

# One Knight in Product - E146 - Jacs Guderley

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, product, product manager, depression, mental health, role, management, pressures, feel, book, career, problems, absolutely, struggling, experience, easy, community, working, bit, job

## SPEAKERS

Jason Knight, Jacs Guderley

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Jason Knight 00:00

Hello and welcome to the show and an episode where we asked the age old question, why is product management so hard? And is there anything we can do about it? One thing you can do about it is pop over to the product mind community where Tonight's guest and her partner in crime are trying to support the well being of product managers globally. You can sign up for free and join a safe space of like minded professionals try and help each other make sense of it all. Check out product mind community.com Or find them on Twitter or LinkedIn, you can check the show notes for more details, mental health or cause very dear to my heart. So I was really keen to do this episode. And if you want to find out more about taking care of your mental health and product management and beyond, stick with us.



Jason Knight 00:52

So my guest tonight is Jacqueline goodly Jackson, form former audio book editor who used to use AI tools to make recording sound more human, which I could certainly do with for the podcast that says she's also able to wrap all of the lyrics to so solid crews 21 seconds, you can press the red button for that premium content. Jax is passionate about lifting things up, by which I mean lifting big heavy weights into the air, as well as lifting up people at work and product managers in general. She's doing this with our new community for product managers, and also writing a self help guidebook for how to overcome depression. hijacks. How are you tonight?



Jacs Guderley 01:23


Hi, I'm great. Thank you. How are you doing?



Jason Knight 01:25

I am fantastic. And looking forward to the wrap up before any of that. Let's start with a deep

and meaningful question. You said before this call that the best paths are never linear. The stumble and fall isn't important is how you get back up. So what was your path into product management and how many twists and turns and I guess falls didn't have in it.


 Jacs Guderley 01:47

So I see my path into product management is kind of coming at the end of a very twisty and turny career. And it's one that I never envisaged. And the reason I say that the best parts of never linear is because I'm actually I'm really happy with where I've ended up. I love the product of a product management. I love the company that I'm working at. But had you asked me kind of how content I was with my career, you know, kind of over the last 10 years, there'll be so many times I thought I'm not achieving enough. I'm not on a kind of set path. I don't know where I'm going, because I've done everything from marketing to sales to ops. And you know, with a career like that you can think whereas this guy, I've also had challenges with my mental health. And at times, jobs haven't kind of ended up where I wanted them to be. But I've got to this point, a lot of product, and I wouldn't have got there without all the twists and turns along the way, basically.



Jason Knight 02:41

Yeah, I think that's really interesting, actually, I mean, my career has gone all over the place, as well, again, through operational roles, working as an analyst working as a developer, then eventually making it into almost my second career as a product manager, product leader. So it's definitely very interesting. I think, from my perspective, it's almost like having that variety of experiences no matter how well they did or didn't go, can actually be really helpful to kind of round you out as a product person as well, because it's such a cross functional role. But what was it then attracted you to product management in the first place? Like you weren't working at it, then if you were working adjacent to it, or if it was just something that came up, but like, what was it that got you in?

 Jacs Guderley 03:19

So I think if I really think back, the first time I ever met a pillar manager, I didn't even know there was such thing as a product manager. And I was working at JustGiving for a time. And all I knew was that I was kind of on the customer side. And then there was a tech side that I didn't really have much interaction with. But there was this guy who Jonathan that we worked with that kind of like sat in between the two. And he was a really cool guy anyway, and I liked him. But then he also seemed to kind of take with the insights that we had on the customer side, beetle off and do something with tech, and then kind of, you know, then stuff got made. And I just was just like Matt by magic. And I just thought, you know what, that's really cool. And I kind of like, I think that just stayed in the back of my mind, I thought wouldn't that be a cool job to do, but you know, I no training, I don't think that's ever something that I wouldn't know how to get into it. And then I ended up working at the AI text to speech startup that you refer to in the intro as a programme manager. And you know, what startups are, like, they are too busy with too many things to do. And there was just someone needed to take our product and I kind of and, you know, no one was really sure how we were gonna build this product, and I just kind of went, I'll try it. And that was and that was how I did it. I think it does come back to that, like,

kind of, you know, meeting a product manager think it was really cool. Really enjoying the tech that we were working with and just thinking you know what, I would really like to have a go at trying to actually help make some more of this



Jason Knight 04:43

product managers glowlight as well. So I see the product manager walk into the room is do you know that someone that you want to know?



