##### Matthew Coyle Client Relationship Director at Baillie Gifford –

##### “Don’t bottle things up! Creating an open culture”

This is the Headtorch Podcast. Welcome! Our mission? To create a mentally healthy culture at work. Keeping the conversations alive, our podcasts bring you great presenters and stimulating discussion on mental health and wellbeing in the workplace. Enjoy!

**Amy:** Welcome to the Headtorch Wellbeing Hour with me, Amy McDonald,

**Angus:** and me, Angus Robinson. We'll introduce you to today's guest, Matthew Coyle, in a few moments. As you settle in, a heads up that we are recording this and you'll be able to listen to the conversation and also share it. It'll be available as a podcast on all the usual podcast channels.

So please, please do follow us on those channels. It makes a difference and we really appreciate it. At Headtorch, we work with organizations to develop and maintain a mentally healthy culture. The Wellbeing Hour is a really important extension of our work. I'll be back a little bit later to field your questions and comments to our guest.

**Amy:** Yeah and we're really looking forward to hearing your responses and the questions from everybody who is joining us live today. Before then, I have a few questions for Matt himself. I'm going to be asking him questions such as, What does a great workplace culture mean to you? What motivated you to join the Mental Health Group, and how does the motto, **Be Curious About the World**, influence practices at Baillie Gifford? So today's session is **Don't Bottle Things Up, Creating an Open Workplace Culture,** and for this conversation, I am delighted that our guest today is Matthew Coyle, Client Relationship Director at Baillie Gifford.

Before we hear your story, Matt, we are going to just share the question that you are posing everybody here today, and it is this:

**What one thing could you do to make your workplace culture more supportive?** I know many of you are doing many things already, but what one thing more could you do? We're going to add that question into the chat.

So as Matt and I go into conversation, do add your responses, thoughts, questions to that question into the chat and we'll come to it a little later on. Let me introduce Matt Coyle then. Matt is, as I said, the Client Relationship Director at Baillie Gifford. He joined Baillie Gifford in 2014 and is their Client Relationship Director within their US Financial Intermediaries team.

Previously, he managed portfolios for high net worth individuals and charities at both Newton and Standard Life Wealth. He's now in his second year as the Chair of the Mental Health Group at Baillie Gifford and has a few more years, I believe, in that post if he is ready to stay on and take on that challenge.

Matt, so pleased you could join us today. Do share with us your mystery object. Introduce yourself.

**Matt:** Hiya, thanks, Amy, and thanks for having me. So this is my mystery object.

 This is a paddle bat or paddle racket. Paddle is a sport which is probably best thought of a mini version of tennis,

and with a little bit of squash combined in there, but it's, it's been going, I think, since the 60s. It was, founded in Mexico, but across kind of Europe and increasingly now in the UK, it's becoming more and more popular. I think because it's it's intuitive, it's much easier than tennis, it's much more inclusive than tennis.

So you have people of all ages. My young kids are playing, equally, even my mum, who's in her mid seventies, we've got her out in the paddle court once or twice as well. It's great fun, and for me, it's just a real switch off from the day to day. So that kind of mental, but also physical health, and you have to be present.

If you're not thinking about it, then you're not going to score many points. Yeah, it's been great fun. I've just been doing it the last few months, but it's been really good fun.

**Amy:** Fantastic. Well, that's absolutely brilliant. So we're going to dive into our conversation then, Don't bottle things up, creating an open workplace culture.

So let's start off with that, that paddle bat, did you call it? Yeah. That paddle bat. how does it help you not to bottle things up?

**Matt:** Yeah, so I'll come on to the kind of bottle reference a little bit later, but for me, it's just a great way to, to connect with friends. So I typically play with guys I've known for a long time,

and equally, we were just on holiday last week and played with some families who we've never met before. So it's a real leveller in terms of just connecting with people, and that connection is brilliant. But I think, yeah, having just a bit of an hour, it's typically an hour we play for, an hour to yourself and away from any thoughts about work or family or anything else, just focus on having fun.

So that kind of being present, so I suppose the mindfulness element of it, you've got to be there, you've got to be connected and thinking about what you're doing. and then just, as I said, connecting with friends, getting a bit of fresh air. Where I play in Edinburgh, it's, there's a cover, but it's still outdoors, so it's still open to the elements at the side.

Playing over the winter months has still been quite chilly, and so you're getting your fresh air, you're getting a bit of adrenaline running around, and as I say, that connection and a bit of, camaraderie with others is great fun.

**Amy:** Fabulous. Yeah. you can't beat it really, can you?

I think, the importance of giving time to yourself to, revitalize, and reconnect with yourself and your family and your friends is so vital so that you can then be the best you can be, in, in all areas of life.

**Matt:** Yeah, exactly. I think that said, I remember someone saying to me when my first son was very young, you've got to look after yourself before you can look after anybody else.

And I suppose sleep's a key part of that, but other things as well, whether it be nutrition and exercise, and yeah, like anything, it's a balance and you've got to prioritize things. But for me, trying to do this once or twice a week is perfect. A little bit of escapism and yeah, it works really well.

**Amy:** Fantastic. Let's go back to Matt Coyle then at the beginning of his career in Baillie Gifford. What made you or what inspired you to join Baillie Gifford?

