STARCATCHERS
CREATIVE SKILLS ONLINE

The Creative Skills Podcast

Wee People Big Feelings Helensburgh: Creative Flow

Featuring Early Years Development Manager, Amy Hall-Gibson, and Visual Artist, Pearl Kinnear.

Transcript

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00:00:00:09 - 00:00:03:08

Amy Hall-Gibson

Hi Pearl, do you want to introduce yourself?

00:00:03:11 - 00:00:12:22

Pearl Kinnear

Hi, Amy. So my name is Pearl Kinnear and I'm a visual artist who works with Starcatchers, amongst other people too.

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Amy Hall-Gibson

Brilliant! Thanks so much for coming and speaking me today on this podcast. I'm fascinated about creative flow. So you were actually the first person that introduced me to this idea of what creative flow is and how it's beneficial. And I think it'd be really good just to hear a bit more about it, to share what what actually is creative flow.

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Pearl Kinnear

So, creative flow essentially is the process when you're working, when you lose track of everything going on around about you because of what you're doing. So you're caught in this moment because of the importance of what you're doing and the importance of your process, you become completely immersed in what you're doing. Completely absorbed. And you actually lose track of things like, I'm hungry or what time is it? it's one of these things that ,I suppose we would know it societally.

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Pearl Kinnear

We know it more as being in the zone which is actually because creative flow, even though I learnt about it through the arts, is used quite commonly now in sports psychology too. And I would love to take, I would love to to be knowledgeable enough to explain all this psychological elements of it. But obviously I'm going to be explaining it from the point of view as an artist who’s learnt about it through reading.

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Pearl Kinnear

So a lot of the stuff I'm talking about when it comes to the psychology and the neuroscience of creativity is is going to be me paraphrasing things that I've learnt through practice and talking about the soft skills that I see people gaining from learning about creative flow themselves.

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Amy Hall-Gibson

Yeah, what I find fascinating was when you were at a training session I was at, and you were talking about this kind of you know your logical side of the brain and the creative side and how they actually fight against one another. And in order to get into the creative flow, the logical side, like you just said about thinking about like what's for dinner, all of that that logical side needs to get pushed to the side a wee bit more.

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Amy Hall-Gibson

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Pearl Kinnear

Yeah. So the brain and I think, I think it's I mean I always feel, because obviously I'm not neuroscientist and it's probably a very much an oversimplification to to describe the brain as being in two halves, but think ultimately how the brain works is that when they describe it as being in two halves, what they mean is predominantly one half's working over the other rather than being completely halved

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Pearl Kinnear

And it only affecting one or the other. So so yeah, basically it's more difficult as we get older to get into creative flow. It's just harder for us because we've got more

responsibilities and logic pulls us away and we have a sense of what society expects of us. And the logical side really is a very, a very useful and defensive side of us. So it tries to help us and it tries to protect us.

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Pearl Kinnear

So when we fully get involved in creativity, we, we're challenging the logical side of the brain. We're challenging ourselves. And for example, if I'm teaching somebody how to draw and, and they are drawn and they're just not getting it right, that's a challenge. And the logical side of your brain wants to step in and save you and help you.

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Pearl Kinnear

And that's when it will come back in, and and it messes up what's going on because it starts to bring in the things it knows. Whereas drawing is about observation. So it's all about just being in that moment and seeing and looking and not drawing what you know, but actually drawing what you see and being completely immersed in that and really, really looking and observing the whole time.

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Amy Hall-Gibson

Yeah, I just, and I think like for little ones like you say that's easier for them because their brains obviously are still developing and all those synapses and they're not, they're not thinking, Oh I need to mind and put the washing on or I need to mind and make sure snacks right or that kind of thing. But equally there are other elements within an early years setting, for instance that actually can distract wee ones, you know, for lots of reasons and take them out of that creative flow or or how do they get into the creative flow because there's so much happening around them or they wanting to do something, but then they're being kind of pulled

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Amy Hall-Gibson

by, you know, even their friends in different directions. But I'm fascinated about like how how can adults support wee ones to to get into that creative flow?

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Pearl Kinnear

So I suppose ultimately the best way adults can support them is by being open and not letting their ego or their societal norms tell them they can't do something because it's going to make them look silly or they feel they feel a bit cautious about doing it because they maybe remember way back something that embarrassed them.

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Pearl Kinnear

And so ultimately as adults, we need to kind of leave all of that at the door and respond entirely to the child. And this is where I think there's a lovely crossover between Creative flow and the child led practice and nurseries because using creative, using that idea behind creative flow it lets you let the child lead but in order

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Pearl Kinnear

to let them lead, you need to introduce new things to them. So our brains are wired to enjoy discovery. They just are. So it's like if I give a child pastilles and they've never used Pastilles before, they respond to that material, they don't go, Oh, this is a pastel. It must go on paper. They will be feeling it and they'll be sensing it, and they'll be like oh that's coming off on my fingers.

