maybe when, I suppose there's more money in the market and people are a little bit more comfortable in terms of expansion. In terms of different leadership. Yeah.

[14:56.8]

Different leaders, exactly. Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I think obviously when things are going well, people can be a little bit more creative. They're going to feel that they've got a bit more space to feel, to be experimental, perhaps. But if you are, you know, under the pressure of, you know, from in crisis moments or something like that, which I've seen, I've advised leaders through that in my previous career.

[15:21.6]

Yeah, you're going to get a lot of very anxious people who behave in a way that is much more challenging for people around them. For sure. Yeah. And that makes, that makes a lot of, a lot of sense when you, when you have that initial conversation with somebody around, I suppose, beginning the relationship through executive coaching, what does that look like?

[15:43.3]

So, when it varies if an individual is coming to me, directly for coaching. Then we'll have a conversation about what it is that they're looking to get out of the coaching, what's bringing them to coaching to begin with. But often when we start talking with hrs, they'll come to us, and I'll have a conversation obviously with the HR about, you know, what they're looking to achieve from the coaching.

[16:07.5]

But then it becomes the coaching is very much about a trusted relationship between the client and the coach. And so we will always start a coaching relationship with a three way alignment meeting with the manager, the coach and the individual who's being coached.

[16:23.6]

But because there is so much about the trusted relationship there, I might have a conversation with the individual first before we bring the manager in, just to say, you know, are there any sensitivities you want raised, or I should be aware of, is there anything that you particularly want to get out of this conversation?

[16:40.4]

And then in the three way alignment meeting, we'll talk about from both sides, what are the expectations, what are the hopes, for the coaching process, but also what are the strengths that you know and what's going well. And then once we've established that and we agree together, everyone gets their voice in the room and we agree together the objectives for the coaching and what success looks like.

[17:04.9]

And then we'll move into the coaching, relationship which tends to be over a period of sort of 6 to 12 months perhaps. What sort of cadence is on that? It depends. Often it's sort of once every three to four weeks.

[17:22.3]

Because the idea behind coaching is that you want to really think about, particularly the way we work at osc, we take a deeper approach to coaching. Right. And we want people to think more deeply. We want people to reflect between sessions and perhaps observe themselves, in, in, in their daily lives. Right.

[17:39.4]

And are the issues that we are talking about, are they coming up, are they being, are they noticing how people are experiencing them in their role? And, and to be able to spend time reflecting on that, noticing it, maybe experimenting with different ways of being.

[17:57.0]

And then we come back and we sort of talk about it and explore how that went and things like that. But you kind of need that time between the sessions to be able to really think about what's going on. What are the sort of common blind spots that you see in senior execs? Oh yeah. Are there a lot? There are a lot.

[18:12.9]

Some of my favourite ones is not listening. Okay. A lot of people think they're listening but you know we listen with our own filters. Right. How often do you listen? You think oh, I know what they're going to say and I know, I know the answer already before you've actually really heard what they're asking for. Often leaders because we're based on our experiences.

[18:31.1]

Right. And so you think oh yeah, I know what's going to. I know how to solve that when you haven't really heard what they're trying to say. I had a client, senior executive in a European guy working in Asia. He'd been hugely successful in Europe implementing a change project for their company and he'd been sent to Asia to, to do the same thing. Right.

[18:53.3]

It's like great, wonderful. Absolutely. And so he thought he knew what to do. He had the playbook. But the reality is he wasn't really listening to what the different markets need. I mean, you know, from your experience in Asia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, they're all vastly different. Yeah.

[19:10.3]

Culturally. So different cultures. Exactly. And, and maturity of markets and all those sorts of things. And yet he was trying to bulldoze his way through with what he thought he knew and about an existing problem. Yeah. But he wasn't really listening to what people were telling him.

[19:26.2]

And so as a result that he had really difficult relationships, over there and that impacted his confidence. So it was about allowing him to take a step back and say, okay, let's think about what's really going on here. Is it, you know, you're not failing at your job, but what are you, what is going on?

[19:43.6]

You know, what are you doing? How are you turning up? How are you showing up in your meetings and are you able to hear what's going on there? Yeah. Another good one is thinking. We talked about this earlier about thinking you know all the answers. Yeah. Right. You have to know all the answers when reality is you don't.

[19:59.0]

You just, you often good leaders surround themselves with brilliant people. Right. You have a fantastic leadership team around you and then together you can find solutions as well. Yeah. Yes. Interesting. Say about the not listening part. Do you think that ties in sometimes with having.

