



Creative Matters podcast

The Art of Leadership

Episode 3: Leadership Development

Transcript

Presenter:

Kirsty Lang

Discussion panel:

Suzie Bailey – Director of Organisational Development and Leadership,
The Kings Fund

Tony Heaton OBE – Chair (and former CEO), Shape Arts

Suzanne Alleyne – Creative Strategist, Cultural Thinker and
inaugural [Arts Council England Changemaker](#)

Produced, recorded and transcribed by The Podcast Company and Arts
Council England



[INTRO MUSIC] Creative Matters – conversations on all things culture and creativity from Arts Council England **[END]**

Kirsty Lang: Hi, I'm Kirsty Lang. Welcome back to Creative Matters, Arts Council England's brand-new podcast. We are now in the third and final episode of our Art of Leadership Series discussing how arts and cultural organisations can demonstrate good leadership and governance. Our first two episodes *What is a Board?* and *Conflict and Crisis* are both available on the Arts Council website. Do have a listen, you just head to arts council.org.uk/leadership.

Now onto our final episode which is all about making time and space for development – professional and personal, as often those two intertwine.

Let me introduce our panel Suzie Bailey is the Director of Organisational Development and Leadership at the King's Fund. She has extensive experience across the NHS, and she's been helping the Arts Council establish the new Transforming Leadership Fund, which saw investment in 18 leadership development programmes across the country.

We have Tony Heaton who is a practicing sculptor. He is the Chair and former CEO of Shape Arts, an organisation aimed at improving access to culture for disabled people. He's also been a consultant for the likes of the British Council and Tate, and in 2013, he was awarded an OBE for services to the disability arts movement.

And we have Suzanne Alleyne – who is a creative strategist. She's consulted for organisations including Channel 4, the V&A and the Roundhouse. She's also an Arts Council England Changemaker. This is a programme that was designed to increase the diversity of senior leadership in arts and culture.

Well, welcome to you all. Throughout the podcast series we've focused on ensuring we have the right kind of board in place. We've discussed the ways that trustees and execs should work together. We've had people providing insight and tips in how to manage leadership positions, particularly in times of challenge. But today we're going to focus on leaders taking the time to work on their own personal and professional development. Now, I'm going to start with you Tony. Talk us through a time when you invested in your own development.

Tony Heaton: Well, I think I've always invested in my own development. I was thinking back to when I was trying to find a job and I ended up not getting a job because nobody wants to employ disabled people and I became self-employed. So leadership starts as going out and making your own job, so I've always been eager to find things out – I'm just nosey I think. I never went out of my way to think, "Oh I need to have some leadership training." But by accident or design, one way or another, I've had opportunities.



Kirsty: How's that helped you in your role as chair or indeed CEO of an arts organisation?

Tony: Well, it all moves along in a sort of meandering way and you learn things because you need to learn things in many ways. I've done formal learning like the Clore and the creative cultural skills training and process work, conflict resolution, so lots of formal training but I think sometimes you're just sort of looking to arm yourself – so whatever position you get in you think, "Okay. What do I need to arm myself with to be able to be as good as I can possibly be for my organisation? What do I really need to learn?"

Kirsty: Suzanne, what about you? How have you invested in your own development?

Suzanne Alleyne: So I think to give you a bit of context, I'm in my mid-50s, and so I grew up at a time when that idea of professional development just didn't exist, and I also came from a background where you were just going to go and do something quite basic, so there was no expectation, and so I didn't even think about it till my mid-40s. I sort of bumbled along, but when I did get it, it was life changing.

The first thing I got was actually from the Arts Council and it was just some mentoring and just having that space: someone who could say, "Let's build on your skills. These are what your skills are. Have you seen the through line? This is your career?" That was quite life changing. But more recently doing the Changemaker programme, that was two years. The thing that I wasn't expecting because I was reporting to a board and I did have some quite live and real responsibilities, was I just had time to step back and I had time to observe myself.

I worked with three or four different coaches. I know people don't like it, but it really was like business therapy, and I'm not entirely sure you can lead without it now.

