



J Jeff Dewing

Doing the opposite:

From resilience, self-belief and passion, to the ability to silence their critics, my guests explain why they only see the summit, not the mountain.

BUSINESS DISRUPTORS

Season Two Episode Nine – released July 2022

With Rob Stephenson – Founder of the Inside Out Leaderboard and CEO of Form Score

Removing the stigma around mental ill health

Jeff Dewing:

Hello again, and welcome to Doing the Opposite Business Disruptors, the podcast where you get to meet leaders who have swum against the tide, thrown out the rule book and changed the way their sector does business.

I'm Jeff Dewing and I'm the founder and CEO of Cloudfm, a facilities management organization, where we thrive on taking data driven risk so our clients don't have to.

Today, I'm really excited. You're gonna meet Rob Stephenson. Now, Rob is a campaigner for mental ill health in the workplace. He was himself diagnosed with bipolar disorder when he was just 30 years old. And once diagnosed, he was able to relate to the signs of that disorder. Going back, as far as his late teens.

For those not aware of the condition Bipolar is basically where one minute you are in a deep dark place of depression. And then the next you are full of energy and aliveness to the extreme.

So despite being diagnosed at the age 30, it was still only his close friends and family that knew about it. It wasn't until the royals Harry and William came out about their own mental health and

therapy they took on the death of their mother when they announced that back in 2-17, that's when Rob decided to tell his story openly and vulnerably on Facebook, the response he received to that post was to change his life and his direction for the better.

As a result Rob is now an international keynote speaker on his specialist subject, and he runs a couple of organizations, which you'll hear about during the podcast, offering powerful tools and advice for people in the workplace to manage their own mental health.

Hi, Rob, and welcome to today's podcast. It's great to have you online and I'm really looking forward to our chat.

Rob Stephenson:

Hey, Jeff, good to be here and thank you so much for having me.

Jeff Dewing:

You're more than welcome. So, so Rob, this is a, a hot topic and if it isn't for some people, it should be. So we now talking about things like mental health, mental wellbeing the impacts on our lives impacts on our family. So what I'm interested in is, is your story, how you come through this journey, how you are such an ambassador for what you do now, sort of give us an insight, set the scene for why you are, where you are and what it is you you're trying to achieve.

Rob Stephenson:

Sure. Thank you. So, you know, I'd describe myself as a mental health campaigner and passionate about helping inspire the creation of mentally healthy workplaces and societies. And those are workplaces and societies where people can put their hand up and say, I'm struggling with mental ill health and seek help or workplaces where people can prioritize proactively their wellbeing and think they've got the feel like they've got the permission, the knowledge and the support of those around them to do so. Now this, this mission is personal to me because I experience bipolar disorder, which is a mental illness, and it's a mental illness that's characterized by extremes of mood from very deep, dark depression where I cannot get outta bed, cannot do my job, cannot look after my children. Through to periods of hypermania, where I can take risks. I can make pretty bad decisions and everything in between.

Rob Stephenson:

Now I'm 50. I was diagnosed with this condition when I was 30. I see the signs of it going back through my, you know, twenties, even into my late teens, and I can tell you a lot of stories about what it's like to be kind of locked away in a room thinking I was antisocial and later found out I was experiencing depression or taking my clothes off in public and getting into trouble in nightclubs, you know, by erratic behaviour when I was experiencing periods of hypermania, but I didn't know I had a mental illness. Right. and then when I was diagnosed after a boss of mine kind of intervened and said, I think you need some help. You know, I think you need to just, you, you could do some help with your mental health and persuaded me to go and see the doctor and even research the numbers of some local therapists to you know, to, to make it easy for me to make that move.

Rob Stephenson:

And I got this diagnosis and I thought, 'wow, that explains a lot'. And then I thought, 'wow, I can be fixed. Now the medical profession can make me well'. And for a while they did with therapy and medication, but then the depression came back, Jeff, and it came back with a loss of hope and a sense of futility.

And my story gets a bit darker there where I wanted it all to be over and made an attempt for it to be over. But from that real low point with the love of close friends and family, I learned to manage my condition. And, and what I learned was that therapy and medication and, and that clinical support helps, but also being proactive about managing my wellness, getting good sleep, exercising, prioritizing connections. And over the years, I learned to effectively manage my mental wellbeing and my associated challenges pretty well, and also enjoy some of the strengths that come with that.