**Matt:** So I suppose a couple of things. I was at, an organization, before and there's a little bit of change. So Baillie Gifford's a very stable organization,

so that was something that appealed, but also from a regulatory perspective. I won't go into too much boring detail around it, but essentially there's some changes in the industry, that meant that the role I was doing was becoming increasingly administrative. And I really enjoyed the connection with clients and the investment side of things, whereas the role was naturally changing to be, as I say, a bit more driven by regulation.

So, um, It was a natural opportunity to look to try and do something else, and Baillie Gifford really appealed. A great reputation in terms of looking after clients, but also a great reputation from a cultural perspective. so I think the combination of both was really appealing. and also the team I joined had clients in the US, so a little bit of travel as well.

It can have its pros and cons, but, being able to see different parts of the world was also definitely an appeal. So I think that, that client focus and that, strong culture were probably the two main elements.

**Amy:** Yeah. Yeah. and you remained in investment management for some time and then moved into client relationships within Baillie Gifford.

What created that shift?

**Matt:** Yeah, so I think for my previous role, it was a kind of combination of both, and at Baillie Gifford, the roles are more clearly defined. So for me, it was able to continue to have those investment conversations, but I was no longer making the investment decisions. So, still being able to build up those really strong relationships with clients and still articulate how we were managing their portfolios.

That really allowed me to get the best bits of my previous job without the kind of day to day stress and responsibility of making those investment decisions. So it's something that works really well here. We give our investment managers as much space and protection as we can from the outside world so they can focus on making the very best investment decisions for clients.

And then my role is to be that interaction between our investment team and our clients and it works really well. So it's a very varied role. Each day can be different, whether it be something happening in the broader stock market. one of the wars happening around the world, whatever it may be, there's always something new that's happening and keeping the role very varied.

**Amy:** Yeah, and you talked earlier about one of the things that attracted you in was the culture within Baillie Gifford, and so how does this motto, Be Curious About the World, how does that influence practices at Baillie Gifford?

**Matt:** Yeah, it's a really interesting one. I think the, for me, the, one of the key things around Baillie Gifford is the partnership structure.

So we're not owned by a parent company. We're not owned by any external shareholders. We're purely owned by a small number of partners who work in the business and run the business. And that gives us a very long time horizon. So this curiosity is about thinking differently. We could all look at Bloomberg screens and we could all read the Financial Times, but if we do that as an industry, everybody's likely to come up with the same sort of investment decisions, same rationale of the world.

We deliberately try and hire people who are very smart, but have different degrees, and come from different parts of the world. So that's where the curiosity comes from. We can teach smart people how to get through their CFA qualifications or do a discounted cash flow, but what we can't teach is that natural curiosity and inquisitiveness about the world,

and that's really what we're looking for. So over 80% of our investment managers joined as graduates straight out of university, and then we train them. So it is brilliant. So it means that you're having people who have studied anything from medicine to music, to philosophy, to history, and from increasingly universities from around the world.

And if you bring those people together, that's what's going to generate an idea that someone else working in London or Wall Street is not thinking about. And that's what we think are key advantages. Being in Edinburgh, we're away from a lot of the, that financial industry noise and we foster this idea of continuous learning.

We have ties with different academic experts as well, whether it be universities or independent experts on certain subject matters. It's much better to listen to them rather than just purely, as I say, focusing on the same inputs that every other firm are thinking about.

**Amy:** Yeah, and so how common do you think it is to take that approach of people from different backgrounds, people with different qualifications?

**Matt:** I'd say others are maybe starting to do a bit more of it, but I would say the majority will still look to bring in people who have studied finance or economics or maths, because it's a safe bet. Because we take that very long term view and we've got the stability of the partnership, that's what allows us to, to think further ahead.

So we'll bring in new graduates every year and we'll keep doing that with our equity teams and it's, it's a really great way to, to do that, to ensure that we've got the conveyor belt, if you like, of really strong people coming through year after year. So others might be catching on, but I think we're still, yeah, we're doing it pretty well.

**Amy:** Yeah. Fantastic. How does that play into mental health and wellbeing?

**Matt:** So ultimately, what we want to do is be one of the best investment management companies in the world. And to do that, we have to create a culture of inclusiveness, and ideally, we want people to be bringing as much as themselves to work as they want to.

Now, people have got their home life, private life, that's absolutely fine, but if you can connect to people and feel that you are understood, you are respected at work, your ideas are valued, then that's exactly what we want to create. We want to create an environment where people can respectfully challenge each other.

That, that element of debate is absolutely vital. So if we get that we're gonna have a workforce who are more engaged, they feel like they're valued, they're gonna stay here longer, they're gonna be more productive, and ultimately that's going to benefit our clients, and that's what we are here to do.

I think that point around diversity and inclusion is absolutely vital. and mental health is a key part of that.

**Amy:** And you were bringing in something there really around psychological safety, weren't you? That ability to challenge with candour, as they say, that ability to say what you think, to go against the grain, and for that to be okay.

