



Season four Episode three- released November 2023

In this episode of Doing the Opposite: Business Disruptors, Jeff Dewing speaks to Dr. Joan Fallon, Founder and CEO of Curemark, a biopharmaceutical company focused on developing novel therapies for the treatment of neurological and other disorders. Joan is considered a visionary scientist who has dedicated her life's work to championing the health and wellbeing of children. Her recent book Goodbye, Status Quo, equips readers with the tools to be agents of change: as entrepreneurs, leaders, and individuals.

Dr Joan has been disrupting in her field her entire life. Born out of curiosity, she describes disruption as discovering 'seams' or 'faults' in our continuum; a desire to understand and question leads to disruption. This curiosity and tenacity to discover an answer has been Joan's key driver throughout her research into Autism. *"When we finally got to a place where I thought, 'oh this could be a why', then I had to go and test it and figure out whether that was right or not."*

Jeff Dewing

Hi and welcome to Doing the Opposite Business Disruptors. The podcast where you get to meet incredible and inspirational leaders that have swum against the tide, thrown out the rule book and done great stuff for their sectors or their businesses. I'm Jeff Dewing, founder and CEO of Cloud Facilities Management, number one bestselling author and podcast host.

Today you're going to meet Dr Joan Fallon. Now Joan, as she likes to be called, has been on a lifelong mission since she was in sixth grade in America, and Joan has focused her entire life's work on autism, trying to understand what causes autism, what is autism? How do we treat autism? And it's one of the subjects that the medical world has shied away from because of its complexity and its lack of pattern.

Joan tells an incredible story in her new book, The Status Quo, which basically focuses on the tenacity of trying to enrich millions of children's lives and, of course, their parents that have to go through the anxiety of dealing and managing and living and loving an autistic child.

So what Joan did was she searched long and hard for patterns. What were the patterns that separated autism from normality? And she spent years and years testing, researching, to find that she couldn't find any patterns! But in this world of entrepreneurialism and desire and purpose, she didn't give up and eventually she found a pattern. And the detail of all of

her story is in her incredible book. Now Joan's journey has been an incredible one, one where she just simply hasn't given up, and I can't wait for you to meet her, because her story is fascinating.

So, Hi, Joan! Thank you so much for taking the time to join me today on my podcast. I love people with stories like yours. I can't wait to get into this conversation. I'm going to hear you share your expressions and stuff, so welcome!

Dr. Joan Fallon

Thank you so much and I'm honoured to be here.

Jeff Dewing

So, Joan, you've obviously got a story, and I've done a fair bit of research on you. I'm always interested in people who've got a story. So tell me what is disruption to you. Tell me how you first understood the power of disruption and how it sort of shaped your life, if you like.

Dr. Joan Fallon

That's a great question.

So I think, if we go back to my blue and red tubes, it was a science fair project where I was talking about cardiac bypass surgery and how it was going to be the future of medicine, and indeed it's still being done, right? Still the major way that we repair the heart, sort of and so that's many, many years later.

And so I think that thinking differently and finding unique solutions to problems is really what disruption is about. And I often talk about how people think that the world is sort of a status quo. That it's one seamless level of events or occurrences, but the reality of it is, I believe, that there are seams, like faults in that continuum and as a result of that, up from those seams comes a disruption.

It comes out of as we we travel along the journey. There are places where, from underneath, as we unearth things, that the disruption comes. And so I feel like I've been sort of doing that my whole life. I was a sports person at a time where there's no title nine in this country, so I couldn't play Little League or do those things. My father took me and fought fought for me to be able to do those things, and now, today, it's a very big business, even.

Jeff Dewing

I'm interested in that concept you talk about with the status quo, because status quo is almost a translation of, 'but we've always done it that way'. I'm interested in this theory about 'seams' - I've never heard that put that way. I love that idea. So you're going along a journey and suddenly you think, 'oh, what's there? And you feel like this weakness, this stitched, this stitch glued together, what I wonder? What's under there?' And that's coming back to something you, you clearly say frequently, and it's probably the number one word I use in my business the word curiosity. I'm curious about what's under that seam. And suddenly this stuff gets unearthed.