Rob Stephenson:

But Jeff, I did so under the radar because of the stigma of mental ill health, *of course. Yeah, yeah.* And the, the, you know, and the fear of how I'd be perceived and, and the real catalyst for me, changing direction to do what I do now was in 2017, I saw the world opening up about mental health, about mental ill health. And I decided to share my story of being bipolar. And it was a pretty awkward Facebook post if I'm honest, but the reaction to that post really changed my direction because I was getting a huge number of people from my immediate network, sharing their stories

of mental health challenges back because I'd created the safe space. And this really motivated me to think, how could I make a difference and set me off on this journey to do all the different things as a campaigner I do now.

Jeff Dewing:

Mm. Fascinating story. So just let me ask you a question that moment that your boss intervened and said to you, 'I think you need help'. How did you feel at that moment when that person identified what they identified and, and asked you that question?

Rob Stephenson:

It was, it was quite emotional. And I, I think there, there was a bit of denial going on for me around that time. You know, I thought I was fine. Clearly I wasn't. And there was when, when I kind of thought, you know, why not? I'm really struggling. Let me give this, this help go and let me follow that advice. There was a sense of relief. Mm-Hmm, <affirmative> a sense of un-burdening, you know, kind of a weight lifting a little bit. And, and I've experienced this a few times with, with, you know, kind of the different degrees of my challenge, but I, I, I felt like I was no longer alone with it. And then at that time, the label of it was, I was initially diagnosed with depression, which later became a bipolar-two diagnosis. That label was quite helpful then mm-hmm <affirmative> because it allowed me to understand I was not experiencing these things alone, that, that millions of other people were experiencing this. And I just never even thought to think that I'd got a mental challenge or a mental illness.

Jeff Dewing:

No, no, because it's in the shadows. Right? And that's, and while it's in the shadows people have to make a judgment. And I guess the one thing that stops us making that judgment is the, this fear of vulnerability. If you're prepared to be vulnerable and say, 'look, I've really got a problem, or I don't understand what I'm doing'. And you can share that, not just with someone that may or may not be able to help you, but with the wider audience, whether your friends, your colleagues, whatever, then, then suddenly vulnerability creates an environment where people want to help you. And that's been the stigma that's preventing people speaking.

Rob Stephenson:

Yeah. But I think I agree with you completely. I mean, vulnerability's interesting. And, and the stigma for me is slightly different because we're happy to be vulnerable about a physical health challenge. You know, if we've broken our leg, people would sign our cast, right? Or if, if we'd got something as serious as cancer, we wouldn't be reticent about telling people that I don't think. And, and we'd be more, I guess, comfortable with that vulnerability, but the stigma of mental ill health means that people are fearful of being vulnerable because they're fearful of how they'd be perceived. Are they gonna be seen as weak? Are they, are we gonna be seen as not able to do our jobs? Are we gonna get passed over for promotion? Will my team think of me differently? What will my friend friends think of me? And that stigma is that fear of how you will be treated with a mental health challenge or a mental illness. And, you know, I think the way mental illness has been portrayed in the media, in movies, you know, *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*, madhouses, asylums, all of this. Yeah. Yeah. It's all contributed to this fear of what is a, just a health challenge in the same way as a physical health challenge is.

Jeff Dewing:

It is. And I think you you've hit nail on the head because as you say, you sign your cast, people can see in touch and feel what it is you're suffering, but they can't see in touch or feel your emotion. Right. So and I think that's where that you do get, but then that comes back down to for me, vulnerability of saying 'I'm prepared to be vulnerable, even if people don't understand I'm still gonna be vulnerable' and I'm speaking as someone that's not gone through that. So I'm not, I'm not a certainly a special purpose on knowledge on this, but the, but the bit I, the reason I'm speaking, the, what I do is because in our organization, we've really opened up to these challenges. And I'm looking at the signatures on emails from we've got 20 odd people in our business.