[20:15.7]

Needing to have the answers so that they almost say something because they need to say something rather than actually having the answer? Yeah, yeah, I'm sure, absolutely. And, and from a neuroscience perspective, right. We want the dopamine hit every time you are seen to solve a problem you get that rush of dopamine. Like.

[20:34.7]

Yes, you know, I got that. You know that was me. Yeah. I solved that. I knew the answer. Tick. Right. Yeah. So, yeah, absolutely. We often feel that we want to do that. Yeah. But that's a very binary way of looking at, isn't it like that quick fix done. Yes.

[20:50.7]

But being a leadership is not binary at all. Exactly. And you have to scale a leadership. Right. And you are not just the organization needs to be more about just one person. And so you need to be able to empower and develop other people beneath you so that you can go off and do 10 year strategizing rather than fixing the day to day stuff. Which makes sense.

[21:14.9]

Do you find that leaders with that in mind and with leaders normally have been really time poor. Do you find that they just come to you thinking that you're just going to Tell them what to do. And it's a quick fix. One session and I'm out. Yeah. Leaders or HRS also like that. Organizations want the quick fix. Tell me why I need to know exactly.

[21:30.6]

Give me a tool and I'll take it away. Thank you. Yes, please. Yeah, absolutely. And because the way we work, we like to take a deeper approach to things. And rather than think about, okay, I'm just going to give you a sticky plaster to stick over the wound, actually. Let's think about what's underneath.

[21:47.0]

Let's think about, what is driving this behaviour. Because if you want really meaningful change and change that's going to last in somebody's behaviour or helping support people going through something that is challenging, and full of anxiety and all that sort of stuff, rather than say, okay, you know, I'm going to give you XYZ tool to make you feel better now, that's great, but that's not going to last. Right.

[22:12.8]

So if you want something that's going to help leaders be more resilient, be more, inspiring or be less aggressive or whatever, you want to think more deeply about what's behind it. And the way from a neuroscience perspective, right.

[22:29.8]

Our brains are creating and, the neural pathways are really established by the time we're 22. So from 0 to 22, you know, you're going around with this young brain and it's all about the way we experience life, the way we made meaning when we were younger.

[22:45.9]

That still impacts how we respond to things today. And so if, and in order to be able to make a change to any neural pathway, you're going to have to really understand where it came from. And once you can take that moment or that understanding out, you sort of pick it out of your.

[23:02.1]

It's almost like you pick it out of your brain stem. You look at it and you go, oh, I don't need to be ruled by that anymore. And then I can put it back. And then I say I can make a choice about how I'm responding to things rather than just being subject to unconscious drivers. Yeah.

[23:18.1]

A lead is good at understanding that change and transformation takes time. It varies. I'm sure it does. It's a good question. Yeah. It's because we all want change. We all want to be able to be better tomorrow. Right? Who doesn't say, I'm going to start going to the gym now, and I want to see immediate gains. Right.

[23:36.7]

It takes time, it takes work. But those, you know, when you can start doing the work and you start seeing improvements as you know, right when you're training in the gym or something like that and you can feel different, you can feel healthier, you feel stronger. Then you see it working.

[23:53.0]

But it does take time. Yeah, it takes a long time. I suppose if, because you were talking earlier on about almost like a 10 year strategy project like that, stuff like that takes 10 years. Like that's. Sometimes you don't even know where you're going to be in 10 years. To even have that vision is very, very difficult.

[24:12.6]

Change obviously is very difficult. I think everybody is conscious that they struggle with it, they sometimes don't like it. How do you, how do you get leaders then to sort of almost control their emotions around it? Because that's probably the biggest frustration is you can almost see people's tension sometimes in them when change is starting to happen. Or they.

[24:33.7]

Well, the other fun one is they roll their eyes when you say you're going to do something. They'll roll their eyes at it. How do you get people to, I suppose maybe not control that or work with that to make it a little bit more positive? Yeah, I mean, it's a great question because nobody likes change really.

[24:51.0]

Our brains are designed to not change. We don't want change because that's risky inherently. Right. And so I guess it's about supporting leaders to be curious and to not see it as threatening. If you can. You know, as I was saying to you before when I was seeing leaders behaving badly, it's just like, wow, what's going on there? Right?

[25:12.9]

What's going on there for you? What's the thought process? Why was that so threatening? And to not vilify. I guess it's okay. People don't like change. People find it stressful, people find it difficult. And some leaders will respond to it better than others.

