

Elizabeth Turp 0:00

Hello and welcome to episode 20 of How We Care, that's exciting! So today we've got a special guest episode and our topic is Supporting students and your own well-being in educational settings.' So I'm really excited to get onto this topic because lots of our topics are really relevant to teachers, lecturers, academics, but we haven't really had any interaction with anyone who actually works at that field before on the podcast. So I'm very excited today to tell you about our guest Dave Wood PhD. Dave is a very old friend of mine, not the he's very old, but we've been friends for a long time and we'll get onto that in a minute. But just to introduce Dave to you. He's multi-talented. He's an artist, a researcher, a teacher, an author and course leader at Dundee University. So he has many, many strings to his bow and over the conversation, I'm sure we'll talk about the evolution of his career. So Dave, do you want to tell us a little bit about your career?

Dave Wood 1:16

Yes. So as far as process I've known you since probably 94 was when we first met. So yeah, I was originally an illustrator then moved through that into publishing into design from design into introduction design. I feel that I'm the instructional design, intellectual and, and I've been a lecturer since the day after 911 happened. So I've been a lecturer ever since then. So that was like, What 2001

Elizabeth Turp 2:00

Yeah, and you've kind of gone up through the ranks in your academic career. as well.

Dave Wood 2:05

Yeah, lifelong learning and all that. So, yeah, from being an illustrator. I've been every type of student possible from being like just a young student through being mature students through all the different levels of academia up to where I currently am now. Which as you said, I've gone as far as I can go in regards to education. I'm learning every day and learning from the students as well in regards to the topic we're going to be discussing today, which is mental health

Elizabeth Turp 2:39

yeah, already, this is how this podcast works. Everything sparks more and more and more ideas. So already, you've got me thinking about how much your own experiences as a student will be useful to you supporting students. I mean, it might sound obvious, but that hadn't kind of come up for me yet. So now

you can talk about that. Obviously, you have that fantastic insight, which is kind of used to exist in industry and business didn't it where people would work their way right up through, that doesn't happen anymore as much, but in your career, you have experienced all the levels of education. Therefore when you are working with students you know what it feels like to be in each of those levels, and some of the things that can come up for people.

Dave Wood 3:25

Yeah, I think empathy has a lot to do with this. By the very nature of experience, you, or myself I speak obviously, for myself, rather for everybody. I think the level of empathy of remembering back to what I would have needed at that particular phase. And I know that's only an individual thing, but you know, it's that thing that... I'll give you a quick little anecdote about where this has sort of materialised from that recently during the first lockdown when we're all online I organised afternoon talks every second Thursday with industry people for my students. Now, I teach graphic design, and add a couple of really big industry people, one had set up own design studios, giving the benefits of their experience. And one of the very first questions in the q&a afterwards, didn't put their camera on, came on voice and said, 'How do you handle impostor syndrome?'

Elizabeth Turp 4:34

Oh, okay. We've got a whole episode on that!

Dave Wood 4:38

nice segue there. And they were absolutely shocked, absolutely shocked, the students that is, when both of these big industry people went 'Yep, Every day, every day.' It became like Spartacus, like once one said, 'Yeah, I've got it.' and even myself, came up on camera, you know, everybody. Yeah, it's one of those things that, it was a domino effect. So all of a sudden the students realise individually, locked down in their own flat, yeah, that they collectively were all suffering from exactly the same thing that everybody's suffering. Yeah.

Elizabeth Turp 5:19

That it wasn't just them.

Dave Wood 5:21

Absolutely. And I think that was a big, valuable lesson. of where things had actually got to, obviously it was a very stressful time. Everybody around us, for the students starting in education at undergraduate level. Yeah. And they're never actually meeting anybody else. All these things going through their heads. Yeah,

Elizabeth Turp 5:38

no chance to chat like you would normally do in normal setting.

Dave Wood 5:43

So I've used that story ever since 2020.

Elizabeth Turp 5:49

So yeah, so now everybody benefits from that revelation. That's really good.

Dave Wood 5:53

I think it's that openness, the fact that being honest that you're not trying to hide stuff from everybody, by people thinking if you say this, you're going to look weak. And I think that's one of the biggest fears that we have to overcome and I think that's something as a student, you definitely don't get taught. Yes, it emerges through exposure and it should do, because it might... I tend to be a different lecturer to the type of lectures I had back in the '80's, it was a whole different educational system then. Yeah, the nurturing aspect, you know, I suppose paternally you know, I joke with them that, you know, they're my babies, you know, as they go through up to the point of graduation and then you fly the nest.

Elizabeth Turp 6:46

There is a lot of that isn't there? I mean, it's the same in the work that I do, there is a lot of parental type of supporting and nurturing, as you say, with the goal of people flying off on their own and your kind of, but you're also, what's coming up for me now multiple things is you're also modelling that. I mean, I think that might be something we talk about a lot. You are modelling being open, honest, and vulnerable about all manner of different things. And it also makes me think a lot about just how hard it is for students to do that in a setting where they're being assessed.

You know, I mean, it came up like really ironically, in the training I did. I'm literally supposed to be training to help people with their mental health, but we still have the same problem in that if we were going through anything emotionally difficult, we were still like, well, if I say this, is it going to jeopardise

my career? This wasn't coming from the staff or anything like that, but it's a real dilemma, isn't it? Is it okay, they're telling me I need to be self-aware and all that. But is it actually okay to admit vulnerability here because at the end of the day, I'm getting marked for this, I need to impress and I've got to be good. So, it's that eternal dilemma, isn't it for students, especially newer students, like you're saying undergraduates?