Jeff Dewing:

That's got a huge banner on their email that says, 'talk to me, I'm a wellbeing guide' - health and wellbeing. So there's people you can specifically go and talk to about education and, and training in how to be receptive of people that just say, 'look, I just, I can't cope. I dunno why I don't understand it, but I just can't cope'. Whereas the old stigma years ago was, you know, the stiff upper lip, chest out, 'for goodness sake, get a grip, man'. Yeah, that was always the, the approach. Whereas now I think COVID has also helped everyone become far more receptive to it.

Rob Stephenson:

I think, well, I think you're right on COVID because I think if COVID has taught us anything, is that we will all struggle with our mental wellbeing to some degree or another. And I think the pandemic was a very unusual situation, whether it was anxiety about the virus itself, whether it was the impact of the loss of connections or being isolated, the worries about jobs or the economy, it affected us all in different ways. But I think we will all have struggled with our mental wellbeing. Now, you know, for me, that's quite helpful because we all have mental health. We all have wellbeing, just like we all have physical health or fitness that can go up and down. So can our mental health and wellbeing. And I think hopefully what we're seeing is that, that the pandemic has caused many more people to engage in the journey of managing their wellbeing proactively because we can all benefit from doing that no matter where we are on the continuum.

Jeff Dewing:

And I perhaps it's a journey. I mean, we have people in our organization that was sitting in apartments with no gardens and, you know, four white walls on a computer on teams and zoom all day. But they were happy to say, 'I just can't deal with this anymore'. But the problem was in the pandemic, you couldn't say, look, go out and get a break. You said I'm not allowed out. So it was just absolutely, you know, the, the devil and the deep blue sea, wasn't it? And I think that's when it really amplified people really struggled, but because the amplification, I think a lot more people started taking it a lot more seriously and realized the severity of what people were suffering.

Rob Stephenson:

I, I think that's right. And, you know, I think what, what the pandemic also highlighted was the importance of our social connections. The change of ways of working now with more flexibility or remote and hybrid are great, mm-hmm <affirmative>, but I think what we'll start to see, and we are seeing it - is that that need for, for real connection with people that we work with, that you can't replicate over a, a teams or a, or a zoom call. And so, you know, I know I, I do most of my work remotely, but I do crave that interaction with people. And I'm making more of a conscious effort to go into town, to, to do face to face meetings, because I think, you know, we are social beings. We need that interaction that, and I think it's very difficult to replicate that through, through a screen.

Jeff Dewing:

I don't disagree, although I'm gonna be slightly controversial. So I very much believe that we have underutilized the ability of remote elements, because we wanna control our own destiny. Right?

We, we don't want the challenges if we take the kids to school in the morning who picks them up. And and 'how do I tell my boss, I need two hours off to do the homework with my son.' We don't need those stresses or pressures. We need to be able to make those decisions ourselves.

But I also believe absolutely in social interaction, I'm a social interaction animal myself, but I don't need it every day of the week. Right. I need it. I need it. I need it frequently, but I don't need it every day. So if you can create that environment, which we've done in our organization, where teams will come together, once every four weeks, six weeks, five weeks, whatever suits them - subject to the problems they wanna solve when they get together. In that moment, the, the connection is so much richer than if you were just going through the motions on a day by day, by day, by day basis. And that's where I think the balance of that hybrid can be really powerful if you get the balance right.

Rob Stephenson:

I agree with that. Yeah. I agree with that. And I think then you're getting into, where do you do different types of work more efficiently and, you know, and, and, you know, doing your deeper work where you've gotta get a report out or you're concentrating, that's never good in an open plan office. There's too many distractions. Yeah, yeah, yeah. The benefits of flexibility we know are great for our, you know, kind of, you know, family life and, and our mental wellbeing. You know I met one of my investors last week for, for a coffee. We could have easily done that over a zoom. And, you know, actually I gave him an update on the business. We kicked a few things around, and then at the end of the meeting, we'd almost sort of shook hands and were leaving. He just came up with this really good idea and, and an introduction followed. And I think, you know, there are moments like that for me, that, that we lose if we're doing everything by, by team zooms. Workplaces as they get, get better at, at remote working. Cause I don't think we've cracked it yet will really help people understand 'where do you do your best work?' And that will differ between types of work types of tasks.