Dr. Joan Fallon

Exactly, exactly, and that's really, I believe, how that happens and certainly, as I have done those things in my younger years and even now in my company, how I founded the company was all about that. What's under here? And everyone said to me oh, you know, kids with autism, they have sensory things and that's why it looks this way. I'm like, 'no, I don't think so'.

Jeff Dewing

I want to know more.

Dr. Joan Fallon

Right, I want to understand. Doesn't make sense to me. You know, and I think that you know, there are certain things that make sense, but it's always difficult for me to understand when someone says, 'oh, it's this', when the rest of it doesn't fit, like a puzzle, like that piece doesn't fit. It might look okay there, but it doesn't fit.

Jeff Dewing

I think the other words you use a lot, and again it's something which all leaders use and that is the word tenacity. So when you were talking about I'm trying to understand the patterns of autism, and I couldn't find any patterns and until eventually the tenacity said but it's got to be somewhere, I've got to keep looking, I've got to keep looking.

And I guess when you speak to some people - and you just made reference to it - when I say no, it is that the other piece sits there and people are happy and content because it's almost too hard to find the problem. There isn't the purpose, there isn't the drive that these are. Therefore, they just say 'let's just leave it alone. I've decided the answer, I've decided I'm content with that', but then they're not driven to solve the problem and I guess that's where entrepreneurship comes alive.

Dr. Joan Fallon

Right, that's right! And that's what leadership is. People think that leadership is someone in government ruling the country, or someone with a flag leading people on a trip, but the reality is that that leadership is all about solving problems, and if you can help solve problems, then you are a leader. I think people don't don't think of leadership that way, but that's really what's about solving problems.

Jeff Dewing

I'm always curious about why I think what I think sometimes I sort of reflect and challenge and I guess, when your children that when they're at that age of sort of three, four, five, six, before they go to school, all they're saying is, 'yeah, but why'? Yeah, but why?

There is this incredible curiosity around kids and yet as you go through the educational system and you'd be exposed to adults and we're all wired for this sort of different behaviours, that suddenly that curiosity is constrained, it's sort of wired out of us and therefore it's only those that have got that I guess, entrepreneurial desire, disruptive desire that maintain that curiosity. It seems like we're dragging the curiosity out of kids. We're saying no, it just is what it is. Stop asking questions.

Dr. Joan Fallon

Right. The educational system ends up being about feeding information. Right. They need to have this information. But I always say, when young people say to me, 'if you had one thing to teach me about what you've learned in your life, what would you say'? And I always say the same thing Information does not equal knowledge, and knowledge is not equal wisdom. And just because you have all this information doesn't mean that you're going to be really good at using it or applying it. And so I think that the young people think, because they have all this information at their fingertips, that they'll know how to use it wisely, and they just don't all the time.

Jeff Dewing

No, that comes back down to tenacity. Why, why, why, why, why?

I've written an article on LinkedIn a few days ago and it was about how the average leader, or the average human being, makes 35,000 decisions a day, and it's created an incredible debate, which I know it would, because the problem you've got is we're now. We're now, consumed with data coming out of every angle, every orifice. There's data everywhere and there's arguments one way that says, 'well, the data is not rich enough'. There's other arguments that says there's too much data. There's all these explanations of people trying to fit the square peg in the round hold, and the reality is how do you decide what data is important?

Just because you have it doesn't mean it's relevant, and therefore it's about how do you truly get to the nub of what is what problem you're trying to solve? The key to life is knowing the right questions to ask.

Dr. Joan Fallon

Always. First of all, you can't collect the right data without knowing what question to ask, and if you don't have the experience, you've got all these data guys trying to collect information, some of which is erroneous and it will give you a fallacy.

But I go back to the original scientific inquiry, or the original learning kind of inquiry. There's inductive reasoning and there's deductive reasoning. We have defaulted everything to an inductive model. Information, information, information, information, information, and that will lead you to a conclusion.

If you have too much data, it's not going to get you there, You're going to make a lot of noise. If you have too little data, you're going to miss something right, and so a combination of deductive and inductive is much better. But we've sort of defaulted to the one model. Even in our healthcare system it's all inductive. Allopathic medicine is inductive and you can make a mistake if you don't look at the right thing.

Jeff Dewing

There's another story I've got with a lady I know very well and she went through a traumatic time of illness when she was much, much younger.