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Pearl Kinnear

Well, that's weird. And then they might try doing it on their clothes, they might wipe their fingers on their clothes, they might wipe their fingers on the adult with them, they might question in their brain while they're using it where else they can put that pastel in terms of making marks. They might discover that when it's wet it's much brighter, bolder and then that might take them in a rejigging what

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Pearl Kinnear

That pastel actually is like by adding water and scrapping it into dust on the floor and then using our fingers to mush it up. So they work in a way that they enjoy discovery so much that they notice, they discover and they explore all based around their response in that moment. And I think the thing you remember with that is that our brains pretty much when we're existing in the present moment is only really aware of about 9 seconds at a time.

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Pearl Kinnear

That's it! So 9 seconds, we are only really aware of what's happening in kind of nine seconds. And then you're on to the next nine and then you're on to the next nine. And really the thing with Creative Flow and discovery is that further down the line when you remember that creative flow your memory puts a slant on that as well. So you want to revisit that moment because when you're existing in that responsive moment because it's it's discovery.

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Pearl Kinnear

And that's what our brain is wired to do because it's providing us with penny drop moments where we are problem solving. We are enjoying it. We are we are totally immersed in what we're doing. We're loving it. And then so our memory of that is a good memory and we realize that we solved the problem or we figured a way of doing something.

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Pearl Kinnear

So you try and reach back and get it. As artists we do all the time as musicians and all that. We want to kind of shut ourselves off and we want to get to a studio or a recording studio or being able to just like immerse ourselves and, and it's quite funny because on that subject there's lots of different ways to achieve creative flow, but there's only, the only type of creative flow that is useful is the proper immersive creative flow in which you discover things so you can achieve that creative flow

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Pearl Kinnear

reading somebody else's book or watching a film, some kids would achieve creative flow playing video games, but that's not the actual fully immersive problem solving creative flow that we aim to deliver with young children.

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Amy Hall-Gibson

Right. Yep. So they're in a zone. But they're, they're not like, I guess like with a computer game its a very different skills they are using.

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Pearl Kinnear

Yes, it’s somebody else’s. You are basically, I am going to use a word I hate here, you’re vibing off somebody else's creativity. So it's not your creativity, you're just responding to it. The same way, when you go to the cinema, you responding to somebody else's creativity and it's great and you might get completely lost in the moment, but it doesn't nourish you.

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Amy Hall-Gibson

Yeah.

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Pearl Kinnear

That makes sense. Yeah.

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Amy Hall-Gibson

No, absolutely.

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Pearl Kinnear

Whereas creative flow, the way that we understand it as artists, we know that we, we can lose, we can kind of suppress that logical side of the brain and just deal with the creativity that's happening in front of us, we realize that there's going to be an end product at some point, that's not where the joy lies.

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Pearl Kinnear

The joy doesn't lie in the end product, it lies in that journey to get to the end product, because that's where the real discovery lies. And because of obviously I come at it from a visual arts perspective, I know the way that I work and it's probably really similar to all other art forms as well. But for me it's visual art.

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Pearl Kinnear

I know that the way visual artists work is directly parallel to the way scientists work. It's not linear. It's like you do something, you get a product, you get something happens and you go, that work, that didn't work. But you know, see this thing that worked, I kind of knew that was going to work, but you see the thing that didn't work, that's really interesting.

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Pearl Kinnear

And then you take that path and then that takes you another fork in the road, and then you take a different path. And then sometimes you rewind and go back to that fork in the road and take the other path too and and that's where discovery lies and children exist in that mode when they play all the time because they don't restrict themselves to sit down at this table.

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Pearl Kinnear

And I'm going to do a water color and my end product is going to be. They go, What is that? Can I add water to it? Can I take it away? Can I use it dry? Does it go on paper? Does it go on my face? And they are just constantly questioning the actual process. And I think that's that's essentially it creative flow is about being in that process rather than thinking about what you're going to make at the end.

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Pearl Kinnear

And in terms of like relating it to your practice as an artist, when you collaborate with others, you are in the creative flow moment much more than you are when you work yourself because you're just constantly bouncing ideas, possibilities and playing about. And it's in that play moment, that that's when you're in that proper flow state.

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Amy Hall-Gibson

Yeah I can honestly it's like little light bulb moments are flashing in my head right now, where I'm like when we deliver sessions, we plan it, you know, we kind of plan, same as settings will plan, certain things. But actually when you're in the moment, it's that plan almost goes out the window in the sense of what you said earlier about being child led because you're not then referring back to the plan and being like, oh, no, no, no, we said we're going to do this and we're not doing it.