[25:31.3]

Some leaders want to work in a way, that helps them understand themselves better. And some leaders might find that challenging. Yeah. So it just depends on their preparedness to, to do the work, I guess. Yeah, yeah, I think that's definitely the case. I always find it interesting though, when I look at, when you're trying to implement changes, it's so interesting.

[25:50.9]

A lot of people have said to me, you need to take people on the journey. Like you need to create the narrative, the story and build it that way. On the, on the flip side to that, and we were talking earlier on about how sports are much more reactive and decision making and if you don't, you create the story.

[26:07.7]

But then if something does, it doesn't go right, you just fire them. How do you balance that? Because that's a really difficult dynamic for a leader to try and do the story. But yet when something goes wrong, people just make a decision and we'll just say, right, that's wrong. Yeah, it's, it's really difficult.

[26:23.5]

It is really difficult. And particularly if you're working in a business or industry that moves really, really quickly. Yeah, and yeah, it's, it is challenging and particularly because people want to see immediate results. As you're saying, we were talking about sports.

[26:39.8]

It's not working. We're going to cut someone straight away. But if we think about it though, if we're really honest, we'll have probably noticed that it hasn't been working for a while. Yeah. And so then you've got to ask yourself, did I give them feedback?

[26:56.5]

Did I talk about it sooner? Did I raise my concerns? Did I offer an opportunity to alter course? Right. Did I say, look, hey, you know, your numbers aren't going in the right direction. What can we do to support you? What's going on?

[27:12.2]

You know, do you, as a leader have a relationship with that individual who is not performing? Yeah. Right. And are you able to have a conversation with them about, you know, have the difficult conversation about the, the, the poor performance?

[27:27.7]

Right. So do you have that relationship? Do you, are you, are you brave enough to have those difficult conversations? And are you able to think about, okay, how can we support you, how can we make a difference? How can I help you, get better? Yeah.

[27:43.0]

And it's challenging. And because if you don't have that relationship, then the person you're going to be giving challenging feedback to is going to become very defensive, they're going to close down. And so how can you frame those conversations in a way that says, I've got your best interests at heart?

[27:58.2]

Right. I can see you're trying. Something is not quite hitting the mark. Let's think about a different way of doing it. Yeah, interesting. Do you find that people, with the way the world is right now, with how I suppose information is readily available so you can Google something, ChatGPT it.

[28:15.8]

Nowadays I'm sitting here with a whoop on my hand to see how stressed or lack of sleep that I've had. Do you find people come to you now almost thinking that they have the answer? Is that changed a little bit because of how well read and well versed everyone is nowadays?

[28:31.6]

It can be, yeah. I mean, I love it. When clients say, oh, I'm very self aware, is that just the epitome of not being self aware normally? Exactly. And it's just like, okay, great, right, well then how can we, how can I help you then?

[28:48.2]

And often, you know, the reality is that the more we read or the more self aware we become, actually, the more we realize there's so much we don't know. Yeah, right. And so, you know, as you say, you've got the whoop there and it's sort of helping you sleep or not sleep and helping you manage your stress levels or not.

[29:04.7]

Yeah, but the reality is like, okay, let's go back. That's just data, right? Let's go back and think, okay, why, what's happening? Why am I stressed? Why am I not sleeping? You know, and so it's being able to take that step back. But, but yeah, absolutely. People are kind of saying, thinking they know everything.

[29:21.2]

And look, these, these AIs are, are great tools. They really are very helpful. But it, I don't know, it's a different way of approaching an issue. Right. So definitely. Have you, have you seen, again, we're digressing from the main questions that we have here, but we're talking about AI.

[29:37.7]

Have you seen that come into what you do at all in the last sort of like year or so? Increasingly, I think. I mean, I haven't personally had to go up against AI, but I increasingly I am seeing companies, going for a lower cost AI option for sure to democratize coaching.

[29:56.2]

And which is great. I mean, you know, if everybody gets a bit of support, fantastic. But it's obviously a different type of relationship. Yeah, completely. Yeah, yeah, like a very, very different type of relationship. I can imagine. Yeah, exactly. And you know, it'd be interesting to see where it goes, but it is certainly something that we are watching very closely.

[30:15.5]

Yeah, yeah, yeah, totally. I'm jumping questions here a little bit, but I want to talk a little bit because you touched on it earlier on about the sort of psychodynamic thinking and the neuroscience in what you, what you do. How do those disciplines, I suppose, complement each other when you support leaders through, through change?