Jacs Guderley 04:50

Totally, I mean, I have that guy now. So you know, I've succeeded in that sense.



Jason Knight 04:56

There you go. So you said then you basically transferred in because obviously getting As a product management can be a bit of a chicken and egg situation, right? Because a lot of times you get people saying, well, they can't get a job because they don't have the experience, but they can't get the experience because they didn't get the job. So did you find that then an easy transition to jump off a lot of coaching on the way in? Or did you have to kind of work that out on your own? Yeah,



Jacs Guderley 05:16


I wouldn't say it was easy, because I think I really think of my roll over now as kind of my real first real product manager job because I've interviewed for a product manager role. And I have to say, like, I have to say, the interview process to become a product manager, it's a lot harder than I expected, it's a lot longer. So new rounds to go through. It's not a senior senior role. And so that it was just a gruelling process, I think. Yeah. And you know, I write a newsletter trying to help people as well just manage that process, but easier. But I think, I wouldn't say it was hard. And I think it goes back to what you're saying before and that so much of this, so many of my experiences helped make me the kind of professional I am today that I just felt I had a lot of experience, I could draw on that I was actually fortunate enough in my last role that I just kind of had the great privilege of just making a product from scratch, I built a customer portal. And that's such an amazing experience to have, as in your, you know, as an early stage product manager, that I knew I had enough experience and evidence to back stuff up at interview, but it was just about, you know, translating that and communicating that to your interviewers who aren't looking for someone who's exactly like you, and you have to convince them.




Jason Knight 06:37

Oh, wow. So that convincing, then you must be you must be quite the negotiator. Are there any kind of top tips that you would take into an interview process to maybe persuade a sceptical interviewer that maybe doesn't necessarily think you've got the right background? But are


there any ways that you tried to surmount that? Or was it very much just whatever you had to do in the interview itself.

 Jacs Guderley 06:56

I mean, I absolutely didn't succeed every single time I tried to persuade them. I don't pretend I got this role. The first, the first interview I did. And I think it's all about learning along the way, really, I think it's unrealistic to expect that you'd waltz into an interview and be able to persuade the first sort of senior product manager or product leader that you ever meet. I knew I had the experience to be able to be a product manager. But I just needed to learn exactly what they needed to hear. And that's a process of really just going through a load of interviews, making notes every time you come out, or one, looking at all the feedback they give you on your case study to say, Oh, you needed to demonstrate more nuance here, or kind of your, your ways of thinking here. And just kind of just giving them what they're just working out what they want, and giving it to them, which sounds like very vague advice. But if you kind of use that critical mindset that a lot of product managers have, and kind of iterate, I think you end up getting a pretty good interview at the end.

 Jason Knight 07:55

Absolutely. But did you feel the need to go for any of those swanky certifications that a lot of people keep sleeping on these days? Or did you have some other ways of kind of self learning other than just like reading product, Twitter and being amazed at the quality of the insight there? Like, what were some of your key ways to skill up in the role and skill up and manage to land that job?

 Jacs Guderley 08:17

Yeah. So as I said, I was just really lucky that I'd already built a product when I wasn't officially a product manager. So that is, I think that's the best experience you can have. And I'm not pretending that I was a perfect product manager, then and I'm certainly not now. But I at least had tangible kind of evidence of, I'd learned on the job, basically. But there is an element, I was quite aware that I just didn't, I just didn't know the right the right way of doing things. And I think a skill within product management is you don't necessarily need to know the right way of doing things. You just need to know how to get shit done, you know. And that's definitely something that you gain from doing lots of different jobs across lots of different industries, different companies, which I was lucky to have. But what I did do was just that kind of like polishing at the end. So like, you know, it's like, doing a good exam when you're younger, like having just those key like facts that you throw in like nature of making sure you've read the right books that you can talk about Marty Kagan, the you know, what continuous discovery is that? And all this stuff is important, right? I'm not I'm not putting it down. It's the fundamentals of Product Management. But you just I just hadn't been I literally didn't have a clue about any of that stuff. I'd been doing some of it without knowing it. And so yeah, I kind of I read around the topic, I listen to podcasts and that kind of stuff, just to just to make sure that I I looked and sounded the part.