Dave Wood 8:11

Yeah, they're learning to be students, and they're learning to be professionals. And there's a lot of stress. And you know, it's a different ballgame now to when I was a student in the 80's, you know, I was one of the last years who got a grant for a start. And so, you know, students have sometimes pulling two jobs and say, balancing a life and study and all these other trials and tribulations that come with being young and discovering the world for the first time away from the parental home. All of this stuff they are going through for the very first time. It was an external examiner for the illustration course just this year, who at the end of the assessment board, the exam board, just reminded everybody around the room, because we've been doing this for a long time all of us and every year we had new undergraduates come in, but he said just remember, it's not our first time. It's THEIR first time every year, we need to be mindful of that.

Elizabeth Turp 9:20

Yeah, the attitude of freshness and the awareness of the newness that also that intersects with I'm sure you do do this, but then if the thought of it like this, the approach to the work which is all about curiosity, isn't it? Yeah, it's about it's about sometimes if in what I'm doing, if I'm feeling a little bit stuck or unsure about something, immediately returning to curiosity is a reset. And it's literally going back to well, it doesn't matter that I don't know. All I have to do is find out you know, just that attitude of curiosity, you're also taking so each individual new student, whereas with me, I guess it's doesn't it doesn't have to be a new client. It could be someone I've worked with for four years or something. But the issue is the newness, isn't it? It's like well, I don't know what's going on here. But it doesn't matter. Because we can find out, that's the work, isn't it?

Dave Wood 10:17

Well, the other thing about this is, as you just mentioned, could somebody you've been with four years or 8 years, a lifetime. You're always going to discover something new about each other. Because every day is a new day and a new set of trials and tribulations. Behind the scenes, whether your staff or

whether you're a student, every day you don't know what they're facing for that day. Yes, yeah. And it's that humanity I suppose.

Elizabeth Turp 10:46

And keeping that keeping that openness and not falling into the trap that a lot of people tend to fall into over a career, which is to start making lots of assumptions about things because it's the opposite of making an assumption that you've just described, isn't it? It's like it like you say every day is different. Everybody's life is different as each day comes. So, keeping that openness is wonderful, exciting, and it's also really, really good for people getting older as we are, you know, like in the middle to late stages of our career, to keep that attitude to life. It keeps us really vibrant and alert doesn't it because I think as I was thinking about doing this with you today, I was also thinking about how much that is part of who you are. You're always learning for yourself as well as for work you know, you're very curious, you're always wanting to learn, you're always looking at things and developing yourself, aren't you?

Dave Wood 11:42

Well, I think you know, as I say, we're post-covid, we're coming out of that period, and I got criticised back over Easter by somebody for referring to as pre COVID / post COVID. I was like, are you still talking like that? I was like, well it was a monumental moment in history. Oh, that's, we were pre COVID doing stuff. And then now we're doing stuff post COVID is a natural, you know, moments in life to know that you've reset yourself.

Elizabeth Turp 12:16

Yeah. And so also acknowledge the impacts because that it also comes into what we're talking about, doesn't it? There are lasting impacts. I mean, I don't know how much you sort of see that in the people you're working with because I guess some of them have now finished and graduated and kind of moved forward but like this, I think this is something that I'm noticing kind of slightly off topic, but it is important is that a lot of people are not wanting to engage, like that person who you were talking to, don't want to think about COVID Oh, no, no, we're gonna pretend that never happened, even though it's actually still happening, right, which people don't want to talk about it. And so in not doing that, there's a denial so lasting impacts whether their physical health stuff like long COVID or mental health or whether they're loneliness or whether the changes in family or grief. Pretending that's not happening or not, hasn't happened is really, really bad for people.

Dave Wood 13:07

Well, that's the thing that I mean, the year just graduated was the covid year as one of my students at the graduation said, Oh, we are COVID babies because I've been referred to as my babies. Your covid babies, like why didn't I think that for the last three years? They started completely on screen, I never met them. For the first year of their education difficult. Never physically met them. Yeah. Now they graduate. And

Elizabeth Turp 13:37

What an achievement, that's even more of an achievement.

Dave Wood 13:39

Absolutely. And it's that period of time where around the country that graduating year was that covid year and you know, I'm an external examiner as well, so I've seen the other universities and their years and things like that and other colleagues and other universities. And you know, it is that thing that it has impacted on them. Yeah, the negative but to flip it to the positive as well, which is what I try to do with those graduating is what they had to do in their learning, to help them to frame this. Just think that the very people that they're hoping to get a job with now had to learn how to design professionally at the same time online. They've now got the skill set to be able to design remotely, talk remotely

Elizabeth Turp 14:34

so, they're way ahead of the game from people who finished before them.

Dave Wood 14:38

That's the way I've been trying to get them to frame what was a negative thing to a positive thing because yeah, you just mentioned about all the different career paths that I've taken all interconnected, but you know, pretty disparate. That the resilience I had when I first met you when I was an illustrator, as a freelance illustrator setting up Network 3 in Liverpool and all these other things. I did that because I was trying to kickstart a career. Yeah, but little does I know that all this stuff that was not paying me anything to do was something that I had to do to try and get paid for something eventually. Now flipped itself that I'm drawing on all of those things that I did voluntarily.

Now as a lecturer. And I was like, oh my God, it was worth all those volunteering things, because it's not just the lived experience that I draw on, but it's those little moments of fear that I had to overcome to do

the next thing without knowing what benefit is actually going to do for me? Yeah, and at the time, it didn't feel like it was a benefit but later in life, it becomes a benefit and I become that crusty old like stage to the students because obviously I'm now at the age I've gone through the age of being like their parents age now I'm creeping into the grandparent.