Jeff Dewing:

And, and I guess that's no different to when you're interacting with people whether it be remotely or via email. I mean, how many times have you heard the stories of people emailing their colleagues sitting next to them? Because they don't know when to pick the phone up there's times when you need to have a human conversation versus highly behind text or WhatsApp or email. And we need to continue that education because we've all got too- we found too easy to hide behind email. And by default you lose that social connection. So it is the ability to say, there's a time we say, 'I don't need the type of spend 30 minutes typing an email I need to have a conversation with you'. And I think that's when you start to bring stuff alive.

Rob Stephenson:

Yeah. I, I, I agree with that. I think the other bit though, when working remotely, the one thing that physical office does give us, it gives us breaks in the day, right? Mm-Hmm <affirmative> so if you, if you know, if you're at your desk and you go to meet someone, you walk to a meeting room, if you you'll probably go outside and get your lunch, you may even eat it outside. Whereas I think what we found is that with, with teams and zooms, people are very much at their desk stuck there all day. We don't have that self-Discipline often to go and take those micro breaks in the day. Mm. And I think that's another bit of the educational process for remote workers is, you know, 'okay take your lunch away from your desk. Use that commute time to go for a short walk outside, put a buffer between home and work, make sure you're getting up and stretching and hydrating and, and doing things, you know, regularly on the hour', because we're a bit locked into a very transactional way of working now. And you know, it, it, it was bonkers. We were not commuting, but we were working more hours through the pandemic because people didn't have that off switch effectively. And I think we need to have more discipline to do that.

Jeff Dewing:

And I, and again, I think you're right. I mean, I've been quite lucky cause I, I belong to a couple of peer groups and we, we were very concerned and fearful about exactly what remote working was going to do. So we went deep on remote, working at the very start of the pandemic. And we all put into places, things like no meeting will last more than 40 minutes without a break. And a break is a minimum of 15 minutes. No employee will ever have less than half an hour break in between every meeting. So you'll never ever have a back to back. It's just illegal. It's not allowed. And everybody has

to take one hour a day for thinking time and reflection within the working day. And one of the things we used to try and drive that is apart from the fact, the line managers have to see that break in their diary.

Jeff Dewing:

We love to saying that old Henry Ford come up with years ago and they said, 'thinking is very difficult, which is why so few choose to do it'. But the, the impact on your health, because you, you just can start to free your mind, just think about stuff. And it's not about solving problems. It's about giving yourself that space to just reflect on, on what was good, what was bad we could do differently, what you do better or more importantly reflect on your kids, your family. What you did the weekend, what you didn't do the weekend, but it's giving people time. And when you think that, because we've been able to enforce that because of the technology, the technology enables us to enforce that you could never enforce that in the working in a, in a, in an office, people would choose to sit their desk down.

Jeff Dewing:

Wouldn't even gone to the toilet. I wouldn't even stop for a break. So at least this way. And I actually learned my contributions to this peer group was discussing. It was, I said, and again, I love to be controversial, not intentionally, but it, it creates a conversation, but I'm a smoker, right. Which is clearly not good for your health. But what I do as a smoker is I have a break every 30 minutes to go outside. Right? So the element of me going outside, I'm gonna break is very healthy. So then of course you then had the non-smokers over the last 10 years going, 'well, look, I think we're being badly treated here because we don't go outside and break from work. We are more productive yet we are being paid the same money, blah, blah, blah'. So I then in my organization started to say to people, even when you don't smoke, you go outside for a break and a walk around in a and whatever, just have a break away from the office to work with colleagues and, and the computer. So it meant that, so in a funny way, the smoker helped create some good health by, by, from a mental perspective. <Laugh>

Jeff Dewing:

So, yeah, that's, that's my controversial story, but yeah, well, yeah.

Rob Stephenson:

I mean, I've, I've made, I've made that provocation myself, that the smoking break is actually without the cigarette is, is, is very good because it's certainly given you a break. It's actually informal connections as well. Of course. Cause you tend to congregate with the other smokers in a, in an this type environment. Yeah. And, and, you know, you just shoot, shoot the breeze and, and that's really good. So I think we can take the cigarettes away, but still have that concept of, you know, connecting with others, short breaks, freeing mind. I think that can be pretty helpful for sure.

