

## My inspiration – 4<sup>th</sup> episode – Manage your stress

**Romaine Johnstone/Sandra Fillaudeau.** I'm Romaine Johnston and I'm Sandra Fillaudeau, and we'll be your hosts on this podcast series,

**Voice-over** Orange presents My Inspiration.

**Sandra Fillaudeau.** Here's what you can expect from each of the seven episodes we'll be airing

**Romaine Johnstone.** Each month. You'll discover an honest conversation on key aspects of what it means to better own your career and your self-development.

**Sandra Fillaudeau.** Some real life examples taken from Romaine's coaching experience and our own lives, as well as tools to help you better understand yourself, others and your relationships.

**Romaine Johnstone.** And we'll always wrap up with a practical exercise for you to start implementing these concepts in your own life.

**Sandra Fillaudeau.** Our ambition is for you to feel energized and empowered after listening to these episodes, so enjoy and share with anyone you think may benefit from the episodes. Thank you for listening. Manage your stress so it doesn't manage you. Hi, Romaine.

**Romaine Johnstone.** Hi, Sandra.

**Sandra Fillaudeau.** How you feeling?

**Romaine Johnstone** Not stressed

**Sandra Fillaudeau** Good for you.

**Romaine Johnstone** I like a little bit of stress

**Sandra Fillaudeau** A little bit stress?

**Romaine Johnstone** But I mean it's like kind of positive stress, isn't it?

**Sandra Fillaudeau** Excitement. Well, I've been feeling stressed lately. As I told you, I have a new job. I'm trying to perform well and I'm managing my podcast carrying from a little kids. So I know myself now, which is great because I know I need to get into physical activity so I don't get overwhelmed with the stress. But sometimes it's not a very nice feeling. And I think that it's something that a lot of listeners can relate to. So let's dive in to stress and maybe if you can start by explaining why we stress in the first place, what does that where does that reaction come from?

**Romaine Johnstone.** So stress is actually a normal part of life. And it really serves a useful purpose. Stress, the right level of stress can motivate you to get that promotion at work or run the last mile of a marathon or even, you know, even start your marathon fight to wake up for the marathon. But if you didn't get a handle on your stress, then it becomes long term and it can really seriously interfere with your job, your family life and your health. Definitely. So and work is often a significant source of stress. It's been a lot of time at work. We can't control everything and we've talked about globalization before and digitalization. That's all part of it. So you can always avoid the tension that occurs in your work life and in your relationships and you don't you know, you don't choose who you're working with, do you? On your project or in a team, you can find steps to manage your work related stress and but understanding your brain and how the brain works is the first step in the right direction.

**Sandra Fillaudeau.** That sounds exciting to me because I'm a neuroscience geek, so please tell us more about how the brain works.

**Romaine Johnstone.** So I am not a neurosurgeon. So forgive me if there's, you know, a lot more than me about this, but I'm trying to. And also because there is a limit to how much time and what detail we can go to. But this is a really important thing. So that the human brain is really complex. And a lot of research has been done the past 20 years on how the brain operates. And we know that 90 percent of his activity happens beneath conscious awareness. So it means that even if we think we have control over what we feel, what we think and how we behave, we now know that our show is not that simple because things happen to us and make us behave in certain ways and we don't necessarily control that. So I think one simple way of explaining that is to go back to the explanation of the triune brain, which was first developed by an American physician, a neuroscientist called Paul McLean, I think.

McLean, he formulated his model back in the 60s and then wrote a book about it in the 90s called "The triune brain in evolution". And so it's all about the kind of how the brain has developed over generations and millennia. And so if you imagine that the brain is divided up into three parts and we've got what's called a stem's or maybe what it is called what it has called the bottom part of the bottom part of the hand. The rest. The rest of that would be the system brain. OK, it's the system brain. And it's also known as a reptilian brain. And all species have the stem brain. And it's the brain that really was usual or came from the fact that we needed to be able to, you know, drink and eat and which just as opposed to a need, for example, survival. Okay. And then the brain developed and the limbic system was created. And the limbic system, all mammals have the limbic system. And it's the part of the brain that where all the emotions take place. And so it's the part of the brain which indicates whether we should be fighting or whether we should be feeling, you know, there's a picture of a lion. Imagine a lion. How do you feel when you see a lion going to run away or are you going to fight the lion. And then and then beyond that, there's a third part of the brain in terms of development and in time, overtime is there is a neocortex for the prefrontal cortex and human beings. Dolphins and elephants are the only species that have actually developed that part of the brain. And its part of the brain that where all the logic and all the reasoning takes place. And so, in effect, if you

like, the neocortex is actually acting on the limbic system to actually control its help us control our emotions does make sense?