**Matt:** Yeah, exactly. I think it was, there was a Scottish philosopher, David Hume, that talked about truth springs from arguments amongst friends, and that's really what we want to get to. We want to get to the best solutions for clients, and if that means rubbing up one of your colleagues slightly the wrong way or disagreeing with them, that's okay.

You can do it in a polite and respectful manner. But you and I don't have to agree on everything, we can have two different views, and it doesn't really matter who's right or wrong, but it's about having that debate. And trying to see the world through someone else's eyes. And I think that's something that I try and do on a regular basis.

As a kind of white middle aged male, I will see the world a certain way. But many of my colleagues are not white middle aged males. So it's very important that we all try and think about the world through different lenses. And being part of the mental health group and the broader diversity and inclusion effort at Baillie Gifford, I think that's really helped.

**Amy:** yeah, definitely. And it all feeds into a truly great culture, doesn't it? What does a great culture, what does that mean to you?

**Matt:** I think it means various different things, but one thing is about perspective and we want to be professional and we want to do a good job for our clients. But we're also all human beings and we need to take the time to recognize that and sensing when someone is maybe not quite themselves and being able to say,

Hi Amy, is everything okay?

and it sounds very easy, but I think you need the right culture for that to be the norm and for that to be comfortable. And you need to get to know each other well enough for that to work. So I think what's worked really well for us is actually some very senior people in our organization have been open about some of the challenges that they've faced.

And that allows others to think, okay, if that person has had, whether it be mental health struggles or any other, things that they've overcome in their lives. Then it just shows that everyone's human. You can reach those high levels despite what else might be going on in your life. And if you're open about that, then it allows other people to do the same,

and you have open conversations and it just means everyone feels much more comfortable, so I think that's a key part of it.

**Amy:** Yeah, definitely, and I think, we're the Baillie Gifford's wellbeing partner, aren't we? So I, and I think when we first started, working with you, that was, it was around about that time when some senior people or definitely a senior person had spoken out.

And sometimes we talk about that, the fact that actually, you an organization needs to be slightly further on in, in the journey so that people don't feel too exposed, right? So it's great when a senior person speaks, but they also need to have that sense of safety when they are speaking.

But, our sense was that, once again, Baillie Gifford handled that extremely well. What's your thoughts around that?

**Matt:** Yeah, I agree. I think, so the story was shared on our kind of internal, intranet. and it's amazing just the, then people turn to each other and say, wow, did you read that?

And then it just naturally opens things up. There's no pressure for other people to do it, but by doing that, we've now covered various different subjects. and I think that's been really helpful. I joined the mental health group during lockdown. and I'll come on to maybe talk a little bit about my motivation for that and the story that I had,

but I think that open culture. particularly as we've grown, because for a long time it was purely Edinburgh as our main office. we've had an office in New York for a number of years, but over the last decade we've opened offices in different locations. So that culture, the culture in Edinburgh will be different to the culture in Shanghai, but you can have these core kind of shared beliefs, if you like, which are consistent.

And I think that works really well. but yeah, I think that culture, can be stretched at different times, but I think it's really important that at the end of the day, we all have that kind of common, goals to fall back on. But I think that the training, we've worked with Headtorch on a couple of areas which have been fantastic.

Manager mental health training, so all of our people managers, of which we have several hundred, we're trying to ensure that all of our people managers are going through this training so that they can just do exactly as I said and pick up on signs of any potential change in their team, but also just have the confidence to ask, is everything okay?

And so that's been brilliant and then you've also kindly helped us with the mental health supporter training, which again, depending on what might be going on in someone's mind, it might be helpful to speak to someone in their team, maybe their manager. Or it might be helpful to speak to someone out with their team.

And that's where the mental health supporters are really valuable. We have over 90 mental health supporters, who someone can look up again to see who they are and go for a chat or have a coffee, whatever works. and then we can signpost people if they need further help. We have a employee assistance program as well if somebody needs more professional assistance.

but yeah, that role of the mental health group, the mental health supporters has been really valuable.

**Amy:** Great, thanks, Matt. So it's a pleasure working with, with you and everyone at Baillie Gifford. So do share with us now if you, if you can, what was your motivation for joining the mental health group?

**Matt:** Yeah, sure. So as I said, it was during lockdown, and there was two real reasons. One is my wife is a clinical psychologist, and I just noticed, A, how busy she was during the period, but also just how valued her services and skills were, because it was a really difficult time for everyone. So that was something I thought, how can I maybe help?

I don't have her skill set, but how can I maybe help, help others? But also we try and keep the mental health group quite small and have representation from different departments. So chatting with a colleague in the same department, there was an opportunity for me to step in and I was really keen to do that,

and then shortly after joining the group, again, based on other colleagues having shared their stories, I thought there's something that I could maybe share with colleagues that might be helpful. So the title of this session was Don't Bottle Things Up, and the reference there is to my Dad. My Dad was an alcoholic.

For most of his life, he was, he functioned okay. There was a few trials and tribulations and my mom and dad separated, when I was a child, but it was really, he kept things together until he retired, but when he stopped working and he lost that focus and, there's only so much golf you can play and during the summer it was okay, but in the winter months things started to deteriorate and sadly, the alcohol addiction just got the better of him.