She decided that she'd been to the doctors because she had indigestion or digestive

problems or something. She went to a doctor and the doctor was treating the symptoms and she'd have some other problem. The doctor would treat the symptoms and she had another problem. The doctor treated the symptoms and nothing was getting any better.

So she decided to do her own research. She became a doctor herself because what she said was look, everything is connected. Everything is connected. So I've got to look at the whole picture, not just these little pieces all of the time. And if you think about it, that's how we live our lives, right? We know we're trying to address all the symptoms. We never really understand how to focus on the root cause. And in business environment you can have people behaving badly, you can have people that are aggressive, you can have people that are toxic. You can have all these different things and you start addressing the toxicity or you start addressing how people are behaving. The crux of it is how do you create an environment and a culture that makes all those things go away, it's still solved the one problem that makes all the other symptoms disappear, rather than trying to treat every symptom.

Dr. Joan Fallon

And that's deductive reasoning. You look at the whole thing and then you see what's wrong and then you have juxtaposition. You have a relativity that gives you insight rather than just looking at the small pieces, so I'm right there with you.

Jeff Dewing

People used to say that we've gone through this journey of sort of a bit circular, but data is the new oil and I say I'm saying data is worthless, it has no value at all. It's the insight that has the value, the insight that data creates. Right? Because that's where you move forward.

Dr. Joan Fallon

Right, that's right, absolutely.

Jeff Dewing

So tell me a bit more about your story then, so as you move through your journey of autism and your focus, and then you start writing patents left, right and center and just sort of tell me about what's driven that journey harder or faster.

Dr. Joan Fallon

Overall it has to do with the fact that it's a huge unmet medical need in the world, not just in the US but everywhere. And so there's that piece. But what was driving me initially was the why, why, why, why, why, right? And so then when we finally got to a place where I thought, 'oh, this is why, or this could be a why', then I had to go and test it and figure out whether that was right or not. But that's where sort of this disruption came in, because we're doing something that was completely novel. So we're talking about a gut brain drug. There isn't any, right?

So you got the gut brain drug. Most drugs are discovered, or the way that they do it is they put it bunch of molecules in a laboratory, see which one they can patent, and then they try to apply them to a disease. It's not about what they see in a patient. The patient's the last person that they consult, basically. And then for us there's no, and there still is no, venture

type money in autism drug treatment because of the uncertainty. So I had to go overcome all of that in order to do this and I was undaunted in terms of knowing that, 'Look if this can help children. I need to get there', and it didn't matter whether people said that's not going to work. I don't understand what you're doing. What do you mean, a gut brain drug? And now of course we've got a microbiome and all that stuff. The gut brain thing is not so weird. When I first started this, it was like what are you talking about? So I've been through a lot of iterations of people looking at this and saying 'I don't understand it, to like oh yeah, now I get it,' and so there's a lot of pieces there.

Jeff Dewing

So what do you think that you had that drive and that tenacity? Why do you think that you just didn't give up?

Dr. Joan Fallon

So I think that the knowledge that I could help millions of children if it worked right? Or the potential for helping millions of children and I'm very authentic, so if you don't know what causes this, then just saying 'it doesn't exist' is not real. That's not the right thing. People say, oh, they relegate some kind of symptom to... it's in your head, it's psychosomatic, it's this thing or that thing, but that's not real. Right, that's not real.

And so I used to say to the parents of the children who came in if there was something that you know the kind of practice I had with people came to me for like a second, third opinion to see if I can figure out what's going on with a child. And I said, look, I may not know the answer, but I will dog this to death with you, to get an answer. Brilliant. I can't tell you how many times I've said to the parents I will dog this to death with you. Because there is an answer. I mean, maybe there is an a treatment. You need to know that this, what you're seeing, is real and part of a picture. So that's kind of my approach.

Jeff Dewing

So where would you say you are in your journey right now?

Dr. Joan Fallon

So I think we are going into a whole new phase of my journey, which is, you know, we've completed the trials, we're getting ready to submit to FDA, and the question is now how do we go forward? Do we, you know, we have to manufacture a drug to get approval anyway. Do we do that ourselves? We build out an infrastructure? Do we license it to someone? There's all that whole new financial world. Well, I'm living in a very different phase and for me, it's always about bringing other people on who have that expertise, right?