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Amy Hall-Gibson

It's not actually at the forefront of my mind. What's at the forefront is that we are in this immersive and I'm discovering alongside the wee ones and I you know and they'll do things that I just hadn't even anticipated and now that you've kind of framed in that way, I'm like, that's a creative flow. But I've never thought of it like that because I've just been in it and not really, you know?

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Amy Hall-Gibson

And then occasionally you're like, But that moment comes back in because we're visiting or there's, there's, you know, lunchtime will be happening in that little kind of moment comes out when you're like, Oh goodness, what time is it? And then you're like, Oh, right, agh, actually you'll need to wash your hands and get ready for lunch or snack or whatever. But yeah, you've just framed it in that way either I never thought previously is is a creative flow moment.

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Pearl Kinnear

And the moments the moments that those that age group zero five exist in is, for me, is probably one of the most important flow states to exist in because there's four types and scientifically it's described as autotelic flow. The first person recorded exploring it purely for this idea that what is it that makes these painters completely forget to eat, forget to get up and leave the room when they need to.

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Pearl Kinnear

And his name was Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. And I think he's Hungarian, Hungarian American psychologist. And he recognized it and it was him that named it as kind of creative flow. But since then, sports psychologist other psychologists have started to see it and and now neuroscientists are really there's lots of research going on into it so it's really interesting and you can find lots of little bits of writing, papers and stuff that are getting written on it which which is fascinating.

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Pearl Kinnear

My interest in it comes from the fact that I've seen the soft skills it delivers in all age groups. And so it fascinates me from that side but also kind of frustrates me because as as a visual artist, it's difficult applying the language to something that is described to you by people who have no background in science, but they know it's making them feel better.

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Pearl Kinnear

They know it's making, it's working for them. So it's how we then pass that on to people that give funding to people that are delivering within those groups so that they understand it better. Because all creatives I know experience this in lots of different ways but kids are the other people that I know that experience it too, all the time, so they live much more in that state and they live in that present kind of a autotelic is how it's described scientifically so autotelic flow, is how it would be described and autotelic, it just really describes a person that's internally driven that they have this ability to

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Pearl Kinnear

harness purpose and creativity regardless of what's going on round about them, regardless of whether they are being rewarded for it, it's completely internally driven. So that's where autotelic actually means which totally relates to creative flow. So when you're working with wee kids, you're working with them in what is known as mini seed creativity. And then there potentially you can reach four different states of creativity and that flow state but for the age group that we are talking about it’s mini seed creativity but that foundation of giving them the space to be in that flow state is what sets up for everything else so it goes mini seed creativity which is that complete flow obsessed

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Pearl Kinnear

with process, not worried too much about an end product. No critical thinking whatsoever involved. It’s just the being in that, those 9 second blocks and doing what you do. And then it moves on to little seed creativity and little seed creativity would be where you start to apply a little bit of critical thinking. So that’s probably when you’re hitting into primary school where they are starting to see if I do this, I achieve this, not so sure I like that, going to take that away.

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Pearl Kinnear

I'm going to add this and this idea that you can use the things you've discovered to then achieve something else. So I suppose, right, when we are cooking like, obviously when you learn to cook and you go into adulthood cooking and then as you cook more, you

get better at it. And then you start to realize if you add certain ingredients, it will make it taste different.

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Pearl Kinnear

And that would be little seed creativity. Or you take up poetry and you start writing poems, and then after a year or two you start writing poems that you like better, and you approach them with a little bit of critical thinking. And that's little seed creativity. So little seed creativity can be achieved by anybody any time in their life if they take up something they deem as a hobby.

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Pearl Kinnear

And they want to get better at it because they apply a little bit of critical thinking. Pro seed Creativity is the other form that follows after that and that would be people like me and you, who then go on to do it as a profession. And then we would learn it to a certain stage and we would be constantly using that creative flow state to to create things, judge things, whether they're good enough and whether we want to keep going and getting into that

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Pearl Kinnear

Parallel to scientists, that I was talking about where you are making discoveries and trying to create something new, something that surprises us. And then the other section is Max seed creativity and Max seed creativity is people like Einstein people that changed the way the world thinks. So you're talking about genius level. It's quite funny because when you read about it it's described in a really linear fashion, but for me, because I get to work with zero to five year olds, I'm kind of thinking it's probably like most things, and you probably find the mini and the max are closer to each other than the mini and the pro.

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Pearl Kinnear

You, know what, I mean, because of the way they work. Yeah. And because it changes the world for those children so much and their discoveries.

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Amy Hall-Gibson

Yeah, that's a very good point. And it just really struck me when you said about erm, It's that internal impulse. And I think that that's that's such a key thing that, and we know again from very young children that actually, if they aren't interested or that is something, they just won't do it. Where as I think when we get older we kinda it's like what you said again it's that expectation societally

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Amy Hall-Gibson

We, we feel the need as opposed to the want, but just when you were talking about the different like seeds. I'm thinking that through out all of them there's still that internal drive of of like, I want to do this, you know, I'm I'm interested in it. This is an urge, it's an impulse. I must find out more erm and and that that kind of line of discovery as well.