So I shared a story about my challenges, working with my dad. As I say, my mum and dad had separated, my brother had moved to Australia a long time ago, so a lot of the day to day was down to me to try and manage the ups and downs of dealing with my dad. Very sadly, my dad passed away about 10 years ago.

It was actually, we were just back from honeymoon. and I couldn't get a hold of him on the phone, went round to see him in his flat and very sadly found him dead in his flat. So that was something, that moment will never leave me. but I was conscious that during lockdown, maybe without judging anyone, a lot of us were maybe drinking more than we should.

So I thought, how can I possibly share something that might help? So that was my motivation in terms of sharing the story there. And I wouldn't have been able to do it when it was very raw, but yeah, eight, nine years later, I thought, actually, this might help, and the amount of support I got afterwards was unbelievable.

People saying, oh, thank you for sharing that. I've been through something similar with a family member or whatever it may be. so yeah, so that was a very powerful experience. but I'm pleased I did it.

**Amy:** Yeah, thank you for sharing it today it sounds, really tough. How did you, whilst, whilst your father was, was still here, how did you support your own mental health during that time?

**Matt:** Yeah,

 so I would say initially it was very hard because I was, when things were, probably starting to decline for my dad, I was so a young professional just out of university trying to make a way in the investment management industry. And if he would phone me during work hours and things, I find this really difficult.

So I had to come up with a mechanism to say, look, as much as I want to support my dad, I can't let his situation determine the course of my life. So I had to come to that realization quite quickly because yes, I want to support my dad and do anything I possibly can. But it can't be the defining point in my life and influence the relationship with my wife and so on.

So that was really difficult, but, I had to just be quite boundaried with it. And at times I would, I'd speak to him and I thought that was a really positive conversation, I think things are sinking in. Speak to him the next day and he wouldn't remember what we were talking about. I sometimes had to write him letters instead, which feels archaic,

but at least he'd have something physical so when he was in a clearer moment, he might actually take it in and appreciate it. So it, it was very difficult, but I had to just yeah, make that decision in my own mind that there's only so much I can do and ultimately, this is an illness that he has to want to fight.

And in fairness, he did get sober for several months and he was doing great, but he couldn't sustain it, unfortunately.

**Amy:** Boundaries are really important and sometimes it's almost like we have to reach a crisis in order to go, actually, enough is enough. And that, I suppose it's coming back to,

what do we do to look after ourselves because we can't function in our own worlds if we're not able to look after ourselves well, right?

**Matt:** Yeah, exactly, and, and I think that's where mental health and broader wellbeing come together because, some people will be diagnosed with a clinical mental health condition,

but many of us will just, and all of us, will just have good days and bad days, up, up moments and down moments, and I think that's where the broader wellbeing point is so important. So building resilience, and if you build resilience when you're feeling strong physically, mentally, then you've got something in the bank,

so that when there is a setback or you have a down moment, then you've got a bit of resilience there, you're well slept, you've had, you've got good connections with family and friends, so you can reach out to them, talk to them. you're physically doing okay, I don't want to be a hypocrite here, I could certainly lose a few pounds, but I think it's that, it's generally having that awareness that, making good decisions on a regular basis builds up that resilience, so that when there are tough times, you can fall back on that. But equally, as I said, there will be colleagues who, are in a very,very difficult place and that's where we need to just say, that resilience point is not relevant so much here.

We need professional assistance, and I think that's part of what we're doing as a mental health group and that's the manager training, the mental health supporter training. We're not trained to be clinicians, but we're able to say, look, there's something not quite right here, do you need further help or I think it would be helpful to speak to so and so and just signpost, so active listening and then signposting to further help,

but yeah, it's that balance.

**Amy:** Yeah, that balance and recognizing that you're, as you said, that you're not the, we're not the clinicians, but, we can be human and we can reach out to people and we can support people and, we can protect them as much as possible within the workplace so that, yeah, so that they can maintain their wellbeing as best, as best possible.

So just going back to your story, if we may, you talked about the fact that you shared you shared your story at that time during lockdown and there was a big outpouring. I think that's often common as well. We hear that a lot of, suddenly when somebody speaks up, it allows other people to recognize what's going on with them or to

start talking about it for themselves. What do you think the benefit of that is for people having opened up about your story?

**Matt:** I think it shows that people are not alone, and that while their situation is really difficult, others have gone through something similar and are willing to talk about it.

It's probably not the first question you're going to ask someone when you meet them, but once you start to chat to someone, then you maybe pick up when there might be a throwaway comment that you think, oh, actually, something's not quite right there, and it's very easy just to let that go. But if you've got the confidence to say, look, is everything all right, then you can continue that.

So I think if, as I say, we've covered a huge range of different topics now, which has been brilliant in terms of, depression, baby loss, equally, so baby blues returning to, to work and so on. So lots of different topics, and caring for family members and relatives and so on.

So I think that's created a real spectrum of different topics that we've covered and it just allows people to think, yeah, okay, life is tough and nobody's a robot. Nobody can come in and do their job in isolation without any influence of their own personal lives. We all have things going on. and there'll be times where life is easy and there'll be times where life is very difficult.