Jeff Dewing

Yeah, Right, knowing the stuff you've been through, knowing the challenges, the hurdles, the barriers that you've had to navigate on this journey, and you're now coming into another set of barriers and brick walls, and God-knows-what. Would you say that, ok, this is the time on it to bring somebody in that perhaps understands that process more than perhaps the medical side of it that I've been dogged about? So is that the piece you're now trying to get those people?

Dr. Joan Fallon

Yes, yes, and we've just brought one person on. You know, we have bankers that we work with, so we are in that phase now where we're able to. The thing I do know is what I don't know, and that's really important when you do an entrepreneurial journey.

Yeah, you can't raise a company. I call it like raising a child. You can't raise a company trying to figure out what it's going to be in the end or who's going to buy you. Yeah, you can't manage it to an exit. You can't manage a child to an exit, right?

Jeff Dewing

Although some parents would like to do that.

Dr. Joan Fallon

Yes, some do and some do, which is kind of interesting, but it's not the outcome when you manage to an exit.

Jeff Dewing

The whole point of this podcast really is to understand people's motivations. What makes them do what they do. And I guess, when you look at business men, SMEs or people that start the business, most people start a business because they feel that there's an opportunity to increase their financial stability, their wealth, their growth. We're going to be rich, we're going to have a big boat. And then some people start a business because they want to solve a problem, they want to enrich other people's lives somehow or another. And then you sort of think, well, hang on a minute, you focused on making huge impacts, on providing water for the 4 billion people that don't have water, and you sell a million bottles of water and you make a profit. You go, wow, wow, wow.

The people that have done that in the first place and navigated all those challenges. Making the money is not about their new house or their new boat, it's 'I can make another million bottles' and it's all about creating that momentum to help more and more and more and more people solve a problem and enrich their lives. And that's what true entrepreneurs are doing. They're out there to make a difference. Without it being all fluffy and whatever it is truly about - if you see a make and a difference, then that just gives you more energy to do it again and make further and faster.

Dr. Joan Fallon

Right, that's right. And for me I went before I started the company. I went back to school to learn how to do a clinical trial. I knew I needed that skill and then, I used to say I went kicking and screaming into being a biotech person. It's the last place I wanted to be and but I was compelled because of the promise of this finding. And you know I never did it for the money. I was very happy in my life, but I just felt that if I didn't do it, I always have that nagging feeling like, well, wait a minute, I could have helped, maybe to help this kid, and I didn't.

Jeff Dewing

Yeah, regrets. You'd have faced regrets.

Dr. Joan Fallon

Yeah. I have to live with myself and I could not live with myself unless I tried.

Jeff Dewing

So what sort of attention are you getting about this product, about this solution, about these trials outside the US?

Dr. Joan Fallon

We're getting quite a bit now. The thing about autism is that the community has not been united. It's much better today, but in the beginning, when I started this, it was very disparate in terms of what they thought caused autism, how you go forward with this whole thing, and it was very different depending on who you spoke to. Parents blame themselves, there were all kinds of things going on, and so I decided that I didn't want my drug tried in the court of public opinion, but rather in the court of FDA.

Jeff Dewing

Of course.

Dr. Joan Fallon

And so we stayed under the radar screen for a long time. But now, for example, the highest incidence of autism in the world is in the Middle East, and so we now have their attention, and what we've done has had tremendous safety. So we feel good about giving it to small children, and so we're starting to get a lot of traction around other parts of the world where the autism is especially high.

Jeff Dewing

And is there any other areas outside of the Middle East that is prominent, or is it sort of pretty even across the wider geographical spectrum?

Dr. Joan Fallon

I think that, for example, China has a very large population as well, probably equal to the US. That seems to be the numbers, because of the difference in the China proper around rural living and urban living, all these children were undercounted for a long time.

Jeff Dewing

Right, of course.

Dr. Joan Fallon

And now, when they did a proper study, they realized that it's about the same as the US. Maybe about 1.5% of children have this, which is a lot.

Jeff Dewing

It is. It's huge. And of course, most people, I guess, that didn't understand autism were also frightened of it, fearful of it, didn't know how to manage it. And you then get the disparity between, especially in the world of schools, and poor kids are just sort of outcasted as not normal. And yeah, it's one of those things that, when you look at diversity and inclusion and religion and all these things, that for us we just parked them in different boxes, didn't we

over the last sort of 70, 80 years, whereas now it's about no, come on, guys, we've got to get to the bottom of this stuff.

