The Strangford Series - Anji McGrandles Ep4 - Video

**Michael Paul:** [00:00:00] Welcome back to the Strangford Management Podcast today I'm with Anji McGrandles. She's a wellness coaching expert. She's also the founder of The Mind Tribe, welcome to the show.

**Anji McGrandles:** Thank you for having me.

**Michael Paul:** Absolute pleasure, absolute pleasure. So it's quite timely, I think a lot of people that will watch this podcast will have seen the recent ARMA wellness reports that's come out.

And it's had some quite shocking statistics and, and findings. I think sort of running through a few that I noticed about 65 respondent, 65% of respondents felt that their mental health was at risk working in block management, roughly 30% of people believed that they were at risk of physical damage. Noticed an increase in work-related stress in the last year and there's been an increase in people saying that they are likely to not be in the industry in the next three years.

So a big, big issue with stress around the workplace at the moment, which is perfect timing for why we've brought Anji in. So tell us about the Mind Tribe.

**Anji McGrandles:** So we are a workplace [00:01:00] wellness. Business and we work with companies on their wellbeing strategy, and that can be anything from developing a program to delivering workshops.

We have an online platform as well. And we work with lots of different people in the industry. So we do work across property management. Okay. And we also work with people like Barclays Bank, mcDonald's, Boston Consulting Group, all of the training that we provide is grounded in neuroscience because we truly believe that once you understand how the brain works, then you can start to manage emotions, feelings, and in turn behaviors.

We use a lot of mindset techniques and strategies as well. And then lots of really practical tools that you can deploy and implement to problem proof your day. Mm-hmm.

**Michael Paul:** Definitely. Well, it's gonna be good to have a comparison between sort of Barclay. And, and the block management industry. So I'm sure there's similarities, but sort of hopefully some big differences as well.

And full disclaimer for everyone. Anji also works with Strangford management. So she's been working with [00:02:00] us on sort of our strategies and, and working with our staff and things like that. So yeah, we already know a little bit of an insight of, of each other and the company. So going back to this block management report by ARMA, I think it's, it's obviously pretty, shocking and slightly scary that, that mm-hmm. People feel this particular way. Big opening question. What do you think companies can do to combat stress in the workplace or with their workforce? Is there anything, let's, let's, I suppose, let's talk easy wins to start with. Is there anything that generally people don't do that you typically say, let's start here.

Where's that?

**Anji McGrandles:** I think kind of, first of all, you can't get away from stress. Yeah. Stress is everywhere. So trying to say like, let's combat stress or let's get, you can't get rid of stress. What you can do is support your workforce in terms of managing stress a little bit better. Mm-hmm. What I tend to find that the companies that.

Have the best stress management and stress [00:03:00] management techniques have a really good culture. Mm, okay. So I think a lot of it comes down to company culture. And it comes from the top. So, You know, if you create an environment that people feel mentally, physically, emotionally safe, then that's a big start in terms of your, your wellbeing and your staff wellbeing, because then people feel confident to have conversations.

You know, if, if not everybody has got an open door policy, but if you have a dialogue, an open dialogue about mental health, then when people do have. Challenges or they're struggling at work, it's a lot easier to to tackle them because people feel a lot more empowered to come and talk about them. So I think a lot of it comes down to culture.

**Michael Paul:** That's a huge point actually. I just want to reemphasize that. I think. It's so often overlooked, sort of actually creating and and [00:04:00] fostering a particular culture in a company. I think so many companies maybe just say, Hey, our culture is our culture because we've hired people and it's just naturally made this way, whereas, I'm certainly of the opinion that you can create a certain culture and you can make a, that you're going for, and if you are saying actually the culture is a way of, of managing stress in the workforce, then actually we're, we, a lot of companies are just looking at the wrong thing.

They're looking maybe, okay, how do we reduce stressors in the workforce? Well, actually you haven't even looked at the right thing first. You haven't asked the right question. And it's, it goes back to what is your culture? It could be a completely toxic culture. So if you're just looking at stressors, you're never gonna get anywhere in the first place.

So I, I, you know, I really wanna emphasize that point, that that's, that's huge. So if you, you know, if you are a owner of a company and you haven't looked at culture, probably start now. It affects everything else.

**Anji McGrandles:** It does because, you know, a lot of companies, they're talking the talk, but they're not walking the walk.

[00:05:00] Right. And that's super important. You know, you create this culture where people feel safe. You know, if you working in a blame culture, in a blame culture mm-hmm. You know, then that's. That's not gonna empower your employees. That's not gonna make your employees feel, feel confident. It's not gonna enhance their mental wellness.

I think you've gotta make wellbeing part of your DNA. Sure. It's gotta be a red thread that runs throughout your company. So it's gotta be part of your culture. It's gotta be an extension of your culture. It's gotta be aligned to the company values, otherwise it just rubs and it doesn't feel right. So if you deploy things like, I don't know, baskets of fruit on a Friday.

Gym memberships, they're great, but if they're not part of the culture, they just don't feel right. Sure. And And wellbeing is more than that as well. Yeah, and I think the problem or the challenge, That some companies face, especially from from the [00:06:00] top down, is they don't actually ask people what they need.

Yeah. So it's like, we'll bring this in and we'll assume that this will work. We'll give people, you know, fruit on a Friday and a gym membership and then eap and that will kind of tick that wellbeing box. Mm-hmm. But I think the companies that have. Good wellness, you know, good staff retention, where, you know people are happy, they're the companies that, it's not a tick box exercise.

