

Cllr Millard: Hello and welcome back to Talk Richmond. I'm your host, Jim Millard and I'm joined by Jason Moore. Jason lives in Richmond upon Thames and is an advocate, speaker and trainer for wellbeing. He's a Governor for Wellbeing at the Queens School in Kew. He joins us today to talk about how to deal with stress and anxiety, so a very warm welcome to Jason.

Jason: Hello, good morning. Nice introduction. Thank you very much. I sound very posh and big and important - it's nice!

Cllr Millard: It's fantastic to have you here. Thank you for taking the time to come and talk to us. So it would be great to kick things off with a bit of an introduction to who you are and what you do.

Jason: Yeah, so well as you said, I'm an advocate and mentor for wellbeing. And I suppose mindfulness and wellbeing, but not in a way that's probably usual. And what I mean by that is we are born with a natural state of wellbeing, and I suppose my approach is just to regain and come back to that because it's often talked out of us. It's not as if I'm a magician or a guru that's going to give you your wellbeing. It's not about that at all. It's about just tapping into what we already have naturally. So, I suppose that's my angle. I've been working with adults and young children and young people for various years in this field and self-leadership and all that kind of work. I originally was an actor, I'm still a theatre director, so I have a suppose an arts approach to it as well. So, it's, I suppose in some ways it's very holistic and realistic – that's my approach to wellbeing, and that as I said, we all have it naturally, it's just re-finding it and re-connecting to it again.

Cllr Millard: That's really struck me as a very positive way of looking at it - that wellbeing is inside us and we born with it. And it's something we want to get back to. I mean, we hear the word wellbeing used more and more frequently these days would be great to go back to just first principles and ask you what exactly does it mean?

Jason: Yes, again as well the words wellbeing and mindfulness are two words that are so important and are well used but the same time I have slightly have a grimace about them because I think I think wellbeing is actually – if we switch it around - it's about being well, it's about being well with ourselves ,being around well with our surroundings, understanding when the tricky moments come up, or when the triggers come up, how am I going to handle this situation now? Am I going to use the past experience or break that cycle and have a new pattern and a new thought and a new way of doing it instead of just going round and round and round, and I suppose the word mindfulness again, both seemed like oh more chores, I've got to do a chore of wellbeing, which is not actually wellbeing. It's more stress. So mindfulness again is about being mindful about again choosing am I going to make this decision? What suits me? What's best healthy for me and most people around me? So, I would say it's more about choices than the words 'wellbeing and mindfulness'. Those are just nice words and they're true and we need words to communicate. But I would say it's about choice, about choice. If you want to stay under the duvet all day, that's a choice and that's fine. If you want to say, OK, I'm not going to do that today, I'm going to do something new and different. That's also a choice. It's choices are not to feel guilty on either of those choices that you make.

Cllr Millard: Thank you, that's very brilliantly explained. And yeah, I think that word you know can almost be sometimes the feeling of wellbeing is something we're supposed to be doing, and that ties into what you're saying. But that's a really good point, and you're talking about people wanting to make the choice, perhaps to hide under the duvet. I mean, how do you think the pandemic has affected people's wellbeing?

Jason: It's interesting. I was re-thinking about that this morning before we spoke, and I think the thing about how it's affected people during the pandemic is that we have had to face our stuff a lot

more than usual - because either we have our distractions which is going out into the world and doing whatever, or actually going out into the world and whatever is part of our wellbeing. And both of those have been cut off so we are with ourselves a lot more. So maybe the stuff that we avoid or the stuff that we work towards in wellbeing is in our face a lot more than it used to be. So, I think that's one way it's affected us more than ever, and I think that's why wellbeing is being talked about so much more than it ever has before.

Cllr Millard: And it's so many changes. I think looking at the good is to say that you know the pandemic, showing how resilient people can be and our ability to adapt to new ways of life is clearly quite incredible. People have had some very stressful experiences and I just wondered if we could ask you to share some of your tips on coping with stress.

Jason: I think the first thing is to acknowledge I am stressed and not be judgmental to yourself about that because the thing about stress is that as young people we're taught that that's a bad thing because we should always be happy. So especially as children we're taught you should be happy all the time so stress becomes a bad thing. If you're feeling stressed, you're feeling stressed, and acknowledge that and be honest with yourself about that. Now, of course, there are many levels of stress, so you can't just put it all in one bucket and say, oh that's fine. So there are many levels † so I don't say that with a huge amount of flippancy, but I think it is to recognize that I'm feeling a bit out of kilter here and to acknowledge that and not necessarily understand it and know what it is and what to do about it. But just to know that it exists, that's the first thing to making those steps.