It's an interesting subject, but it's one of those subjects you think, 'God, this is huge. How are we going to do this'? And that's another reason why I ask you've got you looking at stuff that's massively important, especially with children, which touches everybody's hearts to some degree or another, and you've got people that want to fix the oceans, to save the planet, to create carbon capture and carbon sequestration, and you think this is huge. Yet these people are not fearful of taking it on because of their passion, their drive and their purpose.

Dr. Joan Fallon

Right, that's right, yeah, absolutely!

Jeff Dewing

I think the most powerful words you've said is 'I realize that I don't know what I don't know'. So I think you're now at this stage of trials, in this new phase, this new journey. When do you think you must have timelines in your head that you're trying to achieve? How long do you think it's going to be before you've got to that stage where it's now sort of freely available, licensed and out there in the world?

Dr. Joan Fallon

Yeah, I think that it's going to be another, probably 18 months or two years.

Jeff Dewing

Well, that's not too far away right in our world.

Dr. Joan Fallon

Yeah, that's right. Yeah, yeah, we're on the home straight right, we're on the home straight.

Dr. Joan Fallon

Absolutely. So we're hoping to out license to some regions and also get the FDA approval here. Oh, it's been a journey and it always takes longer and it takes more money than you think it's going to take. Always.

Jeff Dewing

Oh, it always does. Yeah, yeah, we start with your remodel your house. You've got a budget and it's always twice as much. It's it. I mean, even those basics we get wrong don't we, but there you go.

Dr. Joan Fallon

I have to say that the in the world of disease and health, people are more willing to spend money on an adult who loses function, rather than a child who never gains any.

Jeff Dewing

Wow, that's another perspective, isn't it?

Dr. Joan Fallon

Yeah, because you know you've got Alzheimer's and you've got. You're throwing all that money at it. And they thought that they had the clear path to understanding what Alzheimer's and they don't. But they're throwing massive money at it even with that because they feel that it's. You know it's tragic that you lose function, tragic that a child never gains that function either.

Jeff Dewing

Do you think that's because of sponsorship? Because if you imagine, we've all had our parents that we will love dearly, and then you've got, you know, people have become extremely influential, you know, whether it be a Bill Gates or Steve Jobs or a Morgan Freeman or whoever it is, that then suddenly has a parent that's suffering with either dementia or Alzheimer's, and they then become the sponsor, the voice of whatever, and therefore it attracts the attention that that does because of the influence that they have. And, of course, it's really impacting on them. Yet, you know, maybe children have not gained the skill that perhaps they should have done. You almost look at 'what's the opportunity of that getting a voice versus these people's personal experiences losing their parents that they've loved for 50, 60, 70 years, and you know it's interesting to understand. Why might that be?

Dr. Joan Fallon

Yeah, that's a great question. I think that that that's true. I think there are a couple other factors in there. So, for example, when you go through FDA you normally follow a pathway that's been done before. So you know that if you do these kinds of outcome measures and you've got this kind of data, you're gonna get approval. So people don't want to take the risk of doing something completely novel.

Jeff Dewing

Of course.

Dr. Joan Fallon

So there's that, from a private company side. I think that the influencers like Gates and those other people who are interested in healthcare, they actually are able to put a large amount of money. People go where the money is. It's like vaccines. I think we probably will find a way to administer that kind of technology in a different manner going forward. But the idea, the whole concept of vaccine is sort of antiquated in a way. I mean, we're still using it with the thought that you're gonna give immunity to everyone, right, by giving the same dose to everyone, kind of is counterintuitive in a way.

I think that there's probably new technology. But also what happens is if you use the same people, the same physicians, the same mindset, that you have always been using or was always been at the forefront of medicine, you're gonna get the same outcome. You're gonna focus on the same things.

Jeff Dewing

Well, that's the definition of insanity - doing the same thing, but expecting different results.

Dr. Joan Fallon

Yeah, I think so. Yeah, you need to be able to take bets on things that are novel and disruptive.