Elizabeth Turp 16:15

That's just so hard to get my head round!

Dave Wood 16:16

I'm happy with it, I became a great Uncle this year, so I'm happy with that transition in life, but it's that old lecturer's joke that we're like the design parents, they don't listen to us, but as soon as somebody from industry comes in, they're the cool aunties and uncles. Exactly the same thing we've been saying for the last 10 weeks so 'Oh, what a good idea'. So, you know, I play on that all the time. You know, these analogies to family and things like that. They never listen to us because they see us every single day, you know, all these other things. But it is a thing that I tried to think about. What would I like to have known or be reassured of?

Elizabeth Turp 17:01

Yeah, yeah. What would you say to your younger self type of thing?

Dave Wood 17:05

Yeah, that type of thing. Or it's like what reassurance would I have needed when I was trying to do this back then. Yeah. To maybe know that it may not work immediately what, but you'll be fine. You don't know how much it's actually going to benefit you.

Elizabeth Turp 17:21

And you will, you will make an amazing career that you might not have even thought of that would be really fulfilling. I mean, that's you know, you obviously love everything that you do. I mean, it's interesting that you've mentioned Network 3 through there because I was going to bring in this because when we do this podcast, we don't prepare it but what happens, and this is another strand I'll come back to, it's actually quite a creative process, even though we don't plan it so we don't write it write anything. We have a title; we have a person to talk to. And then we go about our day to day lives and like with any creativity ideas will pop into your head. So, the other day I was wandering around and it suddenly hit me

that the reason I met you was literally because, I mean I don't know if you see it like this, but it was because you took a, not parental but I'll say more a mentoring role, to my ex-partner because I met you with my ex- partner (Dave: Yeah. Yeah, I remember the day, at Quiggins!)

He is younger than you. He was new to Liverpool. He didn't really know anybody and you kind of you took this really lovely, supportive role with him. And I remember I mean, it's not that I had forgotten, that but I was thinking about how that is kind of how you've always been, even when you maybe weren't thinking about it in the way you do. Now, you took that role, and it was so lovely. And obviously, we're still friends independently, now, that's a big part of you, which maybe I didn't realise at the time because I was like, I don't know, I just finished University at the time. So, I wasn't aware of any of this stuff. But I am now but that's always been a part of you, hasn't it?

Dave Wood 19:02

Well, it's funny that you cite that as obviously that moment when we met. So, I remember, it was in Quiggins where we had the top floor as gallery space and I think Mark got in touch with me. And then I said Well come along and then you both of you turned up and then we did a portfolio review there when I was invigilating and stuff and you won't know this, you won't realise this. You were there at the very beginning because that was the moment when I had somebody who wanted nurturing in a way that I needed

Elizabeth Turp 19:43

Right? Okay. Wow

Dave Wood 19:47

So, it's in a way it was a bit of projection that in a way, that was the moment I thought I had an idea behind me that I think I might enjoy lecturing, but I'd never had it to that point because we're still fairly fresh myself. But yeah, I think I always remember that moment as well, because it was sort of the trajectory that I didn't realise I was on to where I am now. Because it was that moment where as I was talking through Mark's portfolio with him, and you're watching, you were chatting to other people in the gallery and stuff like that things are starting to fall into place in a very embryonic way with myself. Oh, actually I wish I'd had somebody tell me this.

Elizabeth Turp 20:38



Yes, yeah. Oh, that's really amazing. Because it was so it was so important for him. I mean, he would say the same, in fact I'm seeing him this week. I will be telling him about this, you know, but that that it was so important for him because as somebody who's like, new to a city and didn't know, it was new, his career was very early stage as well, so he didn't know anything about what he was supposed to be doing. So, to come into that space. I mean, I loved it, I'll come on to why I loved it so much, because I wasn't an artist by any means at that point, but that's another bit. So, for me to be in that space and see all the people working and you know, I've made some other good friends from there. But yeah, like there's all this activity and excitement and creativity going on. But you know, we could have walked into that space and just gone 'yeah, that's all right'. But you were there and you were like really supporting him and you know, and from then he made a really good career also. That was a pivotal moment.

Dave Wood 21:39

I mean, that was about 94 because we set up 93. I started Network 3 in 93 and there was three of us that's why it's called 3. So, Quiggins's was about 1994/95 that Mark was like two years behind where I was, yeah, you know, in career development types of way, but also you know, since the nature of the podcasts you know, I'm quite open about this that I was only myself sort of two years out of recovering from deep depression. And it's those things that the activities I got involved in with Network 3 and things like that was my way of being proactively trying to start a life not restart because I hadn't had a life yet, it was that thing of it was something that you know, I went through CBT many years after that. Yeah, I can't remember. I might have been going through it or might have been after or right about the same time, it was a blur by that period of time. So, I just sort of probably gone through the CBT classes and things like that. And the leader of the CBT thing, I don't know what the official job title was, used a term that stayed with me, which is the wounded healer.

And I think that has stuck with me and when you talk to students about their mental health issues, and their moments of being unsure or they've got the pressure of the time or it's just a down period. Yeah, it's that thing of, yeah, you know, within the creative industries. It's probably more prevalent with us to go through depressive episodes, because of the very nature of creativity. Yeah, you know, some have deeper depressions than others, you know, I'm not, I'm not the expert on that side of things, I'm a doctor, but I'm not that type of doctor!