[30:31.3]

Yeah, absolutely. They. It's interesting, isn't it, because, so psychodynamic applied psychology thinking really thinks about, you know, why do we behave in a certain way, goes back a little bit more, talks a little bit more about the emotional side to our lives and, and help us think about stuff that we perhaps haven't wanted to think about.

[30:52.0]

Yeah, you know, previous relationships, earlier relationships, that sort of thing. Whereas the neuroscience, it continues in a similar vein, allows us to make meaning, understand how we make meaning, and again, goes back to thinking about, earlier experiences, but it also think.

[31:10.7]

Taking about neuroscience allows us to think about, okay, how can I help manage my brain's reactions to things? So you have things. I don't know if you've heard of them. Amygdala, hijack. Never heard of it. Right. So the amygdala is the part of our brain that keeps, us alive, does the immediate threat response, sort of fight or flight.

[31:30.2]

Exactly, exactly. Right. And so, and we might be in a situation, you know, you might have a conversation with somebody and they might really trigger you, and you immediately want to flare up. And that's the amygdala. But it works so much faster than our executive function, which is our prefrontal cortex.

[31:47.9]

And so, if we're able to just take a moment and just breathe through that, we allow our executive function to kick in, and then we're actually able to make a more considered response rather than just this emotional reaction, which is what the amygdala is driving, because that's what keeps us alive. Right.

[32:06.1]

In the past, it's like we see a bear. You're going to run. Yeah. Big hairy mammoth approaching your campfire. You're going to go for it. You've got to, to save yourself. Yeah. But, it's. It's so in those, in those moments. So that's what the neuroscience allows.

[32:22.6]

Allows us to think about different brain hacks, but it also allows me to have a conversation with leaders that is also very meaningful, but less threatening because it becomes less about thinking about the emotions and all that sort of stuff, but actually thinking about experiences and how our brain makes sense of the world.

[32:38.6]

Right, so I'll give you an example then. So I had a call yesterday that I found quite stressful. And that reaction afterwards where you feel almost your heart rate has gone. Gone up. Yeah. You almost walk away from it a little bit. Like that anger and that almost that feeling of shaking a little bit, where you get it because you, you feel that way.

[32:57.0]

How do you deal with that? One to one therapy here, but how do you deal with that? Because that is something that is difficult because you want to react immediately. Yeah. And I guess it's about, you know, trying to centre yourself. Right. Calm down. The, your nervous system that has been triggered. Right.

[33:15.6]

So to be able to breathe. So that is a breathing exercise. That's what you would. You can breathe to yourself. You can just take yourself out for a moment. You know, you don't have to. Often when you're in a difficult conversation, giving difficult feedback, for example, and somebody might get really quite heated, you can sort of say, you know, you can take yourself out, or they might take themselves out. Just give me a minute.

[33:36.2]

You know, calm down. But also just to ground yourself and recognize that maybe, you know, it's not you. Right. Okay. Unless they are attacking you. But it often is, you know, you know, I haven't done anything wrong or I haven't done anything fundamentally bad.

[33:54.2]

And so being able to centre yourself and say, you know, what is really going on here? Can I calm myself down? Think rationally, and then be able to proceed rather than feeling that emotion and getting overwhelmed by that emotion, which is very easy to do. Right. Definitely.

[34:12.6]

It sort of takes. You see it instantly, see it in sort of everyday life. You see it especially when people are driving cars. Road rage has got to be the epitome of that, hasn't it? Exactly. Yeah. And. But I mean, in those situations, sometimes it is like a life or death situation. You're like, oh, that was really dangerous. But.

[34:27.9]

But sometimes if you're like, my husband is. Likes a bit of road rage, like me for saying that. But he, you know, he. Oh, you know, why, look at that idiot. Look at what he's doing, all that stuff. But it's just like, it's okay. You know, they're behaving badly. Okay.

[34:45.5]

Doesn't need to affect you. Yeah. You know, all those sorts of things. It's just like, can we just calm down and take the heat out of it? Sort of centre yourself and be present for yourself. Right. You can't control what other people do, but you can control yourself. Yeah. And that's. Yeah, you're absolutely right. You can't control what others do.

[35:01.2]

But, yeah, you can absolutely sort of focus on yourself as well. And then the question here around, I suppose, talking about change, again, uncertainty, how can leaders maintain trust with their employees? Because that is, again, when you're changing things, there is, I suppose, a tendency maybe that you're doing something that the employees don't want or they don't like.