Jeff Dewing

I met a lady two weeks ago. In her 30s she discovered a huge tumor in her chest and went and had it checked and they said, 'Yeah it's cancer'. And they said we're gonna do an investigative bit of surgery. Just to have a look. Which they did and they found this tumor was encased in a solid case. And they said to her 'right, we're gonna have this casing to take a sample to see what is'. And she said, 'no, you're not, it's encased because it needs to be encased. Right, my body has decided it needs to be encased. So if you want to open it up, you do it outside of my body, you don't do it my body'.

So anyway, they they had a big hoo-har. She won the argument and they closed back up again. She said 'well, what's the plan now'? So they said we're gonna put you on a heavy dose of chemotherapy and we're gonna do all the things we need to do, and then we're gonna do this major operation. She went 'you're gonna completely break my body down in chemo and then do a major operation?'. They went yeah, she said 'no, you're not'. So she then did such. Yet she works in Harley Street as a psychologist and she decided that she was gonna research a situation.

Anyway the purpose of this story was that every paper she read about this subject from doctors across the world, she kept hearing one common line which worried her to death for the public, and that one common line was 'the reason that we're issuing chemotherapy at this stage, which seems counter-intuitive, is to simply orientate the patient towards hospital'. That was it!

Dr. Joan Fallon

Oh my god, that's ridiculous.

Jeff Dewing

Isn't it, but that's what they've always done, because that's what they believe is their approach.

Dr. Joan Fallon

When you have an encased tumor, the wisdom of the body encased.

Jeff Dewing

Exactly, course it has.

Now that was her just using common sense. She's not a physician, she's not a doctor, she's not a medical student. She's now 70. They gave her three and a half / four months to live and she's lived number 30 years, and she's been free of it ever since.

But the point of her story was, if this isn't a definition of people just following the herd and doing what everybody else does and never asking why or what's the alternative, and to then realise that something so severe, that's about a matter of life and death, and everyone

follows the same line. Without any rhyme or reason.

Dr. Joan Fallon

Right, exactly, it's more like a trade - if you have this kind of leek, you do this kind of thing. It's very you know, sort of reactionary. There's never any thought and in some places like the UK, if you deviate from that, you're actually in trouble. In the US you have to really have gone egregiously over-treated or under treated or use things that were... But doctors have a lot more freedom here, right? There - they don't.

And so if the protocol says no more chemotherapy or no more this and you decide to use something very different in small amounts and it keeps that person alive for years, it's a problem.

Jeff Dewing

Which is scary Right? That's how we live our lives. We're back to that word 'status quo' aren't we. We've always done it this way, and, of course, because the society says we can't let you think out the box, we can't let you ask why, because we're in a claim culture that says we may end up getting it wrong and having to pay loads of money. No one's actually caring about the outcome. They're caring about how do we protect ourselves in the event of something going wrong and, of course, creativity, entrepreneurs never come alive if you're not prepared to try new things, and if you're gonna be banished from trying new things because the consequences are too great, then what you do is you create a society of robots and therefore, there's no growth, there's no evolution.

Dr. Joan Fallon

You know, that's exactly right.

That's exactly right. Yeah, you can't. We'll never go anywhere. You know we'll never do anything, and I think it's one of the criticisms about our educational system here, as well as the way we're looking at making changes and how we're supporting our entrepreneurs, especially women entrepreneurs. I testified in front of the Congress here about women and people of colour who don't patent their idea and why that is and what we can do to change it, because they estimated that if they did, our GDP would go up significantly benefits everyone. So I think that there's a lot here that people are afraid. Change is scary.

Jeff Dewing

So there's a challenge, let me challenge you on that. So I do a few keynotes and I love to create controversy. I love to create a silence and a pause, in a room, and I stand up and I say I've never met anybody in my entire career that is fearful of change. Everybody that I've met in my career is fearful of the uncertainty of change. It's certainty and uncertainty.

If you can create Certainty during the change, everyone will accept change. Well, they can't accept the uncertainty of the change.

Dr. Joan Fallon

But I don't think you can create certainty when things change. I think it's hard to do that, but I agree with you, it's really the uncertainty. People want to know - this is going to happen

next, this is going to happen next. But when something changes, maybe all those elements are there, but it'll be in the same order? It's very hard to create certainty around change.