Yeah, but it's that element of I think students now have got a lot of things on their shoulders. And we are better at talking about this. So obviously, is it a case of students have got more on the shoulders that

there's more mental health episodes happening, or is it because we know about it more? And where I'm now in my career as the elder statesman of the team (laughs) I'm learning every day every time I talk to a student who's going through a bad time I just remember back to where we were in the 80's, because I didn't self-diagnose myself until 1991. I think, I still remember the time I was on a bus and I knew this is more than just not being able to get any work. This is something underlying it. (ET: something not right.) A rainy Day in Liverpool, winter looking at me reflection on the, you know, the raindrop window that was misty. I just saw my reflection, and I looked dead in the eyes. Like, I think I've got depression. And of course, at that time, we didn't know really what that was

Elizabeth Turp 25:23

there was no way to find out whereas now it's so easy. Sometimes it's too easy and too much information, but it's much easier if there's something not right to kind of research it and find that is interesting as well because I didn't know anything about your mental health stuff until much much later but partly because of how we met you know, because of that different dynamic but it's just not something that people who are like new friends or kind of not that close friends would talk about but I think now because everything has changed people do talk so much more. And you know, particularly men I mean, it's good. It's good to have a man on here talking about this because my experience of working with men in therapy has gone from 5% to 40% caseload. It's absolutely fantastic. I love it. It's really really good. It's you know, there's a lot more it's becoming a lot more acceptable, isn't it to talk about difficulty?

Dave Wood 26:19

you know, I've got other friends, friendship circles outside you know work. And the men within those circles are more open. Now, roughly about my age old, a slightly younger, round over 50 over 50 that the conversation is now a completely different conversation about mental health than it would have been 10 years ago. 20 years ago. Yeah.

Elizabeth Turp 26:50

Oh, yeah. Even 10 years ago, it's rapidly changing and you know, in a good way, but coming back to what you said about is it that there's more of it, or is it that it's different? I think it is a bit of, but I think a lot of Yeah, especially for students. I think, as you pointed out earlier, there isn't any you know, you don't get grants anymore, there's so much debt. You have so much uncertainty and I think another thing for creative people that that contributes to mental health issues is the uncertainty of creative careers. I feel

like I want to mention that because so many of my friends are artists. And so, there's a lot of kind of instability in a lot of artistic career trajectories and not knowing if you're going to be earning a living you know, all of that is not great for people's mental health.

Dave Wood 27:37

Yeah, I mean, that's the thing that I you know, I have taught illustration, and I'm currently you know, running graphic design. And, you know, for people out there who have no idea what the hell I'm talking about in regards to these two terms. They are creative industries to both communication design, but they both have different career structures. Graphic design, you know, easier for a studio job to be taken. But for illustration, it's mostly sole trader/freelance. (ET: So yeah, self-employment) that was my trajectory. So, you know, one of my colleagues setup, you know, a design business, you know, fairly youngish, and been successful in regards to a design studio employing people and things like that. But my career path has always been freelance, never knowing where the next jobs coming from. The next pay check and all these other things. And I've noticed that with the different teachers, teams I've worked with over my career, that I come at things and I suppose the word now is entrepreneurial. Oh, yeah, I would describe it more the seat of the pants.

Elizabeth Turp 28:50

But yeah, because I feel like this what we're doing right now is a good example. Yeah.

Dave Wood 28:55

You know, and sort of when COVID hit, I know I keep harking back to that, but when COVID hit, because I had been a freelance illustrator throughout the 90s and you know, there's a period of time thankfully working time when I hadn't seen daylight because I was working through the night sleeping during the day.

(ET: Wow. So you were prepared.)

And I was feeling you know, back in the 90s, like, the vitamin D deficiency because it like 'what's that thing up in the sky that we don't see often.' You know, I'm sure I supposed to get more of that light so when it came to COVID it was like, Okay, I know I can do this. I know I can survive this, I can get through this. And I thought if I went back into, I suppose mental muscle memory

Elizabeth Turp 29:47

Yeah. So, you used all those skills

Music break

Elizabeth Turp

I wanted to ask you a little bit more about supporting students' mental health. You give some really great examples about the way that's been done in group settings and things like that. And I'm guessing sometimes on a one to one, it can be a very different thing, but without actually giving, you know, specific examples. I'm also interested in, this podcast is really heavy on practitioner wellbeing, so you know, we're talking a lot about your ability and skills and resilience and the way that's all helped your work and supported your students but also wanted to think a little bit about how you look after yourself in that or there's any times where it can be a bit tricky and challenging.

Dave Wood

Yeah, I mean, I'm not a trained professional. And as I mentioned earlier, it's more about an empathic approach. And you know, I've got friends other than yourself like who have been counsellors/trained as counsellors. And so, you know, just hearing how the training of counsellors, the human centred approach to counselling, I can identify with that from a design perspective. Because, you know, it's that humanity that shared humanity, which I think we all have to keep reminding ourselves of in the creative industries, we aren't doing it for yourself. And we have always got an audience and I'm big on people, the students realising that and I try and disabuse them in the nicest possible immediate way when they start that you're not designing for yourselves. But as a practitioner, you can't separate yourself from your work. And I think that is a development that students need to engage with consciously as much as they can. The fact that when they get critiqued on their work, it's not about them. It's about the ability to communicate to somebody else.

Elizabeth Turp

So, there's so many elements that needs to be thought about separately.

Dave Wood

And I think the mental health aspects of supporting students going through different elements of that at different times in their career paths, while they're with me. It's all interconnected because as they grow as students, I haven't got the hair for this anymore, but I'm going to start sounding hippyish, that it is

about the fact that they have to be mindful of this isn't defining them as a person. So, if they get critiqued and it's not successful, it has no bearing on who they are themselves. Right. And I think that's a valuable life lesson we all have to learn and some of us had to learn it harder ways, and I purposely tried to prevent that type of teaching.

