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MBS ([00:00](#)):

I'm just back from an extended visit to Australia and as a farewell act, a farewell treat, I took my family, my mom, my two brothers and their extended family out to a fancy dinner. Now, I'm a vegetarian or maybe a pescatarian, I eat some fish occasionally, but I decided to take everybody to a high-end steakhouse which was confusing for everybody because they've just had three months of me going I don't need meat. But I wanted to go there because, well, they're all committed carnivores, not all of them, but most of them are committed carnivores. And I also knew that most of them hadn't had the experience of the theater and the rituals that go with a classic steakhouse. And not only was the food great, there were these moans of appreciation of a really good steak around the table.



MBS ([00:51](#)):

But as dinner unfolded, I ran a little pop quiz, I guess you could call it. I broke everybody into three teams, three rounds of questions, slightly dubious prize. So, there's a sense of engagement and interaction and competition and, bon ami, that was just absolutely delightful. It was a really great night and I felt that I accomplished my goal which is, not just to say thank you and take people out to dinner, but it was to create a special memory, a moment for these people whom I love.

MBS ([01:26](#)):

Welcome, the 2 Pages with MBS, the podcast where brilliant people read the best two pages from a favorite book, a book that's moved them, a book that has shaped them. Amantha Imber is a speaker, she's the host of Australia's number one business podcast and she's a freshly printed author. Her new book, Time Wise, is actually just out in the world and the foundation for all of that is actually her training as an organizational psychologist. But here's the thing, I'm not entirely sure what an organizational psychologist actually does.

Amantha ([02:00](#)):

I help people do better work and feel better at work. And I feel like that is my professional identity despite the fact that I do quite a few different things like host the How I Work Podcast, I write books, I run a business.

MBS ([02:15](#)):

And as well as speaking and podcasting and writing, Amantha founded a company called Inventium but, of course, that's never where the story starts. And, in the beginning, she found herself using her education, her training for work that felt, well, let's just say it felt a little hollow.



Amantha ([02:32](#)):

When I finished my PhD in organizational psychology, I went and worked in advertising as a consumer psychologist and I did that for about five years. And I loved the work, it was, intellectually, very stimulating but, ethically, I hadn't chosen to become a psychologist so I could help convince more people to buy chocolate bars, that felt a bit empty. And so, I got to a point in advertising where I felt like I'd reached my use by date.

MBS ([03:01](#)):

So, Amantha decided she was done, she let her boss know that he had three months to replace her and then she did what we would all do which is to roll up her sleeves and to start the job hunt. How do I find a job that speaks to my values in my head, in my hands, in my heart? How does it use all of me? How do I feel really excited and committed to it? And she found, pretty much, nothing. I know that, I know that feeling, I've been on that job hunt. Where is it? Where is my perfect job? But in that hunt, actually, she uncovered two things that would influence her future path.

Amantha ([03:38](#)):

A couple of friends said to me, "Why don't you just start your own business?" And I thought, "Well, that's silly. What do I know?" I think I'm 28, I was 28, 29 at the time, that's a stupid idea. But then I thought, "Well, I can't find anywhere to work," and actually, there was one place that I did find that I wanted to work and that was a global innovation consultancy. And I got so excited about this role, I couldn't even believe that innovation consultants were a thing.

MBS ([04:04](#)):

That's funny. Actually, after we stopped recording the conversation, I asked Amantha about this innovation company. Turns out, I know them. In fact, I was their first-ever employee way back in the '90s, many, many moons ago in London. But anyway, Amantha interviewed for that role, the innovation



consultancy, and made it to the very end of the process. So, she had just one remaining hurdle to get over to get hired and that was to run a mock workshop for the company and it did not go well.

Amantha ([04:36](#)):

The day of the workshop, I woke up and I had the flu and I was sweating, I had the highest fever but I just thought, "The show must go on because 10 of their staff were coming to this workshop." So, I just thought, "I'll just suck it up and I won't even mention it." And I did the workshop and I thought I did the best that I could because of this flu. And they called me the next day and they said, "Look, we're not going to put you through to the next round. We're sorry, we're not going to give you the job." And I said, "Ugh," I was so disappointed and I said, "Oh, why?" And they said, "We just didn't feel like you had enough energy." And I said, "Oh, oh, well, here's why, I had the flu but I just thought I'd push on." And I said, "Is there any way I could get another chance?" And they said, "Oh, look, we don't normally do that but I'll have a chat and I'll get back to you."

