

Caroline Webb

Tim: [00:00](#) Caroline Webb, welcome to the Behavioral Grooves podcast.

Caroline: [00:03](#) Thank you so much, it's great to be here.

Tim: [00:06](#) It is great to have you here, it really is. Just for our listeners, for the sake of full disclosure, we had some technical difficulties on our first interview with Caroline and this is, we are excited to be returning to the scene of the crime.

Kurt: [00:20](#) Super excited.

Tim: [00:21](#) Yeah. So we're going to get started with a speed round, Kurt, do you want to start with the speed round?

Kurt: [00:26](#) Yeah, I think this is going to be unfair, because she's already had a preview of these if she can remember back for a couple weeks, but we'll start. Here we go. Alright, Caroline, unicycle or bicycle?

Caroline: [00:37](#) Oh bicycle. I used to love riding my bicycle with no hands on the handlebar as a kid, so yeah.

Kurt: [00:42](#) Awesome.

Tim: [00:42](#) Cool.

Caroline: [00:42](#) Absolutely.

Tim: [00:44](#) No hands okay, would you prefer to get eight hours sleep the night before the big exam or would you study all night?

Caroline: [00:51](#) Oh always eight hours sleep. I'm not sure I always did that actually when I was a student but absolutely now as a grownup, knowing all the research, no question, eight hours sleep.

Tim: [01:01](#) Great.

Kurt: [01:03](#) New Milton or New York?

Caroline: [01:05](#) You can't say that, New Milton is where I grew up. That's part of my DNA, but I do love New York, just by my accent, that is where I live, and it's really become a fantastic home so thank you New York.

Tim: [01:21](#) Yeah, yeah, very much so. Okay, so would you rather sing in the choir at Carnegie Hall, or do a solo performance at Carnegie's Deli?

- Caroline: [01:31](#) Well, so that's sneaky question. So I do sing at Carnegie Hall twice a year as part of a chorus, so yeah, I've got to say I love that. It's a great performance energy from the whole space there. So yes, there we are, I'm busted. My side gig, my side gig.
- Kurt: [01:49](#) Well we love the fact that you sing at Carnegie Hall, I mean that is just, there are very few people I think around the world that can actually say that, so it's a wonderful testament.
- Tim: [02:01](#) Yeah, I think it's a pretty-
- Caroline: [02:05](#) You haven't heard me sing though. You never know, I might just be hiding behind all of my chorus mates.
- Kurt: [02:07](#) So that's how I sing in a choir, I just mouth the words and then the choir sounds good.
- Tim: [02:14](#) Well we absolutely have to come back to that. That's definitely going to be a part of our conversation. And Kurt, whether you like it or not.
- Kurt: [02:22](#) I know, I know.
- Tim: [02:25](#) But let's start by, should we start talking about the book a little bit, I think How to Have a Good Day, is a terrific read. Honestly, I was just so delighted as a bullet point guy myself, I was so delighted to see your very generous use of bullet points.
- Caroline: [02:43](#) Well you know, I know people are really busy and that they may need to just turn to the quick take on how you handle a difficult conversation, and you can read the whole chapter, but I know that you might just need the summary of bullet points. Just possibly.
- Kurt: [02:57](#) Well what I love about the summary bullet points is that I do read the full chapter, but the summary bullet points allow that refresh to remind me of what I just read, and I think it anchors it in more. So from that perspective, that's what I really love about the structure of the book, and the way that the book is going.
- Caroline: [03:17](#) Thank you, I did try to walk my own talk in thinking about how to structure it, because I do know that, I mean the research is really clear on the fact that if you take even just a second or two to take back and reflect on what it is you've just learned, you actually have much higher recall and much more insight that's

gained from the experience. So, that's a little bit of what I was trying to do with each chapter.

- Kurt: [03:35](#) I think you were successful.
- Caroline: [03:38](#) Why thank you.
- Kurt: [03:38](#) So there you go.
- Tim: [03:38](#) So you are intentional, I'm sorry, it's just amazing how intentional you are, I'm sorry Kurt, go ahead. I love that about you.
- Kurt: [03:47](#) So in the book, you talked about, you brought up Kahneman, and Thinking Fast and Slow, and you talked about his use of System Two vs. System One, and you relabeled that to deliberate and automatic, which I think is actually brilliant, and we can talk about that for a little bit.
- Kurt: [04:08](#) But when you think about that, why do you think it's important that we need both? Because that's a key piece of what you bring up in the book that both are really important parts of our thinking.
- Caroline: [04:21](#) Right, well one of the reasons I renamed it from System One and System Two to the automatic and deliberate systems is because I could never remember which one was which, I needed to have a little trick.
- Caroline: [04:33](#) And of course, that is your System Two, your slow system, your deliberate system. Having to work really hard, and so I thought well, let's make it just a little bit easier for the brain's deliberate system. So yes, we have these two systems, and they are working in tandem beautifully all the time, every day, keeping us focused on the things that matter.
- Caroline: [04:59](#) And the reason that we need both is because we need to do our best and highest thinking, our careful reasoning, the sort of mindful weighing of pros and cons and so on that System Two or as I would call it, the deliberate system, everything we do deliberately, takes care of. And we need the automatic system to automate, kind of almost everything else, because otherwise our poor deliberate system gets tired very quickly and gets overloaded very easily.
- Caroline: [05:31](#) So what's happening is that it's a bit like your deliberate system is this super clever professor, but gets overloaded very, very

easily, and the automatic system is this hyper efficient assistant, who mostly, mostly is amazing and fantastic, just occasionally takes shortcuts that might be not quite so smart. But mostly we're very grateful to the assistant.