So it's just that recognition that, we're all in this together. Yes, we want to be professional and do a great job for our clients, but within that, you've got to be yourself. You've got to be able to look after each other and you've got to have a bit of fun as well. It's, yeah, life's too short.

**Amy:** Absolutely, absolutely. So in terms of Baillie Gifford's vision then, for mental health and it's employees mental health, what would you say that vision is?

**Matt:** Yeah, I think, ultimately, we want to just have this open culture, and that's the key part, but I think if we continue with this training that we've talked about in terms of the manager mental health training, that to me is vital.

Culture, I think, works in both directions. You can have top down culture from the leaders of the organisation, but culture's also bottom up, and each team is likely to have its own subculture. And there may be one or two dominant people in the team, but likely it's going to be the manager that kind of sets the tone of that culture within the team.

So I think that's why we are targeting managers from a mental health training perspective. But mental health is not something that's, it's a fad and it's going to go away. This is something that will endure forever. So we want to have this framework in place. Those of us in different groups and network, it's in addition to our kind of day job if you like

 so it's vitally important. HR playing a huge role here as well. But it's something that we want to set up that's sustainable. So if we focus on a few areas, manager mental health training, we've got our mental health supporters, and then the wellbeing part to build up resilience. That to me is a really strong model.

It's sustainable. It doesn't matter who takes over as chair in the next couple of years. They might have slightly different ideas, but I wouldn't see us deviating from the path that we've been on, that others had set before I took on the role as chair, so I think we're in a really good place, but we certainly can't be complacent.

As I said, this is something that changes and evolves and it will be a constant.

**Amy:** Yeah, absolutely, we totally agree that the, managers, people leaders at any level really are absolutely key, aren't they? We might argue that. working with the senior team first and then all people leaders and then frontline people

that's the kind of the path that we like to tread. But there's no doubt that the line managers play that vital role, don't they, in, in sustaining the wellbeing of their teams.

**Matt:** All of the partners have an emphasis on diversity and inclusion, across the firm and that's key,

and so I think it's great. We've got a kind of diversity and inclusion group that's chaired by one of the partners, and then we've got our various different groups and networks covering mental health and wellbeing. LGBT, neurodiversity, multicultural, armed forces, various different groups that all kind of work, independently, but also collaboratively, to just feed up, in fact someone from the Armed Forces Network was in touch about a joint event that we might do.

in May, which is fantastic, and that's exactly what we need to be doing.

**Amy:** Yeah. Yeah. You're very good at bringing the networks together and having that kind of cross culture within those networks as well at BG as well. Fantastic. thank you so much, Matt. Let's look again now at that question that you were posing us.

What one thing could you do to make your workplace culture more supportive? Angus, you've been scrolling through the chat. What have folks been saying?

**Angus:** We have a question here, more a comment from AJ Way. So take time to listen to people, we are all so busy these days.

Sparing some time for people makes a difference and should be easy to factor into our lives. What do you reckon, Matt?

**Matt:** Yeah, I think that's exactly what we should be doing. As you say, life is just so busy. I was thinking that this morning, actually, you can do everything on your phone, whether it's banking stuff or booking a holiday or whatever it may be.

 Life is just so busy and it's just taking that time. if someone's keen to chat, you put your phone down, put your phone away. Okay, let's chat. I think it's absolutely vital. We found something that's quite helpful is organizing breakfasts. People can get into the office maybe half an hour early or even if it creeps into the start of the day, fine.

Generally, people have a bit more time in the morning. At the end of the day, everyone's rushing to, I don't know, pick up the kids or get home or whatever it may be. So creating that time, I think is vital. So yeah, nothing beats a face to face conversation.

**Angus:** Yeah, absolutely agree. Absolutely. Also, from Lorraine Mair, we've got, when you ask, how are you? Really mean it and listen to understand, not just to respond.

**Matt:** Yeah, 100%. And sometimes it might take the question a second time. Because, yeah, how are you? Yeah, I'm fine. Yeah, but how are you really? Yeah. yeah, I think, I think that's exactly it. It's too easy, almost, you can pass someone in the corridor and say, Oh, hi Lorraine, how are you

and just keep walking. But actually stop and wait for the response and use your eyes and ears and think, is that person really okay?

**Amy:** And Gillian Stewart has said, listen and care more and drive less. What do you think to that one, Matt?

**Matt:** So yeah, I think I remember someone saying that we've got two ears and one mouth for a reason, but also just some of the training that we've done through Headtorch, it's just that active listening and asking open questions.

I know I'm very guilty of trying to jump to a solution. And that's not, sometimes that is, I think, depending on the situation, if it's critical, then you just have to make a decision and have to act fast and do something. But very often it's just listening and being supportive and then let the person that you're speaking with almost come to their own conclusion or solution if that's what they need,

but sometimes they just need to offload. They just need to speak to someone who's not going to judge them, they can just sit there and talk. And actually maybe go for a walk and talk, that's something I find quite helpful as well, depending on the situation. So no, I completely agree. yeah, less, less talking, more listening.

**Amy:** Yeah, absolutely. We like to. advocate, promote, Nancy Klein's stuff, don't we, on Time to Think and really creating that thinking environment for someone to just consider, what's going on for themselves without the other person, as it were, jumping in with their ideas or opinions, judgments and so on.