Amantha ([05:27](#)):

And so, they did end up giving me another chance and I went back in, I ran another workshop and I didn't have the flu and I thought it was quite high energy and it was a good workshop. And then they called me the next day and they said, "Sorry, we're not going to give you the job." And I said, "Oh, why? Was it the energy?" And they said, "No, no, you had lots of energy," and they said, ""Look, a couple of people didn't find you very engaging." And it's like what do you do with that feedback? How do you become more engaging?"

MBS ([06:00](#)):

Oh, man.



Amantha ([06:01](#)):

And so, I got off the phone and I bawled my eyes out and I thought, after regrouping myself, I thought, "I will just do it myself. I will start my own business," and that was 15 years ago and that is what led to me starting Inventium.

MBS ([06:15](#)):

That's great. Such a good story. And so, sometimes, rejection, it stings so badly.

Amantha ([06:25](#)):

Yes, yes.

MBS ([06:26](#)):

And it can be such a motivator for the thing that's next. I think of two moments of rejection in my life. One, when I first applied to be a Rhodes Scholar and they're like, "This is the process. You apply, everybody gets a first round interview then we take it down to a short list." And I was like, "Okay, great." So, I applied and I got a letter saying you didn't even make the interview round that everybody gets and I was like, "Oh, man. That is so harsh." But it spurred me, two years later, to come back and actually won it the second time. And also, with the book, The Coaching Habit book, it got turned down by a publisher and I was so sure that they were going to say yes to it. And, when they turned me down, I was like, "Ugh," just like you, this stings and then I'm like, "What am I going to do about it?"

Amantha ([07:19](#)):

Yeah. Just go on and sell a million copies. That's all.

MBS ([07:23](#)):

Yeah, exactly. So, now I feel smug and morally righteous as well. It's very gratifying.



Amantha ([07:29](#)):

Oh, I tell you what, Michael, there was actually quite a smug ending to my story. So, the Sydney office, I was living in Sydney at the time, in Australia and the job was in the Sydney office. And a year after I started Inventium, the Sydney office closed because it wasn't profitable enough. Isn't that wonderful? I mean, not wonderful for all the lovely people that were there but I just felt a little bit [inaudible 00:07:51].

MBS ([07:52](#)):

It feels like there's a moral justice in the universe there.

Amantha ([07:55](#)):

Yes.

MBS ([07:58](#)):

Let me ask you this, what motivates you, Amantha? There's that structure that I've heard, and it may be true, I'm not even sure if it is, that some people are motivated by moving away from danger and some people are motivated about moving towards reward. And I'm wondering, what's your engine?

Amantha ([08:19](#)):

For me, the thing that drives me and I sort of ... I don't do as much work in the innovation space anymore, a lot of my work is focused on helping people use their time better and work in more productive ways that are going to make them feel better about their work. So, for me, the thing that drives me and makes me excited to doing my podcast or do keynote speaking or write is giving people really practical ways that are based on science that will help them do their best work but also feel really great at work.

MBS ([08:59](#)):

Okay, right.



Amantha ([09:00](#)):

Because that's what we found through our research at Inventium. When you give people the tools to work better and use the time that they have in better ways, their job satisfaction goes up, they actually feel a whole lot better at the end of the day. So, that's what motivates me.

MBS ([09:19](#)):

Yeah, I hear that. The feeling better thing is interesting because when you read a lot of, let's call it productivity porn, here are eight hack you can apply immediately to crush it at work, it feels like it's more about the crushing of it and less about the this is a nourishing experience. How do you find the balance in the work or maybe just in your own life around how do I make progress on the stuff that needs to be done but how do I also make sure that I'm growing and looking after myself and feeling better?

Amantha ([09:57](#)):

Well, something that helps a lot is that Inventium runs a four-day week. And so, for people not familiar with that concept, the four-day week doesn't mean just fitting your work into four really long days. It means that, at Inventium, we pay people a full time salary, so 100% pay for 80% time. So, people work for normal length days, Monday to Thursday, and we expect 100% output. So, the output that they would give were they a full-time employee. So, for me, I have Fridays off, doesn't mean that I don't work on Fridays ever. I will often do a bit of deep work in the morning but, not because I have to, because I want to.