Kirsty: Let's just pull back to that very first time when you got some mentoring. This light bulb moment. Talk us through that.

Suzanne: Bit more context, I'm dyslexic and have PTSD. I didn't discover that until I was in my 50s. So, I always probably did things in quite a different way. I always worked with a team, I always collaborated from when I was 17. It was just very intuitive. I also did some quite interesting things, but I never thought about it as a career because they were just fun and it earnt me money.

When I sat down with his mentor and they said, "Think about your career." I was like, "I don't have a career." He was like, "Tell me what you've done." We literally got big



pieces of paper out and he said, "Do you not understand that every single thing you've done is a first in the world." And that was just like, "Oh there is a through-line. There's a theme." Before we were into this model of empathy and belonging as a leadership technique, he said, "These are the skills you have, but you have to know you have the skill to build on it."

Kirsty: Suzie, how about you. Tell us about the time when you invested in your own development?

Suzie Bailey: I think in common with Tony and Suzanne, I think we have to understand that leadership development is lifelong, and most of what you do in terms of learning how to do management and leadership you do on the job and you do it in all sorts of different circumstances. The opportunity to do formal leadership training is obviously hugely valuable and as Suzanne said, the opportunity to take time out is critical.

In terms of investing in my own development, I think probably when I invested in having some coach training and then offering free coaching, to really develop my coaching practices, probably a really valuable point in my career, because it's led to quite a change in the work that I do and also, the opportunity to work in some different settings and support some senior leaders outside my normal daily context. For that, I needed to take some time off and I needed to have some unpaid leave. It was something that I couldn't do whilst doing my day job.

Kirsty: It was interesting with Tony started by saying there was nothing kind of strategic about him investing in his own development, it just sort of happened, he kind of bumbled into it. Is that fairly common?

Suzie: I think that's extremely common and it's certainly common in health and care, the sector that I work in, which is why I think we need to help people earlier in their career to understand the investment that they need to make in themselves and also that the organisations that they work for need to make in them, in order that there is something a little bit more strategic about it because picking up opportunities for leadership development as you go along is a strategy of sorts, but it probably means you're wasting time, and perhaps don't have every opportunity that you might otherwise have.

Kirsty: Is it about normalising it? I put this out to all of you actually, because obviously in the business sector now, it's really, really normal to have coaching but is there still a sense in the public sector that – I don't know – an element of shame attached to it? Are you asking for help? What do you think?

Suzie: Certainly, from my perspective, it is around time. Often giving people permission to have time as well as investing in coaching can be challenging. There is this sense that almost when you get to the most senior levels, what more is there to



learn. That's a big challenge. I think we have to really help people understand that actually, people working at CEO and Chair level can often be at their most vulnerable because they're quite lonely positions. They don't necessarily have a natural peer group to pull on. Actually, coaching at that level can often be critical also for the people that they're responsible for.

Kirsty: What about making time? I mean, that's difficult, isn't it? Especially if you're working in a small arts charity or whatever. You've got so much on your plate. How do you make time?

Suzanne: Of course, it's challenging for CEOs and trustees and boards and SMTs to make time but for the majority of their staff they're passing that on. They're passing on that culture because what you do ultimately says much more than what your written guidelines say. I think it is a matter of looking systemically actually and going, "What am I going to do?" I might controversially say here that I think this is where groups that have often been marginalised, are now leading the way because for whatever reason you've been marginalised, whether it's through disability whether it's through ethnicity, whether it's through class, you've really had to find time, largely for well-being purposes, but what that's now done is you know how to do that.

Suzie: We're often caught up in whatever sector we work in this concept of busyness and we've got to say how busy we are. Actually, a coaching session is an hour. We should be able to give people headspace to have coaching which will help them to be more productive. The stats work out. McKinsey and other agencies have done plenty of research to evidence that the private sector as you say takes this stuff seriously because it makes financial sense. Why is it that we in the public sector don't seem to pay the same attention?

Kirsty: Suzanne, you wrote a blog post about this recently for the Arts Council. What can organisations do to support this? You've got some very specific examples of some arts organisation who've taken this on board. Tell us about them.