- Kurt: [05:53](#) I love-
- Tim: [05:53](#) Well you know-
- Kurt: [05:53](#) Oh, go ahead Tim.
- Tim: [05:56](#) Well I was just going to say, I think Kurt's System One never is out of line. Kurt's system is perfect, it's always, his automatic system is flawless.
- Kurt: [06:05](#) Perfectly if I just want to eat chocolate all day, there you go. Caroline why, since we've had this conversation from our first conversation back, I've been thinking about this, and I'm like, why do you think Kahneman, and I don't know if you can answer this or just have an opinion on it, with all of his brains and the insights that he has, I find that it's very true, that System One and System Two are not intuitive to how we would actually do it. And from a framing perspective, automatic, deliberate, you could probably come up with a multitude of other naming cultures for this, did I just say that wrong? Anyway.
- Tim: [06:50](#) I think you totally muffed it, but that's okay.
- Caroline: [06:52](#) I mean you have to-
- Kurt: [06:52](#) That was my System One going on.
- Caroline: [06:57](#) But you're absolutely right, I mean, cognitive neuroscientists have called the, they have a different name for the two system process, which is the X system and the C system.
- Tim: [07:05](#) Yeah.
- Caroline: [07:06](#) So I think that we've been struggling with what to call these things for a little time, a little while, and of course John Height calls it the elephant and the rider, and that's really evocative.
- Kurt: [07:18](#) Yup.
- Tim: [07:18](#) Yeah.

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- Caroline: [07:19](#) I like that too.
- Tim: [07:21](#) I was a big fan of Jonathan's approach with the elephant and the rider for a long time, but I have to admit, I'm totally on to automatic and deliberate.
- Tim: [07:31](#) I feel like that is really more succinct and more effective way of talking about it to people and just say, our deliberate decision making or our automatic decision making, seems to make more sense. And I'm wondering, are you finding that? Are you getting good responses from people?
- Caroline: [07:47](#) Yeah, yeah absolutely. And it's funny because I love of people will say deliberative instead of deliberate. I don't mind that. The whole idea is that what you're doing deliberately is handled by that system and what you're doing automatically is handled by the other system.
- Caroline: [08:02](#) And I did have a conversation with Daniel Kahneman about the two systems. And he said that if he were to rewrite Thinking Fast and Slow, he might bring out the hero aspect of the automatic system a little bit more fully, because you really do need both of them, you just need to understand the weaknesses, the little quirks of each system, and then you can really go with the grain of how your brain works.
- Caroline: [08:33](#) So you need to understand your deliberate system gets tired easily, can only do one thing at a time, can only take in a certain amount of information, and you need to understand that your automatic system takes shortcuts and sometimes shortcuts are amazing, and sometimes they lead you to do silly things.
- Kurt: [08:49](#) Right.
- Caroline: [08:49](#) And you can understand that the more tired and overloaded your deliberate system is, it's more likely that the automatic system will be in charge. You're going to make much more mindful choices about how you spend your day and how you interact with people.
- Kurt: [09:02](#) How familiar are you with the research from Antonio Damasio? What he did on that work, he took his medical patients that had a debilitating brain injury, or some lesions on their brain that actually impacted that automatic system and that emotional response, and found that those people, I mean, they couldn't even decide which restaurant to choose.

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- Caroline: [09:27](#) Yeah, it's a really, I actually channel that a little bit when I'm running workshops on the topic, and I'm just introducing the idea, I get people to think about if your deliberate system were in charge of choosing a restaurant, then how would you do that?
- Caroline: [09:42](#) If you were, sometimes, we are very, very, deliberate about where we go for lunch, but most of the time we don't build answer exhaustive spreadsheet of every restaurant that is possibly reachable on a given day and then code multiple columns of attributes and then weight the score.
- Caroline: [10:02](#) Can you imagine? I mean if we actually made small decisions like that it would be absolutely paralyzing. And that is of course what Damasio's research showed. And it's a really nice way of saying, you know what? It's not a question of your deliberate system being smart and your automatic system being stupid. It is a question of using each system for the purpose that it's best at.
- Tim: [10:26](#) Are you aware of it? Do you make conscious decisions given the amount of research and work that you've done in this field?
- Caroline: [10:34](#) Oh gosh yes. [crosstalk 00:10:36]
- Tim: [10:36](#) Are you conscious of saying no, no, no, I actually want to get out of my automatic and be deliberate about this.
- Caroline: [10:40](#) I mean you know, I had a few filters for what went in the book. One was I had to only use techniques that I could really, really truly back up with replicated science.
- Caroline: [10:48](#) But another was that I had to only put stuff in the book that I actually use myself. I don't want to be one of those people who gives advice and then doesn't take it themselves, so that took out quite a lot of content.
- Kurt: [11:00](#) Wow.
- Caroline: [11:01](#) And so yeah, I mean the stuff that I talk about in the book, I have this section on cross check routines and how you can, just when you're making a really important choice that you slow yourself down and say okay, you might say, what does, you might sort of adopt a devil's advocate, and imagine in your mind, who would be likely to argue against this?

