

The Future of Work podcast is a weekly show where Jacob has in-depth conversations with senior level executives, business leaders, and bestselling authors around the world on the future of work and the future in general. Topics cover everything from AI and automation to the gig economy to big data to the future of learning and everything in between. Each episode explores a new topic and features a special guest.

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0:01:26 Jacob: Thanks everyone for tuning in to another episode of the Future of Work. I, of course, am your trusty host Jacob Morgan and I'm joined today by somebody who I'm sure a lot of you are familiar with and maybe you saw her TED Talk, maybe you read her book, Ingrid Fetell Lee. She is a TED speaker, best-selling author of Joyful: The Surprising Power of Ordinary Things to Create Extraordinary Happiness, which I love that title and subtitle by the way.

0:01:58 Ingrid: Thank you.

0:02:00 Jacob: So again, thanks for joining me and I'm really curious, how did you get started studying joy and happiness? It seems like such a interesting field to be in.

0:02:12 Ingrid: It's funny, 'cause I didn't set out to study joy, I set out to study design. And I was in my first year of design school at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn. And a professor made an off-hand comment. He said, "Your work gives me a feeling of joy at this review." It was like the end of my first year, and all my stuff was lined up on a table and a bunch of professors were on this panel looking at it. And I thought that was weird for a number of reasons. One, I think joy is something that we often think of as a little bit light and fluffy. It's not something that we think of as serious. And so, I thought is this like... Maybe this isn't a good thing to design something joyful, because what I'm really going for here is being a really serious designer. But on the other hand, I was intrigued, because we always think of joy as this intangible ephemeral feeling, not something we can touch with our hands. And so here I was in design school, making objects, physical, ordinary physical objects. And I was being told that somehow they elicited this feeling of joy. So, I asked how, how does that happen? How do things create joy?

0:03:23 Ingrid: And the professors couldn't answer the question. And so, I started trying to understand how do material things, physical things, elicit this feeling of joy? And as I have studied this over the years, I've noticed that it has expanded, my study of it has expanded. First, it started with just what are the aesthetic elements of joy, the colors, the textures, the patterns? But it quickly grew to starting to ponder how joy shows up in all different areas of our lives.

0:03:57 Jacob: Yeah. Which is a... I mean, joy, it seems like it's such a human thing, but it also kind of feels like a lot of people, and I don't know, correct me if I'm wrong. Do a lot of people really struggle, it seems like with joy and with happiness?

0:04:12 Ingrid: Yeah. I think we have this idea of the pursuit of happiness being enshrined in our, certainly American culture. But a lot of Western cultures, I think have this notion of the pursuit of happiness, and I think that there is a struggle to both... We find a struggle in the pursuit of happiness and we find a challenge to feel and experience those moments of joy when we encounter them. And

I'm pulling them apart, because I think that there are two different things and it's actually helpful to distinguish them. So, I might just, if that's okay, give like a quick definition to hold those two apart.

0:04:53 Jacob: No, no, please. Yeah, that was gonna be my next question actually.

0:04:57 Ingrid: Oh, great, okay. So, happiness is a broad evaluation of how we feel about our lives over time. And it includes whether we feel like we are connected to other people, how we feel about our work, how we feel about our health. Whether we feel like we have a sense of meaning and purpose in life. Those are big things. And so when we ask whether we're happy, that's usually what we're evaluating. And we're evaluating it over a period of days, weeks, months, so longer term. Whereas joy is much simpler and more immediate. So, joy is an intense momentary experience of positive emotions emotion. And these little moments are things that we can feel in our bodies as well as our minds. I'd like to think of it as those little moments that make you feel a little bit more alive. So when you smile, when you laugh, when you feel yourself or something in yourself sort of rise up, or soar. Those feelings are often indications that you're experiencing a moment of joy.

0:06:00 Ingrid: And so, I think that that's an important distinction, because we can be challenged to find both. I think we're challenged right now in the midst of a pandemic to find happiness, because of course many of the things that bring us happiness are hard to access right now. But we can also be challenged to feel joy in times like this, because we feel guilty. We feel guilty, like experiencing a deep moment of joy when there's tragedy and struggle around us. So, I think we actually, it's an interesting question, because we struggle with both.

0:06:35 Jacob: Yeah. So okay, so correct me if I'm wrong, so happiness is more of kind of like the longer-term sort of ongoing feeling, whereas joy is like the little things that you get that maybe build towards overall happiness?

0:06:49 Ingrid: Yes, and I think that's a great way to put it, is that what we find, and what I had to stop and find is that when we... When we focus on happiness, when we are asking ourselves this question, "Am I happy, am I happy?" Often what we focus on are the big things. So we focus on, "I gotta get that promotion, I gotta buy that house, I gotta find my partner." And a lot of those things are not in our control fully, and a lot of them are things that to get them we put off joy. So we say, "Okay, I gotta get that promotion, so I'm not gonna go see my parents this weekend. I'm not gonna go hang out with friends. I'm not gonna do that hobby that I've been dying to take up. I'm gonna put that off until after I get the promotion." And then what happens, we get the promotion, and then we need more. We settle in and we're looking toward the next milestone, and so joy falls by the wayside.

0:07:46 Ingrid: On the other hand, when we focus on little moments of joy, we tend to find happiness almost inadvertently, and one of the reasons is that these little moments of joy often kick off what psychologists call positive spirals or upward spirals of emotion. So they sort of kick off other things that are beneficial to us. And a lot of those things are actually... Have to do with our work performance. So there's research that shows that negotiators, for example, reach more win-win agreements or that decision makers in organizations that they make better decisions when they're in a state of joy, and one of the reasons is that they consider a broader range of scenarios in the process. So there are a lot of ways that joy can actually... We think it's a distraction from success, but actually I think it brings us closer to success.

