



# Saying the unsaid

Real and honest reflections on the personal struggles and opportunities of being a leader.

## Saying the Unsaid... NOJO

**‘NOJO’ stands for ‘no joy’ and was described by Marshall Goldsmith in his book ‘Triggers’. ‘NOJO’ is what happens when we lose our MOJO. When we move from feeling energised and up for it, to drained and stuck, it feels awful. When this happens, how can we get our mojo back?**

### Finding Joy

We all have moments when our mojo leaves the building. We know what it feels like to look at the day ahead and not be sure how everything in it is possible. We know the feeling of prioritising others and then wondering who is going to do the same for us. We have experienced being calm on the outside but feeling unsettled on the inside. These are human challenges. When that human is in leadership, the stakes are higher. Why? When a leader emotionally leaks everyone can get wet.

How a person gets their mojo back might be different for all of us. When I feel like I am tipping into ‘nojo’, I act as soon as I feel that coming on. Here is how:

#### **1. *Engage in small things that bring me joy.***

I have a ‘go to’ list and doing these things are like taking joy capsules. A latte and a raspberry and white chocolate muffin (to be precise) from one of my favourite coffee shops when I finish work. Clean sheets for bedtime. Freshly washed PJs. Writing an encouraging card to someone and walking 5 minutes down the road to post it. Finding something funny to laugh at. Enjoying baths with bubble bars. The smell of log fires and books. Chatting to friends.

#### **2. *Ask someone to listen.***

Sometimes we just need to get the chatter in our brain out of our mouths and as soon as we say it, the thoughts that were previously causing havoc in our heads, lose their power. It is like turning the light on in the middle of the night when your imagination goes crazy in the dark.

I also ask for what I need from people when it comes to listening. It isn’t needy or demanding to ask for help and direct where you need it. I ask things like, ‘Can I just say some things that I know are not



true but I need to get them out anyway?’ or ‘can you just listen as I talk myself through this and get to my own solution?’ or ‘can you tell me what you are noticing about what I am saying?’ and sometimes ‘can we have a chat and NOT talk about the following things?’.

Sometimes you need to guide people in which mode you want them to respond. When I was thinking of moving schools early in my teaching career, I asked my dad’s opinion. He said, ‘Do you want me to speak as a former Headteacher or as your dad?’. I asked him to respond as one and then the other. ‘As a Headteacher, I would say leaving now is not a good move for your career, but as your dad, I think you should leave’. As my dad, he knew a broader context, he knew me, he knew what I really wanted. It was helpful to be heard and then to mull different responses over, it helps mojo return. *(P.S if you are in a school and a member of PiXL and want to try these listening approaches, you can book me and chat to me...for FREE!)*

### **3. Journal**

Back before I was married with our 3 kids, I used to go away on my own frequently across a year. Sometimes an evening, or a weekend and sometimes for a week. I still do it now, just not quite as much as I did then! I go somewhere alone, take a journal and spend the time writing my brain down. ‘Think in ink’ is a phrase attributed to Marilyn Munroe and I find that is true for me too. It is simply amazing what comes out of my pen when I didn’t even know I thought that. Some of my favourite techniques, other than just free writing are:

- Writing a letter to myself when I was a different age (it is amazing how kind and wise you can be when you do this!)
- Write a list of questions I need to answer.
- Write a list of advice I would give myself now

### **4. Success List**

I write down all things I have done, the things I have become and the things that I have changed on purpose. Doing this helps me see something that my ‘nojo’ state has forgotten to remind me about. I remind myself that I am not the finished article, I have lots more to learn, I get things wrong sometimes but that doesn’t mean progress isn’t being made. Forward is forward. Sometimes it isn’t until we write down all that we HAVE achieved that we are able to find mojo levels rising.

### **5. Time travel**

One of the key questions that helps me when I can feel a ‘nojo’ attack coming on is this: ‘In 15 years’ time, will this thing that I am going through still matter? Will I still feel this way?’. The time travel helps me get perspective and that helps me get my mojo back. Usually, I know that it is not permanent, there are reasons I feel like this now and they can be addressed.



Perhaps the most obvious way I go from nojo to mojo is switching the emails off and getting an early night. Decent sleep solves a number of problems!

What's on your 'MOJO improver' list? Perhaps making a list is your first step?