Elizabeth Turp

You don't want to be adding to the critical

Dave Wood

and I suppose throughout my career, I've been every type of lecturer possible because earlier days learning to become a lecturer and feeling that impostor syndrome, that, you know, how am I doing this? You know, I'm only like one page ahead of them, you know, at times I felt like, you know, with my knowledge to where they needed and things like that, that I was conscious in the early days, I'm talking about, early 2000s or something like that, when you know, where if I went out on a limb to support the students who had gone through bad stuff, and then that student turned round and then skipped whatever you know, and almost felt as if throwing back the hard work into my face. I had to physically stop myself at that period of time, from letting that tarnish the next one who came seeking help.

Elizabeth Turp

So, you try not to withdraw as a defence and so could still be supporting other people?

Dave Wood

Yeah, not project onto the next person. I can't find the right words for it right now but that frustration and that anger that this other one who clearly hadn't been gracious, as opposed to people have, just because you're going through bad things, doesn't make you a bad person. But sometimes when students go through things, they can be selfish about stuff, bad behaviour might happen. So, students with bad behaviour can go through bad things and people with good student behaviour can go through bad things. And it's not to tarnish one with the other.

Elizabeth Turp

So again, it's you keeping each part of the student in mind, but they also not taking it personally. It's a real parallel process.

Dave Wood

so, it's about not taking it personally because that was something in my head that without me being a lecturer was a case of if that happened in a non-educational situation, then yeah, that would jade me.

Elizabeth Turp

Right. If it was more personal,

Dave Wood

yeah, but I'm a lecturer. So I can't let it jade me because the next person along could be going through worse things than the person who jaded me

Elizabeth Turp

so it's your job to contain and deal with what you're left with. It's not your job to spew it out all over the next person

Dave Wood

and no one taught me that, that was just through experience and that little inkling based on my own experiences of not to tarnish the next person along because the next person along is not the previous person.

Elizabeth Turp

So important, so important, but you've also said something really interesting, which I thought would come up at some point here, which is you're not trained to do that. So, you, and many, many other people in your field, you know, teachers in schools, whatever, consistently have to deal with, you know, fairly extreme stuff students and pupils might be bringing to them. I don't know child abuse, all kinds of stuff is brought to teachers, and they don't have, it's not part of your education in order to like know how to deal with it. And so, I mean, I can't and maybe it is in some I'm not, not saying nobody ever gets taught. Someone will come at me if I say that. Maybe sometimes, but it's not a core part of your training. For sure.

So you've said something really important, because you have deliberately learned from that and you've had a self-awareness and you've had a process and that's how you've looked after yourself in it. But it's not an inbuilt process that you have.

Like in my profession we have supervision like we're one of the only, we're not just one of the only professions that has it, we're one of the only mental health professions that has it. Lots of other mental health professionals don't have supervision. So, they don't even have the opportunity to work through what you've just described. When, you know, a parallel thing, I guess in my job might be, say, working with a client, and it's not working for them and they say they don't want to work with you anymore. So, it's sort of similar, you know, that needs to be worked through doesn't it because you could be left with all kinds of things if you don't, and like you say this event affects your ability to work with the next person. So that is highly complex stuff that you've managed to evolve a way to deal with. So, you're not trained to do that, I'm literally trained to do that, and you're not, or supported to do it either.

Dave Wood

Yeah. Well, at the time, you know, you're talking about the supporting side and earlier there was no support for the staff. And it becomes an anecdote that you share with other staff members over a coffee. And you talk it through that way, but it's more you know, effing and blinding, you know, about 'Well I won't do that again, blah blah, blah' about the previous person but then you pick yourself up and then you do it again. So, it's that venting aspect amongst the staff room conversation.

Elizabeth Turp

So, the informal support system,

Dave Wood

the informal support, somebody just listening to you vent and rant, and then you walk out the door and you know, yeah, you're back to this role you're playing because it is a role and you're talking about how do you support yourself with what is a projected role, I learned this fairly early. It's performance. Lecturing is performance.

Elizabeth Turp

Absolutely. Yeah, absolutely.

Dave Wood

It's also that comes from you know, the whole idea about 'fake it until you make it' within the creative industries and things like that. Well, I was talking to a recent graduate just the other week about this, and he says, I don't know I hate that, that that phrase because, you know, he's like me from a working-

class background in the creative industries. That's got a whole different level of connections to how you make it. And he's like, no, no, I said, well, I always added extra thing to that. Don't believe your own BS.

Elizabeth Turp

Yeah, okay. Yes. Do that. But hold on to some humility about it.

Dave Wood

Yeah. Because as soon as you start believing what you're faking, then you're always gonna make like,

Elizabeth Turp

Become something else, yeah, and that's not authentic. Okay, so there's something in here about authenticity, which is another concept that runs right through this podcast. In every single episode because this is literally an authentic conversation between two people who are all our conversations are between people that are passionate about what they do, and lifelong learning and development, all of us. So that's kind of how this works. And it's like, if you have that authenticity and everything you do in your work, you will have a successful career.

Dave Wood

It's funny if you said the 'A' word because that's something that has crept into my day-to-day life. And I don't know where I picked it up from, the word authenticity. And as a sort of ethos to work around and to work towards, on a day-to-day basis just as a personal thing, not just as a lecturer, rather, but it's certainly something that at least in the last three years, I've found I've been saying to the students more and more

Elizabeth Turp

Okay, yeah.