Jeff Dewing:

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. And again, there are certain elements of the technology that I did find good on zoom particularly, and obviously teams, you can now do it, but they have the breakout room. So if you've got a group of 10, 20 people doing a solving a problem, having conversation, and you can throw 'em into breakout, so three or four people where they have proper deep intimate conversations about the challenges or whatever - you haven't got 20 rooms in your office, you've only got, you know, a space. So there's, there's some value from technology if it's all used and balanced correctly to, to help our mental health. So but yes, listen, it's, it's, it's horses for courses and it's about how serious we're about solving the problems rather than, as I said before, you know, walking the talk.

So listen, Rob, tell me a little bit more about your journey, what you actually do now, how you are actually campaigning to make that difference.

Rob Stephenson:

Yeah. Thank you. So after I shared my story and, and received that reaction I described earlier, I, that really motivated me because I started to understand that so many people in my immediate network experience a mental health challenge, but do so in silence again, because of the stigma. Now I created that ability for them to share with me and I thought, you know, this, this is something that we need to change. And there's some great people working on this change, but I kind of looked for a way to contribute and kept hearing the same message back when I was exploring this, that we do not have enough senior leaders from our workplaces who are open about their challenges of mental I health to act as role models. You know, we have Ruby wax, Steven Fry, Alastair Campbell, but not enough workplace leaders. Yeah. And I thought that's where I could contribute.

Rob Stephenson:

So I set up something called the InsideOut Leaderboard, which is now a charity. And very simply what we do is published a list of CEOs managing directors, partners in the professions, all sorts of workplaces across a number of different countries that all have a mental health challenge and are prepared to say, 'I'm, I'm open about it. And it is okay to talk about this stuff'. And so we've published with over 200 workplace leaders, who've put their name to this and that's had a big ripple effect of more and more following suit, right? So that's the kind of core of what we do. And then around that, I've kind of funded it by being a paid public speaker where I'll go into organizations, share my story, but also a bit of a provocation as to how to get leadership engaged or why everybody in the workplace should engage in a wellbeing journey.

Rob Stephenson:

And that's, I really enjoy doing that. And then the other main thing that I do is something called Form Score, which is a, a technology startup we've been going for two years based around a tool given to me by a therapist actually many years ago to track my wellbeing using a score out of 10. And so I've been doing this for probably 15 years or so, but what we've done, we've evolved that into a, an app that people can record their score and what's driving it, connect with others. So if then, you know, if we are mates on the app, you would see my score. If it were drop to a four, you'd think, 'Hey, I'm gonna check in with Rob' and you'd get a notification. Yeah. Prompting, peer support. And then we use that in organizations by aggregating up to give a realtime metric on team wellbeing and organization wellbeing.

Jeff Dewing:

Yeah. I, I think we have something similar in our organization as well. We have a thing called the sign in and and we talk about work personal and mental wellbeing. It's score out 10 and if you're all, ten's great, you're punching the air, you're on fire. But if you are two you don't have to explain why you're a two, but when you become, when you're in a trust environment, you will explain why you're a two. And then suddenly people just, they all gather around and say, 'right, what can we do to help?' It's amazing. The power of understanding how somebody feels.

Rob Stephenson:

Yeah. Brilliant. I mean, it's, that's exactly the same concept. Yeah. So the, you know, the, the score out of 10, the, the number is a non-threatening way of describing how you're feeling. And, you know, it's much easier to say I'm a three outta 10 or four outta 10 than it might be to say I've got anxiety or I'm feeling depressed today. Yeah, yeah, yeah. But, but yeah. Prompting those moments of community support. So yeah. Check, check out Form Score. It might, might be something

Jeff Dewing:

You and your team. Yeah. I've, I've already, I've, I've already been looking at it since the moment I realized I was bringing you on the show. So, so, so tell me how you've obviously found this new vocation. You found this passion, this purpose where you can contribute and improve the world, to the extent you can, how do you think that's helped your personal situation from a, a mental wellbeing perspective?