Suzanne: I think firstly that they're not unfortunately my examples. They're things that I found through collaborating with others and I think that's often the way to do it. Don't try and recreate the wheel, just look at what someone else is doing. Battersea Arts Centre, which is a fantastic organisation, which I think employs maybe 100 or so people, they have an organisational psychologist.

Now what that means for them is that this person sees everyone, absolutely confidentially, but she can give a litmus test. That litmus test might be, "Do you understand that 70% of your staff feel this way? Do you understand that 35% of your staff are working these many hours? Do you understand that this percentage of their staff feel like they're not getting enough leadership training?" And she works with the staff, with the SMT, and with the Trustees.



Kirsty: She's not full time though?

Suzanne: No, she only goes in two days a week.

Kirsty: That's affordable then.

Suzanne: It feels very affordable but it's also very practical. Obviously, you'd have to change what that is if your team's super small because it's a bit difficult for anonymity there. I think what it does give you is the outside view. It also gives you that two-sided angle because if you're being coached outside of a workplace, then you're actually only giving the coach your version of it whereas if you've got someone internally who's hearing many voices it allows them to put a piece of the jigsaw puzzle together.

Kirsty: Suzie, you've worked in the health sector for a long time. Can the arts learn from the health sector do you think?

Suzie: I think all sectors should be taking approach of all teach or learn. I think we've got a lot to learn from each other. Actually my experience of working with the Arts Council over the last few months is that actually there are relatively small differences between us, that we have a lot more in common. I think at the CEO and Chair level in the NHS there probably is a lot more formal support and because of the way in which health and care is regulated, there is a formal process that can happen.

But I would really be encouraging Chief Executives and Chairs to develop their personal and professional networks. Certainly those Chief Execs who are part of action learning and have a network that is beyond their own organisation I think are the ones that tend to be able to seek earlier support and are far more likely to have that critical friend, professional friend who'll say to them, "I think you're struggling or a bit." Or help them hold up the mirror.

Kirsty: Find somebody who's in a similar position - CEO perhaps of another arts organisation, confide in them, get some advice from them.

Suzie: Yes. I think I can appreciate that competition locally might make some of that challenging. Sometimes finding someone outside your local area perhaps in a different region, the opportunity to connect even via the phone but potentially face to face on a semi-regular basis, I think just gives you that comfort that someone else might have faced a similar situation, may have some suggestions for you about how you could tackle it.

Kirsty: Suzanne, what would you say to a CEO of an arts organisation who's going through a very, very stressful time, who should they turn to? Let's just put the Chair aside for the moment, or the board aside, where else can they go?



Suzanne: I think that the thing that I absolutely believe in is independent coaching. I think that specifically in the publicly funded arts sector, people step up to that position of CEO having come through an organisation without those leadership skills. So I think personally I'd make it mandatory that if you stepped up to the CEO role you got a coach, but I also think having some 360-coaching – every CEO, everyone in leadership, should have that on a fairly ongoing basis.

Kirsty: Just explain to people who don't know what 360-coaching is, what it is.

Susan: 360-coaching is this idea that it's not just your view on you, it's a 360 degrees feedback on you and who you are because I think in certain times at certain moments being self-reflective enough to understand where you can build on your strength. Let's not even look at the negatives, where you can build on your strengths becomes very difficult if you are in some way isolated.

Even with colleagues and people that you can go to, I think you have to have that as well. There is something very specific about a coach and how they can help you interrogate what is going on.

Kirsty: Just want to follow up on something that you said Suzie. You said there is an awful lot of similarities between what you learned in the NHS and what you learned in the arts sector. What's different? What struck you as particular to the arts sector?

Suzie: I think particular to the art sector was probably the size of organisation, so just the variety of size of organisation and therefore, how difficult it might be in a very small organisation to seek the support that you've just been asking us about, and also the number of freelancers. How do you enhance the diversity and the leadership development when you've got a sector that relies on freelancing so much? There's a problem –

Kirsty: How do you then? What is the answer to that?