Sure. They've got the team involved and what they're doing reflects their business and reflects the people within their business. So for example, I, I was working with a company not that long ago and we were working on their strategy and working on their initiatives for the year. And, you know, they were really keen to.

To talk to people in the business that when you were neurodiverse mm-hmm. And you know, they, they was, there was some of the ideas that we brainstorm, some of the program elements that weren't gonna work for that audience. [00:07:00] Sure. So we took a step back and we were like, who's in your business? What do they want?

What can we. Create for them what initiatives, you know, and, and that's just an example, but it's about knowing who's in your business and knowing what they want.

**Michael Paul:** Definitely. I think you that's, that's a good bit of advice that, that I received, you know, trying to sort of grow a culture. I think I, I was sort of saying, oh, these are.

Key buzzwords that are good and this is what other people are doing. Mm-hmm. And I think, I remember a mentor of mine simply just said, why don't you just ask people just every quarter, send out a little survey and just ask them what they feel like And, and since we've been doing that, the benefit structure that we've got at Strangford, I'd honestly say, Three quarters of it, maybe, maybe more, has been ideas that have come from actual staff members.

Yeah. And then they've just said, oh, I would like this. And then I've gone away and sort of said, okay, well how could we do that for, you know, the wider body of staff? So it's, yeah, it's definitely been a game changer for, for us Yeah know, it's, it's, it's really made a difference and bringing [00:08:00] people into the, The changes within a company is, is, you know, it's also empowering for them, so they kind of feel a bit of ownership over what you're doing and things.

So I think it's, yeah, I think that's, that's definitely a super powerful point to, to make. And like I said, if there are any business owners reading this, a lot of watching it and haven't considered this, Start now. Right now, you know, it's, it's, what is it, June at the moment? Yeah. Look at end of June, second quarter start saying, well, we're just a basic survey.

I think our surveys six, seven questions. So, you know, they're not, yeah, they're not gonna take too long. But the stuff, the, the feedback that you get back, the, the detail that you get back is, Gold, frankly.

**Anji McGrandles:** A hundred percent. And it's a good way to temperature check as well. Mm-hmm. And just gauge how people are feeling in the business.

And I think the thing with wellness as well, you've gotta be prepared to course correct. Sure. And by that I mean you could start off on a wellness journey with a program that's heading one way. And actually it might not be as well received as you thought it might [00:09:00] be. And I think you've gotta be brave and be able to say, well, actually we're gonna go back to the drawing board and we're gonna change that.

We're not gonna do online because online's not working. We're gonna go back to in person. Or we need to focus more on X and less on Y. So I guess there's no one size fits all. Yeah. Every business is different. But to kind of summarize what we've just been discussing, I. You should ensure that your wellbeing, you know, comes from the top.

It feels like it's part of your d n A, it's your red thread and it's aligned to your culture, aligned to your values and answers the team needs. And you'll only know what the team needs are if you ask.

**Michael Paul:** Definitely. I think I'm gonna, I'm gonna ask you an unfair question, considering you just said not no sort of one size fits all, but as a general sort of industry or, or you know, as a society.

Why do you believe, and this might be a really long question, but why do you believe that sort of professional stress is on the rise? [00:10:00] Is there anything, I know we've had Covid, I know we've had a lot of changes in society in general. Is there anything you are thinking, actually these are some real obvious causes for, for why we started to see stressors increasing.

**Anji McGrandles:** There's a couple of things. Definitely Covid has played a huge part. I mean, having to constantly, if you think about the Covid period, right? You've got us having to constantly adapt to change, and that puts you on high alert. The brain doesn't like change. Change creates fear within us. Mm-hmm. And when it comes to fear, Our brain draws on experience a bit.

Like if you think about when you were, when you were a kid, the first time you step out in front of a car, you get a huge rush of cortisol, you get a bit of a fright. You might go a bit hot and sweaty, you step back and you move on. But the next time you go to cross a road, You know, to look both ways and to make sure that, [00:11:00] you know, there's no cars coming and that's negative reinforcement.

It's telling the brain next time we, the brain's telling, telling us the next time we go to cross the road, we've gotta check because we've had this experience. Now the thing with Covid is we had nothing to draw on, no experience to draw on. You know, we were never locked in our houses before. We were never, you know, queue in for.

Food and running out of toilet roll. These are like really unknowns for everybody. Sure. So it puts the brain under enormous amounts, under an enormous amount of stress. Like I said, the brain likes routine. Mm-hmm. The brain doesn't like to to not know what's coming up. And when the brain doesn't know what's coming up and it doesn't know how to respond, then it just fills in the gaps.

Okay. And predicts, and almost story tells. And that's when we can get into a really kind of negative, unhealthy, emotional place. So Covid was doing that constantly, constantly pushing that button. And I don't think we can underestimate what kind of impact that's had. You know, there's people [00:12:00] that.

Were never suffering with anxiety that all of a sudden had anxiety. Then there was people who, you know, had had anxiety and had never felt it so crippling and so debilitating as they did during that period. So, it did have a big impact. I don't think we're quite out the covid wave, if I'm honest. Yeah. I think people are still getting their head around hybrid working, still adapting to it.

It's working for some people, it's not for others. I agree. I'm going into businesses all the time where I'm hearing mixed messages where people say, I love hybrid working. It really works for me. I get to do this, I get to do that. Then other people feel quite anxious about it. So I still think we're coming out of that.

We're obviously in the middle of a global economic crisis Yeah. As well, which again, makes people feel stressed, takes a toll on your mental health. Adds a completely different dimension to your working day as well. Sure. Because it impacts, you know, everything. You're

taking that with you into the office.