Amantha ([10:51](#)):

I had this interview, it was the second time I'd interviewed her on How I Work, her name's Laura Mae Martin and she's the executive productivity advisor at Google. And so, one of the things that she does is she coaches the top executives at Google in how to be more productive. And one of the first questions she asks them, she was telling me, in her coaching sessions is she



said, "If you had an extra hour in your day, how would you use it? What would you be doing?"

Amantha ([11:20](#)):

And it might be something work related, it might be something life related. And I was thinking about that question and, actually, I'd just spent the last weekend away in the country with my partner and I was telling him about this and we were talking about what we'd do. And when he was asking me what would I do with that extra hour, I couldn't answer it because I feel like my life is actually very balanced, [inaudible 00:11:45]. There's nothing else that I would try to put in because I'm really happy with how I'm using my time.

MBS ([11:50](#)):

Yeah. I might look at you and maybe of the listeners are looking at you going, "Oh, curse her, how did she do that? What's the secret to her success?" I'm wondering what you needed to say no to, not just the practical tactical stuff, but also maybe what did you need to say no to about some sense of self identity so you could say yes to fashioning this balanced and fulfilling life for yourself?

Amantha ([12:21](#)):

Well, I think it comes down to being really clear on your values and thoughtful about your values because I think most people ... My experience has been a lot of people are out of touch with what they actually value. And, even if they are in touch with what they value, if you look at their calendar, their calendar does not align with their values. And so, for me, I constantly look at my online calendar, GCal, and I'm looking at how I'm spending the week and I'm like, "Does that align with what's important to me?"

Amantha ([12:58](#)):

So, for example, my daughter is the number one thing that matters to me and I'm divorced from her dad and I have her half the time. And so, that time that I





have her is very precious and my diary reflects that. I do school pickups and drop offs, I could easily outsource that but I choose not to and so those days are a bit tighter when it comes to work. Health is very important to me, it's up there as a value next to being a mom. And so, I allocate time in my diary to see a personal trainer three times a week and do a home workout which is often done during the day. In fact, I just did my home workout before logging on for this interview.

MBS ([13:44](#)):

You're glowing. You're glowing with exercise endorphins right now.

Amantha ([13:48](#)):

I'm glowing with exercise, exactly, exactly. And so, I think it's an interesting exercise to go, firstly, what do your value and then look at your calendar and go, "How does that align? Am I allocating enough time to the things that are really important to me as opposed to just reacting what life and particularly work is throwing at me?"

MBS ([14:06](#)):

Well, I want to get to the two pages you're reading but I know a lot of this is connected to your new book Time Wise. And so, I just want to poke on this a little bit which is what I find is I'm not that good at not over cramming what's important to me because here's what's important to me. My wife, my health, writing a book, reading a book, managing a team, having new ideas, running a podcast, eating nutritionally and enjoying my life, being present in nature, enjoying the city, having dinner with family. I've got so many things that are important to me that my calendar doesn't reflect all of that because my values are too crowded and so it turns my calendar into a bit of a potpourri melange, if that's even a thing. How do you get clear on your values, Amantha? Do you have a process where you were I'm actually figuring out what really is important to me?



Amantha ([15:13](#)):

I've done several different things but I think it's ... Hmm, I'm just trying to think what would be helpful because I haven't come across the holy grail of like, oh, I went through this process and it's spat out my top five values and here I am, a fully evolved human being. That hasn't happened. I do reflect on what are the things that really energize me and bring me joy and I reflect on what are the things that de-energize me. And I also think about what's the person that I want to be in this world. And I think, through asking myself those questions, I've become clear on my values.

MBS ([15:58](#)):

Yeah, that's helpful. And so, tell me about the book you're going to read for us.

Amantha ([16:04](#)):

Oh, I love this book. It's called The Power of Moments by Chip and Dan Heath who are brothers.

MBS ([16:11](#)):

Those two, those two. Those chaps are good writers. There's not a single book that they've written that I haven't gone, ""Damn it, I wish I'd written that book.""