[laughter]

Suzie: I'll turn to two colleagues who work in arts to perhaps answer.

Kirsty: What about that aspect?

Tony: Well, it's really tricky, isn't it? Because I had fewer freelancers working for me. I've had a fairly stable staff team over the 10 years that I worked at Shape. It was about staff development, but we were very closely aligned as an organisation. I think for freelancers, I don't know what they – I think it's very difficult freelancers. I do freelance work now, but I never think about what do I need? I sort of just get onto it.

Kirsty: This is a big issue, isn't it? Because so many people now are – I speak personally. I'm self-employed, but I have regular employers like the BBC and so on, but because I'm not on staff, I don't have access to professional development and so



on. As more and more of us are technically self-employed in the gig economy, it becomes an issue, doesn't it?

Suzanne: I think it's actually a huge issue. I think one of the things that you and Suzie have well identified is this idea of a) the gig economy and b) the freelancers, but I would also throw in who are the freelancers? Who in the sector are the people who are on contracts rather than employed?

Some of it is about actually giving people who don't want to be freelancers an opportunity to be employed and the rest of it is about going for those of us that are happily self-employed, what support do we need? What does leadership mean to us? Who are we leading? Why are we leading? I think you have to ask those questions of the people that you're talking about, talk to them, and then you can make those changes.

Kirsty: Is it about changing attitudes really across the board, convincing arts organisations that executive coaching is critical for the health of your organisation and that it must be provided regardless of whether a lot of your employees are technically freelance or not?

Suzanne: I think it is, but I think what underpins that actually, is the why. I think the reason, outside of time and all those factors, is that some people are resistant because of power, because, actually, if you make a change, people very quickly go to how will it affect you individually and your job and so you can't force this. We've been trying to do it for quite a long time.

Common sense says we want a diverse workforce but we haven't got it, so what might your brain be saying to you that's going against that? Because otherwise, you can coach till the cows come home, but if people don't want to change, they don't want to change.

The statistics on disability are worse than ethnicity. It's like 2%. Why is it? What are we doing? I think we have to sort of partly do a two-pronged approach, give the coaching, but ask those difficult questions as well.

Kirsty: Presumably, we talked about making time, but presumably, quite a lot of the pushback will be about the money as well. "We're a smaller arts organisation. We can't afford it"

Tony: I think assumptions come into it as well, because a lot of people think, "Disabled people are going to cost us more money. We're going to have to make reasonable adjustments to the workplace." People make massive assumptions about wellness and people being off sick and any reasonable adjustments that you've got to make around people's health. Completely irrational sometimes when you hear people having these conversations, though these conversations have been more



and more pushed under the carpet as people have become more aware the things we can and we can't say anymore but I'm pretty cynical about it. I think it still happens. There's still huge discrimination in the workforce and in places of power.

The thing that has to change and it's very, very uncomfortable – And what I always say to people is if you want somebody like me on your board, you've got to let go of somebody like you – and they don't want to do that.

Kirsty: Are we essentially saying that if you want to have a more diverse leadership, then you must invest more in professional development?

Tony: Not only that, you must take people on their value and accept that it might be uncomfortable to have somebody like me on your board, but actually it might do you the world of good. But Actually, you don't need one of me, you need three or four of me because I've seen it when one person from a so-called minority group is on the board, they're defeated all the time. You need more of a critical mass, more of a tipping point because if they don't believe me, they might believe a much more polite disabled person who says it a much more kindly way.

Until you get that, it's never going to happen and having one token, whoever it is on your board, isn't about having a diverse viewpoint. You're always going to come around to a group think solution.

It is about total bravery at the top. Well, I don't think they have to brave, they just have to stop bringing people like them on the board and trust in the fact that people like me and other people aren't really going to sink the ship. We may even make it a better ship.

Kirsty: It seems to be bringing us back to boards, doesn't it Suzanne? Unless you actually shift attitudes towards self-care and development at board level, you're not going to shift things.