Yeah. You take it with you. So I think the external factors [00:13:00] that have definitely seen a rise in mental, he in poor mental health, but also I think we're better at talking about. Mental health than we were maybe five years ago. Yeah. There were so many campaigns, there were so many initiatives now that encourage people to talk more openly about mental health wellness programs in the workplace that lot of businesses put in place.

Again, that makes it easier for people to, to say, actually I'm not having a day off sick today. Yeah. I'm having a mental health day. Sure. So then when HR are recording it, It's been recorded differently to maybe what it would've been five, 10 years ago. Mm-hmm. Where people wouldn't have wanted to have said they're having a mental health day in fear that it was gonna impact on how they were viewed, how it looked.

Yeah. Or their performance within the business, how they progressed. So I think there's, there's two kind of two factors, and also I think. [00:14:00] Hybrid working has played a big role in burnout, so there's been a huge increase in burnout over the last couple of years. Right. A real rise. And I think hybrid working has, has played a big part in that as well.

**Michael Paul:** Why do you think Just because the. Expectations. I, I agree wholeheartedly with what you, what you're saying. I think, you know, I was having this chat only a week ago saying how there's too many sort of sweeper statements in, I don't LinkedIn or what have you, or whatever medium that says hybrid working is here to stay.

It's perfect. Every company should jump on the bandwagon. And then there's other people saying it doesn't work for anyone. Everyone's gotta get back into the office. The end. And it's almost a case of, from what I've seen, I can see it working wonderfully for certain people. I can see it working terribly for other people.

Yeah. But because there's such a narrative of either works a hundred percent or it doesn't work, and it 0% people tend to fall into two camps and, and then you find it difficult of saying someone, I'm [00:15:00] not sure this is working for you. And then they find, actually, I'm not sure working and, and I don't wanna generalize again, but certainly the, the experience I've had, it tends to be more of the, the younger person tends to find hybrid work a little bit more challenging mm-hmm.

Because there's not the support network when they're at home. Yeah. Or, you know, wherever they, wherever they're working outta. So, you know, trying to sort of combat that and then have those discussions say, Actually, it might be better if you're back in five days a week. It's very difficult when maybe someone of a similar age or or the same age in the same role might just be able to deal with it better and they're happy to work, I don't know, three days from the office versus you are working five days from the office.

So it, it's, it's a really awkward conversation to sort of have, and I think we're. I feel like we're not there yet. Yeah. But I feel like we're going to that point, but I just feel like we're not, it's not an acceptable conversation to have because of the other narratives that are being pushed. And the other point you made about actually, we're [00:16:00] just a lot more open about talking about it now is, is, is really interesting.

So I think that's really true as well. And I think. It might have just been a case that's always been there, but we just didn't talk about it openly or it's not been kind of reported as such before. So, you know, these statistics of, of, you know, 75% noticed an increase in work-related stress. Well, it might have always been there.

You just didn't label it as that Exactly. So, you know, I think that's something to really say it. Shocking statistic, but maybe not that shocking. It just, you know, I don't, I don't, I can't remember how long these, these wellness, you know, surveys have been done. I, it's a couple of years, so. Five, 10 years ago could have been exactly the same number, but actually we just didn't know about it and, and

**Anji McGrandles:** labeling it as well and labeling it.

So, so World Health Organization is only just in the last couple of years, defined burnout as a thing. Mm-hmm. So that was never a thing previously, but I'm sure there was a lots of people burnout 10 years ago, seven years ago, but it was just not recognized. So I think there's been a lot of changes. [00:17:00] Sure.

Covid has definitely highlighted wellbeing in some positive ways as well. I think Covid definitely helped some people with their wellness. You know, I know lots of people that were more relaxed, felt like they'd had a reset. Mm-hmm. Got fitter, ate better. Stop drinking, you know, so, so there was positive effects that definitely Covid had on, on people's wellness as well, but there was definitely negative effects.

I think what it did was it brought wellbeing, wellness, and especially workplace wellness to the forefront of, of the news.

**Michael Paul:** Definitely. It's not to go off a tangent, but I've seen a huge increase in, I say famous people, such a generic term, but. Celebrities, artists, musicians, all sorts. Mm-hmm. Being more vocal about their mental health and saying, actually I need to stop because before I would've just pushed through this and it would've been fine and I would've crumbled and no one sees like post [00:18:00] tour that I needed six months off to try and have therapy and things or whoever that might have been.

Whereas now case of actually I need to. I need to cancel a few nights singing because this is not OK where I'm at and I can't continue to do what I do every night and just crumble. So you know, I think that's, that's a, that's a really good point to make. And just stemming off from that as well is, it'd be interesting to sort of, it'd be interesting to hear your perspective on , how you see someone's character change when you feel that they are highly stressed or possibly going through burnout.

Cause you know, I know from, from personal experience, people have said to me in the past, at certain points, Hey, you're not yourself. You're not acting like X, Y, and Z. You know, I think you're too stressed. And I'm sat there thinking, well, I'm fine. I'm, I'm, this is normal for me and I'm probably part of the problem of five, 10 years ago, I didn't label anything as stress or mental health wellbeing.

Whereas now it's almost. Makes me stop and think, hang on a second, am I being right to [00:19:00] myself? So, you know, what do you see in terms of the characteristics? Cause I, I think a lot of people maybe listening or watching might say, I'm fine, I'm not stressed, but actually I just not identifying it

**Anji McGrandles:** from a workplace perspective.

Yeah. If we keep in that workplace lens on things and, and I guess outside of work as well, I think the first thing you notice is people's confidence. Their confidence tends to go quite quickly. You feel you're not coping, whether that's perception that you're not coping or whether that's fact. Mm-hmm.