Amantha ([16:17](#)):

Oh, my gosh, just brilliant. So, I'm just opening up to see when it was published. You'd love it if I actually knew this prior to the interview.

MBS ([16:30](#)):

Was it, at least, 10 years ago, I would've guessed.

Amantha ([16:31](#)):

No, 2017.



MBS ([16:31](#)):

Oh, okay. So, it's more recent, yeah.

Amantha ([16:33](#)):

How's that? So, five years ago, yeah.

MBS ([16:33](#)):

All right, yeah.

Amantha ([16:35](#)):

So, I read it in the year that it came out and it has stuck with me. It has changed the way I think about being a mom, it has changed the way I think about, I was about to say being a leader in my company. We run a holacracy which means we don't have managers per se, no one reports in to me but I am a leader as the founder of Inventium. So, it definitely changed the way I think about that and it changed the way I think about just living life in general. And five years on, I would still think about this book frequently.

MBS ([17:15](#)):

How did it come into your life? Is it just part of the flow of books that come through you because you're a podcaster and a reader and a host or did it come through some other doorway?

Amantha ([17:25](#)):

It came because I'm just a bit obsessed with the Heath brothers because I think everything they write is gold and yeah. And finally enough, I did actually get to interview Dan Heath on my podcast because, in his most recent book, which was a couple of years ago called *Upstream*, he actually referenced my company, Inventium, and some stuff that we'd done. And so, we got connected through that which was an absolutely thrilling moment in my life.



MBS ([17:51](#)):

I love that. There's a moment where Peter Block blurbed one of my books and I'm like, "I've just had my book blurbed by the person I admire most in this world in terms of thinking." It was a professional highlight would be understating it.

Amantha ([18:05](#)):

Yeah.

MBS ([18:07](#)):

And how did you choose what two pages to read? Because that's always part of the dilemma.

Amantha ([18:11](#)):

Oh, my gosh. I got the reminder a couple of days ago that I was doing this podcast and I'm like, "Oh, damn, I need to pick two pages in this 300-page book. How on earth am I going to do that?" And I remembered some of the stories from the book but then I'm like, "Mmm, but that doesn't sum it up." And so, I was re-reading through parts of it and, really, I often don't read the conclusion of books because I think there's no new information and it's generally just padding. And I remember actually, when I was writing the conclusion to *Time Wise*, my new book, I'm like, "Oh, God, these are so hard to write because conclusions suck." But the last two pages of this conclusion are beautiful and that's what I've chosen.

MBS ([19:00](#)):

Oh, wonderful. Well, let me introduce you. Dr. Amantha Imber, author of a new book, *Time Wise*, reading from *The Power of Moments* by the wonderful Heath brothers. Amantha, over to you.



Amantha ([19:12](#)):

Great. And so, just to set up this extract because it could have actually been three pages. It's a story about Daniel Darcy's three-year-old daughter, Wendy, who, in June 2007, came down with a stomachache and ended up having to go to hospital and it got quite serious.

Amantha ([19:40](#)):

One day in December, not long before Christmas, it began to snow outside. For a child from Vermont, it was cruel, having to watch the snow through the windows. Wendy loved to make snowmen, to go sleigh riding. She hadn't been outside for two months. Her lead nurse, Corey Fogarty, and patient care associate, Jessica Marsh, hatched a plan. If Wendy couldn't play in the snow, they would bring the snow to her but it was more complicated than that. Because of Wendy's heart condition, the staff was monitoring every milliliter of water that she consumed. So, Jessica went and filled an emesis bucket with snow, waited, let it melt and then poured it into a graduated cylinder. Now, they knew how to translate the weight of snow into its volume of water. So, they went and refilled the bucket with exactly the right amount of snow so that, if Wendy ate it, as three-year-olds are prone to do, she'd be just fine.

Amantha ([20:40](#)):

When they brought the ball of snow into Wendy's room, she lit up. "I've never seen such joy and pure innocence on a child's face," said Marsh. "Can you imagine," said Darcy, "A child who has only seen the inside of a hospital room for months, who only knew the sounds of machines and the buzzers, the television, the woosh of the forced air, who only knew the sterility of the meal trays, the plastic covered hospital bed, the stethoscope hanging over her head, getting a bowl of snow?" It was bliss. It was joy. She thought it was the best thing in the world. It reminded her of home.