Suzanne: You cannot make change. You just can't. You can't – I'd almost go you're wasting your coaching money if you're not coaching everybody. But also I think it begs that question then, if you're coaching someone to bring about better leaders and what we're talking about is the art of leadership –

Kirsty: When you say coaching everybody in that sense of what? You should coaching your trustee and your CEO and your Chair?

Suzanne: So one of the ideas that I know is happening at the moment is this idea that there are workshops where there has to be a trustee, there has to be a Chair, there has to be one of the SMT because actually you can't put all of that on the CEO. Even if they could do it to come back with all those ideas.



I think when we're talking about the art of leadership, for me, it's a bit like a pie chart at the moment that both cuts that traditional way and cuts across and says: What are we trying to aim for with the art of leadership? Why are we talking about it? Are we talking about it because we want a nation that's actually more interested in politics. Would that help us in terms of the arts? Is the arts there to talk to people and give people a chance to self-reflect? If that's the case, do we really want the arts to better reflect the makeup of the country?

Kirsty: Thinking about purpose and--

Suzanne: Yes. I think you have to think about purpose and you have to have people in position who have that vision and strength.

Kirsty: Which is difficult, isn't it? Because a lot of organisations, you get so bogged down on looking at your navel, you don't actually think about that. Suzie, I mentioned that you advised the Arts Council on its new Transforming Leadership Fund, what lessons did you bring from your NHS experience.

Suzie: A real privilege to get to work with colleagues at the Arts Council to bring some experiences from health and care, particularly understanding that actually leadership is the thing that shapes culture, but it's everyday leadership behaviours and experiences at every level of the organisation.

So in a large organisation, arts or health and care, there's a lot of different leadership behaviours going on and they're all affecting the culture. So yes, it's really important that the board is exhibiting the right kind of behaviours, but you need to pay attention to your middle and early leaders as well.

We were bringing experience in around compassionate and inclusive leadership, what that really means. It's not enough to say that you want diversity, you've actually got to practice it. How are the proposals really going to address diversity, not just by who they would bring on to programmes, but actually really championing it through every aspect of the programmes they were proposing.

We were able to bring some data and research from health and care sector which is applicable to any sector, but also we do a lot of research looking globally at what's happening in leadership and development.

Kirsty: That's all quite general. I want to pin you down on some specifics here.

Suzie: I think one of the important things around teams and teaming. We've talked quite a lot in the early part of this podcast around individuals and of individual coaching and mentoring, which has its place, but I think increasingly, what we need to do is help people develop in teams. What Suzanne was talking about how do you coach the board as a team, as opposed to a group of individuals.



I think increasingly, in our sector and in other sectors, there's some very strong evidence about the contribution that teams make and that if we don't give teams time out to practice what they're doing, you don't get the performance and the results that you want.

Kirsty: So let me ask you a specific question, supposing you're in an organisation and your senior management team is not getting on for whatever reason.

Suzie: That's very common [chuckles] certainly in my sector, can't talk for the arts. So there's something important around the contribution we talked about around coaching. The ability to give each other feedback.

Certainly in the sector I work in, feedback is often left to an annual appraisal as opposed to giving it in the moment and giving in a professional way that allows someone to hold the mirror up to their own behaviour. Taking that timeout time away from the workplace, away from the busyness of the operational day job to reflect on what's going on in the team.

Kirsty: An away day?

Suzie: An away day, but an away day in itself is only the start often of a conversation and unfortunately, sometimes they're too heavily relied upon. Actually, what you need is more regular time out as part of normal core business, so don't specialise this as being something –

Kirsty: How do you do that? Just give me an example there.

Suzie: By building it into team time that you have, so in your team meeting. Being more effective in how you run your team meetings so that there is time at the end to give each other feedback, how did that meeting go? How did I receive that paper that you gave? What did I think of that behaviour? Helping people have the tools to be able to have that conversation.

Tony: I used to run a thing I used to call Jackals-Join and used to encourage people when we had team meetings to bring food in. I'm sure lots of organisations do this and I think it's really valuable because people get to bring food in and a lot of people quite liked that, to bring things that they've cooked or things they've made or whatever. It's okay for people not to bring stuff in.