Jeff Dewing

I can only use COVID, which gave the world a lot of education about how you manage things, how you don't manage things. We all let to learn on the way. I guess the bit that we that I learned was during COVID. We have a lot of staff and we were communicating every two, three, four days because people were worried, obviously. Well, at some point we thought it was going to wipe out the population, didn't we?

The uncertainty was 'have I got a job, am I about to pay my bills' and all that other bit of space. And all we did was we said no, we can't create certainty. I think it should be fine in three weeks. That was never the aim. But all we did do is say that, whatever happens, we are all in it together and we live to protect each other. So what we can give you is a certainty that you'll never be alone. So it's a question of what certainty are you going to create, and what certainty do people want? And I think that was the driver that helped people get through it, because that was the level of certainty that they needed, knowing that no one could tell them what was going to happen next week or next month, because we were all seeing what was unfolding.

Dr. Joan Fallon

That's exactly right. People had to make instantaneous changes, just to survive, in some cases.

Jeff Dewing

Well then you look at the human spirit, right. Then we sent everybody home because everything is shut, as you can imagine, on the lockdowns. We surveyed all their stuff three weeks later and said 'how are you finding it?'. And 90% come back and said we hate it, we just want to get back in the office, we want the wife's driving me mad, the kids are driving me mad, all the usual things are going on. And we said, 'yeah, okay, we'll find, you can't come back to the office because we're on lockdown'.

Anyway, we was on lockdown for four or five months. After four months, in the July, we surveyed the people again. 90% said we love it because they'd learned to adapt. They had no choice, so they were forced to think about things differently, whereas it was really easy to say, 'no, I don't like this, I want to do that', but when they're in that environment, they can't change. We adapt with the human race, right, and that's why suddenly the world has become a better place. People have got more freedom and they've got more control over the destiny and so on. So it's become a good thing from that perspective.

But the interesting thing is that everybody making the choice at that time would have said 'no, I want to go back to the old way'. Now they're saying 'no, I really like the new way'. And it's interesting that people have to go on that journey.

Dr. Joan Fallon

And just to add to that a little bit, I don't think we needed to be as uncertain about the pandemic and it coming in as we were. So when in January of that year - one of our vendors

is Chinese, he was there with his family and we're hearing these little reports, yada, da, da da. And he spent a lot of time on the phone with me talking about how Wuhan is like the centre of the inland commerce and all of that. He talked about how severe it was there even in January. But we knew that - he's on the ground, he knew that,

And then I went to Qatar in the end of February, beginning of March, at the behest of the ambassador, to go see the autism facilities there, meet children and families with autism, and it had just started to come there. And what they did was they called all of their citizens back and quarantined them for two weeks in a hotel and then let them integrate back. But they wanted everybody home. They didn't want people going back out. If they work in Dubai or something, they go back and forth. They were wise enough to bring everybody home.

So when I got home I said to my staff. I said two things. One is, we have these children still on a clinical trial and they're all getting a drug. Now I want them to have six months of drug available to them and I want you to pay everyone in the office for two months. They were like 'what are you talking about?' I said, well, we're going to end up shutting down here and I don't want my drugs stuck at the warehouse because the warehouse shut down and I lived through 9-11 in New York City where the Bank of New York had no computers because they were in World Trade Center, so in order to get money, they had to know you. I want people to have that money at home where they can actually use it. They needed it and they couldn't get to a bank. The bank shut down and so it was soon after that that everything else shut down. We need to look around us. We don't always look at what's going on beyond what we can do.

Jeff Dewing

But again, you come back down to, who are the influencers in our lives, because you've just said something that's quite important. Because of 9-11, you had the experience of what could happen in terms of things that may prevent you from doing what you want to do. The bank loses communication, losing computers, you can't communicate and therefore everything stalls. So you used that knowledge, wisdom, experience to realise hang on, I need to be a step ahead of the game here on the element of this that I do understand.

I was in Portugal. I got stuck in Portugal in the Covid. What happened in the UK was we had our Prime Minister saying this is just a bad cold, please don't panic everybody. And then we had the force of lockdown on the other bits and pieces going on.