[35:22.0]

And that's difficult. Yeah, it is. And so, first of all, maintaining trust implies that you already have trust. Yeah, true. That's a very good point. Yes. Which is, you know, it's fundamental to these kind of leadership relationships.

[35:38.6]

And sometimes you may not have that trust to Begin with. So it's really, really important, as you say, to have a trusted relationship to make sure you know how your team is going to respond to this change. Perhaps, maybe you will have floated the idea before or maybe, you know, these people are, very wedded to a certain way of doing things.

[35:59.5]

And actually when you change things, they're going to feel very alienated or they might feel very threatened. And so if you are aware and you know your team and you know the people, then you can prepare a little bit better in terms of how you position, the message. Also, obviously, as you were saying about communication is so important as well. Yeah, right.

[36:17.6]

How you communicate and position it. Because when you go through a change program, you know, you, as the leadership team will have gone through all the thinking, you'll have done all the processes, you'll be 20 steps ahead of everyone else. And then you come and announce this program and announce this new change and expect everyone to think, wow, it's brilliant, but they're two years behind you in the thinking. Right.

[36:39.3]

And so how can you, you need to think about how you manage and look after the people through that process of them adjusting to the, to the new message or the new way of doing business. Because, you know, I think I read last night 75 to 90% of change programs or And a program fail because of, you know, lack of integration, lack of cultural considerations, all those sorts of things.

[37:06.5]

Right. And so if you, you need to really spend a lot of time supporting people through that process because it's, it's really, really challenging and ultimately a business is as good as people, right? Yeah, completely. I'm jumping in with a few questions here. Do you find people come to you potentially later than they should?

[37:28.0]

Do you find that people come to you when they are burnt out and what they should have done is probably come to you a year or so ahead of that? Is that something you see as quite a common theme? Yeah, it can be, for sure. And again, it goes to hrs, being able to recognize if somebody's struggling or not.

[37:45.7]

You know, do you have a culture at the organization where you can talk about the fact that actually, you know what, I'm really struggling, and do the HRS have a sort of. I'm sure they have all these protocols on how they can look after people, but yeah, absolutely. Sometimes people come to me directly, rather than through their hr, and then say, you know, I need some help because I, you know, lost all interest in my job or I've lost my motivation, that sort of thing, for sure.

[38:12.1]

Is that what burnout looks like? Just. Yeah. I mean, burnout can look. Take different, different, forms. Losing interest, losing energy. You know, can be depression at work, can be depression at home as well, for sure. You know, a number of different symptoms that can manifest for the person.

[38:30.7]

But, but yeah, I mean, ultimately it's a difficult place to be. Right. When you're burnt out completely. Yeah, yeah. So for those sort of, I suppose, interested in coaching or actually, I suppose, getting some sort of executive coach, what are the steps they should go through to do that?

[38:47.4]

Yeah, well, I mean, if you have, if your HRS might have a program or a panel of coaches that already exist, then you should be getting in touch with your HR team to ask for some support. Otherwise, there are lots of, coaches available.

[39:05.6]

You can look through different accredited bodies, like the icf, for example, the International Coaching Federation, is one body that I'm affiliated with particularly. But, there are a number of different ones. And then you want to look for a coach who's going to make you feel comfortable. Right.

[39:22.1]

Who's got a style that you feel will support you, that you can trust them, and have a conversation. When you want to meet a coach for the first time, often they have chemistry checks. And so you can just have a conversation and see how it feels, whether you feel you can work with that person or not.

[39:39.4]

Are they going to offer you the kind of, support that you want? Yeah, that makes perfect sense. And then for our, for our audience, do you want to tell people how they can connect with you and maybe learn more about what it is you do as well? Absolutely. So, thank you. I. Can you Find me on LinkedIn?

[39:55.6]

We'll definitely put a link to you. We'll make sure that that's there. Yeah, absolutely. Or then my email is [nina.donovanlobalosc.com](mailto:nina.donovanlobalosc.com) and check out our website as well. Perfect. Thank you so much for coming on the show.

[40:11.2]

It's been a real pleasure to have you on board and there's so many other questions and I think this is. Executive coaching is something I've seen really take off, I think in the. Probably the Last sort of five, 10 years, but it's really become something I think is so fundamental to an individual's career. And yeah, there's so much value to it as well.

[40:28.4]

Absolutely. Thank you very much for having me. No problem. Thanks so much.

[40:37.9]

Thank you so much for listening to today's show. If you have any questions, on the topic of executive coaching for myself, please do contact me at [se@elliottscotthr.com](mailto:se@elliottscotthr.com) thanks ever so much.