Then after the meeting, everybody shares the food, everybody shares the setting out of the table and putting everything away at the end of it but actually, there's lots of discussion whilst everybody is eating, about the things that have happened in the sort business end of the team meeting. It's just a really great way to get that sort of comment and feedback.



Kirsty: I find that actually about having board dinners. I've instituted that in an arts organisation I'm involved in where we have dinners the night before occasionally at the board meeting, where you can just chat instead of being regulated by an agenda.

Let me get back to that if your senior leadership team is not getting on. Is there a form of coaching that you can use?

Suzanne: I think there is, but I just want to go back one second if I can to what you talked about with teams. The thing that I'm doing at the moment with my team is trying to encourage – It's one thing saying to people, you're a team but actually, it's this thing about leading from the front, what does that look like?

And this idea of, there's no point leading, if you can't take critique, for example, really practical, when I booked a flight this weekend to go away and yesterday I had a meeting with my team about well-being and specifically my well-being and I got an email from one of my team saying, you've booked this flight and you're coming back at seven o'clock and quite frankly, this is ridiculous. That is not looking after your well-being and now we're going to have to suffer you on Monday being in a bad mood.

Now, that's really minor, but me being able to take that critique means that when the bigger critiques come, we have created that teamwork and framework for that. If you have an SMT that's fractious, of course, it's about bringing them together and working through mechanisms – but that fractiousness how can you use it well, rather than it splitting them apart?

Kirsty: And you think that comes from the CEO being able to show that they're able to accept criticism?

Suzanne: I think it comes from a CEO setting the tone and culture of an organisation, because you can say one thing and do another. I've got a really silly example, a Changemaker friend of mine has just been appointed Artistic Director and CEO, all over Twitter. The first thing she did on Twitter, say thank you very much, I'm just going for a walk. I'll be back. This is all great.

As leadership technique, that small but it's huge, because the message that she is giving is balance. I'm not going to sit here and try and respond to 100,000 Twitter messages, I'm going to take some time out. Before she's even stepped into that, it's about the culture that you create and it's about all the things that are unsaid, it's not about, you have to put those systems in place but you can very well say one thing but actually be exhibiting another thing.

Tony: I think the other thing about the art of leadership is, it's all right for leaders to say – well, I used to give an analogy of birds flying, the sort of geese, the V formation and this looks like there's a leader at the front but actually, there's an imperceptible



change of leadership that goes on in that V formation of geese and I'm not always going to be the best person to lead this team for certain bits of things that we need to achieve. So part of the art of leadership is being able to say to other people, "Look, you're really brilliant at this. I want you to really help and guide us through this situation."

And having the humility or whatever you might want to call it to say: "We're a team and we have to get this cracked and we need the best people to do what needs doing. Now, I might be the person who decides which of us are all going to do these various things for however long we're going to do it."

Kirsty: It's about being open and transparent and not being afraid to show your vulnerability as a leader.

Tony: Completely. I think that's a real mistake for anybody in a leadership position to think that they're impervious.

Suzie: I guess that's the shift that we need to see though because certainly my own experience of doing leadership development very early in my career as an NHS manager is that, as a kind of 23-year-old, I was expected to have all the answers. How could I possibly? I was very new to the world of work and I've worked in lots of different settings since. Just because I'm often the most senior person, doesn't mean I will know what we should do in this situation.

How you help leaders to understand their role as facilitators, as coaches, and to practice in a collective way to really draw on the strengths of all the people around them and that diversity, really value that diversity, and those people who are bringing very different perspectives. To be able to sit with things that feel uncomfortable. I think that's a real skill for leaders as well, to be able to listen deeply and to be curious and not to assume that the way that they've always done things is the right way.

Tony: That's why we need more disabled people in leadership because we're really good at looking at what we need to help us do things. What are the things that, the lateral thinking that goes on, to help us get through the day or get through the task is really good for teams as well to look at that lateral thinking – problem solving.