0:08:37 Jacob: I have kind of a weird question. I'm trying to figure out if this makes sense in my

own mind.

0:08:41 Ingrid: Yeah, go ahead.

0:08:42 Jacob: So does it... Can you be happy without having a lot of joy or do you have to have joy in order to be happy? I don't know if that makes sense, but hopefully, you kinda get where I'm going.

0:08:58 Ingrid: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

0:08:58 Jacob: Okay.

0:09:00 Ingrid: So I think that you... So, I often will say you don't need to be happy to find joy. So in that direction, I think it's very clear that you can be... You can... Finding joy is an experience, it's a process. I think we too often identify happiness as a quality, as an attribute or a trait, "I am happy," instead of a feeling. And I think when we define joy as a feeling, it's much more helpful because you can say, "Okay, I may not be happy. I have objective reasons to not be happy right now. I'm stuck at home," or, "I'm watching people suffering right now. I'm not happy. But I can find moments of joy in my day." And that is... That's possible, and that's possible even if you are depressed, that's possible even in times of grief or struggle. There are people who find themselves laughing at a funeral, and you're in the depths of grief, you're in the lowest moments of your life. But those moments of joy often they're intertwined. There's something bittersweet that we remember something about our loved one that makes us laugh that then makes us cry harder because we miss them, right, so these things can get wrapped up together. I think, you were also asking maybe if you could be happy but not have joy.

0:10:24 Jacob: You're right. If you can be... Yeah, because, for example, I'm thinking of somebody, as you mentioned, somebody who might sacrifice visiting family or spending time with their kids or doing typical things that we would assume with joy, but, instead, they're very focused on their career. And so maybe they get that really big promotion, and so they're kind of... Maybe now they're happy, but they didn't really have any joy getting to that happiness, if that makes sense.

0:10:52 Ingrid: Yeah, yeah. I would argue that when you put joy on hold again and again and again, you are kind of depriving yourself of something essential. It may be that... There are people who are very career-focused who build very rich lives around their work. They have a lot of work friends, they have a lot of meaningful relationships there, so they feel connected. They have... They play in their work, so it's joyful. There may be elements of joy within that. So it's not to say that you couldn't be totally career-focused, but I think when you're putting off joy day-by-day and you don't have any of it, generally, there's some deprivation going on there that makes it hard to be truly happy. I think it takes a toll. Because what we know about these external markers of happiness is that we tend to hedonically adapt to them, and so we'll hit a milestone, it'll feel good for a while, and then our happiness will sort of sink back to the level that it was before. And everything from marriage, there's research that we get a big happiness bump from marriage but eventually it goes back to what it was before.

0:12:09 Jacob: Not true. My wife, I love you very much if you're listening. [chuckle] I am happier every day. She's probably in the house somewhere downstairs. [chuckle]

0:12:17 Ingrid: And probably, that has to do with how you cultivate your marriage. I would say the

same thing about my marriage, too, but I'm talking about population level studies that psychologists do. They find that big life events. And this is adaptive because we also adapt to the negative ones as well. You go through something horrible in life, and generally your happiness level will rise back up. Even if you thought, "There's no way I can ever be happy again," it will come back up after a couple of years.

0:12:43 Jacob: So somebody already asked the question... So Brett is asking, "Can joy be anticipated or does it usually come in a moment of delightful, surprised?"

0:12:53 Ingrid: Oh, wonderful question. So, both. So when I talk about the different pathways to joy, I talk about 10 different pathways to joy, which I call aesthetics of joy, and they are rooted in the physical world but they also have sort of an experiential dimension and surprise is one of those. Surprise its own distinct emotion. It's separate from Joy. There are six primary emotions that psychologists have found that people all over the world feel and express in the same way, basically, and surprise is one of them, and joy is one of them, and surprise is a really interesting emotion, because it is not inherently positive or negative, it takes all of its meaning from the context in which it happens and so we often find that surprise can be joyful, because it brings us something that exceeds our expectations. And so we had no idea that this was going to happen. And so it creates this Delta and expectations. That's very joyful, but it's not the only way find joy.

0:14:00 Ingrid: And in fact I think anticipation is an equally powerful route to joy, and there are studies that show that when we plan for joy and allow ourselves to anticipate it, we actually experience more joy than if we just sort of happened upon the experience. So I think there are a number of good reasons to plan for joy, one is that you get the experience of getting to enjoy the experience twice. You enjoy it...

0:14:24 Jacob: Like looking forward to a cruise or a fancy dinner or a date night.

0:14:28 Ingrid: Yes, yes exactly. So you get to... You almost get to pre-enjoy it. And then you get to enjoy it. And a lot of people are worried about that because they are worried that it won't live up to the anticipation that you created, that pre-enjoying it will take away from the experience and moment, but the science says that that's not true, that actually when we... The longer we have to look forward to something, the more we will eventually enjoy it. So, go ahead and give yourself permission to do that.

0:14:54 Jacob: I had Thomas Gilovich as a podcast guest a little while ago, who's one of the people that did... I think some studies on that too. So we talked a little bit... That was, oh man, three years ago now. So I didn't know about that before I spoke with him, and then I was thinking about these different experiences I've had, looking forward to a fancy dinner that you have to book months in advance or a trip or something like that, and you... As it gets closer you get more and more excited, you get that kind of [0:15:20] ____ feeling.

0:15:20 Ingrid: Yeah.

0:15:22 Jacob: Okay, I have another weird question for you.

0:15:23 Ingrid: Yeah.

0:15:25 Jacob: And there's a lot of the debate on this. Do you think that we should be happy or get

joy from our work or do you think... 'cause there's a big debate on this, right? Do what makes you happy, follow your passion. You should always have joy at work, and other people are like, "No, work is not always supposed to be joyous and happy, it's supposed to be hard, sometimes unpleasant." So what do you think?