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Amy Hall-Gibson

Like I think sometimes even in like my own practice, I'm guilty of forgetting that actually these wee three year olds have never experienced, you know, like whatever I have brought in, but I've forgotten that because I've done it so many times that actually. Hang on a minute here. What's the discovery of this happening? And just taking a moment to see and to watch them and then and like that to draw those parallels to that mini seed, to the little seed.

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Amy Hall-Gibson

And then and then absolutely that genius level of going, they actually figured that all out in that nine second block they went from there to there that's incredible but we're viewing it definitely because they're so little like you said Einstein everyone's got oh, that's amazing. But actually that's happening on such a a level with the wee ones.

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Amy Hall-Gibson

But, but we don't see it because, because we've already gone through that process as adults.

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Pearl Kinnear

We don't see it. We just see it as like, oh, that's just kids that’s them just growing up. But what you're providing is you're providing that foundation for a strong house when you engage with them in those creative moments because creative flow or autotelic flow it provides more than just those moments, it provides a broader perspective on everything.

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Pearl Kinnear

If you encourage creativity in the very, very young and they adapt that into their ways of thinking, it makes problem solving so much easier. And I think ultimately as human beings, we are, we are creative, you know, we are! This idea that creativity needs to stop at a certain age is a downfall of so many people. And I know so many different artists that work in so many different community led projects because obviously our work, in, we're a broader age range than just zero to five and my experience of working in those broader age ranges and also the broader backgrounds that that entails, and that can be things like addiction, recovery from addiction, people who are

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Pearl Kinnear

approaching death. How many of them have said to me, I used to really love art, I used to really love music, but then somebody at some point told them they weren't very good at it and they took that away from them. And those aspects of your character as a human being actually emboldening you. And for, especially for those people, when they then rediscover writing, music, art, dance, everything like that, they are just like, this is amazing.

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Pearl Kinnear

I can't believe I didn’t get into this before. And one of the things that they talk about most is that ability to lose track of time, and that is when they are in a flow state. So they are only losing track of those logical elements because they have entered a flow state.

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Amy Hall-Gibson

Yeah. I'm thinking about when I was in a nursery and there was a wee boy and he was absolutely wanting to draw a dragon, but he just couldn't get the image in his head just wasn't transferring to the paper, and actually it was really frustrating him to the point where he was just refusing to do any mark making whatsoever.

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Amy Hall-Gibson

So I was trying to think of, okay, I don't want this to be a really upsetting experience for him, how can we change it? And just as we're talking now, I think, oh my goodness, we created a creative flow experience. So what happened was, as I just sort of said, what, what sounds just a dragon me and I'll just make a mark.

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Amy Hall-Gibson

So what we did was we took away that logical side, that element that he was struggling with of but I want pen to paper, and I want it to look like this. We took that completely away. And then he he would make the noise of a dragon and I would just make a mark. And then all of a sudden he was like absolutely loving the fact that whatever sound he made, I then made a mark and we, we we flipped roles

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Amy Hall-Gibson

So then I would make a sound and he would make a mark. And here was this little four year old who hated Mark making and got really distraught and frustrated, laughing and giggling, enjoying, saying “give me the pen! My turn, my turn!” And actually, I never thought of it at the moment that that was a creative flow experience right there for him, because it was discovery, it was looking at things differently.

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Amy Hall-Gibson

It took that whole element of, I must get this right. Somebody’s, this is my expectation of what this image should look like. Do you know what. Scrap that. We don't need that anymore. That's it. And it was still a dragon to him because he was like, Wow, look at the sounds that dragon makes. And that was completely a creative flow experience for him that.

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Pearl Kinnear

I think as well for for adults. That's a good thing to remember, is the fact that we need to we need to retain the ability to introduce a level of abstraction into thought for children that are finding themselves stuck in those moments, this idea that there is a right and a wrong when we know there is no right or wrong in terms of creativity, there's only a path and an experience to something else, specially for that age group.

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Pearl Kinnear

It's all about process and it's very, very important that people remember that with young children that that it's not about sitting them down and following a linear A to B path. It's not about that. You know, and it's lovely. And I get that parents love it when their children bring home lovely little pictures. But there is nothing more soul destroying than going into a primary school and seeing a wall full of the same picture.

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Pearl Kinnear

I love it, when you see the rogue one all. The one that's given Van Gogh, double horns and something else, and a rocket ship on his back. And yeah, completely changed the whole idea of what it should be. Yeah, I think I think ultimately we have to remember that we need to we need to celebrate the uniqueness of thought because it's process that's the process that they're celebrating?