Jason Knight 09:37

That's the thing, you need to get the lingo down, and then everything else comes from there. Right so we talked about it path into product. You've obviously touched on the newsletter that you do as well, but you're also the co founder of product mind, a free community that aims to support the well being of product people, which obviously I fully support. It's sounds like a fantastic community a fantastic initiative, but specifically what initiatives be doing within that community? And I guess also, while we're, while we're at it, why did you start it up in the first place?



Jacs Guderley 10:07

So um, I kind of laugh about how the Hmong community came into being or how I became a part of it. Because, you know, I have two passions. Well, I have more than two passions in life. But the two that I tweet about, and are their passion, if you don't tweet about it, I'm not sure is, is mental health and products. And I kind of looked at my Twitter feed one day, and I just thought, Who is this speaking to honestly, like, I've got the product, I've done product and mental health, and in a quite sort of I read a lot about mental health. So it was about kind of, you know, quite detailed stuff about psychiatry and mental health services. And I shared this tweet, and I said, kind of laughing at myself saying, I mean, who's sweet spot on my head? Same with the whole mental health product thing really like? Is anyone interested? Yeah. And weirdly, that was one of my most popular tweets. And people kept saying, Yeah, I just got a load of positive response to that. And then I'm happened to meet my Co Co Founder, Graham Reid, and through reaching out to different PMS as I was, that was one thing I did actually getting into product management, I just spoke to a load of product managers. He was one of them. He had a community online community for product managers. And we both had a passion for mental health and well being. And we knew that there was this, we really felt that there was this desire amongst product managers to be better supported in that space. We were both product managers who had, you know, our own struggles. And we just had this, we just had this feeling that was what was needed. There was feedback from, you know, social media, and we just thought we'll give this a go. And it's, and it's really, you know, it's definitely Well,



Jason Knight 11:44

sounds really good. And obviously something I really support. But what sort of things are you doing within the community to help support that? I mean, obviously, you talked a lot about your own journey and your own issues you've had in the past, and obviously the same for your co founder as well. But like, Are there any specific initiatives that you or kind of activities that you run within the community? Or is it more of a kind of mutual support group between people that are interested in basically supporting each other?



Jacs Guderley 12:11

Yeah, it's that it's, you know, the value of it really comes in providing that really supportive safe space, but not just that, I mean, Graham and I both recognise that there is a need to support the mental health of people in product because of its uniqueness. And you know, all jobs can be tough on our mental health, that goes without saying, but there's something you know, something about being supported by other product managers who understand the kind of

unique pressures and stresses that you have in a role where you're kind of sitting in the middle of a lot of different parts of the business, a lot of different influences, you're expected to manage a lot, say no to a lot, keep a lot of people happy. And all of that stuff, you know, that stuff that we're kind of drawn to, in a way, you know, we love that kind of excitement, it's like, there's so much you could do with the role. But at times, that's the stuff that also gets stressful. And one of the worst things that you can do for your mental health is just to keep all that stuff inside, if you're feeling the pressure, that's just keeping it inside you. And so it's as simple as, look, here's a space, here's other people who get it, and you can share her. And we understand, and you know, you might crowdsource various ways of problem solving, to the challenges you face. But ultimately, it's just that kind of, I think, I think Graham feels the same. It's just this that kind of feeling supported by people who get



Jason Knight 13:32

Yeah, absolutely. And, again, massively support that. But if we're talking about purely wellbeing problems that product managers have, so excluding tiresome debates about prioritisation, and roadmaps, and all of that stuff that comes up on medium and stuff all the time and constraint very purely on well being what are some of the common problems, or issues or things that people bring up in the community that you feel show a trend for product managers, or you spoke a lot, just then about some of the reasons why that might be the case, because of the ambiguity of the role, but what actually come up as common themes?