0:15:50 Ingrid: Okay, so I think that again it comes back to this joy and happiness piece. I think that finding work that fulfills you is a big part of what can make you happy? And that doesn't mean that you should just follow your passion. I think there's sort of a set of factors that will go into what kind of work will make you happy. You might be someone who derives a lot of joy from what you do on the weekends and your having a beautiful home or doing a lot of travel.

0:16:27 Ingrid: And so maybe a happy work situation for you is work that makes that possible and you'd be very unhappy if you supposedly followed your passion and you ended up not making enough money to do the things that really bring you joy. So I think it's a very complex equation, and we all have to figure that out for ourselves. But when it comes to the day-to-day, I think whether you are living your passion, or whether you're just doing a job, you can find joy in your work, and you should find joy in your work. And if your work has no moments of joy, then I think something's wrong, right? Either there's an interpersonal situation, which is something that I hear about a lot, right?

0:17:11 Ingrid: You have someone who... You have a tenuous relationship with your boss or there's a co-worker who's sapping your joy and those dynamics are not handled well, culturally, by the organization. It may be that the organization's values are out of line with your values. So it doesn't necessarily mean that you have to have an organization that is where you go everyday, and you live your purpose, but if your values are misaligned then it's possible that you could be going into a space where you feel your integrity compromised, or it could just be that you go to an office and no one laughs. Like if you go to an office and no one's laughing...

0:17:50 Jacob: I worked at those.

0:17:51 Ingrid: Yeah, and I've had clients like that, where you walk in and it's just... You can hear a pin drop. And I think one of the things that I was reading about recently was the power of laughter. That we laugh when we feel safe. And I think we underestimate that. So I love to use that as a metric of whether an office feels joyful because it's a measure of psychological safety. And if you... If people don't feel safe to laugh, it's probably very unconscious, it's not that they're repressing their laughter consciously, although they maybe, but it's more that it's an environment that doesn't feel like you can bring your whole self there. So I think that we should expect to find joy at work, whether or not we're living our true purpose or whether we're just doing a job.

0:18:40 Jacob: So I'll admit, I seem to grasp the concept of joy better than happiness, because joy I get what you're saying, it's kind of these moments, experiencing moments of joy, happiness is kind of like a long-term thing, but it feels like happiness is constantly like a future state. Or how can you be... Can you have joy and happiness at the same time? How can you tell the difference between if you're experiencing joy or happiness, if that makes sense?

0:19:09 Ingrid: Yeah, great question, my answer to this is stop thinking about happiness entirely.

0:19:15 Jacob: Okay.

0:19:17 Ingrid: That's really how it has played out for me, is that instead of thinking about happiness, because I think it is so vague, I think you're just...

0:19:25 Jacob: It's super vague.

0:19:26 Ingrid: Place your finger on the heart of the issue, which is that it's so vague and we treat it as a future state. And we also treat it like... The way that all the fairy tales end, they end with happily ever after, right? So we treat it as this state that once we get to it, we will be there, and then everything will be great. And I think we do that a lot in our minds when we think about future happiness. We think, "Oh, I'm gonna get there. I'm gonna land the guy or whatever, and everything's gonna be great."

0:19:57 Ingrid: And that is just not how we evolved. It's not how our emotions evolved. Our emotions evolved to do this, and they evolved to do that because that is how we respond to what's going on around us and make adjustments. And so our emotions are in this constant flux, and that is really valuable information. And so to me, if you know that adding little moments of joy to your day adds up to not just to happiness overall but to... That it reduces stress, that it increases our resilience by lowering those physiological responses to stress and also facilitating more adaptive coping mechanisms. We're more likely to grow from a crisis, for example, or from a difficult time at work if we invite little moments of joy into our struggle.

0:20:46 Ingrid: So, it impacts our health. It impacts our connections. We have greater trust and intimacy when we have little moments of joy that we share with our partner. It impacts I talked about productivity and cognition. So if we know that these little moments of joy are helping us in all these different ways, I focus on that. I'm like, "Okay, how can I create a few more moments of joy today, this week, in my marriage, in my work? How do I create those things? How do I share them with others?" And the happiness takes care of itself.

0:21:17 Jacob: It's interesting because since a lot of people refer to happiness as a future state, you actually don't know that getting that job or getting that extra degree will make you happy, because it's in the future. So it's sort of like... And I have... I know some people like this who are constantly chasing something, and then they get it and then they find something else to chase. They think that once they get that one thing they're gonna be happy and then they get it and then they're like, "Now, I'm gonna go for this. Now, I'm gonna go for that." And it's like you don't actually know if it's gonna make you happy 'cause it's in the future and you can't predict the future, so better to just focus on the things like you said that give you joy which I think makes more sense. Another question we got. Somebody asked, "What's the relationship between the concept of flow and joy if there is one?"

0:22:00 Ingrid: Oh, I'm glad you brought that up 'cause I was thinking about that when we were talking about work and finding joy at work. Flow is a profoundly joyful state. And for those who haven't encountered the idea of flow, it's basically a state of total absorption in your work. It often happens to creatives, but it can happen in any kind of work. You can find flow in a really simple task for example, like you're assembling something and you find it and you get into a rhythm where you just feel completely absorbed. You can find flow in many different things. I think one of the places where we find flow very naturally is in play, and we find this state of almost timelessness where we lose our sense of time and we lose our sense of ourselves.

0:22:50 Ingrid: And there's something really wonderful about that. We stop being so self-conscious. When you're playing a game, you're not thinking about how you look. You are... When

you're really in it, you are thinking about the game or the thing that you're playing with, and that is a really powerful place to be. I think when we look at work, flow is one of the ways that you can access to at work. And it's a way that is completely congruent with getting work done and being successful. So I love that question 'cause I think it is, it's a very joyful state.