Dave Wood

It's probably been in, floating around in my head for a longer time. I'm conscious of talking to them about being authentic. Probably because I've become course leader. I feel that I've got more of a responsibility over everybody rather than just the group. Yeah. So, I think that's probably why in my head, the word authentic is something that I say more often, to more students than previously. So, I probably have been using it for a longer time than I think I've been using it. (ET: it's so key to everything)



And I think that's the thing that, you know, as you said, you know, going back to when I first met you and Mark, that you said, I've always been like that you know, me personally, I've always been like that. And I had to stop myself and think and think and I don't think up to that point I knew or had the confidence to be authentic about myself. I think you knew me in the early days when I was learning what I was authentic about.

Elizabeth Turp

Yes, you were learning who you were and what you're gonna be. Yeah, absolutely.

Dave Wood

I think I developed who I was authentically, quietly without me having that 'A' word

Elizabeth Turp

Yeah. But now is it that you've now landed in a point, because, you know, obviously, I've known you for a very long time and our conversations are different now to what we were then because that's just normal. But, you know, like now I don't know is it more that you're using that word now because you've got, you're more identified, you know, you've landed in a place you seem, correct me if I'm wrong, but you seem really really comfortable with yourself. You seem very happy with where you are in life. You know, you're okay with the future. You know, you're okay with your age. There's a lot of stuff that you now kind of feel good about.

Dave Wood

Yeah. I think there is certainly authentic, which is one 'A' word. I think there's another 'A' word underpinning all of this which is acceptance, not accepting your situation because you can change situations but accepting who I am. And I think that's the thing that you grow into who you are. But obviously, you know, different people have lots of different trials and tribulations to get there. But I think it's knowing who you are and how you live in a world, I've become existentialist in my old age sorry.

Elizabeth Turp

No, this is fantastic. Yeah,

Dave Wood

It's that sense of situated being. Yeah, in regard to Yeah, I make meaning and knowledge emerges. That's the way I frame things, you know, we recreate the world around us based upon our experiences, and I push that to the students in accessible ways. Not heavy philosophical ways, but you know, it underpins everything that I do. In a way. And, you know, so I suppose that is also a way for me personally, to shield myself from some of these conversations you have on their issues. And yeah, as you say, some of the could be horrendously stuff that you have to escalate. There a quick little pep talk to

Elizabeth Turp

safeguarding level issues. Yeah.

Dave Wood

You know, so it's that thing I think within the personal I think, I know that I have what my existence is, there. They're learning where they exist and yet, it'd be great to say that some of the negative really negative stuff that they go through, won't affect them negatively, but it's trying to flip that negative to the positive of okay, you know, you're going through really bad stuff right now, but it won't always be this way. Because I always remember, as I mentioned, I went through CBT. The visualising techniques they were, they said, you know, you're in a valley you're in a dark valley and you've got, you know, a very sharp climb. But when you get to the top, it's a plateau. And there'll be some light there, you know, and it's all these things like, Yeah, I can't, I can't, I can't accept that. I can't accept. I'm never gonna get out of this valley. And then little steps, little steps, little people, you know, uh, you know, you know, the valley.

Elizabeth Turp

And you can't believe you were ever in there,

Dave Wood

yeah. But I remember that sense of, I'm never gonna get out of this. And telling the students who I'm having conversations with

Elizabeth Turp

sharing a little bit about your own experience of that is really valuable.

Dave Wood

that I can guarantee that, well, I can't guarantee, as much as possible that when we say this to them, and when other people say this to them, that is a truth behind it.

Elizabeth Turp

an authenticity. So, they will be able to hear that even if you're not spelling out your own, obviously you're not spelling out your own

Dave Wood

It's the cool auntie and uncle thing again, you know, the parents are going to counselling the counsellor is so like the parent role, tell them this stuff or you know, making them try and visualise this stuff and they're like, nah, not accepting this, but then somebody's been through it,

Elizabeth Turp

that actually resonates for me because when I'm working with clients if I'm working with a client, so a lot of my clients have health issues, and some of them know that I have health issues and some of them don't. But there's some stuff that you work with. They know that you KNOW it like that, like it's the same thing. There's an authenticity to it, even though you're not saying 'well in 1990', or whatever this happened to me' you're not saying that but you are saying something with a level of authenticity that is accepted, and it's known on a deep human level. So that's a very similar thing, I think. Whereas if you were just spouting something you'd read in a book they'd be like, Yeah, whatever.

Dave Wood

I think it's that trust thing. And I think yeah, Creative Industries thing again, it's that you have to trust, the trust jobs gonna come in, you have to trust you're gonna get paid for that job,

Elizabeth Turp

You have to keep going with the flow of the whole thing and like you said, in your whole career, you have kept finding ways to move forward. Can I ask you something really important, which I'm aware that some of the listeners might need to know more about and you might not have an answer, which is fine, but if somebody was in like maybe an early career stage, or they hadn't done all the work on themselves that you've done, and they were a teacher or lecturer or whatever, and they were finding that students talking to them about difficult things was something that was really badly affecting them, what support systems are available, or what would you recommend that they do with that?

Dave Wood

That's a very good question. And I think, in my experience in the different institutions that I've moved to the support for the students and the support in two different degrees for the staff is more in place than it had been had been in previous incarnations. That's not to say that it differs institution to institution because it does. But I think it's that thing that, I've worked in institutions where staff members are, let's just say unempathic not just to the students but also to colleagues, and I'm always deeply suspicious of people like that, because I'm feeling they're bottling up stuff that they probably could do with, you know, working through. And but yeah, I think it only takes you to fall into that type of regime where you've got more people like that than less people like that. So I think it's hard. It's hard to be honest in general here because obviously if I'm specific somebody's going to say, well, it's not like that in my institution.