Jacs Guderley 14:04

So you're probably not surprised to hear there are lots and lots and lots of different issues that come up. I mean, yeah, it's a hugely broad role, we deal with so many different people, the environments so diverse, but if I were to kind of share a few things, like pressure from leaders, kind of deliver all the time and constantly be releasing, you know, it can be quite lonely role. I just find it quite funny that, you know, I need a team of devs. I don't know how they do what they do. But I lead them. And there's only one of me, and there's no one kind of, you know, team of devs they've got each other but as a product manager, there's just one of you and it's it's yeah, you're kind of you're enjoying a fair bit. Other things like not feeling particularly empowered to be able to deliver what you think is a product vision you'd have and taking kind of direction from above a lot. But I think ultimately but a lot of the time, I do think there's this feeling of loneliness, not on like a deep, profound level, I hope people go home and kind of feel less lonely. But yeah, just that sense that you're dealing with a lot of things that perhaps aren't many other people around that understand that particular situation you're in.



Jason Knight 15:17

Yeah, that resonates a lot, actually. I mean, actually, one of the reasons that I started the podcast up in the first place was back then a couple of years ago now was in a job that wasn't particularly enjoying at the time, also amid lockdown, which didn't help for many reasons. But at the same time, kind of going on a short break, and you go away and walking on the beach, and reflecting and trying to not look at your phone, that actually was one of the first times in a long time that I hadn't actually checked in with my emails all the time, and try to sort of do some ad hoc work on the beach or whatever. And yeah, for me, it was very much a case of

Well, yeah, this is quite a lonely craft, because as a product manager, and I don't know if you feel this, but as a product person, you're sitting there, like you say, either the only product manager on your team, or in some cases, maybe the only product manager within the company. Or even if you do have a group of people within the company, you've only got each other and you all have the same problems. As in like, you've, you're all under the same organisational structure, you've all got the same commercial and product and business pressures that are weighing your down, and there's no real easy way to actually go out there and effectively, really understand that it's all okay. I mean, yeah, okay, is subjective, obviously. But okay, in the sense that many of these things are just things that happen in jobs, and to try and understand what's right, what's okay, what's not, right, what's not. Okay. So, for me, sort of throwing myself into the community. And obviously, with the podcast, as well, I tried to get out there and talk to people really opened my eyes to what really, the world of product management was like, in a way that I don't think I could get just reading a few articles and just talking to my own fellow product, people in my own company, to completely resonate, completely agree with that.

J

Jacs Guderley 16:53

And just, you know, I think I feel very lucky that I work in a very, I love the product environment, they work, I love the culture, it's got a really product, first culture, but not everyone is lucky enough to work in those sorts of environments. And I think that, you know, we can try and perform as best as we can. But if you're working in an environment that doesn't lend itself to supporting product managers, it can be really tough.



Jason Knight 17:17

Yeah. And then that makes me think, and I don't know what you think about this. But this idea that, of course, product managers in environments like that, I mean, they often get blamed for some of the organisational dysfunction that basically is affecting them just as much as anyone else. But because they're, they're in between everyone. They're kind of getting it from all sides, which I understand why they get it from all sides, because they are in that position, but at the same time, doesn't make their lives in New Zealand. There's certainly been occasions in my career where I've just walked out of the office at the end of the day, weighed down with the weight of the world, because again, he's just getting effectively, I don't want to say attacked, but basically attacked by all comers, just because they've got no one else to have a go at.

J

Jacs Guderley 17:58

Yeah, exactly. And it's hard, because I think certainly I suffer from this, sometimes I feel responsible for too much the product manager because because you do have somebody on you can have so much influence, and you have a whole team to look after. And I think I should be making sure that team are really happy. And if they're not, it's my fault. And if we're not, you know, haven't delivered anything really tangible for the past couple of Sprint's, you know, that's, you know, what am I doing, and then to have those pressures you put on yourself, but then to have, as you just talked about kind of these extra pressures and kind of being held accountable for perhaps things that aren't in your control? I think it's just yeah, it can be it can be a lot,



Jason Knight 18:35

a lot of some of the ways that you try to help people Aside from providing a safe space to try to help people overcome some of those challenges, or maybe overcome the stresses and strains of Product Management in a role or company, which maybe isn't working quite as well as it could do for that person.