Kirsty: You very neatly brought me onto to what was going to be my next point which is, how do we pass the baton on. How the Chairs and CEOs nurture future leaders and I know that you Tony got a grant from the Transforming Leadership Fund for Shape Arts to equip 50 future disabled leaders with the skills they need to succeed in their careers. Tell us a bit more about that. What does that involve?

Tony: It's really interesting because I think there's been a massive gap in leadership development for disabled people over the last 10 years, largely because of cuts in



funding. Nevertheless, we have an opportunity now and those 50 people they're going to get the sort of things we've talked about here.

Coaching, mentoring, opportunities to go to places. We run the National Disability Arts Collection and Archive. Our patron is Jen Campbell. She's in the House of Lords. We're going to take people to the House of Lords to meet a disabled person who's been very successful in her life and her career. Just to see how something like that happens.

Kirsty: Back to the building networks a point that Suzie made that –

Tony: Totally, yes. And taking people to organisations and seeing how people work. Seeing how those organisations they're terrified to step into.

Kirsty: Hearing about best practice.

Tony: We did something on the South Bank with some disabled young people who come up from Manchester and this young guy said to me, "You see those buildings down there. That look like the Houses of Parliament." I said, "That is the Houses of Parliament." He couldn't believe it. It's difficult when you're doing things that – Whatever you're doing and you sort of think that a lot of people just not had the opportunities, the experiences that a lot of us have had. We've got to –

Kirsty: That we take for granted.

Tony: Totally take for granted.

Kirsty: Suzanne how do you pass the baton on?

Suzanne: I think that what you were just saying feeds into how I think or talk about passing the baton on. I think firstly, we have to accept whoever we are we have a certain privilege and we are all leading something. We all have a position and I think the very first thing about passing the baton is to understand the person you're passing the baton onto may not do things in the way that you would do them.

An example of that, is that I work with a lot of people who are in their 20s and 30s and they work so differently to me and we've built up a relationship where they can say, "This is the way we're doing it." For example, they value the action of doing something over the action of 30 years of expertise and you feel yourself doing that and going, "But this is how it's always been. It's my turn now." But actually, you have to be able to go, "Leadership looks different, it tastes different." I think it comes back to my – the thing that I'm obsessed about in terms of power, in terms of interrogating yourself about why you don't want to give it up.

Kirsty: There are courses now in how to manage millennials because so many people from older age groups find it difficult. That's a whole other shift as well, isn't it? Talking about--



Tony: I think letting go of things should be easy actually, but it's not, is it?

Suzanne: I think one of the things that I would just highlight though in terms of the protected classes and handing over the baton to people who've been marginalised. Whether that's through ethnicity or through age, there are many things that are outside of that. Is this that for me, I can only give my lived experience as a black woman who grew up and went to majority-white schools, as someone with significant mental health diagnoses, I've always – part of my skill is that, I'm not just able to step into your shoes. I have to peel off all of my skin and I step into a very, that's the only way I've been able to survive.

That survival technique has taught me a leadership technique, has taught me about empathy and belonging because literally, I couldn't survive unless I had a team around me. I learned very quickly that having a team and seeing some of that team go on and do better than you made my life easier. If nothing else, actually, all of those people who've been marginalised and who've been othered, and who have had to find really, really creative ways to do things are great leaders, but we do it very, very, very differently.

Kirsty: What are the biggest obstacles to building this kind of team of diverse talented people?

Suzanne: I'm going to say one word which is networks.

Kirsty: Networks.

Suzie: Yes, I would agree with that networks. And institutionalised racism, sexism, etc. We can't get away from the fact that it's not enough to say that we want diversity, we have to act on it at every level. There are some daily practices that leaders need to be doing to make sure that they are creating those opportunities.

Kirsty: So much of this stuff is so deeply rooted. It's so difficult to dislodge. I mean, I don't know, unconscious bias training. Is that any good?

Tony: Well, are people having unconscious bias training. For me, it's tenacity, the thing that I always try to say to people. If you're from a discriminated-against group, you have to be really tenacious because people ain't going to let you in. You really going to have to stick it out.