And you. Is a big player in stress. The two main causes of stress are lack of control. So not feeling like you're in control of things and your perception of a situation. So confidence definitely is one of the, the first things Yeah, that you see people changing people.

**Michael Paul:** So even not making decisions effectively and quickly that they may have.

Usually done. They're just not confident in Yeah. Sort of putting their foot forward and saying this is the right decision to make. You know, they're just [00:20:00] sort of stagnating on things and letting things sort build up and, and such,

**Anji McGrandles:** definitely. So if, if you work in say, the client services industry and you have a negative experience with a client, then your next experience, if that's dented your confidence or that client has made you feel stressed, then your next experience with that client mm-hmm.

Will be. Based on that, a bit like what I was saying earlier. Yeah. The brain draws on experience and that's what the brain will be drawing on what happened before that previous encounter. Yeah. So that puts you on high alert and that makes you feel stressed and it makes you feel anxious. So you don't necessarily go into things confidently.

You can sometimes, you know, rush through things when you're stressed because you're juggling lots of different things, so you might drop a ball. Mm-hmm.

**Michael Paul:** Like distracted, I guess as well. Throws into there distract. You're just, you just, you just rushing around and you're not focusing on one thing and one task and is distracted by lots of different things and, and, you know, trying [00:21:00] to.

Paid the small amount of attention to lots of things instead of just saying, lemme just focus on this one and get it done. It's a funny one.

**Anji McGrandles:** Stress, because everybody lumps everything into a stress bowl, I think. Sure. So it's like I feel really stressed. Mm-hmm. I feel really stressed and there's a fine line between pressure.

And stress. And there's a very fine line between stress and burnout. Burnout is stealth, it can creep up on you so quickly. And the same with pressure. A bit of pressure can flip quite quickly into stress. And I think the key is to knowing what level of pressure you best operate under. Okay. So getting an understanding of, because look, we need a bit of pressure in our lives.

Mm-hmm. I dunno about you. But sometimes, you know, I think if I've got a project that I've got four weeks to do, I'll probably do my best part of that project, close to the deadline. Then I will four weeks before human nature. Cause it's human

**Michael Paul:** nature. Yeah. Whatever [00:22:00] deadline, you know, if you've got give yourself six months or six weeks, it'll take the amount of time that you've given yourself to do it.

**Anji McGrandles:** Yeah. So we do need a bit of pressure in our lives. Some of the symptoms of burnout are really similar to those you experienced during stress. And the difference is stress can be characterized by doing too much. That can be having like too many demands, too many changes, too many decisions to make.

Burnout is the opposite. Burnout is not doing enough. Burnout's, a feeling of lethargy, not having enough energy, time, enthusiasm. So stress gets you going mm-hmm. Burnout dulls everything. So, Recognize when you're feeling stressed and when you're kind of borderline burnout.

**Michael Paul:** Do you think there's a link between procrastination and burnout, therefore, or do you think that's too much of a stretch?

You know, I've, I've talked to a few people that have sort of said, You know, sometimes I find things really hard and I just procrastinate [00:23:00] and I just, I find myself very distracted and I'm sort of thinking, well, I dunno if that's lacking a purpose in what you're doing, or you don't understand what you are supposed to be doing or how you're supposed to be doing it, or possibly you are just in a state of burnout and you don't know about it.

If it is so stealthy, then it could just be that, I guess as well.

**Anji McGrandles:** I think there were people who were like, naturally. Procrastinators. Sure. Yeah. Yeah. And, and you know, go through that process. But yeah, procrastination is a sign of, oh, it's as well a sign of burnout. It's, and I think when you're overwhelmed, you're just like, I can't even think about what I want for dinner.

Sure. You know, if you've got a lot on and you're juggling lots of different things and your mind's all over, you know, just making that simple decision is, what do I have for dinner tonight? Can somebody just take that out of my hands. So there is a link between between them for sure. Yes. There is six signs of burnout and one of them is procrastination.

**Michael Paul:** Procrastination. It is. Ok. Yeah, it's, it's, it's interesting you [00:24:00] saying this because even now I'm thinking of periods in the past where I've been guilty of procrastination. I've had that conversation with my wife and being like, I don't know what we're doing for dinner. I can't. I can't think of anything.

Nothing's coming to my head. I've really struggled with lethargy and, and the motivation to do things. And then I'm thinking, well, actually I need to be disciplined. So I kind of replace motivation with discipline and I just force myself to do something. Yeah. And, and now I'm sitting there thinking, well, hang on.

Was I just. Burn out that whole time, cuz I was just labeling it as I just needed to realign my purpose for what I was doing.

**Anji McGrandles:** Well, do you know what? There's a bit of both, but when we're stressed, we obviously get, our body gets flooded with cortisol. Our brain gets flooded with cortisol and it's a part of our brain called our prefrontal cortex.

Mm-hmm. Our PFC and our prefrontal cortex is responsible for decision making, planning and thought processing

and the minute we get [00:25:00] flooded with cortisol, that part of the brain switches off. It literally goes offline. So that's why when we're really stressed, when we're constantly activating those cortisol levels and you know, dialing up stress, that's why we don't always make. Our best decisions. Interesting. Why we can't plan, that's why we don't always think rationally.

It, it's, it's interesting because it does kinda give you an insight into why we behave in certain ways when we're stressed. Yeah. I know when I've been under stress before, or I've felt really overwhelmed, which again is, can feel stressful. You know, some of the simplest things. That really do involve that part of my brain.