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- Caroline: [11:24](#) And I think about what would they say to me right now. And I don't necessarily have to take on board what they're saying, but just the very fact of slowing down and asking myself, it really makes a big difference.
- Caroline: [11:34](#) And I do that especially when I'm annoyed, because when I'm annoyed I know that there's less activity in my prefrontal cortex and so I know that it's time to kind of just notice that I'm aggravated, step away and then just come back with a fresh pair of eyes. And so frankly if you did nothing else but that, that would be helpful.
- Kurt: [12:05](#) Tim if we followed that advice, we would never be able to write a book because we don't follow any of our own advice.
- Tim: [12:15](#) Yeah, sorry that's, spoiler alert.
- Kurt: [12:18](#) No book coming out from Tim and Kurt in any time soon.
- Tim: [12:22](#) Not in any near future.
- Kurt: [12:23](#) So Caroline, you started your career as a research fellow at the Levy Economic Institute. Help us understand [crosstalk 00:12:30] how you transitioned from that into this work that you're doing now.
- Caroline: [12:36](#) Well when I was an economic student, the Berlin Wall came down, and that seemed, I know, for listeners, yeah, wow she's so old.
- Tim: [12:44](#) Wow. Wow, no, I'm not, the time, but I mean what a momentous, no, no. [crosstalk 00:12:52]. No, no, you're taking that the wrong way. No, I mean just like, that's so, such a momentous experience, my gosh.
- Caroline: [12:55](#) And so as a sort of fledgling economist, I just thought, this has to be the most interesting thing that any economist could ever want to look at, to think about. I wasn't quite right about that, because obviously not everybody thought that they should spend their lives studying it.
- Tim: [13:05](#) Yeah. Yeah totally.
- Caroline: [13:05](#) But for me that was just absolutely fascinating because it brought together, it wasn't just economics per se, it was politics and psychology. And my interests were in that sort of broader

sense of how to human beings thrive and come together and function at their best.

Caroline: [13:25](#) And so those first few years of my professional life, I was focused on the changes on central and eastern Europe, and I spent a year researching that, I was basically at the Levy Institute, but I spent a good bit of the year on the ground in Prague. And then I spent a couple of years in public policy, as a public policy economist, helping the British government give support to the region.

Caroline: [13:50](#) So that was building stock exchanges and figuring out how to actually have central banks and after years of not really having any of those sorts of institutional structures. And I just loved the combination of the fact that there was an enormous shift that was going on at a macro level but there were small, everyday level, there were tiny changes that each individual was having to make.

Caroline: [14:17](#) Actually big changes that each individual was having to make. And I think that was what seeded my interest in personal change. I saw societies that had to absolutely turn on a dime in terms of what they valued and what they pursued and I think that although I then went on to do public policy work in other areas, and then I went into management consulting and focused on organizational change, really the seeds of interest in what I did were planted back then in the late '80s and early '90s.

Caroline: [14:52](#) So I've always been interested in human change. It's just that the canvas on which I've been interested in it has shifted over the years. Does that make sense?

Tim: [15:06](#) Oh totally, and I think it's so interesting. [inaudible 00:15:11] Totally, and I think it's so interesting, it reminds me of Coleman's boat, Coleman's idea of sociological change at the macro level influencing the micro level change, and vice versa.

Tim: [15:23](#) How individual changes influence the community and how the community influences the individual. [crosstalk 00:15:33] Right? It almost sounds like your fascination was at least at first sociological.

Caroline: [15:36](#) Yeah, I think my first economics teacher when I was 16, was, I didn't realize it, but he wasn't really teaching us economics. He was really teaching us to be critical thinkers about human behavior. And we only just barely managed to get through the



examination because he wasn't really teaching to the curriculum.

Tim: [15:50](#)

Wow.

Caroline: [15:50](#)

But he got us to think philosophically, politically, psychologically, and as you say, sociologically. So yeah, I mean when I went into management consulting, my interest was getting closer to that again, that human dimension.

Caroline: [16:06](#)

And initially I was working on these huge projects, huge cultural change projects at large organizations, and then over time I just again found that it was down to individual leaders and managers and the behaviors that they showed to the world day in and day out, had such a disproportionate impact on people around them and then the changes that they were trying to make, that I became more and more interested in that, in the small stuff let's say. The everyday stuff and the individual stuff.

Tim: [16:41](#)

Do you find more joy out of working, because you have done these massive projects that influence tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of people, as well as workshops, [crosstalk 00:16:52] where you're working with very small groups. Do you find more joy in the smaller groups? Is there more personal benefit to you in that?