Kirsty: That's putting all the emphasis on those discriminated groups.

Suzie: Absolutely. I –

Tony: It is, but what is the alternative? If people won't let you in, what do you left to do? You got to bash the door down, haven't you? If they're not going to let you in, you've got to make sure you get in there one way or another and that is quite a



difficult and potentially combative situation to be in, and you're never going to win if you are in that position.

Kirsty: Because you can say that, I can't say that. I mean, to me, that sounds kind of unfair. I think, "No, it's for people like me from--

Tony: Well it is, but you won't do it, not you Kirsty but you know what I mean.

[laughter]

Suzanne: Do you know what? I think there are some really practical things. I've just been through this Changemaker programme, which was very much about saying people who have the skills, what can we do to help you get in those positions? I realised that it's about networks and networks are about human beings.

I think everyone who is in that position of privilege, needs to set targets for themselves. "I am going to share support, get someone alongside." Sometimes I think people who have that need to think how those skills are translatable. I may not see those skills in a way that I understand, even if they're there.

Suzie: Yes, I think we have to challenge leaders to create space for staff to talk and for leaders to actually deeply listen because without listening to those lived experiences, we won't change culture. I think reverse mentoring, can help. I'm mentored by a young Asian woman, I find that incredibly invaluable in terms of my own leadership development, helping me see different perspectives.

Kirsty: Reverse mentoring? I hadn't heard about that. It's a great idea.

Suzie: Yes. You can have reverse mentoring around diversity or about a youth mentoring someone who is much more senior.

Kirsty: I'm presuming that's helpful that you can increase diversity in your recruitment but then often, those people find themselves unsupported within the organisation. That reverse mentoring helps you as a leader, understand those issues.

Suzie: And gives them an opportunity to give their perspective into leadership decisions. I think we need to be prepared as leaders. It is a privilege to be a leader, but we need to be prepared as leaders to deal with unprofessional and uncomfortable things and if we're to achieve diversity in the arts sector or in health and care, then we as leaders need to be prepared for some of that uncomfortableness. The reality is we don't lead teams that are sufficiently diverse at the moment. We've got a huge amount to do about it.

Tony: But we've been saying that for a very, very long time and we still only say it. We don't do anything about it.



Kirsty: I don't want to end on a depressing note.

Tony: No, I know I'm terribly sorry.

Suzanne: Should I give you an example of something that's worked really well?

Kirsty: Yes.

Suzanne: I used to go to – still go to a group called What's Next Young Vic which is a movement of arts organisations. Sat there for two years and then one day I just slightly lost it, I was like "I don't feel included." They asked me to Chair. I now sit on the management team. That was because one human being decided to feel uncomfortable and face their fear. Instead of thinking like, "Who the hell does she think she is?" they literally were like, "This is very uncomfortable – that means I should do something". I've now met more people and been more networked through that experience, but it starts with – My advice if we left on a good note would be if you are feeling uncomfortable as a leader sit with it, you're probably doing something brilliant.

Tony: It doesn't have to be ending on a negative because it can be a call out to all those leaders to think about how they might change practice. It could be a very positive way to end it to say, we've actually said to people to sit down and think about your leadership and how you might let people in from more diverse backgrounds.

Kirsty: Well, unfortunately, that's all we have time for. I'd like to thank Suzie, Tony, and Suzanne for their time and for bringing their experiences and insights to our discussion today. I'd also like to thank all the other contributors from our first two episodes. Do make sure that you get involved on Twitter just use the hashtag #ACEleadership and let us know what you've thought of the series.

Remember there's loads more resources and guidance around these issues of leadership and good governance on the Arts Council website. I'll just remind you of that again. It's artscouncil.org.uk/leadership. That's all from me, it's been a real pleasure hosting these episodes. I've learned loads from all the inspirational people who've joined in the discussions. Stay tuned for more from the Arts Council's *Creative Matters* podcast, thank you.

[OUTRO MUSIC]

V/O: Thanks for listening to creative matters. For more from Arts Council England, visit artscouncil.org.uk/creativematters.

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37:50