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Pearl Kinnear

And is about discovery and exploration, that's really what it's about.

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Amy Hall-Gibson

Absolutely. And I wonder if you can share with us a little bit how you're sort of using that clear flow approach, or kind of, those that process with, the Wee People Big Feelings in Helensburgh sessions that you and I have been delivering together and I can absolutely see the thread of it, but I just wondered if you could share sort of your thoughts around the creative flow.

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Amy Hall-Gibson

Because we're in the setting, we're there we are there for a sort of set amount a time. So even as us, as the artists, we can get into that creative flow but, but we still need to sort of be like, oh what time, because we need to move on and you know, as in go to the next setting but also we're aware that the setting itself has lunches and things like that or home time.

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Amy Hall-Gibson

Yeah, do you want to share a little bit about that?

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Pearl Kinnear

Yeah, I suppose the the joy of, the joy of that autotelic flow and that age group is that they don't tend to get sucked in to the time thing that we do. So they do lose awareness of their surroundings and times, but kids are completely oblivious to the fact that there is an expected amount of time so we might go in timetable and stuff and go, right, we're going to give this group half an hour or 45 minutes and then we'll move on to the next group.

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Pearl Kinnear

But you might get some kids that want to stay for both groups, and that's fine because they've maybe become completely immersed in the process. But then you might get other kids that start the process, go actually, there's something happening out there that I want to get involved in or they want to take that process elsewhere in the setting. So I think you get to see that creative flow happening so many different levels and really it's down to our observation to notice those little penny drop moments for children. Obviously when we done work in a nursery we only we only know those kids quite superficially really.

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Pearl Kinnear

And so we have the luxury of having that outside perspective where we can, and as artists, we can go well that's totally that happening, that's totally that happening. But ultimately the people who are based in the nursery, all the time are in a much better position to see how much benefit lies within those creative flow processes for those children.

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Pearl Kinnear

And that could even just be the fact that you get so emersed as a group together because you might get children who are just not group workers, don't usually like to work in a group. Or it may just be that they sit and spend a bit of time completely observaning and completely absorbed absorbed in that process because they're loving the feel of something.

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Pearl Kinnear

And that may introduce them to something else down the line. Really it’s, really watching, watching young children emerse themselves in creative flow teaches us how the, how the crossover points with any type of art form is where the sweet spots actually lie. So it's when kids discover well actually I don't need to be sitting at a table making this picture because that window looks far more than interesting to paint on or I can do this

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Pearl Kinnear

outside and let's actually see what happens when I just drop all the paint in a puddle because there's water there. And I don’t have to put it in a cup and it's already there and let's see what happens. And can I make the ground turn into a huge rainbow is that rainbow going to extend when I splash in that puddle afterwards.

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Pearl Kinnear

These are they're just that that's the questions that I’m imagining they're asking themselves but they're just responding in those little 9 seconds awareness moments.

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Amy Hall-Gibson

Yeah, I really like that thought of like they actually take the process to other areas because there is that free flow in our sessions and yeah, and they will take some of the things that we've, you know, provided materials or whatever, but then they'll go somewhere else. And I've never thought of that, that actually what they're doing is taking, they’re still in their creative flow, they're just taken it elsewhere, they're just exploring it.

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Amy Hall-Gibson

Or maybe they want to share that process with another friend who's not in that area. Erm, and I'm thinking about the paint sticks that we had. And I remember like they were all over the nursery at one point and, and it was absolutely that I think that wee ones were like, I'm still in this flow, but I want to take it here to see what happens.

00:30:29:16 - 00:30:57:11

Amy Hall-Gibson

And, and yeah, when we took the powdered paint outside that that to me was such a highlight to see like we had it in our hands first. But then the children were like, oh, what happens if we put in and you know, and they went and found loads of different things in the outside area and they dropped it on different materials as well. It wasn't just the ground, it was like wooden things and then there were smeared in it on like fences or you know.

00:30:57:11 - 00:31:03:21

Amy Hall-Gibson

So again, that's all a creative flow and that all came from them. It was discovery, it was internal.

00:31:04:17 - 00:31:49:08

Pearl Kinnear

The thing is what they are learning from those actions as well is because obviously there's a whole load of scientific physics, things that they learn when they behave with the materials like that when you give them a hula hoop and they start doing the tug of war thing, there's that like oppositional force happening, when they spin there's centrifugal force happening so they they are gathering an understanding through a relationship with a process that they can then apply when they sit in school further up the years and get told well when you're on a swing this is a type of force it makes, you're on a roundabout it's centrifugal force so that you feel like everything's getting pulled out the

00:31:49:08 - 00:32:12:15

Pearl Kinnear

way. And they're like, oh, yeah, like with the hoops, you know what I mean? Then you remember being on roundabouts, playing with hoops, how the washing machine turns, they start to relate all their life experiences within that. So it's really, really important for young kids to engage completely in process because their brain remembers it their brain tucks it all away and then it gives them a way of understanding.