Caroline: [16:55](#)

Well I think I came to understand over the years, that although I have a technical background, and I was, I did like math, you know, I was really into all of that stuff. Actually my strengths really lie particularly in the interpersonal space and so yeah, I think that was big personal journey for me to actually recognize that and lean into it over time.

Caroline: [17:18](#)

And when I was at McKenzie, the consulting firm, I was very lucky because initially when I first joined, they just wanted me to do extremely technical work, and I kept on saying no, I really want to do the people stuff. And then eventually they let me have a go.

Caroline: [17:33](#)

And then I didn't really look back, but they allowed me to experiment and push and build actually quite an innovative practice in behavioral change.

Tim: [17:41](#)

Thank goodness.

Caroline: [17:42](#)

Yeah, I did find over time that I got more and more energy from the face to face, the sort of deeply, deeply personal. And so I

had to think quite carefully about who I work with, so that I'm helping the right people have strong, positive impact on the world.

- Caroline: [17:58](#) But the reason for writing the book was because as my work became more intimate, I thought, wow, wouldn't it be nice if I could still have a wider way of reaching people. So the book was a way of doing that, and I'm so delighted I did it even though it was the hardest thing I've ever done.
- Tim: [18:14](#) Yeah. Okay, wow. Well I think so too. I'm sorry Kurt, go ahead, but I just have to just say, I'm glad you wrote it because I think that it really, it really gets right down to the very specific deliverables.
- Caroline: [18:35](#) Thank you, that's really what I was trying to do, yeah.
- Tim: [18:38](#) It seems to me that personally[crosstalk 00:18:39], anybody can pick up the book and benefit from it.
- Caroline: [18:40](#) I was really trying to make it accessible to anybody-
- Tim: [18:40](#) Yeah, I think it's terrific.
- Caroline: [18:40](#) Who has kind of aspiration to be at their best more often, and ability or an interest in the evidence behind it, right? That doesn't require formal education, but it does require a little bit of a curious mind. So I was writing for that person for sure.
- Kurt: [19:03](#) Yeah, so let's get into some of the details in the book, because in the book one of the things you talk about is setting goals, and how important setting goals are.
- Kurt: [19:10](#) But you actually bring two traits into that, where you talk about setting personal goals and then setting specific goals, [crosstalk 00:19:17] so help our listeners understand the difference between those two and how they impact each other.
- Caroline: [19:19](#) Well, you know, all of us have to do lists that are long, long, very long, and we don't always feel that we get to the end of that. I remember actually talking to a colleague who was getting very stressed about not being able to complete his to do list each day.
- Tim: [19:34](#) Never.

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- Caroline: [19:34](#) And I said, welcome to the world, that there's a point of maturity in your career where you get to the point where you cannot possibly finish everything that's on your list. And embrace that.
- Caroline: [19:43](#) That is the reality of growing up. So luckily, he didn't punch me. But yeah, we all perpetually feel that there's more that we should be doing, so how do we manage that?
- Tim: [20:01](#) I could.
- Caroline: [20:01](#) There's definitely some stuff that's on our list usually that we're not super excited about, and so there I think it's helpful to harness the research on intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivation, because we know that if you can find some kind of personal why behind even the most annoying work, you will perform better, be more creative, be more likely to do your best with it.
- Caroline: [20:28](#) And sometimes it's when you're sort of, you've been delegated a task, and it's really not what you wanted to spend time on. Asking yourself, who's going to ultimately benefit from this, results initially in a pretty sarcastic response, or at least it does for a Brit like me. You think oh well, who's going to benefit from this ultimately? My boss. My boss is going to benefit from this.
- Caroline: [20:54](#) But if you can push beyond that and actually push to say okay, now who ultimately is going to benefit, if I get this work right? Maybe it leads to the leaders of your organization making better choices and that means that the customers benefit from having a better range of products or better customer service.
- Caroline: [21:18](#) Or maybe if you're not so excited about serving customers, maybe there's something about the sustainability of the company. Oh, is that some background noise?
- Kurt: [21:29](#) Yeah, that was me.
- Caroline: [21:29](#) Okay. So maybe you can cut that out. Okay, yeah. Sorry. Yeah, so
- Kurt: [21:35](#) That was me.
- Caroline: [21:36](#) So it's not always easy to find the personal why, but to the extent that you're able to do it.
- Tim: [21:40](#) Yes.