0:23:26 Jacob: Let's talk a little bit about the work side of joy. And I know we're kind of in some crazy times right now, but usually most people on planet Earth that work, they commute to an office, they are usually there for a set amount of time, they go home at the end of the day. Do you have any suggestions or advice? 'Cause there are a lot of people who just feel like, "Oh, I don't have any joy. I can't create joy at work." So many people are disengaged in their jobs. Any suggestions or advice for these people? I know you have your 10... What did you call them, the 10? Not attributes...

0:24:06 Ingrid: Aesthetics.

0:24:06 Jacob: Aesthetics. The 10 aesthetics of joy.

0:24:08 Ingrid: Yeah.

0:24:08 Jacob: Maybe we can go through a couple of those and see which ones might be able to be applied at work.

0:24:12 Ingrid: Sure. Well, so there are a lot of things you can do with your environment. I think even if you don't have full control over your workspace, you have control over something hopefully. You have control over even if it's just your desk or your cubicle. I think adding color is a very simple thing. When you look at most offices, they're designed in this sort of tones of gray and beige and...

0:24:38 Jacob: Yeah, it's terrible.

[chuckle]

0:24:39 Ingrid: It is, and I think so. Just adding a little bit of color. That might be your coffee mug. That might be a cushion you're bringing in for your chair, but adding some little spot of color, so that when you walk in, you have this little beacon that draws you, it invites you to sit down and work. And there's research showing that... And this is cross-cultural research with people in countries as diverse as Saudi Arabia, Argentina and Sweden, that shows that people working in more brightly colored offices are more alert. They're more confident, and friendly than people working in drab spaces. I think that's a really... It's a very simple one, but it's an interesting place to start. The other thing...

0:25:21 Jacob: You mean something as simple as color, huh?

0:25:23 Ingrid: Yeah, color. And the other thing is light, and especially now while many people are working from home, if you can move your desk where you're sitting to near to a window or if you can't, getting supplementary artificial light, I think that's really, really important. We know that all the research that we have about the relationship between environment and well-being, I think light is some of the most robust. And what we're coming to understand is, not only does light regulate our Circadian rhythm, so it'll help us sleep better at night. Workers who sit in sunnier desks, sleep 46

minutes more at night.

0:26:00 Jacob: Wow.

0:26:00 Ingrid: It seems kind of intuitive that more light exposure during the day results in better sleep at night. But it has to do with the fact that you're getting the energy boost when you actually need it, which allows you to be tired when you're supposed to be tired. So we have a better balance in our sleep wake-cycle or Circadian rhythm when we have more light exposure especially early in the day. But there's also... Research showing that we're more active during the day, when we have light exposure, that we are... We feel more positive, and our stress levels are lower. So sitting if you look around and then it feels dim where you're sitting or you do that thing where you're working and you're working, and then you forget to turn on the lights and it's like 5:00 PM-6:00 PM, and you're sitting in the dark, staring at a screen like that's a thing to pay attention to you, you come back and you're like, "Oh god, what? I'm in a cave here."

0:26:53 Ingrid: So get out of the cave make sure you get some light. I think that one's really important. Also bringing the outside in, having some nature exposure, I see you have a beautiful fiddle leaf fig behind you, so bringing in a plant or some form of nature or getting out into nature, if you have access to it, there's research that shows that it helps restore our ability to concentrate, that we have sort of... I'm sure you've heard about this... Our will power our ability to focus declines over as the day goes on.

0:27:29 Ingrid: And one of the things that's really good at restoring our ability to pay attention, is nature and it has something to do with the fact that it's passive, but still stimulating. It's not like zoning out to TV, there's kind of a soft simulation that happens when we are out in nature, and so you can get some of the same effects by bringing plants indoors. So those are a few things environmentally that I think make a big difference.

0:27:55 Jacob: I suppose even going for a walk, if you get a lunch break... I know a lot of people, they go for a walk, and just to get outside can also be very helpful.

0:28:04 Ingrid: It's huge. I would venture to say if you can get outside, do that, if you can't get outside, try to bring some elements of nature indoors or do both. There's certainly no harm in doing both. And I think that when you think about... Just as a framing for why I think the environment is so important, I think historically the way that offices were designed was to eliminate distractions.

0:28:32 Ingrid: So they were designed in this sort of lean minimalist way and there's research now that's starting to emerge that shows that that's a really misguided way of understanding the way that the brain works. That if we think about the conscious mind than the conscious mind may be distracted by things that are on the walls or whatever, but our unconscious minds are often very under-stimulated, in those environments, and that can often drive us to distraction. And so recent study shows that people working in what they call enriched environments, environments that have plants that have art that have more simulation color, things like that we've been talking about, are 15% more productive than people working in Lean spaces.

0:29:17 Jacob: Wow.

0:29:17 Ingrid: So I think this is a joy thing. You wanna go and enjoy sitting down at your work... At your desk. At your work space, but you also want to create an environment that is conducive to

working well, and I think that realistically we are not... Our offices should not be just warehouses for the mind.

0:29:36 Jacob: No.

0:29:37 Ingrid: They should be places that feel engaging and stimulating in a positive way.

0:29:44 Jacob: Do you think this is one of the reasons why... And I'm curious to hear your take on this, why we've seen so many different changes in workspace design, here in the Bay Area especially, I've seen a lot of offices and they're doing exactly what you said they're bringing outside in, they're making spaces more open, more breathable, they're adding lots of colors, like these offices don't look like offices anymore, they look like gorgeous homes to live in.