00:32:13:13 - 00:32:38:14

Pearl Kinnear

Once they get further up and they start to use critical thinking, it's really important. Their experiences feed into all of that. It's very, very important. So the hoop thing on the last time we were in, there was a couple of wee boys and they'd decorated, the girl's had decorated a hoop but they were going with a volcano vibe again so they decided that they were going to fly.

00:32:39:01 - 00:33:10:14

Pearl Kinnear

in the hoop because it became whatever they were flying in, to a lavacano. It was this big circular trip, that we had to keep going on but it quite quickly turned into a bit of a dance so one of the wee boys in the hoop had some serious moves and he was just running and dancing and shuffling at the same time while we were singing that, we were going in this lavacano. He started sitting just playing materials, looking through colored acetates.

00:33:10:14 - 00:33:37:12

Pearl Kinnear

And then from that, that developed into him playing with drama, creating a sculpture out of the hula hoop, and it then transforming then into movement to which all feeds into things like proprioception and all the important things that you need to do with young children. But unless you can sit back and appreciate the level of development, it's easily dismissed too.

00:33:37:19 - 00:33:38:04

Amy Hall-Gibson

Yeah.

00:33:38:22 - 00:34:02:11

Pearl Kinnear

But this is where nursery workers, that's where their strength is because they knew to look out for these things. So so really when we go in and explain to them how creative flow works, they get to analyze those things in their memories a little bit more. So obviously if they're, they're in the hoop going to the lavacano they can't be

00:34:02:11 - 00:34:35:12

Pearl Kinnear

Writing a sheet out while they are going round. But they know when they go back to their staff, they're just like, Oh, that lavacano thing was a laugh. And then when they sit and talk through it, they will get penny drop moments about all the experiences that that kid was having through that, how that relates to things like their physical development, their motor skills, but also the freedom to explore, the excitement, or the sadness when something breaks is all incredibly important and

00:34:35:12 - 00:34:37:24

Pearl Kinnear

And they only get that through the process.

00:34:38:24 - 00:35:05:15

Amy Hall-Gibson

Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. I think that was something that's become quite clear through these sessions that we're doing, is that the variety of emotions that are explored in such a short time is vast. But but I think you're absolutely just pointing it out that it's because it's that creative flow moment. There's an environment that's been created. It's a yes space in the way that they can explore explore it

00:35:06:09 - 00:35:44:17

Amy Hall-Gibson

And we're celebrating all emotions. We're not saying like we're not saying there's bad emotions, you know what I'm saying like oh feeling sad, you know, oh no, no no, we don't want that. Actually all emotions are valid and we're creating an opportunity for them to do that in a safe way where they're supported, that they can go through these emotions and and figure out how that feels and how they're able to regulate and and you're right yeah because things do break and it is sad if they've spent all this time and investment if you like feeling into creating that volcano trip and then all of a sudden it's it's broken physically broken or whether it's a case of

00:35:44:17 - 00:36:03:24

Amy Hall-Gibson

oh, your parents are here, you need to go, you know, so the opportunity is broken because it's like no you'll need to leave now. And that that is ok to feel like that. And I would feel like that as an adult too. I'd be like oh, but I didn't want this experience to stop. I'm really enjoying it. I want to see where more discovery could go.

00:36:03:24 - 00:36:21:22

Amy Hall-Gibson

I want it more of this or. And also that negotiation with others in the area. You know like, I don't want to go that way, but you do. And then all of a sudden, frustration or anger starting to creep in and seeing how they manage that through a creative flow experience.

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Pearl Kinnear

Yeah, there's, there's an adaption involved in working with process that helps kids learn how to negotiate better I think. So through actual response to materials, through response to situations, through mimicking adults, mimicking other children they learn other ways to approach things. And that's where their strongest learning point is, is that it's, it's experiential. So if you don't allow them that experience, they don't know how to act.

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Pearl Kinnear

And, and so I suppose with the creative process for me one of the strongest, most valuable things in terms of emotional literacy is the, with creative flow its a space that it’s safe to fail in. So like in science, it’s all mixed up you don't get what you expected. But that's okay. You got something else and maybe that was more exciting or maybe it didn't work and it just made you start again and do something else.

00:37:26:02 - 00:37:57:00

Pearl Kinnear

But there's no expectation and there's no expectation in children, or their shouldn't be any expectation in children's play and their interaction with art materials or with music or drama or storytelling. There shouldn't be an expectation. There should just be this. They are in this moment and they are responding to it and and that is that's where their biggest learning moments are happening, but only because it's a safe space to fail.