Well, I think that it's I think that the more we talk, sounds trite, but the more we talk about it, the more we can open up conversations, useful support of each other. And you know, because as I say different institutions have different levels of support for the staff. Now, I've been in institutions where I've not been supported and I've been in institutions where have felt supported, but what I have consciously done, that when I started working in my current employer, it was time it was COVID. I started literally, I moved from one institution to another institution, during the very first early days the lockdown. And so yeah, became course leader virtually, and I had a whole new team that I recruited. And I think we've all gelled together as a team. Disparate people, but we all gel together as a team, because I was mindful of not just the students going through crap, but the staff.

Elizabeth Turp

So that was on the agenda. It was named, it was there

Dave Wood

and I think, from my perspective as course leader that I've got responsibilities to my staff as well. And I think if you are bottled up too much, you can have negative impacts on yourself and also all the people around you. If you acknowledge the fact that other people can be going through same issues, different issues going on same sorts of trials and tribulations, that if we just we mutually support each other through anything that happens, we can be in a better position individually and collectively,

Elizabeth Turp

so it's coming full circle to where we started about modelling vulnerability and saying we need to talk about the difficult stuff. So, if somebody was in an organisation that wasn't supportive, and that person wasn't very used to dealing with their own emotional stuff, lots of universities and colleges have counselling services, so would you, you know, would that be a place that a person could get that level of support?

Dave Wood

I would seek I would as somebody who, you know, White heterosexual male grew up in the 1980s where, you know, if you're always heterosexual male, you didn't talk about this stuff, because, you know, you're a man. I mean, you know, without getting too much into it my family background was Scots Presbyterian Irish Catholic. Between those two structures. Talking about this stuff was problematic growing up. That culturally, it was that reinforcement. Now as all of those elements start to loosen in regard to you open up as a human, never mind what you believe in, and acknowledge individually, we have times when life isn't good. (ET: And we need to do something about that) we need to do something about this and doesn't matter what you've been taught on how you should be. It's a fundamental to be Yeah, it's about being you know, we need to be the best being we possibly can be for ourselves,

Elizabeth Turp

because if it's not working, something needs to change. And I think that's the problem, isn't it with lots of these kind of social and cultural ideas that we get even we get taught and we get brought up by people who haven't had anything different given to them, like in a way you know, people are breaking new ground here, by doing something different and then passing it on because that's what you're doing in your work. You're passing on your own learning and development and modelling it to young people, and even if it's from the person, like one of the people who heard that thing about impostor syndrome, right down to ones that you've done, one to one, deep levels of support with that will have had an impact. And so, everybody wins from an individual doing this work, don't they?

Dave Wood

Well, exactly. I mean, I've seen it, you know, immediately, you know, very recently I won't I won't give specifics, but very recently, you know, I was talking to somebody you've known for a long, long, long, long, long, long time. And you know, as you said, you didn't know about my mental health when you first met me. I didn't know about her mental health until, you know, we broke bread again and caught up and hearing her talk and then me basically saying, yes, I, I understand where you're coming from because all

of a sudden, they felt completely vindicated is not the right word. They felt oh my god, I've been alone in this thought for so long. Now. This is me projecting on what she was feeling, but it felt as if that all of a sudden, there was connections that come back that she's separated herself. Because going through this thinking, no one

Elizabeth Turp

Yeah, 'it's just me.'

Dave Wood

I've got to get on with it. Yeah, similar background to my background. Of 'you don't talk about this stuff.' And she talked about it in her own right you know, in counselling. But talking to somebody she'd known for a long, long time. (ET: like talking in a different language. It's really powerful.) All of a sudden, it was like, Yeah, I'm not alone. I think it's that thing that you're not alone.

Elizabeth Turp

Yeah. And it's okay. It's okay to show those sides of yourself.

Dave Wood

And you know, just a quick little tip that when you know, I mentioned earlier, the fact that when I self-diagnosed myself as having depression, I didn't know what depression was, by looking at my reflection on a rainy bus, window, yeah, I went to the doctor, then which was like, early 90s. And the doctor the GP was, like, almost like panicking about what do I do? And I went through different ways before I found the right fit for me. Yeah, I didn't want to go on antidepressants. That's what I knew I didn't want. And I went through wrong turns. Now when you go through a depressive episode (ET: it's really hard to try things.) Yeah. But there was a resilience in me going no, this isn't right. I need to go back and that in a way has been my power cell. Because I did that for myself, no one did that for me. Yeah, I did that for myself. And I just started to believe in that little kernel

Elizabeth Turp

always had that determination because within that, even though you were depressed at the time, to do that, there has to be a bit of hope. That determination that keeps you going forward.

Dave Wood

I didn't have that word at the time. It's only when you look back on it

Elizabeth Turp

have been there must have been the effort. I mean, I think I think yeah, that's fantastic. Wow, there's so there's so much in this conversation. There's just wonderful just a where we were running down on time a little bit. So, coming towards the end, I just wanted to reflect a little bit more on the creativity stuff, because obviously, you are literally a creative professional. That's what that's where you're you know; you've always been an artist. Your whole career is around creativity and teaching creativity. And I mentioned before, didn't I that I was delighted to meet you and everybody else in that art studio. And over many, many years, I've realised that I am also an artist and the reason why I mean obviously I you know, I love my friends who are artists, but the reason I hang around with so many artists is because I wanted it to be one. And so now I am, now, I paint, you know, and I think what we talk about quite a lot on the podcast, maybe in quite subtle ways is and I mentioned it before in terms of doing this podcast, the amount of creativity that is inherent in the work that I do, because you said 'seat of your pants' earlier, didn't you when you were talking about your career, and an interaction like this is seat of your pants because we don't know what we're going to say or plan it.