**Sandra Fillaudeau** Yeah, it really does.

**Romaine Johnstone** And when we're stressed, we find it difficult to manage our emotions. Why? Because in fact, there is so much emotion that there is a disconnection, neuro neurologic disconnection, if you like, between the limbic system and the neocortex. And when we don't manage our emotions, it impacts our behavior and our relationships suffer. And we feel off balance. We feel miserable. And of course, our performance suffers as well. So too much stress in the workplace has an impact on our relationships. Too much stress in the workplace has an impact on our well-being and our health. And of course, and on our performance, which then creates a kind of negative circle. Right. And that's because stress. Okay. Triggers a secretion of a hormone called cortisol, okay by the adrenaline gland, the adrenal gland, this is in the limbic system. And it's actually hormone in in small quantities, which is positive because designed to set our organs into action. So if you do need to run away, it helps you to run away fast. it has a protective function absolutely. But cortisol research releases sugar as well. And this sugar. Okay, this gives us the energy. So for running, for example. So it's useful in doses, but not when it's constant. Because what happens is that the brain relies more and more and feeds on this cortisol. Okay. And this excess sugar and becomes dependent on it. So it thrives on it. It becomes, if you like, it thrives on it. And as a result, you are governed by emotions. Your emotions and your neocortex can no longer kick in and reason you. So that's why too much cortisol is not good for the body and really hinders stress management. So the more we stress, the more stressed we are. It's a negative circle. And there is, as I said, in your neurological disconnection between the limbic system and our neocortex. And that's why in English you say I lost it. I lost it. I lost the connection and I lost my reasoning. So one thing I think that's important to add is, is that the reaction to stressful events will vary from one person to the next. So it's partly genetic, but it's also partly based on past experience. And what have you suffered from in the past that has left a negative feeling in you and that you know that if you go there again, it's not going to be a very pleasant experience. Going to trigger.

**Sandra Fillaudeau** Trigger?

**Romaine Johnstone** Going to trigger.

**Sandra Fillaudeau** That's a really important idea. The fact that you can't prevent yourself from feeling the emotion of stress. But you can do something about making sure that doesn't control you. And then it doesn't take over and govern instead of instead of your near prefrontal cortex. So could you share some tips on how to make sure it doesn't get to unbearable levels or to a level that that really mean it?

**Romaine Johnstone** I think. And again, I really. Sorry for coming back to the same thing every time. But it is so much about self-awareness and doing your homework with yourself really and taking that time and I know that it's difficult when you're in a situation

of stress. But take some time out for yourself. Even if it's only half an hour a day or 15 minutes a day, track your stresses. What makes you stress? When do you feel stressed?

**Sandra Fillaudeau** To track the emotional physical response?

**Romaine Johnstone** Yes, to most of physical response I think all responses. And think about the situations where you've been stressed and take notes. Keep a journal for a week or two to identify which situations create the most stress and consider how you respond to these situations. So what is the ensuing behavior? How do you act? Take notes which can help you find patterns among your stress and your reactions to them. And it's identifying those patterns, which is really important because occasional stress on a certain topic is okay, you know.

But if it's something that's recurring, that's where there's a slight danger of you or your brain becoming addicted on the stress and you no longer being in control. So track your stress. That's the first thing establish boundaries. And this is really important and it's just as important for us as it is for the younger generation. In today's digital world, it's so easy to feel pressure to be available 24 hours a day and we are all. I am addicted to my phone. My whole life is on my phone, personal and professional, you know, phones are more and more intelligent and we can do everything. So learn to establish your work life boundaries for yourself. Decide when you're gonna put that phone at the other side of the room. Decide when you're going to turn off the volume, decide you're going to turn off notifications. That's really easy, you know. So, that might mean making a rule for not checking your e-mails at home or in the evening, you know.

**Sandra Fillaudeau.** But even the person because you said you talked about personal and professional but even on the personal side, absolutely, Instagram and that entire thing.

**Romaine Johnstone** Instagram, WhatsApp groups.

**Sandra Fillaudeau** I think trigger the same reactions as when sugar cravings that's things.

**Romaine Johnstone** Absolutely. As too.

**Sandra Fillaudeau** So we can we can take power over as and claim our time back basically

**Romaine Johnstone** And claim our time back for ourselves and that's maybe somewhere where we have to be a little bit more selfish, you know. And personally as well, because I'm thinking, okay, you know, there is my there's a family WhatsApp group. They're all talking to me. They're in a conversation I want to take now. Okay. Put it down. It can wait an hour, two hours, three hours. Yeah. So the 30. I say take time to recharge your batteries. Okay. It does require switching off. It does require giving us a period of time when you're neither engaging in work related activities. You're not thinking about what you're not thinking about a project you're involved in. And, you know, switch off

smartphone comes back to the same thing. But focus your attention actually on doing nothing.