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- Caroline: [21:41](#) It really does help to boost your motivation. And to think about maybe this is going to help my colleague step up and be braver and be more able to, I'm sorry, I'm waffling because it's just the sounds, maybe worried that it was me that was beeping. Okay, let me just make sure I've silenced everything.
- Tim: [22:07](#) But it's not.
- Caroline: [22:08](#) Okay, alright. Let me start that answer again. I'll give you something crisper. Okay, okay. Yup.
- Caroline: [22:16](#) So if there's something on your to do list that is not [crosstalk 00:22:20] particularly exciting to you, it's really helpful to harness the evidence around intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivation, because it turns out that if you are doing something that is deeply meaningful to you, you will perform better in general against any kind of complex or interesting task, as long as it's not a super basic task you'll perform better if you feel that it's somehow worthwhile, as opposed to something that's just pursuing externally conferred status, maybe it's something that's been delegated to you by a boss and you're just ticking a box.
- Caroline: [22:53](#) So the trick is then to think about, well how can I make this extremely annoying thing that has been delegated to me by my boss, something that feels really personal. And there are really just a couple of simple questions that are going to help you. It might be who is ultimately going to benefit from this piece of work being done well.
- Caroline: [23:13](#) Maybe it's a colleague, maybe it's the team, maybe it's a customer. And you can also work it back through the other way around, and say, well what is it that I really care about? What really motivates me? What do I, what am I excited about and how does this task in some way speak to that? And there was a guy that I ran into, I was coaching a hospital CEO for a while, and he was new in role, and he was doing a walk around the hospital before anyone really knew his face well, and just to try to get a bit of a sense of what it actually felt like on the ground.
- Caroline: [23:49](#) And he told a wonderful story about the porter in the hospital who was fixing a door, which was apparently squeaking and the CEO asked this guy, so why are you doing this? And instead of saying, well I'm doing it because it's on my to do list, he said, well I'm doing it because it's going to help patients.

- Caroline: [24:15](#) Because every time they go through on a trolley, on a gurney, the door sticks a little bit and it just gives them a really jarring jolt, and that's not very good is it if they're ill, you don't want that. And so he had just naturally just got this ability to frame it in terms of the benefit to patients.
- Tim: [24:32](#) That's terrific.
- Caroline: [24:33](#) And pretty simple job I'm sure, to fix the door, but he will have done it better, he might have seen something else that needed fixing.
- Tim: [24:42](#) That's terrific.
- Caroline: [24:42](#) And he might have been more excited about fixing that. And the same is true for us when we're dealing with perhaps a report that we're not that excited about, focusing on what is the benefit is going to make us more intelligent as we do it.
- Kurt: [25:01](#) It's tying well into that larger component of how, it's tying it into that larger component of how it fits into the bigger world. I'm hearing an echo. Are you guys hearing an echo?
- Tim: [25:12](#) Yeah. [crosstalk 00:25:13].
- Caroline: [25:12](#) Yah for editable stream, yeah.
- Tim: [25:14](#) We were getting a pretty massive echo on your voice but I don't hear it on prompter.
- Kurt: [25:19](#) Okay, yeah that was weird.
- Caroline: [25:19](#) And then the other thing you were asking me about was-
- Tim: [25:20](#) Hey, cut that part out too.
- Caroline: [25:22](#) I think specifics?
- Kurt: [25:31](#) Yeah, so you had, [crosstalk 00:25:32], personal and specific, goal, the two traits of those, of a goal, right?
- Caroline: [25:33](#) And then there's an enormous amount of research on the power of being very specific about what it is that you're trying to do, and it's not to say that you don't want the big, lofty goals that make you feel like life is worth living, we've just talked about the fact that actually having a clear sense of the personal why, of why something is meaningful to you is really helpful.

- Caroline: [25:52](#) But often when we think about things that are on our to do list, that sit there for weeks and sometimes actually years, it's because it's just too big or too vague, and we haven't really been specific enough in thinking about what is the very first small step that I need to take.
- Caroline: [26:08](#) And if you go back to System One and System Two or the automatic system and deliberate system, you want to make it as easy as possible for your deliberate system to figure out what it needs to do next. And that's why specific goals tend to get done, and vague ones don't.
- Tim: [26:31](#) Yeah, you know, I was at, I guest-lectured this morning at a local university, and was surprised that it was in a group of 50 or so junior and seniors, the way the salespeople articulated their goals were lofty and huge and sort of the BHAG, the big, hairy, audacious goals. And then I said, well what about marketing, because it was mostly marketing majors.
- Tim: [26:58](#) And the marketing majors, they spoke much more specifically about well, what I'd like to do is get into marketing analytics, or I'd like to, they were had little bricks size, these very specific, and I thought, that was really interesting, do you think, so Caroline, do you think there's a difference in the way people naturally set goals? Do you think that some people are predisposed to these BHAGs, [crosstalk 00:27:21] these monstrous, lofty goals, and some people are more predisposed to sort of more smaller, incremental sized goals?
- Caroline: [27:24](#) Yeah, I think that's probably right. And the thing is that if you are a very pragmatic, okay what is it I do next in the next ten minutes person, you might want to pay a little bit of attention to well, what am I truly trying to achieve here, what are my bigger, more motivating, more meaningful, bigger picture goals, because they're going to help you lift your performance when you're dealing with complexity and when you're hitting bumps in the road.
- Caroline: [27:43](#) On the other hand, if you're the sort of person who's all about the vision, then actually boiling it down to, okay yeah, okay but what do you do this afternoon?
- Caroline: [27:51](#) And actually specifically what are you right now? Which email do you send, oh, which email address do you need to actually find so you can send that email right? So you need that complementarity between the huge and the tiny in order to really achieve great things.