Rob Stephenson:

So I, I think in a couple of ways really and it's helped it a lot. I think you you've, you mentioned the word purpose there. And I think for many years I was doing roles that I was successful at, that I could earn good money at, you know, both in kind of recruitment and other things. But I was not passionate about them. I didn't have that strong sense of purpose, so I continually felt unfulfilled. And you know, I dunno if you're aware of that concept of, of Ikigai the Japanese Ikigai

Jeff Dewing:

Love Ikigai. Yeah. Yeah.

Rob Stephenson:

You know, now I feel like I found something the world needs, that's something I could be remunerated for and is doing good. And you know, I feel like I've got that, that very centered that, that centered belief that what I'm doing is what I'm meant to do. Mm-Hmm <affirmative>, and, and, and that is, is, you know, sense of purpose. We know is a core component of wellbeing. Anyway, mm-hmm, <affirmative> Combine that with the passion of doing some good in an area that's been very difficult for me over the years in terms of my own challenges gives me that yeah. Strong sense of, of, of meaning and achievement.

But I think the other bit as, as a bit of a byproduct, is that because I'm a campaigner and I'm really open about, you know, how I am, I literally score it every day on my email signature mm-hmm <affirmative> is I'm no longer carrying the burden of pretending to be something I'm not when I'm struggling. Yeah. And that's, that's, that's also very, very powerful. And so since being open since being a campaigner, the incidences of depression for me have been far less in terms of volume and also in terms of intensity.

Jeff Dewing:

Right? So you would therefore argue that because you're doing what you love, that's had a really positive impact on your own personal situation. And therefore that perhaps adds to one of the things that I'm a big advocate of and Ikigai is my single biggest driver, you know, do, do work out what you're good at, do what you love. You'll never work a day in your life, make sure you can get paid for X, it's gotta be sustainable and what change you're gonna bring to the world. And when you can truly do that, then you're on the journey of fulfillment. And when you're on a journey of fulfillment, it takes an awful lot to bring you down. And it gives you that resilience.

Rob Stephenson:

Yeah. It, it, it, it does because you are you are carried on the momentum of the mission, the importance of the mission you're right. It, you never work a day in your life. It doesn't feel like work. Yeah. You know, I talk about my mission or my projects. I don't talk about work. It's not toil for me. And, you know, at do some pretty hard stuff. Right. Any startup type world you know, fundraising and sales and, and all of these things, creating something new, you know, it, it's, it's tough at times. It's really tough, but you know, the fact that I believe in the mission and, and it gives me the sense of meaning, you know, does help build that resilience as you say, or that bounce back ability.

Jeff Dewing:

So in terms of your journey, which is, which is clear now, and, and anyone that wants to read up on Rob, and I'll give you the details later, will see his story in more detail, but clearly around you, you've had your family, you know, your, your wife, your children, all the things are all, all around you, which by default whether we like, or not, will affect in one way, another positively, negatively. How have they, how would you say they've seen you know, Rob's journey, if you like, especially when you've

gone from where you knew you were from diagnosis up to where you are today, how do, how do they feel about that journey themselves?

Rob Stephenson:

Really good question. And I think, you know, shout out to my wife who knew what she was getting into with me and has supported me through various ups and downs. And, you know, there's times where I'm not present, you know, there's times where all I can do is, is maybe read a book or watch, watch some Netflix shows, or just switch myself off because of what I'm going through.

There's other times where I am so passionate about what I'm doing, I'm also not present or available <laugh>. And so balance for someone like me is, is, is difficult to obtain. And I recognize that I don't always get it. Right. Mm-hmm <affirmative> So I've been very well supported by my wife and yeah, I think often the carers, the supporters of, of those of us that suffer regularly with mental health, don't get enough air time, really. So big shout out to my wife. Yeah. I think, you know, if you were to look at the impact of my change to doing what I do now, I'm probably yeah, I'm, I'm, I'm probably a better husband, a better father because of it

I think, you know, if you'd asked my family, they would, they would say that the change has been beneficial. And I'm a better human being because of it, for me, as I mentioned that, trying to find that balance where I'm equally present for the family, driven with what I'm doing, achieving you know, doing the things I need to do stay well, that balance sometimes is elusive. And I think we've all gotta keep striving for that.