**Sandra Fillaudeau.** It seems complicated to me, too.

**Romaine Johnstone** I agree. And the last or the second to last, I suppose that I want to share with you today. Except that the events that you cannot control because there is this notion of control as well. And although I say don't be a victim. Okay. Take ownership for you for your career and your life. At the same time, there are things that you cannot control and those you have to let go of and say, okay, that's okay. And almost that's in my panic zone. And I'm not even going to go there. I can't do anything about it. But again, goes back to doing things about things that you can control to a certain extent. And the for the work related environment. I think talking to your supervisor. Too often we forget about who we can talk to in an environment. And even if it's not your supervisor. Talk to an ally. Find someone that you can talk to about this particular stress and take the time to do that, because we know now that you're mental health and your physical health has a positive effect on creativity and not this is not all about. This is not all about making more money for the organization. Okay. But it's all about you fitting more effectively and happier in your jobs. And so your boss should have an incentive to creating a work environment that promotes your well-being. So talk to your supervisor. Talk to your colleagues. Talk to your peers. This is not about complaining. It is all about putting the facts on the table, laying the facts on the table and saying, hey, what can we do about this? And then the last one is learning how to relax. And you said, you know, I can't even imagine how to do that. It is about thinking what you could do to actually step back from the sources of stress and maybe taking time to recharge. It would help. So learn how to relax. Can be yoga. It can be it can be meditation. It can be just mindfulness. Can be a walk in the woods. Supercharging be having just a drink with a friend. Or with some of the somebody who has a positive effect on you.

**Sandra Fillaudeau.** Mindfulness has gotten a lot of attention lately. Can you quickly explain how that works and how it can especially help us to relax?

**Romaine Johnstone.** Yes. I can't get through a whole mindfulness process here, but I can definitely talk about, you know, how I can help you build your skills of attention and concentration. So how would you know? How would you practice mindfulness? And how long would it take? You know, you could you can achieve a bit of mindfulness in just ten minutes a day. Do again, don't be too ambitious down with the bar too high. So mindfulness is all about. You know, it's like working out and eating healthy. Food is good for you and it's good for the people around you. Don't forget, your relationships are impacted. It takes practice and patients at the beginning. It's like flexing a new muscle ready. It's like engaging a new muscle that you haven't actually played with before. So build the habit of sitting down once a day, if only for a few minutes and focus on nothing. Okay. Focus on nothing and let your mind wander. And of course, it'll take you to pieces of stress and work and projects that you need to deal with and conversation you need to have. Just bring your mind back gently to nothing and let the breath take your breath accidentally to breath. So listening to your breath, for example, or counting 1 to 10 and

back down from 10 to 1, you know, so on the breath is a really good one because you can practice bringing the speed of your breath right down and making it as slow as possible and as deep as possible. And don't forget, you can also find yourself a mindfulness meditation method that you're comfortable with

**Sandra Fillaudeau** Would you use one?

**Romaine Johnstone** I do use one now and again and then here, I'm being totally honest as I would. I don't use it as often as I would, but when I have been in a period when I've done it, I've used actually someone we did with someone reading a text aloud. So some people use music and some people find that slow music and meditation music really helps them tends to irritate me a little bit and I can't focus enough on nothing. And I find that listening to somebody who takes me through a red mindfulness practice really does help me. And you can find loads online.

**Sandra Fillaudeau** I've tried done petit bamboo I think is really helpful.

**Romaine Johnstone** Petit bamboo is really good

**Sandra Fillaudeau** It's a really good one. And I can I can see the results. I am I'm not by any means at a daily practically, but every time I do use it, I can feel more focused, energized and I feel more patient as well here. This is really great. And there's also you talk about yoga. There's a great resource. I think we both agreed. Was really helpful to us. A website called "Yoga with Adriene" which is fine with and super, super serious and just a really great resume to check out the real professional.

**Romaine Johnstone** And she has a YouTube, doesn't she?

**Sandra Fillaudeau** Yeah, YouTube channel

**Romaine Johnstone** even has a YouTube channel and you know, Google. Sorry, but the ad search for "Yoga with Adriene" and you will find various yoga sessions for all different kind of postures and elements and state of mind. Another meditation that maybe is I would mention is headspace.

**Sandra Fillaudeau** Headspace in English,

**Romaine Johnstone** Right, So those are tips for you, really.

**Sandra Fillaudeau** Thank you so much for this insightful discussion. We'll be talking about emotional intelligence next time. Another buzzing topic that's very, very useful to.

**Romaine Johnstone** Very topical and so important.

**Sandra Fillaudeau** So important. Looking forward to it.

**Romaine Johnstone** Until next time. Dear listeners, please let us know how this episode helped you and share it with a friend or colleague. And thanks for listening. And we'll be back soon. Down to you guys.

**Voice-over.** You were listening to My Inspiration an Orange podcast.