Yeah. I've struggled to do like deciding what to have for dinner. Sure. Like planning what you're doing over the weekend. I, can't think about it right now, because I just need to get through today, and that's, Exactly what's in front of us. We can't see what's happening around us. Yeah. So that probably kind of explains a, a little bit, [00:26:00] that phase to assume a little bit of that as well.

Yeah. Well,

**Michael Paul:** I guess how do you come back from burnout or high stress levels? Like is there, is there a technique involved? Is there a strategy? You know, is there, is there something that people can do? You know, I certainly know how sort of, I try and work through it and combat it, but. Is there something that's, I'll say universally accepted, but is there something that's generally you can do this and over time it will kinda lead you back to where you should be?

**Anji McGrandles:** Everybody's different. Sure. I guess a couple of things. I'm a big believer in proactively managing your mental health. Okay. So I think that if you are good, what I call self-manager, yeah. And you're looking after your wellbeing, it can really put you in good stead going through challenging periods.

There's lots of things you can do. There's lots of mindset techniques, there's lots of really practical tools as well. But one of, I guess one of the key things I always say to people is to look after your shed. Okay, so you shed a sleep, hydration, exercise, diet, and

**Michael Paul:** I thought you were gonna say shed sort of, that's your mind or something.

It was just

**Anji McGrandles:** ok. No, [00:27:00] it's not. It's not the wooden shack at what was garden. So it was, again, it was sleep, hydration, exercise, and diet. Right. And I think if you, something really interesting you said earlier was about habits. Mm-hmm. And being disciplined. And I think if you can make. Tiny habits. I'm talking about like that 1%, that once you make small changes and you practice it on a daily basis, when you go into really busy periods, you are on the front foot rather than on the back foot, and that helps you.

It helps you recover quickly from setbacks. It helps you manage your stress levels better. So, you know, you might be thinking, well, you know, sleep, hydration, exercise, diet. Yeah, well, everybody knows that they do, but you know, just being 2% dehydrated can have a huge impact on your cognitive ability and your decision.

I didn't have much to drink today. Well, you know, that will impair your cognitive ability. Everybody [00:28:00] knows if you don't get enough sleep, you feel terrible and it impacts everywhere. If you don't sleep very well and you have a couple of nights on the bounce where you're not sleeping, you probably, and I'm not saying everybody does this, but you probably drink more caffeine.

Mm-hmm. You probably drink food that might be high sugar to give yourself a few energy bursts. You probably skip the gym. And, you know, all of these things make a difference to how you fail. Definitely.

**Michael Paul:** I think it's interesting how you put sleep first as well. So it's something that I've been digging into a lot recently and I was a terrible sleeper.

You know, I was the sort of four and a half, five hours, maybe a night for extended periods. And it was actually a discussion that I had three months ago, and the gentleman sat down and explained, The effects of lack of sleep and from a medical point of view. Yeah. And it scared everything out of me. And I [00:29:00] sort of went home and I was like, okay, well actually it doesn't, it doesn't necessarily matter that I'm focusing so much on diet.

It doesn't really matter that I'm focusing on exercise right now. If I don't get sleep sorted, yeah, the rest of it's not going to matter. And I really, really started to sort of delve into it and think, okay, what do I need to do? Like at what time do I need to go to bed? How am I having an evening process?

When am I switching off my phone and when am I stopping watching tv, my laptop or something? And really trying to build this entire habit of how I manage sleep. I'm still, you know, it's, I'm still struggling with it. I'd still go back and forth and some nights I'll have seven and a half, eight hours. Perfect. Some nights I'm still on four and a half, five.

Mm-hmm. But it, the difference is so enormous and I've had discussions with senior people at Strangford, my wife, and you know, I've, I've said when I've had enough sleep, I make better decisions when it comes to mainly around diet and [00:30:00] exercise. Yeah.

**Anji McGrandles:** A hundred percent. They're, they're, they're all of those things.

Sleep, hydration. Mm-hmm. Exercise, diet. They're all interlinked. Yeah. And they're the foundations of good wellbeing and sleep is a big one. I think everybody has their own non-negotiables. Yeah. When it comes to looking after their shed. Right. There were. There are some things that you can let drop and it's not gonna have a massive impact, or you can dial down a little bit.

But I think for a lot of people, sleep is the number one for me. I think it's definitely exercise and diet. Yeah. I'm not too bad on sleep, although I've had really poor sleep periods and it's not great. I remember I, I lost my dad a couple of years ago and I went through about. Well, it felt like forever, but it was probably about a four month period where I just couldn't sleep.

And I'm a coach, right? I'm a wellbeing coach. Sure. And I know I knew exactly what was happening and I knew exactly kind of what I needed to do, but I was so kind of caught up in grief that I had to just [00:31:00] park it. And in the end kind of. I was like, right. I've gotta have a reset here. And just kind of, you were saying how do you get back from, you know, burnout?

How do you get back from periods of, of, of stress? It does sometimes need an intervention. You sometimes need to have a complete reset. You need to have a break and you need to, you need to give your mind time to

**Michael Paul:** rest. What does that look like? Does that mean, does that sort of suggest and not, not sort of pointing the finger at yourself, emotion here, but does it mean working with someone like yourself as a coach, or does it mean, could it mean.

A two week holiday somewhere, could it just mean, I don't know, something that's, that's really nominal? Like, I'm just wondering kind of the extent of, of, I suppose it depends on the, the case by case basis, right? Yeah, definitely. Yeah. It could be, it could be something as as simple as, Hey look, just take a two week break.