It's just about creating that safe space, isn't it?

**Matt:** I think that's really it because sometimes actually we have this when we're trying to connect people from a mental health supporter perspective. So sometimes somebody might email me or the group and say, does anyone have experience of such and such?

And if you can connect someone, that's great. Other times it's actually more helpful if the person doesn't have experience because the danger is, as you just said, Amy, they can start listening for a little bit and then they think, Oh, I've had that and they jump in and they tell their story and you think, hold on, this is not about you,

it's about me. So I think, yeah, just, you can relate and empathize, but you don't need to tell your story. it's, yeah, it's not vital.

**Angus:** We've got another comment there from AJ Way and, I saw a meme last week. about when you ask someone how they are doing, and we tend to respond with living the dream.

Instead, they suggested more honest, the horrors persist, and so do I.

**Matt:** Yeah, I think there's a fine line. There's also, I think, something about kind of Scottish culture as well, and that we're And I think it was a Billy Connolly thing that I was watching and somebody said something about Scottish males and their feelings and, he says, oh, he loved his wife so much that he almost told her and it's that kind of reluctance to, to show weakness and to say that everything's not all right.

But I think we're getting so much better as a society. So I think when I left uni, or even during uni, not many people were really talking about kind of mental health, whereas 20 years on, it's much more prevalent. And we do a staff networks day every year, and the first group that come through are new graduates that have joined,

and it's amazing just the difference chatting with someone who's just out of university, how much more open they are, say oh we did this at university and we had this group at university and I was thinking none of that existed. So I think we've come a long way.

**Angus:** I agree. We've done quite a lot of work in the shipyards in Glasgow and you would have thought that's one of the last places that people would be talking openly about mental health, but in our experience actually they do.

And the yard convener who, at the time was a shop steward and, he was a mental health representative and, the guys in the yard had put across his welding booth appointments and lots of people would go in and talk to him and he always said that his duty was to help people with mental health, because if you leave it too long, he said that every disciplinary procedure he'd ever gone to had a mental health element to it.

So it was about helping people to open up, to talk about it in their own language, in their own words, and also helping steer them towards support rather than something traumatic, if you like.

**Matt:** Yeah, no, I think that's vital. And that kind of own words is really important as well. I do a bit of sports coaching for kids,

and I think part of the training, from a kind of child protection and wellbeing perspective is if there are any issues, then you get down, you speak to the children at the same height and you replay their language. if I'm speaking with a five year old or a six year old, they're not going to have the same language that I might use.

So, it's really important that you listen and replay things in their own language. yeah, I completely agree.

**Amy:** Nice. that's a lovely way to think about it, isn't it? Gillian Stewart, thank you for sharing your comment. She says, Matt mentioned how we do everything on our phones.

Does an expectation always, an expectation feature in the Baillie Gifford, culture? Always on, I think that should be. Yeah, sorry.

**Matt:** Yeah, no, I think we're very lucky in that regard. I think we deliberately try and ensure that we're not like the kind of Wall Street investment banks that you see this culture of coming into the office at six in the morning and staying till midnight.

Definitely not. I, I was saying to Amy and Angus just before we started. I was off last week for the school midterm and, I forwarded my emails to one of my colleagues. I gave a little summary of things to look out for when I was off and I didn't turn my work phone on once. And I came back to work,

my colleague had kindly done a little summary to say, look, these are the key things. And then I spent the first hour or so yesterday going through the emails from last week. So there is no expectation, that you're always on. I think, we've been very clear about that during lockdown. I think there's a temptation that people were on more, do your working day, go and have dinner, maybe put the kids to bed, whatever it may be,

and then you think, oh, I just need to finish that off. And if people want to do it, fine, but I think that's, there's no expectation. And actually, again, I won't get into the kind of working from home versus office debate, but for me, I come in every day because I like the separation between work and home.

And if there's something particular going on with a client and I need to do something at night, fine. But that's a rarity. Most of the time, phone or laptop goes down, I walk out the door, and I'll look at things again the next morning. And even with clients from the US, there's a time difference,

we're 5,6, 7,8 hours, but they respect that time difference. We've got operational teams, and as I say, we've got offices in different locations, so if something's urgent, someone can pick it up. But no, I think always on is not a helpful culture at all. no.

**Angus:** How would, Matt, how would you say, so we've been working with Baillie Gifford since 2018, and I don't know how long before that you started with the mental health journey, but what would you say the results from that are?

**Matt:** Yeah, it's a really good question. I think, the, there's different ways to measure it. So I would say 2016 was when we really formed the mental health group, so not that long before, but I think there's that change. And part of it is, as we chatted about earlier, senior people sharing their stories.

That changes a culture. I think our culture has been great for many years, but I think that was a different element to it and allowed that much more openness. And the other way to maybe measure things is, as I say, we also have our employee assistance program, so a counselling psychology service.

So we can measure things that way. And that service is open to all staff and their families and dependents. So we can look at numbers. and actually, you can look at it two ways. You can see if numbers are going up, oh, does that mean there's a problem? And you think, not necessarily. It might be a really good thing, because we're offering it, and colleagues are chatting before there's a problem, or before the problem gets too big.