Amantha ([21:17](#)):



Wendy's long nightmare eventually ended. She received a successful kidney transplant and, since then, has grown into a healthy young girl. She plays soccer, runs triathlons and won medals in the transplant Olympics. Mercifully, she has forgotten much of her health ordeal but her mom hasn't. Darcy wrote in a blog, years later, about the bucket of snow. It is those moments of compassion and spontaneity that we are grateful for now, looking back. It's easy to forget the monotony of the endless days that stretch together during her recovery but that one moment of brightness, that is one moment that we will never forget. And that's what a defining moment looks like. A burst of magic, thoughtful, playful, emotional that was conjured into reality by two caregivers who thought a sick girl deserved an escape.

Amantha ([22:10](#)):

And that's the charge for all of us, to defy the forgettable flatness of everyday work and life by creating a few precious moments. What if every organization in the world offered new employees an unforgettable first day experience? What if every student had an academic experience as memorable as prom? What if every patient was asked, "What matters to you?" What if you call that old friend right now and finally made that road trip happen? What if we didn't just remember the defining moments of our lives but made them? We can be the designers of moments that deliver elevation and insight and pride and connection. These extraordinary minutes and hours and days, they are what makes life meaningful and they are ours to create.

MBS ([23:01](#)):

That's a great story and a great encapsulation of what so much of this book is about. And then, what particularly strikes a chord for you in this book, in these pages?



Amantha ([23:18](#)):

I think, before reading the book, and I think before many people read the book, I imagine, you think of these memorable moments in your life as just happening serendipitously. Like, "Oh, I remember that," and how fortuitous it was that happened. We have no control about crafting those moments. But after reading the book, you become aware that it's, no, we have the power to craft and create those meaningful moments, not only in our own lives, but importantly, in those around us and the people that matter to us. And I just think that story about Wendy and the snow just encapsulates that so beautifully. It was such a small thing but it was such a big thing.

MBS ([24:08](#)):

Amantha, what have you learned about how to give people permission or maybe how to get people to give themselves permission to create moments like this? And really, it's asking a bigger question which is, how do you give people permission to, here's my reference back to Peter Block, the thinker I was mentioning before, and this is a quote from him, to give people responsibility for their own freedom so that they are active players in their life rather than passive players in their life. In some ways, that's a big part of what you write about in Time Wise and also the bigger picture of your work which is to make a difference and to feel better about the work you do, you have to be an active player in that. How do you give people permission to be an active person, an active player in their own life?

Amantha ([25:03](#)):

Ah, that's an interesting question. Because I think what I try to do more is I try to be a role model and I try to be really deliberate about creating those moments in my own life. Whether that be for my daughter or whether that be for people in my team at Inventium or clients of ours or my family. So, I think that is how I think about it and that's where that book has had the biggest impact on me.



MBS ([25:37](#)):

Yeah. Now I'm just like, "I want to be nosy." I'm like, "Okay, so." You've sat with this book for five years, is there a magical moment that you've created, a memorable moment that you're particularly proud of as an orchestrator of?

Amantha ([25:56](#)):

Oh, it's hard to pick just one. Something I did do early on, after reading the book, I think it was within the first year of reading the book is I sat down with my daughter, Frankie, and this is during the Christmas holidays in Australia which is our big holidays. We get two months off school and-

MBS ([26:21](#)):

So good.

Amantha ([26:21](#)):

Yeah, so good. And I said to Frankie, "Okay, let's make a list of all the things that would just be super fun to do over the school holidays." And we made a list of about 20 different things and we put them in a little container. And I said, "What we're going to do, Frankie, is, every couple of days, we're going to pick out something and we're going to do that thing." And that was a really cool exercise. And it's so funny, I think about what are the things that Frankie, my daughter, remembers and, obviously, the last two years, we haven't really done much in the way of travel because of the pandemic. And there was a period of time, Melbourne, where I live, had about 260 days of lockdown so I think that was the most in the world.

Amantha ([27:16](#)):

So, we spent a lot of time at home but then there was a little break in the lockdowns. And so, what I did is I booked Frankie and I a night in a hotel in the city that was this glamping package where there was a little tent, a little teepee set up in the hotel room and-





MBS ([27:37](#)):

So great.