Don't look at anything to do with work. Yeah. And that can reset you otherwise. But if I suppose in, in, in, in bad, in bad severe cases, it could be actually you do need to work with a coach because you are [00:32:00] so far gone that Yeah, you need to sort of be pulled back to an extent. So it's difficult sometimes.

Cause I think there's, there, there still is. I think it's changing, but I still think there is this glorification of the sort of hustle culture and I mean, I, I think it's, I think it's all just crap. Frankly. Yeah. And from someone who bought into it wholeheartedly, you know, hook, line, sinker I was like, hustle, hustle, hustle.

And then I thought, hang on a sec. I'm not sleeping. I'm making bad diet decisions. I'm getting injured when I'm training. You know, I, I, I find myself not even drinking water during the day and all these bad, bad decisions coming from it. You know, just realizing where you are kind of on that spectrum of actually this is just a bit of pressure and pressure's fine.

It it, it changes me and develops me and builds character. Stress is not great. So, but it can be managed. Burnout is, is the end of the line and you need to have an intervention here. So I think it's, it's important for people to understand where they are on the spectrum. I mean, yeah. [00:33:00] Do you think it's easy for people to find, like to label themselves, oh, I'm here, here, here.

Or do you think maybe sometimes that's someone like yourself that will come in and say, I can kind of see how you're working and see how you're acting and speaking to you. I sort of think that you are more here, whereas you might think you are sort of down pressure, stress, actually you are like stress burnout.

**Anji McGrandles:** It's such a tricky one, Michael, because I've worked with people who are completely in denial of being burntout and said, I'm not, I'm. But they're not fine. They're a hundred percent not fine. I think you've gotta, like I said, you've gotta recognise. Where you're at and where you work best work under pressure. And when you don't, and if you feel like you're on the edge and if you feel like you know, things really feel outta control, then you've gotta go and ask for help.

Sure. Sometimes you need somebody to point it out to you, but sometimes you can just go and sit down with your HR or your line manager and say this is how I'm feeling, [00:34:00] and once you start to put it down and talk to somebody.

Let's make a couple of changes here and a couple of changes there, and then you can then start to make adjustments and get back on track. But when you keep those things to yourself and you bottle it all up and you just carry on like everything's normal, that's when you put yourself at risk of a breakdown.

Sure. And I don't say that lightly. Yeah. But. I've seen people who just won't take any help and they get to that point and that's that breaking point. So, so sometimes, you know, you might need, or you might need is a two week holiday to reset. Yeah. And make a plan. But I think it's the making the plan bit that's really important because it's okay going off and having a long weekend and you know, you've gotten over that project or over that challenging period.

You've had that two week holiday and you feel great and you go back to work, but it's what you do when you go back to work that makes a difference. Sure. How do you stop yourself from getting back? In that sticky place [00:35:00] again, what? What are the changes that you're gonna make? And it goes back to what I said about being a good self-manager and making small changes that once practiced habitually, that become part of your daily routine, your habits.

Then they put you on the front foot so you feel better if you are eating really well. So gut health, mental health, intrinsically linked. You know, 90% of your serotonin is created in the lining of your gut, your enteric nervous system, and that's traveled, you know, travels up to your central nervous system.

Everybody knows serotonin's a really good, feel good hormone makes you feel good. Really important to have lots of it. If you've got poor gut health, then that 90% serotonin isn't being, isn't being created in your stomach. Yeah, and it isn't going up to. Your CNS. So, you know, small changes like eating well taking a really decent pre and probiotic, [00:36:00] you know, there's shortcuts and you don't have to, you know, be on salads and, and vegetables.

You know, life's about living as well. Sure. But if you can look after yourself, aim that 80/20 balance so you know Monday to Friday you're eating a nutritious breakfast, decent lunch and you, and you'd dehydrate in and you're getting some sleep. Then on a weekend go and eat the cake and drink the beer and have the glass of wine. You know, life's for living.

Sure. But going through periods when you need to take care of yourself once you do things. And they become a habit. Then you go into those periods, better armed to deal with things. You know, if your sleep's in a good position, in a, in a good place, then you're not gonna feel mentally exhausted during challenging periods at work.

If you're hydrated, you're not gonna drink, you know, you're not gonna it's not gonna impair your cognitive abilities. If you're drinking lots of caffeine, then how's that gonna make you feel if you're not eating?[00:37:00] Food or you, you know, you're skipping meals, you know, that is all gonna impact how you deal with things, the decisions you make.

There was a study a few years ago, you may have heard of it, and it was across judges in the US and they looked at when judges made decisions where they, where people got off on charges. Sure. And the slot right before lunch. Less people. Got off with the sentencing and they reckoned that was because the judge was really hungry and really thirsty at that point.

So the decisions that they made influenced how they felt. And I can't remember who, who carried out that study, but if you look at that, that's, that's fact. And the people who were in straight after lunch were more likely to get to get let off than the people who were in before lunch. So if you were, that's incredible.

If you were ever in trouble, people. Make sure you don't get the pre-lunch slot in court.

**Michael Paul:** Yeah, just pre, pre-book. Cause it won't help you [00:38:00] pre-book in advance. The, the, yeah. The early afternoon slot, a two o'clock slot. I mean, that is, you know, we, we sort of hold judges in very high esteem and yet they're still affected by the same thing.

So, you know, whether you are, you sort of lower down sort of the, the, the workforce chain or, or you know, you're a judge in this country or in the US. You know, it's, it's incredible to think we're all affected by the same things. One thing I'd love to know, and this is, there's a lot of noise out there, you know, whether it's on social media and, and self gurus and all these sorts of things, self-proclaimed gurus.