- Tim: [28:07](#) Right, right. That's cool. Kurt are you sitting on a question or may I? I wanted to talk about actually something that is close to Kurt's heart and that is priming. Yeah, yeah, so reminding yourself to stay on track and I know that you admitted to Donna Summers, being a prime for you right?
- Tim: [28:39](#) And Kurt has actually done a lot of work [crosstalk 00:28:44] in finding, he uses socks. As his primary prime. So maybe the two of you could just compare primes, I don't know.
- Kurt: [28:53](#) The listeners have heard about my prime. I definitely wear socks for a very specific purpose of the day. So if I know that I am going to be speaking with clients or doing a presentation where I need to be smart, I will wear my Einstein socks that have pictures of Einstein on them.
- Kurt: [29:11](#) If I know that day I need to maybe be a little bit more aggressive, I'm not naturally an aggressive person in a sales situation or in asking people for favors or to do something, I will often wear my shark socks that again prime me to be thinking about shark and being more aggressive. [crosstalk 00:29:31]
- Kurt: [29:30](#) So those are the types of, [inaudible 00:29:31], many, many pairs of socks that I wear in various different occasions.
- Caroline: [29:31](#) And what I love about that is when you think about the priming field, it's obviously been a source of huge controversy, the fact, the idea that if you give people a warm drink that it will make them warmer and friendly because of the associations that they have with that warm drink.
- Caroline: [29:48](#) And I think the challenge with that research, and the reason why there have been issues with replication is that we don't know what associations are stored in other peoples minds. So how can we be sure that what we think will prime them to behave in a certain way will actually achieve that.
- Kurt: [30:06](#) Yes.
- Caroline: [30:06](#) I mean, there's certainly some things you can imagine, upbeat songs in a major key will tend to boost people's mood more than drifty, smooshy songs in a minor key. But the thing is that we can only be really sure of our own associations. And if you know that the socks make a huge difference to your mood, because of the associations you have it, then oh my goodness, I think that's the most precise use of enclosed cognition that I think I've ever heard, I love it.

- Caroline: [30:43](#) Yeah, so I remember seeing a Blue Man Group show and this was years ago [crosstalk 00:30:55] and in the finale, there was this incredible moment where a lot of stuff happened, it was interactive, there were things coming down from the ceiling, and I just loved the show. I was so into it. And I just loved the performance energy of these guys.
- Caroline: [31:07](#) And the song that was playing in the finale was Donna Summers, I Feel Love. And I'm a musical person, so music really makes a big difference to me. And so what happened after that was that whenever I heard the song, I thought, wow, yeah. And it reminded me of that moment.
- Caroline: [31:25](#) So I started to use that as one of my primes for going on stage or embarking on something which required a little bit of that performance of energy from me, to put me in a high energy state of mind that would allow me to kind of perhaps not perform the gymnastics that the Blue Man Group managed to do on stage, but at least radiate a little bit of energy.
- Caroline: [31:54](#) So yeah, so I put that in the book as an example, and then the financial times review of the book honed in on that, at that fact, and now of course I get asked about Donna Summers quite a lot.
- Tim: [32:06](#) Oh come on, oh come on.
- Caroline: [32:10](#) Often when I'm giving a talk, that will be the song that someone has played as I'm coming on the stage, and it still works. It still works, every time.
- Caroline: [32:17](#) But I actually have quite a few playlists. I have a playlist for workshops that I play every time when I'm setting up the room, and I'm waiting for people to arrive that just gets me into the right state of mind. So I'm pretty fluid in thinking about what playlist is needed for one particular moment.
- Kurt: [32:34](#) So you're purposeful.
- Caroline: [32:35](#) Yeah.
- Kurt: [32:51](#) But you're purposeful in that playlist and how you're actually using that music to enlighten those neuro networks that are going to put you in the state of mind that gets you to the desired outcome that you want. And again, as Tim mentioned, very purposeful in those mannerisms.



- Caroline: [33:08](#) Oh I totally get it, absolutely. [crosstalk 00:33:08]
- Kurt: [33:08](#) That's the same way when I think about the socks that I put on in the morning and go alright, what do I need to do? And it's not the colorful ones, it's if there's something specific. Now many days, I just wear the old socks, but those are just the boring days, so.
- Caroline: [33:09](#) And I think actually this may be more of a female thing than a male thing, I think women are often thinking who do I need to be today, what is it that I need to convey because our outfits are often, they're more varied than men.
- Caroline: [33:25](#) And we often dress to think about how we, what is it that we want to convey to everyone else, but it's extremely powerful to think about well what is it that, what mood do I want to be in? What kind of zone do I want to be in and what's going to actually create that for myself?
- Caroline: [33:39](#) So I love the fact that you found a way to do that, it's brilliant. There you go.
- Kurt: [33:58](#) There you go. Well my step sister- in-law wears her power pink outfit when she needs to be on, and she knows that and she knows that it's more of an internal component for her, I don't think she's ever associated it with priming, but she definitely does do that.
- Kurt: [34:16](#) So I think there's some validity [crosstalk 00:34:18] in what you're talking about from that element. Because I don't think there's very few men that I would know that say, I'm wearing this outfit to convey a certain message to myself. Although I'm generalizing probably there and who knows.
- Caroline: [34:33](#) Yes, yes. When he wants to, when he's, yeah, when he's wanting to step up his game, and he's really, it's an important meeting. Yeah, absolutely.
- Tim: [34:41](#) He has one tie? That's good. But he wears that for specific purposes, yeah, yeah. Yeah. So well with all that, [crosstalk 00:35:02] so do you think prime, so you're not saying that priming doesn't work of course, you're saying that priming is effective, but do you think that it's ineffective on a marketing level?