I have a meditation which I've done with people which goes, it's like a bridge meditation or a step-by-step meditation and we go from hate to love and it's about knowing that everything takes its time. Don't think I've because especially that phrase get over it is one of the worst things that that you can say to someone who is in a low mood or in a not good place - you cannot go from being stressed, highly anxious to being fully happy and wonderful in a second, it just doesn't exist and just to say it's OK, I can take it step by step. I can take it slowly so that then you'll start to relieve the stress and also manage your stress. And I suppose the tips you're asking me is take that moment maybe I'm going to put some music on. Maybe I'm going to have a bath. Maybe I'm going to light some incense but some incense maybe? I'm going to just make a shift of some sort and listeners might think well that's not going to change. And no, it's not going to change, but it's taking a slow step towards something else. You know, going out into the garden. If you have a garden or just going outside the house for just to make a slight shift to where you are physically and where you are, not necessarily mentally, but when you're looking at new things. Just that's a very simple tip, and it's not about changing worlds, it's just about making that step-by-step approach because the thing about wellbeing and making your choices and everything I've just said, is it's not going to happen overnight. It is going to be and a step by step and you've got to find what suits you - that's what I would say with the first approach. Especially when stress appears it's like a like a train coming in. We can see it here. It's coming it's coming it's coming it's coming, and that's the what's called the gap in between it's here and before it's here what am I going to step in or am I going to allow it? So it's just finding that moment but now is the time I need to do something now before it arrives.

Cllr Millard: Brilliant. I I would quite like to listen to you talking about this all day. I think it would be very good. Any other tips for people to help them cope with the stress and the difficulties of the pandemic?

Jason: Yeah, I think it's very much we're very much human race very much look at negatives instead of positives, so I suppose look at what our achievements, what achievements we've done. How did that make you feel? I felt good in that. So reconnect to that. There's a definite another technique

which is like having a jar maybe jar of what you're grateful for or what you have achieved, and you write it down on a piece of paper, rip that piece of paper, put it in the jar and when you when I need something, I need something, take out the jar, go oh ok yeah, that was good. I did that and I was good at that. I feel good about that. Or yeah, I'm grateful about that I can see the sky. The simple, simple things are the most powerful things, so that's another sort of - I call it the jar of gratitude - You can call it whatever you want, but it's almost as if you are looking in your history of how great you are.

Cllr Millard: Thank you, that's fantastic. I'm definitely going to have a jar of gratitude from now on. It's very easy for us to talk negatively about ourselves, let alone other people, but we have a very often, I think, the stresses and strains of modern life get it give us can give us quite a negative narrative so that's very helpful.

Jason: Yeah, I think also. I think also just thinking about affirmations. Whenever I start to say to young people or anyone, let's write some affirmations, they are like oh my gosh, this is going to be so fake and weird, but I think, well, hang on a minute we're always giving negative affirmations constantly throughout the day, the whole day, so why don't we flip it the other side and start to retrain our thoughts of what we think about ourselves. Not saying that we should all think that we wonderful all the time and every day, and never have a negative thought. But when the negative thought comes in OK, what's the other? What's the reverse of it? What's the other side?

Cllr Millard: and how wonderful to be able to bring this at that level of that age at a primary age when children just starting to come across these sort of the stresses and strains of getting older and modern life and well they have them create some really good positive.

Jason: Well they teach us. They teach us. The things that young people have said to me - I'm like hang on I need to write that down because you just you have no idea what wisdom you've just said. So where we actually learn from them, but we teach it out of them. So we need to learn from them to then give that gift back to them.

Cllr Millard: Wonderful. I feel that you are like the sculptor who says the statue is inside the block of stone and all he has to do is chip away the outer bits to reveal it. And there you are. And I think that's a very, very powerful image to leave us with I think that wellbeing is inside us all and we just need to get back to it. It's not something external that we need to achieve that's difficult, or it may be difficult, but the journey is inward to that state that we were born with.

Jason: I think the illusion is that it's difficult, that's the illusion.

Cllr Millard: Very good. Well Jason, you know it's been fantastic. I think it's a really important time to be talking about this. Obviously Stress Awareness Month in April so you know never has it been more appropriate than now. And I hope that it's been helpful to our listeners. I'd like to say thank you on behalf of all of them and myself for coming. It's been fantastic talking to you.

Jason: Thank you very much. Thank you.

Cllr Millard: Thanks Jason. So, you know a big thanks to Jason for coming to speak to us at Talk Richmond today. It has been fascinating to hear your tips. I hope listeners have found this useful. Listeners, if you want to know more about Jason, you can email him on jason.moore.coach@gmail.com. Is that right?

Jason: That's correct.

Cllr Millard: Excellent. Thanks Jason. If you are feeling stressed, anxious or depressed, you're not alone. And there is support available. There are plenty of services and resources for people in Richmond upon Thames, and we've listed some of these in the show notes in this episode. If you've enjoyed this episode, please leave a rating and review. Help me fill up my jar of gratitude. If you have any questions or feedback, email us at talk@richmond.gov.uk. I'm Jim Millard. Thanks for listening.