Jacs Guderley 18:52

Yeah, so I suppose, you know, there are no, there's never, there's never an easy solution. There's never one solution. And ultimately, what we try and do in the community, I think it's a sort of crowdsourcing of different experiences, different opinions, you know, someone we have a, you know, we have lots of different channels that sits on Slack, we have lots of different channels might have, we have a well being channel, we have a product channel, people will post about something that's getting to them. And invariably, lots of different people come back with all different angles, you know, they'll approach a problem from all different angles. And I kind of think of it like, a bit like peer coaching, which I've just started over as well. Sometimes it's just that kind of the value is in kind of the diversity of experiences that can then feed into where you're, you know, the thing that you're going through, yeah, that felt that makes you feel supported in the first instance that people are coming forward to help you. And then you kind of you get to, like anything you get to decide whether you want to take on those take on that advice, but I hope it adds up to kind of a quite well built out well thought through sort of approach to just hoping various problems. But there is no unfixed way. And we would never be prescriptive in that sense that I really, I really hope that the kind of the breadth of experience is really helpful for people.



Jason Knight 20:10

No, absolutely. It's that whole argument about the diversity of experiences really what can obviously help with product teams in general, but again, diversity of experience, which can help you again, to understand that things are okay or they're more okay than they feel like some things aren't okay, and you need to be that needs to be called out to like, there are situations that just don't, okay. There's some situations aren't as bad as they seem, when you're on the coalface.



Jacs Guderley 20:36


And sometimes there's a value in exactly that people go, Oh, my gosh, that's a really bloody hard situation. And I don't actually know what I would do either. But you could try this. And just to know that you're not unsuccessful, you're not failing, you're not doing a bad job. Just because something's difficult or work. It's some things are, as you just said, some things are just really difficult.



Jason Knight 20:53



Yeah, absolutely. But as a lot of chat, online about impostor syndrome, in product managers, there's a lot of chatter around the perils of hustle culture. But there's also all these people out there with your threads of like 10 things you need to do to be a great product manager. This is the way that you succeed in business, bla, bla, bla, bla, bla, all delivered in a constantly updating feed on one social network or another. And it's fair to say that at least some of these are somewhat idealised or so context free that they're almost impossible to apply to any other situation than the one that the person was originally talking about. But do you think that this for one of a better word, Instagram, if occasion, of product management, and to some extent tech, contributes to some of the problems around people in product management, feeling that they've got almost like an impossible standard that they have to reach?

 Jacs Guderley 21:44

Yeah, I think I do think there are two sides to you know, the role that social media plays in product. I certainly I love the product community on Twitter, or parts of it. I don't



Jason Knight 21:57

i Everyone except me, you can say it's fine. Yeah,

 Jacs Guderley 22:01

I've come on the podcast, belong to the person I really know I am, I find it really, I find it really helpful. But I think it's about how you use social media, I, the kinds of articles, you've just talked about 10 things or the five books that you have to read on product management, which are always the same five books and they're no other books, you know, that surely that I find boring, I find reductive I find it makes it I think there's a pressure to just fit into this very kind of cookie cutter product management, kind of ideal. And that goes against everything. I think that product management is like the beauty of product management is that you can bring your own magic and your own take on it. And you can be creative, and you don't have to follow frameworks, if you don't want to sometimes are useful. There are no 10 ways to be the best product manager. And the only thing that that's going to do is make you feel pretty crappy if you don't do those 10 things. And I think, again, the benefit of my weird kind of squiggly career is I just think well, okay, you would never have told me to do it this way. But I have and it's still worked out really well. So I don't have to follow a pattern. But I don't want to be all kind of negative about products, social media, because I have gained from it massively. And I talked about it before, a little I when I first when I got this, this job. Now I reached out to the community, I just said that would anyone like a chat about product manager, anybody who's a product manager for longer than anyone who's been one for longer than me, which was about 18 months at the time or not, you know, let's talk and there was so much value in that I learned a lot. And I think it's about how you connect with people, if you can make meaningful connections and have proper conversations on social media, about product management. I think it's great. And I think it's really helpful. But I have certainly felt you know, this is a crazy example, there's a lot of tweets about how stress how stressed you should feel as a product manager. And when I started my role, I just didn't feel very stressed. I kind of felt like I had things under control. There wasn't there weren't too many pressures. At that time. I'm now working at an energy company in an energy crisis. And I feel more stressed. I felt like a bad