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Pearl Kinnear

If you make it a space where they feel they have to succeed or have an end product, then that’s when the logical side of the brain starts to take over to try to protect them. And I understand that entirely. So the best thing you can do as a practitioner when you're working with the arts is almost celebrate failure when it fails and see where it goes.

00:38:22:05 - 00:38:55:02

Pearl Kinnear

Because ultimately you're shoring up their emotions and teaching them how to be adaptive and teaching them that’s okay to be sad about things, and teaching them that it’s ok to be angry about things. It's just about how you then take that communicate it and what you take from it. And as adults we can sit and explain to them how they can make things better or make things work for them because and sometimes just listen and console them when they are sad because sometimes that's all they want.

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Pearl Kinnear

They just want about consolation. And then it gives them that consolation and then they notice that somebody else's doing something far more interesting than getting a hug of you so they'll just go and do that instead.

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Amy Hall-Gibson

I'm just, there was a quote that you sent me around that whole like, feeling angry, and I've got it here. It was Aristotle. You sent me it. It's, “Anyone can become angry. That's easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose and in the right way, that is not easy.”

00:39:29:16 - 00:39:48:18

Amy Hall-Gibson

And I think that's exactly what we're what we're doing, what we're doing through this regulation. It's about seeing that everybody feels the emotion, but actually finding, like celebrating it and being like, do you know what you're in a safe space it’s ok to feel angry. Right now, I can support you. I'm the right person for this to be with.

00:39:48:18 - 00:40:11:18

Amy Hall-Gibson

I understand. You know, we know where your anger is coming from. But that's not easy. It's really not even for adults. So imagine it for children who are you know, they're learning this, you know, when our bodies are very reactive because it's like you just said, it's about protecting us and trying to figure out who can I be angry with, who or not?

00:40:11:18 - 00:40:23:15

Amy Hall-Gibson

Just anger, but who can I be sad with? Who can I feel happy with that's actually going to support? You know, my emotions or and help me through this and that's not easy to do. It really isn't.

00:40:23:22 - 00:41:03:12

Pearl Kinnear

And ultimately, you know, by giving them that space, you're teaching them compassion. And it's and compassion. Having compassion is one of the best learning tools moving on in the world. Because if you can understand why somebody behaves a certain way, it usually stops the conflict happening within a space. Yes, so if you can help nurture that idea that people have compassion then as the child grows, they then learn compassion and they then are more open to understanding.

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Pearl Kinnear

They're more open to experiences are more open to learning and they don't shut down. That's like it's really important and that the creativity is as bolstered. Through out all years education really. But more importantly, the zero to five is so, so, so important. And, and I think, you know, you get to the stage where you've got people who practice like art therapy and stuff and you really see how beneficial using creativity as a way to help children and adults re reinvigorate and redesign their neural pathways so that they can respond to the world in a different way, when you see professionals in the field of things like art therapy and how they use that, you start to recognize how

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Pearl Kinnear

strong the arts actually are in this. And really again for us, it's like I've said before it's quantifying and that's how we quantify that and pass that on so that people are assured and confident when they are working in 0 - 5 setting. And it's not just messing around, there's a whole swaithe of foundations being built below what other people are coming in and just looking at

00:42:22:12 - 00:42:27:21

Pearl Kinnear

as a bit of fun or a bit of mess making. It's so much more than that.

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Amy Hall-Gibson

Yeah. And I think that that's actually for me the biggest thing is that we see a snapshot, but actually that snapshot does not show the bigger journey that the wee ones have gone on or that work that's been put in behind the scenes, if you like, somebody is just coming in and seeing it and that's lovely that they're seeing it. And of course, time is, you know, very important to all of us and we don't have a lot of it.

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Amy Hall-Gibson

But we need to remember that there's so much more goes into everything than what you see in that, it is essentially a tiny snapshot, whether you're there for half an hour or 2 hours, is still such a tiny amount that you're seeing. You're not you haven't seen what happened years before. You're not about to see what's happening years in front.

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Amy Hall-Gibson

You're just seeing that moment and reminding remind myself of those 9 second blocks I think is actually really important to because like you said earlier as well, when we go in, we are just seeing that surface level of the children. We we we're building relationships. But our relationships can only go so far because we're not there all the time and we're just seeing those 9 second blocks.

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Amy Hall-Gibson

We we have no idea what happened in the morning or we have no idea what's happening in the afternoon. We're just seeing that little bit. And we're we're just coming with that kind of knowledge of that of that snapshot. Yeah, I can see how it filters through to even like the resources we've been creating like for parents as well.

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Amy Hall-Gibson

So we created a grounding resource, and a glimmer resource and now that we're chatting, I'm thinking to myself that they lend themselves autotelic process actually for

parents, because we've got little, you know, we call them wee inspirations, but they're little moments where we've said if the parent or the carers overwhelmed or is experiencing emotions that they're finding challenging.