In Portugal they didn't have lockdowns, they had curfews. And in Portugal, their government said 'this virus will kill you'. Different message, and that sort of honesty because it was true meant that the people didn't have to be told to wear masks, they didn't have to be told to wash their hands, they did it automatically. Because the message was this virus is going to kill you, whereas over in the UK 'Oh it's just a bad cold, stop making a fuss', I don't need to wear a mask. It was just a different message, but you get two completely different sets of behaviours.

Dr. Joan Fallon

Right, yeah, I agree and I think that being realistic, you know, short of panicking everyone,

but the virus killed a lot of people.

Jeff Dewing

It did yeah.

Dr. Joan Fallon

That's truth of it. And then they utilized the way they always did things - so when a person had an oxygen saturation of a certain number, they put you on a ventilator and it made it worse, because that's how they always did things.

Jeff Dewing

That was the procedure, yeah, and we're not allowed to deviate because someone might sue us.

Dr. Joan Fallon

Right.

Jeff Dewing

Unbelievable, unbelievable. Anyway, listen Dr Joan we're going to bring this to an end now. It's been a fascinating conversation and I can't wait to see you get over the next 18 months and have a little victory dance and a glass of champagne. That'll be fantastic.

But what I want to do now is just ask you a couple of questions. If there was one message that you would send to the audience, what would that one be? It can only be one. What would that one message be?

Dr. Joan Fallon

Look around. Use your peripheral vision. Don't focus so narrowly on life in general.

Jeff Dewing

Brilliant answer, Brilliant answer. And then the final one - what would you say you were most grateful for?

Dr. Joan Fallon

I would say the support of humans. The people who supported me in this journey. They just supported me on every level. Doors opened where they should never have opened, and I think that I've had a lot of support from people around me, from the bigger community, so I'm very grateful for that support.

Jeff Dewing

That's fantastic. And again, a lot of us perhaps need to learn just how much people will help you, especially if you're prepared to show genuine vulnerability, because when you're vulnerable, people just want to help you.

Dr. Joan Fallon

That's what's all about!

Jeff Dewing

Listen, Dr Joan it's been absolutely fantastic talking to you and if I'm in New York I'm definitely going to reach out to you because it would be great to have a coffee.

Dr. Joan Fallon

Please, come! I would love that!

Jeff Dewing

Thank you very much, Dr Joan, and have a great week.

Dr. Joan Fallon

Thank you, thank you so much!

Jeff Dewing

Well, a big thank you to Dr Joan Fallon. What a lovely lady. An incredible story, incredible tenacity, incredible curiosity and a drive that was simply born out of the desire to help millions of children, and she's so close to getting the FDA approval that will have that impact. And, of course, she also had to run her trials through COVID and all the challenges that that brought in terms of preventing the medicine or the money moving because of COVID being locked down. So an incredible, incredible journey.

What I loved about Joan was this - I don't know, she had a spark in her eye. There seemed to be nothing that would phase her. And when she asked that question at the end, when I said, what are you most grateful for? And she said the people that surrounded me, the people that helped me, the people that supported me, and you can tell that she's the sort of person that you want to support. Right, she was just such a lovely lady, and the reason I want to support her is, for me, was pretty obvious. She was prepared to be open, honest, had a huge amount of integrity, but, most importantly, she was vulnerable. She needed help to solve this problem, and when she tells her story, you can understand why people rallied behind her, because it's such an incredible cause and, as she said, that you know we're spending across the globe are spending limitless amounts of money on researching diseases for, you know, the towards the end of life. You know Alzheimer's, dementia, all the things that we'd love to fix, obviously, but we're spending no money on the children that have not gained, that ability to do the things they should be able to do as children. So it's an interesting, an interesting subject, nevertheless.

I'm Jeff Dewing, host of Doing the Opposite Business Disruptors. Please do listen back to previous episodes when we've had some incredible guests like Nazir Afzal, who is the ex Chief Crown Prosecutor, and Sue Fennessy, who has just launched this incredible new social platform that is going to disrupt Facebook, twitter, instagram and, with such a positive message and vibe, incredible stories from incredible people.

You can find out more about the podcast and my incredible guests by visiting jeffdewing.co.uk or, alternatively, you can learn more about CloudFM on cloudfmgroup.com.

Finally, a big thanks to my incredible team Nichola Crawshaw at Cloud FM, Thinking Hat PR and of course, my production team What Goes On Media. Thanks for listening.