0:30:12 Ingrid: Yeah, I think there are a number of factors that are driving that. I think some of it is the research though, I wouldn't say that the research is fully known, or broadly people are that broadly aware of it. I think that part of it had to do with... In Silicon Valley you started to have a competition for talent, and one of the ways to attract talent was to make offices that really felt engaging to work in, and so it started with cafeterias and foosball tables and amenities, and amenities was where it was for a while, and I think then companies started to think more about making offices that felt like home, because they were competing with co-working spaces, they were competing with other types of environments with coffee shops, right? And I've talked to a lot of people who work in offices just say, I still get my best work done in coffee shops, 'cause there's comfort.

0:31:10 Ingrid: And there's a certain amount of stimulation. So, I think that office designers as starting to catch on to this, but I wouldn't say that they're doing it necessarily informed by... If the science were a part of it, I think we'd see a lot more color, I think we'd see more plants and I think we'd see more... I think we'd see more light more natural light. Instead, I think sometimes I'm still seeing a lot of hotel lobby-esque offices.

0:31:38 Jacob: Yes. Yeah.

0:31:39 Ingrid: That feel very kind of... And so I think it's informed more by real estate and hospitality trends, than research.

0:31:47 Jacob: Yeah. Interesting.

0:31:48 Ingrid: So I'd love to see us get a little bit more evidence based in how we apply this to office design, but I think we also will have to see post-pandemic how much work goes back to offices, and how much stays at home.

0:32:03 Jacob: Yeah, I'm really interested to see it as well, and there's been a lot written about that, and discussed about that too, so we'll see.

0:32:10 Ingrid: Yeah.

0:32:10 Jacob: There were three that I was particularly interested in when looking at the aesthetics of joy and maybe how they might apply to work. The first one was freedom, and then also play and celebration. So, I thought maybe we could start and talk a little bit about freedom.

0:32:28 Ingrid: Yeah.

0:32:29 Jacob: And then maybe we can talk about the other two.

0:32:31 Ingrid: Yeah, so freedom I talked a little bit about nature, and the power of nature, and freedom, the freedom aesthetic is really all about how connected freedom and joy are. When you feel free, physically free, you feel this sense of joy. When you feel constrained, that's usually something that hold us back from joy. And so the prototypical place of freedom is like the open field. But I think one of the things that's interesting about freedom is we don't necessarily feel our most joyful when we're fully exposed. And so as geographers started to understand and to research the types of environments that made us feel most joyful one of the things that they found is that we tend to like environments that have what they call prospect and refuge.

0:33:26 Ingrid: So prospect means we have a view, we're able to see things. So that's often why we like elevated views. We like to be up a little bit higher so we can see out over things and we like refuge. We wanna feel not totally exposed 'cause we're still these vulnerable primates roaming the savanna in some deep part of our minds and so we don't wanna be sitting totally exposed. So I think this is really interesting when you think about open plan offices because I think we see in an open plan office is you have lots of prospect which can be joyful, right? To be able to see out over everything but you have no refuge and your back is unprotected and you have no space to hide out.

0:34:04 Ingrid: And so I think the offices that do the best job with open plan offices provide more refuge and they provide little spaces to get away and they provide screening in places to break the space a little bit and make it not feel so monolithic but that's I think a way that freedom manifests in the modern office that is surprising. And then there's psychological freedom, right? Feeling independent, feeling that you can go and get your work done without someone hovering over your shoulder. That's of course a way to find a sense of autonomy, I think. People who study work have found autonomy is really important to finding joy at work. So there's the psychological side of it, and then there's the physical side of it.

0:34:50 Jacob: So we got a question from Oscar and he says, "Speaking of coffee shops, what can we bring to back of the house environments?" Wait Oscar, I think. Okay, I think I'm gonna... I understand this question. Maybe he's saying what could we bring from our homes or from coffee shops into our corporate environments? It sounds like what he's asking. Oscar if I didn't get that right, please correct me. But it sounds like that's what you're asking. So do you have any suggestions for what we could bring from our homes or from the coffee shop environment to our work environment that might create joy?

0:35:29 Ingrid: Yeah. I think it's a lot of things that I mentioned. When you think about an office being designed, it's not designed for... It's designed for optimal productivity, but I think it's designed based on a flawed understanding on what really drives productivity. So I think... So if you understand that having periods of rest amid your focus is really important than having these spaces that are maybe a little bit more buzzy to take breaks to have spaces where people have choice of the way that they sit, I think is really important. So like body awareness is something that I think about a lot. At home you can sit in all different ways.

0:36:17 Ingrid: You may not have the ergonomic chair that was designed for you to be sort of calcified into one position but it's an ergonomic position, but it's one position the whole day right

now. But for example, it's sort of out of iShop. I have a giant exercise ball here. And this can be a good segue in to play, but I bought... I'm actually pregnant right now, and so I bought this giant exercise...

0:36:42 Jacob: Congratulations, so is my wife.

0:36:42 Ingrid: Thank you, thank you. So we bought this giant exercise ball because my doula said it'd be good for labor, right? So we have this giant pink ball sitting in our living room right now and it's not quite the right height. I know some people use those as desk chairs and I think it's a great idea. It's not quite the right height for that but I bounce on it during breaks. And it's super joyful to have something big and playful in the middle of the space. So that's something that I think you wouldn't have in a traditional office but you could. And you could easily bring that, and most people could fit one under their desk next to their chair and take breaks on something like that or share one among your pod. So I think there are a lot of things that we can bring in where you look at what makes your home a good place to work and think about how you can bring some of those textures or colors or materials back into your workspace.

0:37:39 Jacob: Okay, so we talked about the freedom one and I guess the other important aspect there that we kinda touched on as we wrap that one up was kind of like you said, not having somebody constantly looking over your shoulder but feeling that you have a little bit of freedom to do the things that you need to do without having a set of eyes constantly staring at you. The other one which I really like is play because I actually had somebody from Lego on the podcast a little while ago. And play is a huge aspect of the Lego corporate culture to the point where all the conference rooms have Legos in there, they're encouraged to play all the time. I think even when new prospects show up to work for Lego they ask them like, "What's your favorite thing to build?" They ask them to build something from lego pieces, like play is a big part of their culture. So when you talk about play in the aesthetics of joy, what components are you looking at?