- Tim: [35:13](#) Do you think that getting back to this idea of trying to appeal to the complexities of every individual with their own memories, is it wasted effort?
- Caroline: [35:18](#) I'm not an expert in marketing, but I think that the thing that we can be certain of is our own associations, I think the controversies in the field of priming research have centered on the question of can you prime other people and is it conscious or unconscious? And those are the two big, big debates and quite acrimonious debates that are going on.
- Caroline: [35:25](#) But what you can be sure of is consciously priming yourself, using associations you definitely have. Now, can you have subliminal influences on people as they, or not even subliminal, can you influence people to have more warmer feelings toward your product? Of course you can.
- Caroline: [35:45](#) I mean that is really what marketing is trying to do and I think that what behavioral science is doing is becoming precise in how to help marketers figure out what those connections, what those aspirations might be. I just know that it's a surer bet to figure out how to prime yourself than it is to prime other people. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.
- Tim: [36:27](#) That makes sense, and I don't think that would go counter to Cheldini's [crosstalk 00:36:31] work, I think he has lots and lots of examples of very subtle, unconscious primes, but I don't think he would say that priming ourselves would be, I think he would agree that priming us, ourselves, our individual self, is more effective and we're going to do better at that.
- Kurt: [36:50](#) So Caroline, going back to the book.
- Caroline: [36:52](#) Sorry about that.
- Kurt: [36:52](#) You talked a lot in the book about identifying a number of [inaudible 00:36:59]. Okay.
- Tim: [37:02](#) Okay.
- Kurt: [37:02](#) I was going to talk about tiny tweaks.
- Tim: [37:14](#) Sounds good.
- Kurt: [37:14](#) And then wrap it up after that?
- Tim: [37:15](#) Mosque, yes please. Yeah.

- Kurt: [37:19](#) No worries. So Caroline, in the book you talk about tiny tweaks, about identifying tiny tweaks that can help you have a better day, better life, things [crosstalk 00:37:31] from multitasking, or stopping multitasking, sleep, positive thinking, primes like we just talked about, physical activity, when if scenarios.
- Kurt: [37:41](#) So if you had to say of those, and there's many more of them, but what would you, if you had to give advice to the listeners in saying look, if there are two or three things of those tiny tweaks that you think can have the biggest impact on somebody's daily life, can you call out two or three or is it dependent to the individual?
- Caroline: [38:01](#) Oh sure, yeah. I mean it is dependent on the individual, but I'll tell you one thing that combines a few different strands of the research that I do every day, and I'm not a very routinized person, so this is definitely something which I would say is a no brainer for me, and it's working something [inaudible 00:38:02] is called the peak and the end.
- Caroline: [38:01](#) And the way that works is that we have limited capacity to remember everything that ever happened in our lives, and so we actually don't remember every aspect of every experience, actually when we look back at the quality of an experience, we tend to remember the most intense moment and the end.
- Caroline: [38:09](#) The way we think about the quality of this podcast, and no pressure right, but we've got to end on a real high note, is it's going to be the average of the most intense moment and the way it ends.
- Caroline: [38:19](#) And so that is something that we know about the way that our memory works and so when you get to the end of a day, that's maybe not been great, how on earth do you end on a high? Well you can end on a high, and knowing that's going to disproportionately affect the way you remember the day, by thinking about what was it that went well today, even if it was mostly a pretty crappy day.
- Caroline: [38:40](#) And just forcing yourself, perhaps forcing is too dramatic a word, but really encouraging yourself to think about, okay, well there was that moment that I actually remembered my umbrella today, that was good.
- Caroline: [38:51](#) Or I got to that meeting on time even though the traffic was terrible. Or there was that moment where someone actually

smiled or helped me out. And if you don't stop to remember, you will likely forget.

- Caroline: [39:04](#) And by ending your day with this kind of reflection, it combines a lot of research on gratitude, it combines some research on the peak end effect, and it also combines in the research on selective attention, because unless you direct your attention to something deliberately, then there's a good chance you're going to forget it. And so that starts to rewrite the story of how you think about your life.
- Kurt: [39:30](#) So Caroline, I'm sorry to interrupt, but [inaudible 00:39:54]. So, do you have to do this at the end of the day or can it be, I'm thinking, your day is kind of parceled out into different aspects of it, so at the end of your work day, is there value in doing that same thing about what you just did at work and thinking about that and then going, maybe at the end of the day, again, doing it again at the end of the day. Is there value in doing it multitudes of times during the day at different breaks?
- Caroline: [39:56](#) That's a great question. Yeah, I would say yeah, this is a bit factual, right? I mean actually at the end of each meeting, how nice is it if you actually say, you know what, that was great, here are the things that I'm going to take away from this and that I really appreciated.
- Caroline: [40:08](#) How even better if you can get everybody to share their own version of that. The end of a conversation, if you say, you know, it was really great talking [crosstalk 00:40:15] to you, I really liked hearing about XYZ, just taking a moment to recap and think what was great about that at the end of each major experience at the end of each working day, yeah, it really makes a difference in how you start to think about the quality of those experiences, and that really adds value.
- Caroline: [40:51](#) Yeah. Absolutely.
- Kurt: [41:01](#) And you did that with your book as we talked about at the very beginning of this, with the bullet points at the end of each chapter, and kind of [crosstalk 00:41:27] providing a shortcut for people to say here are the highlights, here are these peak things from this chapter that you can now remember and now its at the end, and it bring that back to your mind. So I think there's probably a lot of different ways to incorporate that peak end rule into your life.