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Pearl Kinnear

Yeah.

00:44:25:01 - 00:44:50:20

Amy Hall-Gibson

But they are obviously in a role where they're the carer or they are the play mate but they need to regulate themselves. Our Wee Inspirations that we've put in there are to do that. And we're doing it through that creative flow process by saying, setting it up and you know, and it's something fun. It's engaging. But actually I think we don't say that in the resources that it's creative flow but actually it really is now that we're talking about it.

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Pearl Kinnear

It is, and I think. I think I suppose it's about it's about like whenever we talk about schemas with people and we we go, listen, when that child is dropping that bowl of food repeatedly. They are not doing it to annoy you. Because they've discovered gravity and it's like you're just like, oh my God, this is amazing.

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Pearl Kinnear

And that is creative flow as well. That's repeated action, that's those babies engaging in a process because obviously when we are talking about art and we do, were talking about zero to five year olds, we are literally talking about zero, the first marks that a child makes can literally just be them in movement, they are learning how to move and those movements are then translated into marks as they get older.

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Pearl Kinnear

So and like I was talking a little bit about proprioception earlier, so, so that's all to do with their spatial awareness of how they exist in a space, what space they take up, how their movements interact with that space as well. So it’s actually better for little kids to draw on an upright surface rather than sitting at a table.

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Pearl Kinnear

So, you know, I was talking about how we as adults envisage art to be contained to a table where you sit and you look down and you’re in a chair. Whereas with kids, like we said, they'll take it anywhere and they'll walk outdoors with it, and they’ll run with it. And it's like everything is crossing over. That's when dance and movement cross into visual art and and drama because they're they're creating a whole character based around what they're doing.

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Pearl Kinnear

And then just a simple thing of going we need an upright surface for these children to explore some mark-making and realizing that we we know that people are like I don't want those children to draw on the walls. That's fine. Just paint about a Blackboard Point, designate a space that they can draw in, it's much more beneficial for their motor skills and their appreciation of where they exist in the world to let them explore that movement and mark making.

00:47:02:09 - 00:47:12:03

Pearl Kinnear

When they stand up to do. And they're in a space and their arms are moving, making big gestures and again, make space for them to explore that in.

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Amy Hall-Gibson

Yeah. And that's what we want. We want them to be curious little people. We want them to explore the world and not be. Worried of fear of getting it wrong you know because we have that so much as adults that actually I think it hinders us, well we know it does because there's all the evidence there that creativity in that we just I expectation it changes and what we want to do is nurture the opposite of that and say actually here is a place where you can explore and discover and keep questioning, keep exploring and keep being curious.

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Pearl Kinnear

Yeah, totally. Really what creative flow is about is making art for art's sake, which sounds a wee bit airy fairy, but it really is, what is it. It's about forgetting about the end product. So it's just about the process and that's all the art, for arts sake means and what that provides those children is basically optimal wellbeing from creativity. That's what you're giving those kids.

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Amy Hall-Gibson

Yeah. And we need that so much. I mean, I think we've always it but it feels like it's gone up the list of priorities now.

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Pearl Kinnear

Yeah. Especially now when you're seeing so many older children having to deal with mental health issues. So much. So yeah, all we can do really is promote those kind of soft skills that come out of creative flow and making art for art's sake, whether that is through music or visual art or dance. And that is we are talking about things like, self-esteem and self-confidence, reducing people's anxiety, keeping depression from their door.

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Pearl Kinnear

And and also as well. It gives them a lot of fulfillment and it usually helps with focus as well. So as yeah. As a really, really important thing and unfortunately we exist and a society that thinks of art as purely being that's just a nice thing on the side but it really isn't. It's like the onion base to the recipe man.

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Amy Hall-Gibson

Absolutely. It's like what you said, though, about that memory when you said to be like, we're creating those memories. And so when you grow up, when you get back into those moments of flow.

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Pearl Kinnear

Yeah.

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Amy Hall-Gibson

Your brain has this memory that goes alongside that. And if we are in a memory where it's allowing the wee one to feel really good about themselves. Like you said, self esteem to be really able to express themselves without fear of judgment or anything like that. If they then revisit that when they're older, that's the memory that's going to stick with it, which is ultimately benefitting wellbeing, isn't it?

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Pearl Kinnear

Erm, and if you think about, you know, most of the advice now that gets given out by doctors and just general people in our horizons whenever people are like really anxious or really worried about anything, there's this like you just need go for a walk, you just need to let's go for a walk. Let's do this. Let's, let's go

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Pearl Kinnear

and sit next to a river and the goal of that is to help people be completely present in the moment and being completely present in the moment is a direct translation of getting into creative flow. So if we can embolden children with the ability to do that through creativity now it's just going to make it easier for them as they move on through life.

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Amy Hall-Gibson

Absolutely.