0:38:37 Ingrid: Yeah, so when I started looking at play, play's one of our most direct roots to joy. We often think of those two things as very related. And when I started looking at the things and places that brought people joy, one of the things that kept coming up were around things. So big giant exercise balls, balloons, bubbles, merry-go-rounds, hula hoops, ferris wheels and half the playground is round. And even babies are round. Babies are rounder versions of adults. So there's circles throughout childhood, circles and spheres. That shape just keeps recurring. And so, I wanted to understand why is it? Why do we see around things so much in connection with play and with childhood? And what I discovered is that round shapes are, of course, the safest shapes so they're the least likely to risk injury. And our brains actually have an unconscious response to this. So there's a part of the brain called the amygdala, associated in part with fear and anxiety. When neuroscientists place people in fMRI machines and they show them pictures of angular objects, like a very angular table, and then they show them picture of a round version circular table, they find that that part of the brain lights up when we look at the angular objects, but not when we look at the rounds.

0:40:01 Jacob: Interesting.

0:40:01 Ingrid: So there's something going on on an unconscious level when we see these things. And part of that has to do with the way that we evolved. So when we evolved in an environment that had these two different shapes, angular things were more likely to be dangerous to us. It was more adaptive for us to develop a sense of caution around antlers and jagged rocks and tree

branches, than it was to develop to be on alert for round shapes. And so we developed this unconscious sense of caution that persists across time and it continues to be true that we should be more alert in those situations. And so, this connects to play because we are more at ease. We're more able to run around and be free and physically play when we have round shapes around us than when we are surrounded by angles. And the brain knows this on an unconscious level, so it creates the sense of safety.

0:41:00 Ingrid: And the other thing is that round shapes are often the most playful. They bounce, they roll, they do... You can do almost anything with a ball. There are dozens of games that you can play with a ball. You can kick it, you can spin it, you can do all kinds of things. And so, round shapes, I think, bring out this impulse toward play. So play is deeply connected to joy, we know that. And if we wanna elicit more playful impulses, then it can be as simple as having a ball, or having a Frisbee, or having something round in your space.

0:41:31 Ingrid: There's also research that ties round movements to creativity. So there have been studies that show that when we move in a fluid way, like we move our arms like this as opposed to like if we move like robot-some movements, we are more creative, we come up with a greater variety of ideas, we have greater cognitive flexibility. So I think, it's... And studies show that we actually move in that way when we play. That curve in your movement is the way that children move when they're pantomiming something. So when you gonna go punch someone, you would punch them with a direct linear motion. If you're going to play punch someone, you have a curve to your motion. So all of these things come together.

0:42:17 Ingrid: I think when we look at it in a work context, we work in cubes, and that really gets play out of the equation. But play is how we find new ideas, play is how we adapt to changing circumstances. It's one of the most mysterious but most essential tools for survival. And so, I think, starting to find ways to encourage to break the rigid frame of an office to invite play in, like I mentioned a few ways, but I also think keeping a game of Jenga on your desk, for example, it's not round but it's...

0:42:54 Jacob: But we're like actual literally even playing games.

0:42:56 Ingrid: Yes, put a game of Jenga on your desk so that every time someone comes by, they can take a piece, put it on top and it's like you play... Use things that invite play.

0:43:08 Jacob: Chess boards. I'm a big fun of chess.

0:43:10 Ingrid: Yeah, props. Basically, use things that have playful affordances to bring more play into your space and into your day. Reminders, in a way. Reminders to play, yeah.

0:43:24 Jacob: Yeah. I feel like a lot of people feel like their offices have to be so sanitized, removed of anything that allows for joy. Like you said, we want people to be as productive as possible. And I don't know if companies still do this, but I remember, I think it was, I don't know, eight years ago, there was this big push, ban social media, ban browsing any of these websites that are out there. And then over a while, companies gave up on that idea and they're just kind of like, "If you need to take a break, you need to have a little bit of play and do something like that and look at a funny picture or a meme, go for it."

0:44:01 Ingrid: Yeah, I think that that reflects a more nuanced understanding of again how work

happens. If you think of work as time in, work out and that's it, then plugging away like this is the only way to produce work. But if you recognize that, for example, the way that work might happen might be knowledge in, knowledge in, knowledge in for three hours of deep research and then, something that takes your mind, your conscious mind away from that so that your unconscious mind can spin on that problem for a while and then come back, sit down an idea, idea, idea, that is, I think, a more realistic... That's more realistic. And you can either spend that background processing time forcing yourself to stare at the computer, or you can spend that background processing time in nature, you can spend it in play. There are all sorts of other ways to engage your brain during that time. So I think, the changing office and the changing culture of work are starting to accommodate this new, this better understanding of how we actually solve problems.

0:45:11 Jacob: And the last one that I wanted to talk about is celebration, because to me... And you talk about obviously Celebration the book, but to me in my mind was very much like celebration, recognition, a lot of these things were kind of coming together, which is something that so many leaders and organizations struggle with. So I thought this was a huge one.

0:45:32 Ingrid: Yeah. So celebration is all about what happens in a moment of intense joy when we, sort of, our joy feel so contagious and infectious that it just draws other people in. And I think that we see it in moments of... Structured moments of celebration, but we also see it in spontaneous moments of celebration or just moments of collective joy. And one of the things that I explore under the banner of celebration is, why do we sing? Why do we dance? Why do we do all these things in moments of celebration? And one of the reasons is that the synchrony that results from having coordinated movement, having coordinated vocalization, actually makes us more connected on a primal level, so we actually are more altruistic. We're more likely to sacrifice our own gain, personal gain, for the gain of the group when we feel connected in that way. And so I think it's one of the reasons why we sing Happy Birthday and why we do all these things in a moment of celebration. I think in the workplace and in organizations, celebration has often taken on a perfunctory context. So we celebrate birthdays or we celebrate anniversaries, and it's the same cake, and the same 10 people in the...