product manager, because I wasn't stressed enough. And I thought, am I not doing something right? And that's just absurd. And that is, you know, down to the kind of the narrow representation of what it is to be a product manager on Twitter, Instagram, you name it.



Jason Knight 24:29

No, absolutely. Well, hopefully we can tackle that problem, one tweet at a time.



Jacs Guderley 24:36

That's the way to save the world.



Jason Knight 24:39

But on the topic of well being, I believe you're also writing a book, and the book is called My sketchy head. No bullshit depression sketches. Now I know what all of those words mean. But what's the core premise of that book if you put all those words together?



Jacs Guderley 24:53

So the noble ship depression sketches is a guide to overcoming low mood and and depression a self help guide. And there were various things I wanted to achieve with that. Firstly, it's an illustrated book. So illustrated by me. I wasn't an illustrator until I got a publishing girl, I have to say. It's fine. I'm coping just and



Jason Knight 25:17

you can just use dolly right? The online image generator. Oh, yeah,



Jacs Guderley 25:21

yeah, exactly. Touch. Yes. So I wanted to, you know, there's a whole section of the population, that just is not going to pick up a book on how to get over depression, if it's just, you know, a wall of text. And I think there's a real power in making it visual and making it more accessible. And there are a lot of people who won't have access to therapy as well, it's either very hard to get on the NHS, or it's prohibitively expensive to go privately. But as someone who has been depressed a number of times six, to be precise, I just have this real, real urge to kind of help people in a way that perhaps I wasn't helpful at the beginning of my journey. And, you know, there's such a body of evidence suggests the power and effectiveness of video therapy, basically, and self help books. And, you know, I really want to try and help people through my experience, through my lived experience, to start to tackle some of the challenges they face with them.



Jason Knight 26:21

No, absolutely. And again, massive fan of that, and something that I probably could have done with at times in my life and career as well. But is it somewhat daunting going into an area like this, I mean, obviously, you're saying you've got the lived experience that you have, which obviously is going to give you a lot of insight into how you felt but of course, depression is a big subject, and there's a lot of ways that depression can be expressed. So do you feel that you need to? I mean, you say you read about it a lot. So I guess, you've been doing a lot of self study yourself. But do you feel almost like an obligation to get this stuff? Really, right?



Jacs Guderley 26:55

Absolutely. And, and it's a pressure that I probably shouldn't put on myself? Because there is no right. You know, like, I was thinking about this just the other day, I've got a friend who's struggling a bit at the moment. And with all the experience I've got, over the 10 years I've got and having managed to pull myself out of depression, I still felt totally powerless as to how to really help her, or how to get her out of the kind of, I always called them holes, the hole she was in with her with how she was healing. And that just shows how complicated it is. If someone who's gone through it that many times still doesn't have the answer. It's a very complicated, and you can't help everyone you really can't. And I think, in writing the book, and in illustrating it, I've been so careful to try and think of this from every angle. But I am very conscious that my experience is just my experience. It may help some other people, I think it will, and I'm really pleased that it will. But I can't, you know, I can't put pressure on myself to help to kind of be the right person to help everyone. And I think that's an important lesson to them that I have learned in writing this book.



Jason Knight 28:01

No, that makes a lot of sense. And I guess, even if it's a jumping off point for people to look into other stuff, that could still be a really helpful first step like I'm accessible guide to get started. And then they can go and find whatever it is that they need to take them on the rest of their journey.