Jeff Dewing:

Yeah. And I guess of course, you're right. And when you look at the support unit, whether that be brother sister's mother, fathers, you know, kids, wives it's about understanding and for me, it's about also not just feeling good about your own journey or might, you know, if it was me, if it was my journey of, of improvement, that I also feel good about the fact that their lives getting better as a result as well, because the support network is, is not as, is intense as it needed to be before. So everyone wins, right? And that's, you know, having a win-win outcome is always the challenge that we need to face. And I think as you say, shout out, not only to the wives and stuff, but the kids, the grandkids, everybody you come into contact with, that's gotta work with you on that, on that journey. And of course they feel fulfilled when they see you coming out the other side in a, in a positive way. And as you say, a better human being.

Rob Stephenson:

Yeah. A hundred percent, hundred percent.

Jeff Dewing:

So Rob, we're gonna wrap it up. Now, I'm gonna ask you one last question. I haven't prompted you for this because I wanted it to be as authentic as it could be. That doesn't mean it's gotta be a, a reach for stars one, but the question I'm now gonna ask you is for, for the person listening if you could give them one piece of advice, only one piece of advice from all the knowledge and wisdom that you've gathered over the years, what would be the standout piece of advice you would give somebody?

Rob Stephenson:

Work out what the one or two things you need to do each week to stay well mentally and prioritize them, guard them passionately and make sure they happen. And that will be different for different people. It could be exercise for some prioritizing sleep, family time with others, but wellbeing is not a nice to have. It is an essential component of high performance. And so religiously guard those and make sure they happen. I'd probably add another one. If you start to struggle with your mental health talk, talk, talk to those around you. Talk to those that you love talk to professionals because talking is the start of the journey to recovery and we're often fearful of talking. So do talk.

Jeff Dewing:

Yeah. Yeah. That's brilliant. Absolutely absolutely buy into that a hundred percent. So listen, Rob, it's been absolutely fascinating talking to you. It's an incredible story, incredible subject, which is I've become very, very passionate about as we get more educated over it. And I thank you for your time and your insight and and I wish you well for the future.

Rob Stephenson:

Thanks for having me, Jeff. And thanks for all that you do in your business making it's great for people to manage their own wellbeing too.

Jeff Dewing:

Yep. No problem at all. Thanks mate.

Rob Stephenson:

Thank you.

Jeff Dewing:

Wow. That was a intense and sensitive conversation on a very sensitive subject that touches many people in different ways, but listen, a massive thanks to Rob for taking the time to talk to me today. So openly and so vulnerably.

I've always been aware of mental health, but obviously COVID and running a business with the amplification of people's feelings during COVID just helped me really appreciate the importance of wellbeing and helping people around you when they need help. Not to mention yourself. We, you know, we all need help at some point.

I think the bit that I found interesting is when he mentioned that the first time just before he was diagnosed was when one of his bosses had said to him, 'listen, Rob, I think you, I think you need some help'. And you know, in that moment, in that moment, how do you react?

Jeff Dewing:

Do you put the barriers up and say, 'don't be stupid. I don't need any help. Who are you anyway'? Or do you actually show that element of humility to say, 'maybe I do' and clearly Rob did. And it helped improve his life to an incredible extent because of that humility and, and humbleness and vulnerability to enable him now to understand what his challenges were and, and how to manage it, but to then go on and decide to use that superpower to help other people in the way he's doing it is, is just fascinating. And I, I guess the reason that I resonate so much with it, is watching how the people of my organization, the journeys they went through, the roller coaster during COVID and the realization that the only thing that mattered was people looking after people in a open and honest and safe way.

Jeff Dewing:

And it's just a realization that as human beings, when you reach out for somebody for help, they, they generally and caringly want to help. And I think that's why we must never let the health and or wellbeing ever become anything other than number one in any organization, we must not drop into 'what we don't see, we don't care about'.

So thank you, Rob. Appreciate that. And it's been absolutely incredible listening to your story.

I'm Jeff Dewing author of bestselling book, 'Doing the Opposite' and CEO of Cloudfm. Cloudfm are changing the rules of our industry and doing the opposite to create best value for all of our clients. If you'd like to know more, please feel free to visit our website at cloudfmgroup.com or by all means, follow us on LinkedIn.

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Thanks for listening.