Amantha ([27:37](#)):

And again, it's a small thing but it was a big thing. And there was all this buildup to our night away in the city going glamping and I think we had dinner at the hotel and breakfast at the hotel. But otherwise, we didn't do that much other than hang about in the hotel and we went for a little bit of a walk outside down the yarrow which was quite nice. But Frankie talks about that night so much. For her, that was such a magical moment and it was just one night. And even a couple of weeks ago, well, actually, I booked us a couple of months ago, but then I got COVID, so we rebooked for a couple of weeks ago to spend, again, one night. These are short amounts of time in the scheme of life but, just one night, we stayed at this place called Werribee Mansion in outer Melbourne and it's right near Werribee Open Range Zoo which is, as the name suggests, an open range zoo.

MBS ([28:43](#)):

Well, the animals, yeah.

Amantha ([28:46](#)):

Yeah, lots of animals that you'd find in the jungle. And I'd booked us in to go giraffe feeding as a little extra thing and we did that. And again, it was 24 hours out of our lives but I suspect that will be a very memorable moment.

MBS ([29:04](#)):

Another one.

Amantha ([29:05](#)):

Mm-hmm.



MBS ([29:06](#)):

That's great. I feel like, for your next book, giraffe feeding needs to be a chapter heading because that has to be a metaphor for something that becomes a teachable moment. Amantha, what's the connection between this commitment to creating magical moments that you talk about with Frankie, and also from the Heath brother's book, and some of the key themes in your new book Time Wise?

Amantha ([29:36](#)):

I opened the book with, there's a quote that, yeah, that I really loved that goes something like, I will paraphrase it.

MBS ([29:51](#)):

I'm just going to interrupt because we talked about this before I hit record. Even though your book is imminent, even though other people in the world have copies, pre-publication copies of your book, you don't yet have a copy of your book.

Amantha ([30:02](#)):

I don't.

MBS ([30:02](#)):

Otherwise, you'd be holding it up and showing us what it looks like.

Amantha ([30:04](#)):

Exactly.

MBS ([30:08](#)):

So, I'm feeling outraged on your behalf. [inaudible 00:30:08].



Amantha ([30:10](#)):

I know. So, I'm trying to remember what did I write, what was the quote. The quote was something like the bad news is time flies but the good news is you are the pilot. And for me, the essence of the book is going so much of us spend our days just reacting to what other people throw at us, what they put in our diary, what different directions that people want to pull us in. And that doesn't really lead to a fulfilling life where you feel like I've spent today wisely, today felt really good or this week felt really good, I've lived a week in line with my values. And so, the book, despite the fact that I do like a bit of productivity porn, the book is not productivity porn. Yes, there are ways to be more efficient but, really, what it comes down to is being more thoughtful with how you do use the hours that we've all been given.

MBS ([31:04](#)):

Yeah. What surprised you in writing the book? I'm sure there's some books you wrote where you're like, "I know this and I've known it for a while and I'm recasting it in a way that's useful and shining new light on it." But I'm wondering if you uncovered anything where you're like, "Huh, this wasn't what I was expecting to be writing about."

Amantha ([31:25](#)):

Wow. The book was based on strategies that I'd heard from guests on my podcast, How I Work, and the premise of that show is ... I started doing that show in 2018 where I was thinking, "There are all these successful people in the world and we've all got the same amount of hours in the day but they've achieved so much more than the rest of us mere mortals." And I thought, "There must be some secret, something that they're doing to use their time more wisely than the rest of us." And so, that was the hypothesis that I started out with. And what I found is that, in every single interview that I've done for the



show, there's at least one or two very practical strategies that I can take on board and use in my own life.

Amantha ([32:11](#)):

And so, what I thought when writing the book is it's like, look, it's very time consuming to go back through the hundreds and hundreds of hours of podcast to find these gems. So, wouldn't it be great to put it in a book to make it really simple for people to go here's nearly a hundred different strategies that are super practical that are used by the world's most successful people. People like Adam Grant and Dan Pink and Amanda Palmer and people like that and just have them all at once.