Where would you advise someone, just average Joe person. Where would you advise they go to, to get some more information apart from yourself reaching out to you, but where could they start to say, actually, I just wanna start the basics on managing, you know, my own stressors a bit more. Where would you, where would you start?

Where would you advise that person to go

**Anji McGrandles:** if you're struggling with your stress levels? I think it's good to talk to somebody like a [00:39:00] trusted. Friend. Sure. And that's always a, a good, a good start. If you don't wanna talk to somebody from, on a professional level. Cause I always think about, you know, when I'm being hard on my myself or if I'm thinking about decisions that I wanna make, I always think, well, what would I tell my best friend?

Mm what advice would I give my best friend? And I always give myself that advice cause it's always a lot kinder than if it's the voice in my head. So I think speaking to someone, That you're close to, that you feel, you know, confident enough it's got your back is good because you'll get a different perspective.

And it'll be a perspective that you trust as well. Yeah. And again, it might be that that person might say to you, well, actually I've noticed that you're really stressed at the moment and I think maybe you need to go and speak to somebody. Or you might, want to go and speak to your GP or you might want to speak to someone at work, so.

Different avenues you can go down if you wanna, if you don't [00:40:00] wanna go and talk to somebody, if you don't wanna talk to somebody at work. There were loads of great books out there that can help with stress levels. I was just talking about the shed earlier. There's a book called The Shed Method Okay.

By called and that's really good and that's how you. Manage stress through managing your shed. There's another book as well called The Source by a lady called Dr. Tara Swart. Mm-hmm. And again, that's great cause it dives into the neuroscience a little bit, but she does it in such a smart way.

Like she talks about kinda neuroscience on layman's terms. Good. And it's like, look, this is what our body does under pressure, this is why we're doing it.

Something I always say to my clients as well is keep a stressed diary. Yeah. Keep a stressed diary for two weeks. And if anybody from you know, any listeners from your podcast want to see what a stress diary looks like, then you know, reach out to me directly. Cause I've got. Some that I can share. And I think [00:41:00] if you, if you keep a stress diary for two weeks and analyze it, you can then pinpoint what the underlying stresses are.

Patterns and, yeah, and patterns and things like that. And then you can start to know what your triggers are and identify maybe some underlying problems. And then you can start to make changes. So something as simple as a stress diary can, can really help.

**Michael Paul:** Yeah, definitely. I think, I think something that struck me then as well was you could simply order yourself to start with even just using, you know, the shed.

I think. I think we're all gonna be pretty self-aware of, Hey, do we sleep enough? You know? Yeah. Am I just exercising poorly or not at all? Yeah. Am I eating? Just terrible food. You know, there's, there's a lot of immediate audits that you can kinda look at. Definitely. And say, hang on a sec, did I drink any water today?

Or why don't I just go and buy, I dunno, a liter bottle, you know, double lined, fill it up at the start of the day. Yeah. And make sure I've drunk whatever one or two of those a day easy kind of wins that you can kind of [00:42:00] say, well, it's not, maybe not gonna cure wherever you are. Yeah. But it's a, it's a really good start.

**Anji McGrandles:** Definitely. It's like looking at where you are winning and where you are winging. Sure. So you just said there, for example, you, shed start with your shed like, am I winning with my sleep and winning with my diet? But am I not doing so great with my exercise and hydration and what can I do? And then it's about making what I call micro hacks, micro changes.

Little like small incremental changes that when once you do it regularly, you know, can make a big difference. So I always say to people, look at things like habit stacking. Mm-hmm. So say if you're, you know, you're winging it when it comes to hydration, for every cup of tea you have, make sure you've drank 500 mil of water.

Yeah. Or when you get up first thing in the, in the morning, you know, before you do anything else. Have a glass of water and once you just start to do these things, they become habitual. Just like brushing your teeth. Yeah. You don't have told to brush your teeth. Yeah. You automatically do it. And the same applies, small [00:43:00] changes.

Again, you know, if it's exercise, how can you have it stack exercise into your day? Can you. Take a phone call at work by doing a while. You're doing a block walk. If you don't have take notes, you if it's just something have front of yeah, on go. And making yourself accountable and just trying to introduce small changes like that.

All add up and go towards it being a win. Definitely. So I think, you know, small changes and, and doing a little bit of an audit, where am I win? Where am I winning? Where am I winging?

**Michael Paul:** Definitely. And it's, it's incredible. I, I would say the biggest effects I've had are from tiny changes I've. Now I put charge my phone at night in the kitchen.

Yeah. So it's out of the bedroom and you know, I I, I'm making sure that I do at least three 10 minute walks a day. Yeah. And it's just nothingness. It's, I, I know I need to call this person, you know, they're, they're someone that I've known for years. I don't, it doesn't matter if [00:44:00] I'm out walking or walking the dog and, and, Talking to them, jump on and be like, oh, I know I need to call this person so I'm just gonna go for a walk while I do it.

And it's just these tiny, tiny, tiny changes that you're right, just over time just build up and, and and, you know, make you a bit more resilient. And, and you know, something I would, I wanna touch upon but not dwell on a bit is I'm very much of the cause I think we, we sort of said about a lot of stress and you stress is sort negative pressures good, whereas, I think there's something to be said for certainly my belief in terms of making the uncomfortable, comfortable, and I think to grow as, as a person, I like to try and find the uncomfortable and try and live in that area of uncomfortableness to make it comfortable and then it all of a sudden just becomes a pressure as opposed to a stress.