0:46:56 Jacob: It's like a template. It's a template.

0:46:58 Ingrid: In the... Exactly, in the break room, and it doesn't actually have much joy in it. It's just kind of like a thing that we do. And I think one thing for leaders to really think about, is what you're celebrating, because you have options here. You don't have to... Maybe you don't celebrate birthdays and maybe instead you celebrate join dates, like the year from when they join the organization, because that's a more work-relevant measure and it's a joyful thing to celebrate, and it shows what you value. If you think about what you value and you align your celebrations to that, I think that's the first thing that's really important.

0:47:36 Ingrid: The other thing is that celebration, again, like most joyful things in organizations like play, like nature, like color, has been dismissed as something that is kind of tangential to work or a break or an aside, it's not part of the work itself. And therefore, if you see celebration in that way, what usually ends up happening is that you'll never see the boss at one of these birthday celebrations. The person who's in charge is never there. It's always admins and entry level staff. And the higher you move up in the organization, you're doing serious work over here and so... And it sends the message that these things aren't important, that they don't matter. When in fact, celebration is an ideal way to incentivize people to move toward the things that you care about, that you value.

0:48:30 Ingrid: So if you're celebrating something, then it's really important that you be there, that the leaders be there and participate and demonstrate that this is important and that it's not just something that's like, "We created space for this for you all but not for us, not for ourselves." You create this sort of two-tier class society. I think celebration should embrace everyone for it to be successful.

0:48:56 Jacob: And leading by example. And we've seen organizations celebrate so many things. Some of them are... They celebrate failures, they celebrate successes, they celebrate all sorts of different things, which is kind of interesting to see.

0:49:09 Ingrid: Yeah. And then it's a great way to reflect your values. Celebrating failure is a great thing to do actually because it takes pressure off and it's a joyful thing to celebrate.

0:49:20 Jacob: Yeah, I agree. I know we only have a couple of minutes left so a couple of last questions for you. First one is, how do you know if you are getting enough joy? I don't know if there is a benchmark or... And I know that sounds like a weird question but some people might be thinking, "How do I know if I get enough joy or if I don't get enough joy?" Any guidelines on that?

0:49:47 Ingrid: That's a great question. I don't know. I haven't been asked that. I don't think maybe ever, but certainly not in a while. I think...

0:50:00 Jacob: 'Cause you might have a couple, I guess, three moments of joy, but then what if you have 10 bad moments? You know what I mean? Like it's...

0:50:06 Ingrid: Yeah.

0:50:07 Jacob: This is really subjective.

0:50:08 Ingrid: Okay. It is but... Okay, so there was some research done on this, but it has since been questioned. And so, I think I'll just share what it is so that people are aware of it and also just be aware that this is... I don't even know if... The study may have been retracted, but it has certainly been challenged and questioned, so I would not use this as your metric. You may see these places, do not use this as your metric. The metric was that you need like six positive events I think to counter one negative because we have a negativity bias as humans and that's adaptive, it's for survival, that we're supposed to... Our brains pay much more attention to negative things because they're dangerous to us, they're threats.

0:50:50 Ingrid: And so, we magnify the negative things and positive things carry less weight, so we need more of them. But if you have this... Supposedly if you have this six to one positivity ratio, you'd be golden. So that's been challenged. I think rather than going by numbers, what's more useful is to start to tune in to when you feel good. It's really simple. Well, a lot of us tune out joy. We don't pay attention to it. We don't notice it. We don't notice it happening in our bodies throughout the day. Start to notice it and start to notice what it feels like when you've been going a long time without joy. Start to notice when you are pushing toward a deadline and you... And, if you're the sort of... You'll notice your own habits around it.

0:51:36 Ingrid: I'm someone who really pushes through things and I forget to take care of myself. I forget to take breaks and so, I will notice that I'm sort of going into this tunnel and it doesn't feel

good. And my body doesn't feel good, and my back is hunched, and whatever. And so I need to take a break not just physically, but I need an emotional, a joy break or something, right? So start to notice what it feels like when you do have a lot of joy in your life, when you don't, and where the right... What homeostasis looks like for you because I think it's gonna be different for all of us.

0:52:14 Jacob: See you need to have a little bit of that internal self-awareness piece to understand what gives you that joy, what doesn't when you don't have it for a while. And I think for a lot of people, if you're not getting joy in a long time from your organization, it might be time for reconsider your job, your career choice. So I feel like a lot of people are constantly under pressure where they feel like they're not getting joy from work, and they feel like they have to stay there, but life is short, so people just really need to be aware of, like you said, what joy looks like, and if you're going a long time without feeling joy, it's time to start to ask some questions.

0:52:54 Ingrid: Yeah, I think one of the things in work life that is really important to pay attention to is has your learning curve leveled off? Because I think that is often a source of joy, that is often why when we reach, when we join a new job, we feel really joyful. And then it starts to level off and we lose that joy. Learning is a really powerful route to joy.

0:53:17 Jacob: Oh, okay.

0:53:17 Ingrid: And so, if you're someone who derives a lot of joy from that, you may find that you don't necessarily need to change your job, you need to re-invigorate your learning curve.

0:53:27 Jacob: Oh, okay.

0:53:27 Ingrid: Or if connections is it for you, then start to notice, have you been nurturing your work connections, or have you been just going through the motions? So look for the things that you know bring you joy in other areas of life, too, and say, "Am I doing this in my work or have I just sort of expected work to provide it?"