Amantha ([32:38](#)):

So, look, in terms of some of the tips that have stuck with me, gosh, a lot of them are just very quirky things that I'm like, "I have to give that a try and that sounds very useful." So, for example, Marissa King is a professor at Yale and she researches social dynamics and social networks. And like most people, I hate networking, I hate being in a room with strangers and having to make small talk and I get very nervous about approaching people. And Marissa said, "What you want to do is you want to, firstly, not walk into an event and go, 'Oh, my God, it's an ocean of people,' because it's not. It's islands and it's little islands." And then she said, "What you want to do is remember that humans communicate in dyads. We're designed to communicate one on one, in groups of two. So, with that in mind, what you want to do is look for the odd numbered groups because someone will be on the outer."

Amantha ([33:39](#)):

So, now, when I'm at an event, which also is somewhat rare because I'm quite introverted, I like my home. But I'll look for a group of three and I'll try to identify who's on the outer of this conversation and they'll probably be quite



relieved if I go up to them and so they break off into a conversation with me. So, that's something that I thought-

MBS ([33:58](#)):

Yes, I like that.

Amantha ([33:59](#)):

... very useful. Another tip that-

MBS ([34:02](#)):

Before you give us another tip-

Amantha ([34:06](#)):

Yeah.

MBS ([34:06](#)):

... can I build on this because-

Amantha ([34:06](#)):

Please do.

MBS ([34:06](#)):

Have you heard of the bagel croissant approach to networking?

Amantha ([34:10](#)):

I have not. Sounds delicious.

MBS ([34:12](#)):

It does sound delicious. And basically, anybody leading with a food metaphor, you've already won more than half the battle with me because I'm like, "I'm not sure what this is about but I like it already."



Amantha ([34:21](#)):

Yes.

MBS ([34:23](#)):

It's a way of managing your group if you're in these big things so that it's more inviting. And often, a group of conversation will be a bagel, meaning it's a closed circle. And so, if you're hovering on the outside, it's hard to find a way in, you have to shoulder past somebody. Whereas, if you structure your group like a croissant, like a semi-circle, there's actually a doorway for somebody like you to come up and go, right, here's how I can join this circle. So, this is more if you're in the group already rather than looking for a conversation which is make sure your groups are croissant, not a bagel.

Amantha ([34:57](#)):

Oh, I love that. That's so good, although I'm dying to have bagels.

MBS ([35:03](#)):

And when in doubt, eat a bagel or eat a croissant, that also works as well. But I interrupted a second insight from you.

Amantha ([35:09](#)):

Oh, gosh. Look, I think this is a really useful one. I got this from Adam Grant, Wharton professor and host of the WorkLife Podcast by TED, and something he does twice a year is he does what he calls a life checkup. So, he said to me, "Most of us will go to the doctor once a year for a medical checkup. But life, it's so important to actually think about what are you doing in your life? What are you doing in your career? To actually stop and reflect." And he was prompted to do this because he'd have students that he'd taught in their MBA at Wharton and they'd go on to high-powered jobs on Wall Street and they'd call him a few years later and they would say that they're actually unhappy in their work but, sunk costs, they've put in all those years into their careers, they can't leave.



Amantha ([36:06](#)):

And so, the life checkup is something that he schedules every six months, and he recommends this to his students as well, to just reflect on how are you going? Are you enjoying what you're doing? Have you hit a learning plateau? Do you need to introduce something new? Are you enjoying the culture of the workplace that you are at? I liken it to setting a bit of a trip wire for yourself so you don't just keep going on default and not reflecting and then ending up three, four years down the track and feeling you can't change your mind or change course.

MBS ([36:42](#)):

Yeah. It's like occasionally taking a drone-sized view of who you are and what's going on for you because ... I'm not a gamer but I'm now going to confuse a whole bunch of metaphors. But so often, you're running your life like a first person shooter, which is it's all from your perspective and you're not sure what's around the corner and you're on alert. But if you pull back and you're at that drone version, you're seeing the bigger picture, you see context, you see movement, you see where you are relative to your goal, you understand whether that goal is actually still your goal or whether, like so many goals, it morphs and emerges and changes. It's just a different perspective.

MBS ([37:23](#)):

Now, let me be nosy again. Do you actually do that or you're like, "This is a good idea and I think other people should do it and I know I can't get around it."? Because I find, with so many tips, I'm like, "That's such a good tip, I'm not doing it."