So, you know, I think. People don't panic if all of a sudden you're saying, actually I'm really stressed. You know, it could just be, okay, well let's just find out the root cause of it. It might just be cuz you are growing. [00:45:00] Yeah. And you just need to go through a little bit of it. So you know, you kinda have to realize to grow into something.

Yeah. There has to be stressors, burnout's a whole different thing obviously. But you know, there has to be stress on you and then you'll grow and all of a sudden you'll realize the thing you are stressed about is just the norm now and you can handle it and you manage it. So. That it's not that you're trying to get rid of stress.

It's just you're trying to manage stress and there's a big, big, big difference to it. I think one thing I'd like to just kinda wrap up on is how can companies work with you? Because you've obviously done, you know, you've done some great stuff with us and, and you know, I really appreciate what you've done for us.

What can companies do if they wanted to reach out and say, actually we, we could do better as a company? Mm-hmm. What, what can you do, or how, how, what's your methodology or what's your, your sort of techniques that you work with brand new clients, how do you kind of go through that with them? Well,

**Anji McGrandles:** it's a different process for every client because if you think, you know, say for example, clients like, Boston Consultancy Group.

They've got 10 of me in team, [00:46:00] so don't need me to sit down and talk to them about strategy. They want to talk to me about delivering, you know, hard, fast training that's gonna equip their team. Okay. With really good tools. So, so it really varies. And I work with companies, you know, as small as 10 15. Right up to global companies sure. That have thousands of staff and, and I can flex up and flex down.

So help people with a strategy, help them just even think about, okay, what does a wellbeing program look like? What can we do that's not gonna cost me thousands and thousands of pounds, but is gonna help people in my business? And then I can co go away and come up with a program that they can implement themselves.

I could design or give them ideas and they can implement and run it themselves, or I can do the whole thing. So design a program badge it, [00:47:00] theme it. Add all the training elements to it. It, it, it just really depends on what a company needs, but I tend to do a bit of a deep dive first. Yeah. And get to understand what's company set up, what the company culture's like.

Going back to what I said at the beginning and, and getting a, you know, a head start on. What maybe some of the challenges are right now. So why have you called me into the company? Sure. You know, what kind of, what a couple of maybe red flags that you might be seeing. And then again, I like to speak to staff.

Mm-hmm. Some companies don't always want you to, but I think it's so beneficial to, to do a little bit of an audit with, with a staff as well, whether that's kinda anonymous survey or small small groups where you get a feel for. But what's really happening within the business. And then that informs you and then you can go away and make recommendations.

And it can be, you know, initiatives to training right through to counseling in some [00:48:00] cases. Sure. And bringing in experts from, from other fields as well. So, you know, we've got nutritionist in Nice. We've got specialize in fitness. The menopause, you know, there's so many different things that are encompassed in wellbeing, you know, financial wellbeing.

Sure. It's not just about stress. So it's about, you know, looking at what's really important to your business right now. You know, if, if some businesses go through a lot of change Sure. And you can go in and talk to business about change. On it. So how do you manage periods of change while you're managing yourself?

How do you bring your a game to work but still look after yourself? How do you get a work-life balance? The, there is, you know, so many different elements to wellness. How do you bounce back from, you know, Restructures, company restructures, things like that. So there's, there's a lot that that a wellness program can encompass a lot of different themes and focus areas

**Michael Paul:** and it's an [00:49:00] ongoing thing.

Cause I think maybe, maybe, you know, I think when we first spoke, I thought it was more of a, I suppose it's more like therapy really of, of, of, you know, here's a 10 week course and then at the end of the 10 weeks you'll be healed and you'll be better. Whereas actually, When it comes to sort of workplace sort of management in that respect, it's more of a, an ongoing thing that needs to be attended to just like many other sort of scenarios.

It's, it's something needs to worked at and improved and tweaked and surveyed and all sort. So just, just to clarify, it's not. You'll have a six week course with Anji and then it's all done. It's more a, yeah, we need to actually put a strategy and a wellbeing officer internally and, and you know, you can do the workshops, but actually it's, it's what you then execute afterwards.

That's the important stuff. That makes a difference. Hundred percent. Yeah,

**Anji McGrandles:** and I think it's really interesting as well. Cause obviously we've been, you know, we talked at the top about the findings of this wellbeing survey and I think sometimes, [00:50:00] you know, there needs to be things that happen sector-wide as well. Cause there are some sectors, some industries that are more prone to to good wellbeing.

Sure. And poor wellbeing, so, so I think it's important as well to kind of open it out and think from a sector perspective, you know, what can thought leaders in that place do collectively. That's gonna make an impact.

**Michael Paul:** Yeah, definitely. That's a really, that's, that's a whole nother podcast. But I might get onto that.

Thank you so much for coming in today. I think there's, there's definitely some gold in, in this and hopefully people take heed of it. And whether it's just doing a self audit you know, from that very basic point or. You know, business leaders getting in touch with you and starting to take, you know, their strategies for wellbeing in, in the workplace a lot more.

Seriously. I think it's, it's something that really needs to be done and, and you know, like we said, just looking at that survey, it's not fantastic and, and, you know, something needs to certainly be done, you know, within the block management industry. You know, hopefully we are doing a little bit to, to get ourselves up [00:51:00] and running on it, but I think a lot more people need to do it.

And likewise, whatever industry, you know, that you can, you can adapt to and start working with people. So I really appreciate you coming in. Thank you so much. Thanks for having me. Absolute pleasure. I'll put all your details at the bottom so everyone can contact Anji if if you wanna, and start having those discussions about improving the workforce and we'll go from there.

Excellent. Thanks so much. Thank you.