0:53:47 Jacob: That's interesting. How much of joy, 'cause obviously, I know it's probably not realistic to say, "Well, what if you don't know what gives you joy?" I think most people know some things that give them joy.

0:53:58 Ingrid: Yeah.

0:54:00 Jacob: But how much of joy is having a little bit of curiosity to find maybe new things that give you joy? Especially at work, maybe grabbing coffee with a new co-worker will give you joy, maybe taking on a big project that you didn't think you could do would give you joy. How much of that exploration and curiosity do you think is a part of this?

0:54:21 Ingrid: I think it's vital. Here's what I would say. If you have been... If you're one of the people who has accepted the idea that work doesn't necessarily need to be joyful, then you may have tuned out the kinds of things, you may have not paid attention to that because you didn't expect that work should be joyful and so you weren't looking for it. And I think this is true for anyone. There are people... I think many people do know a few things that bring them joy, but there are people who do not, who cannot name things that bring them joy. I have met many of them in my travels, and I think that there's a very good reason for that and it's because our society often dismisses joy as childish and superficial. And so because we see joy as this thing that we outgrow,

it's childish, it's silly, it's trivial, these little moments don't matter. There are all these reasons why we see joy as not important, a distraction from success, all of the things that we've talked about. It's very possible that you could get to adulthood and realize that you don't know anymore.

0:55:29 Ingrid: And so I think the curiosity is important in work, it's important out of work where you find that you are not, you don't... You can look at it as barriers at different stages. The first barrier is awareness, and so that's where the exploration and the curiosity comes in. You need to be aware of what brings you joy, and you need to... If you don't know, trying things is a really good way to do it and just observing. Starting to ask yourself what you found joy in childhood is a really good way, too, to ask yourself that question. What did I like to do when I was a kid? Because that may point you toward it.

0:56:02 Ingrid: And then, and I think there's time and space. We don't make time and space for joy. So we know what brings us joy, but we don't think it's important enough so we don't make space. And the third one is permission. And in work context, permission is personal permission, but it's also our workplace, whether our workplace sanctions it, or allows it, or makes it feel valid, or makes it feel it's trivial. So I think you can look at those three levels. Awareness is the curiosity the exploration to find it. Time and space is like you intentionally carving out and it goes back to that anticipation. Plan it, put it on your calendar, show yourself that it's important. And then permission, like getting permission or giving yourself permission to do it.

0:56:46 Jacob: And sometimes, I guess, doing uncomfortable things can give you joy. Like for me, I started competing in chess tournaments, which is very, very uncomfortable for me to sit there and I'm nervous and I'm tensed and I'm like... During the tournament, I'm quite uncomfortable, but then afterwards it's done I'm like, "Man, I feel pretty good." You look at the game afterwards, you did something tough. So sometimes, doing some challenging and uncomfortable things, I guess, can bring you joy, too.

0:57:12 Jacob: So one last question before we wrap up, and this is for all the leaders who are listening because I feel like a lot of leaders don't know that they have tremendous power and even responsibility to try to create some joy inside of their organizations for their people. So for all the leaders out there who are listening, who are responsible for others, what advice or suggestions do you have for them so that they can create more joy in their organizations and in their teams? And you can be brutally honest with all of them, they need to hear it.

0:57:44 Ingrid: Okay. Number one, joy starts at the top. If you don't model the behavior of demonstrating that joy is important within your organization, it won't carry any weight because people are so used to the mentality that joy is extraneous, it's not important, I'm not supposed to bring that to work, that it needs to be modeled at the top. And I've seen this in working at IDEO, you see it very, very clearly that leaders at IDEO are joyful. David Kelley, founder of IDEO, is a joyful guy, and he brings that to his work. And he's playful and he tells his funny stories, and sometimes they're stories of failure and they're... But it's a maybe a vulnerable thing. I think recognizing that it may take some vulnerability on your part to feel safe to express joy and exhibit joy in that way.

0:58:37 Jacob: Same with play. If you didn't... You weren't a... If play was not considered important in your household as a kid, you weren't encouraged to play, play might be super vulnerable for you as an adult and certainly as a leader with all eyes on you. So finding other ways to learn that skill, to learn to be vulnerable so you can do that with your team, I think is really

important. And then take your vacations, so that it makes it stay for other people to take vacations, take your leave. Those are things that are very simple things, but they set the tone. So I think that's... Watch what you're celebrating and make sure it's in line with your values and make sure that you do it.

0:59:28 Jacob: And I think having a little bit of fun is okay if you're leader. Don't take yourself so seriously. You gotta relax a little bit out there.

0:59:33 Ingrid: Yeah, I think so. Yeah, it's... It's your own joy, too. You know?

0:59:39 Jacob: Yeah, it is.

0:59:39 Ingrid: So hopefully, it will feed your own joy to do this.

0:59:42 Jacob: Yes. Well, Ingrid, thank you so much for joining me. Where can people go to learn more about you? Where can they find your book? Anything that you wanna mention, please feel free to do so.

0:59:52 Ingrid: Sure. So my book, Joyful: The Surprising Power of Ordinary Things to Create Extraordinary Happiness. You can find that in hardcover eBook audio wherever you get your books. Especially Indies right now, they could really use your support. So if you have an indie lab, you can order it from them. You can find me at aestheticsofjoy.com and I put out weekly articles on finding joy in every aspect of your life that are all backed by research. And then you can find me on Instagram @aestheticsofjoy is the best place to find me there.

1:00:26 Jacob: Yeah, your Instagram profile is awesome. I love all the little cool things you put up there.

1:00:30 Ingrid: Thank you.

1:00:32 Jacob: Well, thank you again very much for joining me, and thank you everyone for tuning in. My guest again, Ingrid Fetell Lee. You can check out her book Joyful. You can find it pretty much anywhere you can find a book. And I will see all of you very, very soon. Ingrid, thank you again.