Amantha ([37:38](#)):

I do have that problem with a lot of tips that I receive but I definitely have done the life checkup. I don't think I've done it every six months on the dot and I know that Adam diarizes it so that he doesn't miss it. And talking to you now,



I'm like, "Hmm, I should probably do that." But no, I definitely have done it and it's led to making sometimes small but sometimes significant changes to what I want to be shooting for or focusing on.

MBS ([38:10](#)):

The launch of your book is, I hope, a magical moment for you, a memorable moment, something that is memorable and meaningful and joyful and all of that. What do you think will be different for you, if anything, once your book is in the world?

Amantha ([38:30](#)):

Hmm, that's an interesting question. Before we started recording, I think we were talking about what I was looking forward to with the launch of the book and getting it out there. And I feel like, even though this is my third book, it's still dawning on me that, oh, hang on, people are going to read this. Oh, oh, yes, okay. And with that in mind, I'm really looking forward to hearing how people apply the strategies and the impact that makes. Because I know, for me, with the podcast and given the book *Time Wise* evolved from the *How I Work* Podcast, one of the most rewarding things, by far, with the podcast is getting emails and messages from people that listen to the show and say like, "It's transformed my work life," and it's like, "Ugh, that feels bloody amazing."

MBS ([39:30](#)):

How delightful, yeah.

Amantha ([39:30](#)):

Yeah.

MBS ([39:30](#)):

Yeah. A final question, Amantha, what needs to be said that hasn't yet been said in this chat between you and me?





Amantha ([39:37](#)):

Oh, you have such good questions. Look, I hope that people ... I mean, look, we've been talking about moments and I would love it if people listening to this episode just think about who are the people that matter most to them and think about how could they, in the next week or the next month, actually curate a memorable moment for someone that they love and something that will be remembered years into the future. And it doesn't have to be big and it doesn't have to take a lot of time or cost a lot of money. It can be, actually, very, very small but I think that would be a really wonderful thing if people listening took the time to do that.

MBS ([40:29](#)):

So, how do you make a moment? Look, I'm not an expert but I've got some ideas around this. First of all, go full Priya Parker. Priya Parker is the author of *The Art of Gathering* and that book can be summed up, really, in a single sentence which is, be an active host. Don't leave it to chance but shape the event that you're trying to create, shape the experience. Second, disrupt the usual, disrupt what's expected. So, either do something new or do something old in a new way. Rearranging the furniture, I found, both literally and metaphorically, is a really powerful thing to do. It always makes people hesitate and go, "Wait, this wasn't what I was expecting." [inaudible 00:41:13] to figure out what rules you can break and then breaking them, of course. That also is a powerful strategy. And then, finally, once you've gone full Priya Parker, host, and then decided to disrupt what's expected, commit. Don't just dip your toes in, plunge in, be all in, be in the moment.

MBS ([41:37](#)):

If you enjoyed the conversation with Amantha, I've got two other interviews I might suggest for you. Juliet Funt, her conversation was entitled *The Powerful Pause*. She's a really dynamic woman, I love talking to Juliet and her book is also



around how do you figure out time so that it can work best for you in a way that enlivens you rather than crushes you. And then, Kim Scott, famous for Radical Candor, and we were talking about her new book, it's also about how to work and that title, that interview is called When to Wave the Purple Flag.

MBS ([42:16](#)):

If you'd like more of Amantha, well, Amantha Imber is a pretty unusual name. So, she has amantha.com, you can certainly check that out and you'll find her new book out where you find books. So, congratulations to her for that. You might want to even check out her podcast, How I Work and I've actually been a guest on that. So, if you'd like to see the tables being turned, you can listen to Amantha interviewing me on that wonderful podcast.

MBS ([42:42](#)):

Thank you for listening. Thank you for rating or reviewing the podcast. Thank you for passing interviews along. I'm trying to be one of the people's favorite podcasts. It doesn't matter how many podcasts you've got listed on your podcast listening platform. I reckon most of us listen to four or five or six regularly, I'd love to be one of those four or five or six. If you think this podcast could be somebody else's four, five or six favorite podcast, then please do let them know about it, maybe send them an interview that you think would particularly strike a chord. Thanks for all your help, thanks for all your support. You're awesome and you're doing great.