Jacs Guderley 28:15

Absolutely. And so and one of the main messages in the book is, for most people, there's something we can do to help our own mental health. I think there's a lot of talk and part of it is down to the over medicalization of fluctuations in mood, and kind of, we rely on antidepressants a lot, which are very helpful for a lot of people. But you know, it's a, there's a real talk about the medical model and how we address depression. And because of that, it's very easy to kind of feel disempowered. And lots of people be really tough, and they might not be able to help themselves. But I know that once upon a time, I believed there was nothing I could do to get myself out of it. But I have learned that there's definitely stuff I can do. And and that's been a really kind of empowering and validating lesson for me to learn and gives me confidence, you know, and I hope other people can find that confidence through the book as well.



Jason Knight 29:08

Oh, absolutely. Well, I look forward to that coming out. But you say on the Twitter page of that book, depression doesn't make you wrong. We don't need to be on an endless search to fix ourselves because we're not broken. Now, I've definitely had my problems over the years and to some extent, have kind of come to accept myself more or less what I am and develop my own coping mechanisms. But when it comes to your journey, and the things that you've learned, I mean, how have those, I mean, you've talked about your six episodes that you've had throughout your career, how have they manifested themselves in general, but also specifically with regards to your career?



Jacs Guderley 29:45

So my career has been choppy, in part due to my mental health, you know, just to give a flavour of it. I've had to take 10 months off of work sometimes, you know, because I was completely debilitated by it. I found it very hard to leave the House, couldn't pick up a phone at the phone if my friend rang. Times, that was really bad, I couldn't think properly enough to be able to do a job. So there was no point it's only up to the office. Even if I could have, and I guess, to talk about the point that, you know, the point I want to make is that is normal, because that's how humans designed or designed, if life is getting too much fear on top of you. People can get depressed, it can happen. I think one thing that lockdown showed us is that people all sorts of people struggled with their mental health and their mood when they'd never had any problems before. Yeah, it's something that no one is immune from, from struggling with their mental health, whether that be you know, a clinically diagnoseable condition and inverted commas, or just feeling a bit shit, you know, they were, no one is immune. And that's the, that's the message I want to give. And I think that's a really important one to give. Because if you are someone who struggles, there's nothing worse than to be struggling and then to be beating yourself up for the fact that you're struggling. Yeah, it's, it's not helpful. And I think if we normalise it, which is such an overused word, but if we, if we normalise it, I think people feel in a far better position to kind of address it and kind of approach it with, you need to approach it with bravery. In some ways, the biggest lesson that I've learned in my depression is to just accept myself for who I am with the struggles that I've had, and with the potential that they could happen again, one day for all that I've learned and all the way the coping mechanisms I've developed, and to think, Okay, this spot, mate, and that's okay. And that is normal.



Jason Knight 31:36

Yeah, absolutely. And, again, can completely identify with a lot of that. But obviously, the flip side of, for example, having a period of depression at work, and having some of those struggles that you've mentioned is, of course, the boss side of that, like the people that you're reporting into the people that you have to tell that you need to take that time out the people that you need to tell that you're struggling in whatever level of detail that you feel comfortable with sharing with them both for psychological safety, and just the ability to have that kind of conversation, just in our general societies, it's still not great. So have you found over the years, and the times that this has happened to you that having those conversations with your bosses, with your managers has been productive, or that they just have no idea what to do? And it all shuts down? And I maybe even start to doubt you a little bit.