We can measure numbers that way, but I think in general, let's look at how long people will stay here, and if we're creating the right environment, people are going to want to stay. And I forget the exact numbers, but turnover is probably 4 or 5 percent a year, which is very low. there are lots of examples of people, I've been here 10 years, lots of examples of people being here 10, 20, 30,

even, one or two have been up to 40 years, and you think that's brilliant, and in a world that's I suppose fluid in terms of people moving around, for people to spend 20 plus years at one organisation, we must be doing something right. So I think that's probably a key way we can do, we do staff surveys as well.

And as I say, we're not perfect. There are always things we can learn and D & I is a journey that we are and we're moving along and things will evolve, but I think looking at some of those retention numbers and the fact that we continue to attract really good candidates, that also speaks volumes.

**Amy:** Thanks, Matt. just briefly, if you can, just a comment back to Rona Waugh's comment, which is sometimes managers are scared about opening a can of worms with the follow up question about how are you really and the confidence to deal with issues raised. So many pressures on managers in the NHS, especially, to be all things to all people.

A brief comment on that, Matt.

**Matt:** Yeah, no, I completely agree, and I think each situation will be different. But I think it will make such a difference to your colleague if you can do it. Now, they won't expect you to have all the answers, but I think it will really, they will feel such a relief that you've noticed and that you're willing and you're showing an interest.

And yes, it might create a little bit more, okay, what do we do next? But that's where, whether it be HR or external employee assistance programs can come in. So I, yeah, I know in the short term we're busy, it'd be easier just to do nothing and move on, but I think longer term, for that colleague, it will make a huge difference to take the time.

so I know it's not easy, definitely not easy. But yeah, I think,

**Amy:** Yeah, we see it really as a false economy, to ignore it, because what's going to happen is what's going to happen to that person. They might not speak up, they might become more unwell, then they might end up going off sick, et cetera, et cetera.

So far better to take that time in, in the short term, and as you said, I will actually, it's one of our mantras is doing nothing is not an option, right? You wouldn't leave somebody lying on the floor with a broken leg. So it's the same thing. If you notice somebody struggling, you don't ignore it.

Let's move on to your top tips. Matt, talk us through these, if you can. Can you see that there? Yeah. The first one is movement.

**Matt:** Yeah, and I think we can apply these to both individuals and at an organizational level. I started by talking about paddle and I think, yeah, for me, physical exercise is really important, but equally in the workplace.

I think for two reasons. One, just getting off your seat is good, but also rather than just sending a Teams message or an email, go and speak to somebody. Go and walk a couple of flights of stairs upstairs to go and chat with someone. And, and I think that's really important. We also talked about maybe doing some walking meetings instead.

we're lucky here where we are next to Calton Hill, and it's a lovely way to go and spend, half an hour if you've got time to have a walking meeting with someone. so yeah, that, that works well.

**Amy:** Great. connection.

**Matt:** Yeah. Yeah. partly covered in the above if you're, if you've got those meetings.

But I think connection is It's important on a regular basis. It's not something to be just relied upon when you're dependent on somebody for something. It's building up these connections on a regular basis. And then nutrition, we're fortunate here, we've got a great, I think I used the word canteen, Amy, and you corrected me and said no, it's more of a restaurant, but we are lucky, it's a great facility,

and we're well fed and it's healthy stuff, but I think, again, whether it's at the organizational level, or just individuals, that, that are eating well and trying to think about those different coloured fruits and vegetables, it's all important stuff, and again, the connection. Some days you're just busy and you just need to have a quick lunch and get something done, but taking the time to go and have lunch with colleagues, people you know well, people you maybe don't know so well, that, that can be really powerful as well.

**Amy:** Yeah, it's interesting how often they tie in together, don't they? These sort of, these ways to look after ourselves better. Plan for success.

**Matt:** Yeah, again, I think this, can be applied at both levels, but I think ultimately this is about being optimistic. and I think that optimistic mindset is vital, for both individuals and, and organisations.

And if you can get the structures in place, whether it be your day to day routines or whether it be a business plan, nobody can go from A to Z in one jump. It takes time and it takes planning. and yes, there'll be setbacks again, individually, professionally, but if you know what path you're going on and you've planned for that and you've set things up well, then you've got every chance to succeed.

yeah, I think that's all about optimism for me.

**Amy:** Yeah, fabulous. Gratitude.

**Matt:** Yeah, I think, it's very easy to, again, there's a little bit of the positivity here, but it's very easy to focus on the bad things. I don't know whether it'd be an end of year review or as a business, what are your goals?

If you've not hit them, then the temptation is to say, oh, we've not done so well there. But let's think about what we have done well and be grateful about what we've got around us, the people we've got here, and it can be really powerful. It's something we've tried to do with the boys on occasion. They might roll their eyes a little bit, but I say, what were you grateful for today?

And it doesn't have to be a big thing, but it's something that just gives you that little bit of spark, a little bit of positivity, and yeah, I think it's good to reflect on the positive and the good things in life as well.