Can be the same when you're doing therapy, depends what type of therapy doing some therapies are quite manualized and structured. But the way I work is fairly open. So basically, anything can happen, you know, and it's very exciting. And I've realised over time how creative that actually is. And so, I also this week was reflecting on all the other guests and my co-host have also got a creative practice outside of their work. So, all these different professions, you know, that we've had, what have we had social worker, podcast, Paul is in careers development. In fact, he's a course leader, as well. So, he's actually similar career to you, quite interesting. And other counsellors and lecturers. We've all got artistic practices. So, it's kind of making me realise a lot more about how interconnected working with people and creativity actually is and maybe getting to a good place in your career also involves you getting to a place where you can fully express yourself authentically in your personal time. So, I don't know what you think about that, but I felt like I wanted to say it because it's kind of important to our relationship here, isn't it as well.

Dave Wood

Absolutely. I think I've grown into the realisation that as humans, we are creative. We wouldn't be where we are without being creative. Now some of us are more creative than others in what we call creativity.

I'm in the creative industries. My brother as well, he's retired now but he was an analytical chemist. In his role, there's creativity within analytical, but you know, there is creative thinking about wanting to do this blah, blah, blah. And I've always had a problem with people saying 'I'm not creative. I can't draw.' Yeah, what you're saying is you're not Michelangelo? None of us are. Yeah, but you can write your name can't you. Yes. Well, you put marks down. Yes. Well, those marks that's an expression, an expression of what you're thinking, because you're putting marks down. Now. My you mentioned before, I'm a researcher, I'm really into semiotics, you know,

Elizabeth Turp

I had a look at your YouTube videos. Check them out, there's a link in the show notes

Dave Wood

But where I've gone with trying to explain semiotics to creative people, you know, from heavy theory, to it's a practice. I've realised I can't talk about semiotics and the theory semiosis without talking about people. And it comes back to what we just mentioned there about the fact that we are a symbolic mammal, we put marks down to mean something else. (ET: Yeah. It's how we make meaning in the world,) meaning is intrinsically there. And I think that sense of creativity is within us and I've always had a pet sort of theory since I was obviously you know, in the creative industries and as a depressive from when I was studying the first time around doing an HND and I realise it had gone further back than I thought I was depressed for a longer period than I could put words to and I've always had this pet thought that the very nature of maybe some of us are more prevalent to depression in the creative industries because of the worlds... just before the break, we were talking about the outside as we see the world slightly differently. And one of the things when I was doing them through CBT that I really enjoyed and really found a way of expressing what was in my head trying to get that out, was through the aspects of we had different workshops throughout the sessions. And when we got onto the art therapy side, put it down into, you know, an image. I could do that. I was, I was trying to get work as an illustrator and I basically just used as an extension of my creative practice. And it was at that point in the CBC that I realised that I could make the connection between trying to visualise what I'm feeling through an image. That then that kicked me into where I currently am now with my research in semiotics.

Elizabeth Turp

Wow, I love that. That's a really that's a really lovely full circle thing to draw together. So, has anything arisen for a brief ending exercise for the audience to reflect on? Do you think, something simple?



Dave Wood

I think the exercise that I was get people to do, your listeners to do especially if in my field of education going through similar things with students that maybe they feel that not that they feel they're not prepared for themselves. It's triggering things in themselves thinking like well, you know, I'm not comfortable within this. Is to first of all, talk more with each other. In a staff room environment about the specifics of how they're feeling about talking about these things. They can talk to each other about what they

Elizabeth Turp

So, naming the feelings

Dave Wood

naming the feelings because I can guarantee that others will identify with exactly the same things and it may start a chain reaction of those people that are maybe not, maybe more negative about this stuff. may start a thought in their heads that Yeah.

Elizabeth Turp

Again, modelling good practices.

Dave Wood

Yeah. And I think it's that domino effect. The more you know, I made a reference Spartacus earlier, yeah. You know, and all it takes is one person to stand up and go 'I am' And then realise everybody around you and realise, oh, my God. This is a human thing.

Elizabeth Turp

And you achieve that by being authentic about your feelings like so there's so much overlocking interest inter-connectedness about this conversation, but most of it is about communication and connectedness with other humans in all these different forms, which leads to better mental health, well-being support and overall quality of life. So, it's, yeah, that's fantastic,

Dave Wood

It ties into the creative industries. You know, obviously, that's what we're talking about today. Yeah, Creative Industries is you reaching out to try and impact in somebody else's life and within my area, I'll

leave you on this one: in my area of visual communication. There's a South American professor Jorge Frascara, I'm not sure if he's Central American or North American, and I use him a lot to the students and it lifts the students creatively up when you hear this design students are saying, he basically says that actual Visual Communication Design graphic design illustration isn't about the end results that people think it's about the visual side of things. It's actually being a facilitator for behavioural change. If you think about any piece of design work, whether an illustration in a book or whatever. You're changed by that, even if something or buy something, you go and change your mind. You do.

Elizabeth Turp

Coming from the individual who's designed it. Fantastic. Thank you so much, Dave. This has been a wonderful, even better than I imagined conversation. Thank you so much for being on here. So listeners, check out the show notes for more information about Dave and related episodes. We have a couple of episodes that are really strongly related to this topic. So thanks very much, and we'll see you next time.

Dave Wood

It's been a pleasure Elizabeth

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