 J**Jacs Guderley 32:28**

I'll be very honest. In the majority of roles, I've had majority of companies, I just haven't had that conversation because I was too scared. Like, I can talk about my mental health now. But you know, for the first half of the 10 years where it's been difficult sometimes I just I just couldn't have said it for exactly the reason you said I didn't know what the response would be. I didn't I just didn't want to take that risk. Since then, I have I do. I do talk about it now. But I won't pretend it's easy still. And I think that's what we have to understand. I don't think even for me, I don't think it's ever gonna feel particularly easy to sit down in front of a boss and say, Okay, I have this thing where maybe it'll happen. And I might have to take a lot of time off work. And I'll kind of disappear. And I'm really sorry, obviously, you wouldn't have a conversation like that. But no one really wants to have that conversation. Yeah. But what I would say is, I've never found it easier than working where I am now at ovo. And that has to do with the environment that they created for me when I joined. So when I joined, I got sent wellbeing action plan and all of these questions about like, Okay, how would a boss recognise if you're struggling with your mental health? What are some of the things that the pressures that you feel that might start to impact on your mental health? And so walking into that role? I felt it felt easy or easier to say, okay, yeah, I have been depressed, I've got it under control. And I think really, there should be a lot more focus on what companies can do for their employees to help them feel comfortable to share. And then what I do within over as well as I lead the Mental Health Network, and I make the point of sharing my experiences as hard as that sometimes still feels. Yeah, because then people feel able to share that right. And there is such a power in that.

**Jason Knight 34:08**

But there is a lot of stigma around depression have just said and around mental health in general. So if someone's listening to this now, maybe they've not come to terms with how they're doing or maybe they're unable to work out what to do, how to progress themselves, at work or in their life in general. Just they're in a bit of a hole as you kind of put it yourself. And they need to know like what that first next step could be. Now with the caveat that I could be different for everyone. But are there any kind of general principles that you've kind of learned that you might recommend to someone that's in that sort of situation, that first step they can take?

 J**Jacs Guderley 34:43**

I don't think anyone can do any of this stuff alone, basically. And sometimes it's really hard to know who to reach out to and I understand that that's sort of could be an obstacle in this advice I'm giving and not everyone has people that they feel that they can talk to But if you have even like the slightest inkling of someone who would listen, and not judge and and just and you feel even vaguely comfortable to share with, that's the first step because you know, once it's out there and a thing, it's only from that point that you can then take some action, that person also might have some suggestions. And there's a relief and just kind of getting that thing off your chest. And when you're in a bad place, you're not necessarily the best person to kind of motivate you to do the things that are helpful for you either. So it's really, really useful to have people around you who can help you with that. I mean, I'm always happy to hear from people on social media as well. If you're struggling, send me a DM, you know, and there's always things that you can do, but it's much easier when you're not doing on your own.



Jason Knight 35:47

No, absolutely. And I'll like to extend off, of course, myself to anyone listening to this as well, if they want to listen to someone who's been around the block a couple of times, anything I can do to help. But of course, one thing we could do to help us get into by that book. So what's it coming out,



Jacs Guderley 36:01

it's come out in January 2020 force a little way off. So I hope people kind of can hang around for that long. But yeah, and it's going to be released in the UK, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. So hopefully, your international listeners can get a copy as well. And yeah, I'm very, very excited for



Jason Knight 36:19

me to I'll keep an eye on the progress. And hopefully you can put a little couple of little sneak peek chapters out or something like George RR Martin does when he's not writing his book. I'm sure I will go and where can people find you then after this, if they do want to reach out to you to talk about mental health or wellness in product management in general, find out about a community or see if they can entice you into our wrap off.



Jacs Guderley 36:41

So yes, on Twitter is the best place to find me. So my handle is at Jack's got JC SGU D. And if you're interested in joining the product mind community, where we help support the mental health people in product that is at product mind calm with a double then



Jason Knight 37:03

oh, there you go. Well, I'll make sure to link that all into the shownotes. And hopefully I get some interested people heading in your direction and finding out a little bit more. I'd love that. Well, that's been a fantastic chat. So obviously really appreciate you taking the time to talk about some deep and meaningful issues. And again, if anyone is listening to this, I'm sure they can reach out to either of us for some advice or just a friendly face. But that offer remains open in perpetuity. Obviously, you and I stay in touch but as for now thanks



Jacs Guderley 37:30

for taking the time. Thanks, Jason.



Jason Knight 37:34



Jason Knight 37:54

As always, thanks for listening. I hope you found the episode inspiring and insightful. If you did again, I can only encourage you to hop over to [one.night.inproduct.com](http://one.night.inproduct.com) Check out some of my other fantastic guests sign up to the main misters Skype on your favourite podcast app and make sure you share your friends so you and they can never miss another episode again. I'll be back soon with another inspiring guest but as for now. Thanks and good night.