**Amy:** Absolutely. I, for the past few months, myself and a friend have been exchanging just three gratitudes for so this morning I sent a photograph of my three gratitudes from yesterday,

and I think what it does is it helps you to start looking for the good stuff as well. You're actively looking for the stuff that you're grateful for. Whereas before you might, I might've just bumbled along, not really recognizing the good stuff as much as I could. Perspective.

**Matt:** Yeah, I think, this is again, about keeping the long term in mind, and we will all have short term struggles and so on, but trying to think about what are you really trying to achieve, and focus on the big things in life, Now, there'll be smaller things that are important and there'll be smaller things that are not important.

So it's a little bit about prioritization and thinking, where can I have impact that helps either the organization or helps my colleagues? And maintaining that long term view, I think is really important. And we said earlier, life is so busy, we get bombarded with stuff on a day to day basis and it's easy to become submerged in the day to day rat race. But thinking about what's truly important in life,

whether it be your family, whether it be your health, whether it be what you want to achieve work wise, keep those big things in mind and, yeah, try not to sweat too much about the smaller things that just get in the way and don't really matter at the end of the day.

**Amy:** Yeah, I really appreciate those very pithy top tips because sometimes it's difficult to retain lots of stuff, isn't it?

And so it's nice to have just the, actually just think of movement. What am I doing? What am I not doing? Perspective and so on. Matt, let's move on to some quick fire rapid questions. Are you ready?

**Matt:** I am.

**Amy:** Fantastic. What does vulnerability mean to you?

**Matt:** Being open and allowing others to be vulnerable.

**Amy:** What little thing do you notice, zoom into, celebrate every day?

**Matt:** Trying to have a laugh with either my \wife or my kids.

**Amy:** Lovely. What message would you give your younger self?

**Matt:** haha, don't be too serious.

**Amy:** Nice one, and what message would your younger self give you?

**Matt:** Start thinking about hair loss earlier.

**Amy:** What would you say to leaders that use only plasters, give lip service to workplace mental health and wellbeing?

**Matt:** Yeah, you need to go deeper. You need to, need to do mental health training with Headtorch.

**Amy:** Oh, what a marvellous message! Matt, thank you so much. It's been a great pleasure. Let me pass on now to Angus for formal thanks.

**Angus:** Matt, thank you very much. That was fantastic. The openness that comes across, the commitment from Baillie Gifford is really fantastic. It's staggering, actually. It's really great. Being vulnerable and having the confidence to share your story and, the reasons why you got involved in mental health, with the mental health group,

is really impressive. And, I love the bit about, giving the space and protection to be the best, to be allowed to focus on your job. And also I remember working with, your new intake of graduates, I think it was last year, maybe the year before, I think it was the year before, and I was blown away by the diversity in the room.

There was people there from all over the world, from all walks of life. There was a dentist and, I remember saying, how come you're a dentist and you joined Baillie Gifford? She goes, I didn't like drilling

teeth, but that was her career

move into Baillie Gifford. It's really, insightful, it's really eye opening about the way that Baillie Gifford approached things.

So really impressive and we really appreciate you joining us today and sharing the thoughts that you've shared. So thank you very much.

**Matt:** No, thanks for having me on and thank you for all the questions and interaction. It's been great. Thank you.

**Angus:** Thank you. Thank you. And I wish I'd thought about hair earlier as well.

 Coming up on the Wellbeing Hour, we have, on 21st March, we have Tamana Ayazi, and she is an award winning filmmaker. You can watch her Emmy award winning film, In Her Hands, in which she follows the youngest female mayor in Afghanistan prior to the Americans leaving. You'll get that on Netflix.

Tamana was based in Afghanistan prior to moving abroad, and you can also see an Oscar winning short film that she was involved in called Learning to Skateboard in a War Zone, in brackets, if you're a girl. You'll get that on Apple TV and Amazon Prime. And there is another film she was involved in, Where the Light Shines,

about two men from Afghanistan aiming to qualify to ski at the Olympics. So it's going to be another brilliant Wellbeing Hour, she's talking about We're all human, let's build bridges. Join us on 21st March at 12 noon. We also have coming up Here we go, on 25th April, we have a wellbeing panel event.

It's a different format that we're taking. I think it's going to be quite interesting, quite controversial. We're going to be asking the question about let's stop wellbeing washing. Let's start walking the talk. So again, join us, 12 noon, 25th April. 15th of May, we have Chris Abbey. He is a Senior Director in Altrad.

Altrad is an industrial services company. They work in the energy sector and all sorts of things. Again, it should be another great one. Please join us for those. We'd love to hear from you as well.

Tell us what you're doing in terms of workplace mental health. We have tailored solutions for all layers in an organisation. Senior leaders, people managers, and frontline people. That's it for the Wellbeing Hour today. thank you very much. It's a great pleasure and an honour. to run these. And from all of us at Headtorch, we'd like to thank you for coming along and listening and, for listening in the future as well.

Thank you very much and enjoy the rest of your day. Thank you.

Thank you, everybody.

Thanks for listening to the Wellbeing Hour. We hope you enjoyed the conversation. These events take place regularly, so do join us for more. And, if your organisation would like to develop a mentally healthy culture, we'd be happy to work with your senior team, people managers and frontline staff. Please get in touch at headtorch.org. We look forward to hearing from you.