- Kurt: [41:51](#) And I think to your point, I think that it brings in a lot of different aspects from a lot of the different psychological and behavioral science research.
- Tim: [42:01](#) I love that, I love it. Okay, so we started out by talking a little bit about Carnegie Hall vs. Carnegie Deli, which because you're in New York. But let's talk about, I'm really curious about your musical interests and how is it that you came to be in a choir that performs in Carnegie Hall twice a year?
- Tim: [42:18](#) Honestly, I mean I'd like to get that gig, but also just, this must go back a while. How did you get started in the musical thing?
- Caroline: [42:25](#) Well both my grandfathers were very musical. Actually, one of my grandmothers was as well. And I started playing the piano, bashing the piano next to my grandfather, maybe at the age of three or so. And then piano was the thing in my life apart from [inaudible 00:42:25]. But from everything else, it was a big thing in my life, sport was a big thing, studies were a big thing, but piano was my sort of very personal retreat.
- Caroline: [42:25](#) And it was a huge part of my life, all of the formal musical training that you can do and I did, music is part of my baccalaureate. [crosstalk 00:42:25] And then I realized I couldn't carry a piano around with me, and actually it wasn't always easy to get access to a piano, and so then I started singing more and discovered that's something I can actually carry with you at any moment.
- Caroline: [42:25](#) Oh goodness, terrible bands. You know, when I was a kid, we'd form a band, and I would still as I'd say most young people, is I sort of migrated gradually to singing backing and backup and then from there started to come a little more to the front.
- Caroline: [42:41](#) But yeah, we used to cover pop songs, I mean that's kind of how you learn your chops when you're first dancing. And then I got into jazz and I discovered that I was a better jazz singer than I was a jazz pianist, and so that was one of the things that led me a little bit towards singing. Practice, practice, practice, obviously. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yes. Yeah, so my husband also sings and we [crosstalk 00:43:21]
- Tim: [43:21](#) Yes, it's very portable.
- Caroline: [43:21](#) We moved to New York from London a few years ago, about three years ago, I was spending a lot of time here before that but actually got my green card and was allowed into the country

properly at that point. And he reconnected with a [crosstalk 00:43:34] conductor that he had loved singing with years earlier.

- Tim: [43:34](#) Like what kind of bands, punk bands?
- Caroline: [43:36](#) And always said that he's learned more from this guy than from anyone else, and so he has this chorus called the Cecilia chorus, and it is just fantastic.
- Caroline: [43:45](#) It's a mix of, oh, and obviously there's a step in the middle there where we both auditioned and then got into the chorus, but yeah. It's a, I love it because we do a lot of the big classical pieces but we also commission new work and we sort of surface work that's been a little bit neglected, so our programs are always really interesting.
- Tim: [44:08](#) Wow.
- Caroline: [44:08](#) Yeah, and we're doing Handel's Messiah at Carnegie Hall on December 8, so.
- Tim: [44:11](#) Wow. That's a great realization. I wish I was a better jazz singer than I was jazz player personally, but because I was listening to Ella Fitzgerald recently and oh my gosh, she just, she always just sends chills up my spine. Okay, but how did you get to, how did we get to Carnegie Hall from playing [crosstalk 00:44:30]. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, but come on, a lot of people practice and still don't get to Carnegie Hall, so.
- Caroline: [44:29](#) Oh it goes a lot wider, I used to be part of this huge pop chorus in London, and we used to do a range of pop songs, about 300 strong, and we'd perform in clubs, so I mean it goes wider. And the music I tend to listen to a lot at home is a lot of instrumental deep house and EDM so no, the tastes go a little broader than we've talked about so far.
- Tim: [45:18](#) Okay.
- Caroline: [45:18](#) I'm such a huge [inaudible 00:45:19] I could talk to you guys all day.
- Tim: [45:20](#) Okay a minor, a minor little thing.
- Caroline: [45:22](#) That would be a good day right? [inaudible 00:45:29]. Likewise, thank you.

- Tim: [45:37](#) Wow. Oh my gosh. Oh. What a fabulous piece of vocal music. Oh my god, just absolutely amazing. Okay, so I think that's so cool. But your musical instruments are,[crosstalk 00:45:54] or interests, are very wide. I mean if you, singing jazz to the classical serious music, that's a wide-
- Caroline: [45:58](#) This was kind of a life's work. Sometimes people ask me how long it took to write, and it was four years from the first outline to actually sending it to the printer, but there's another answer which is it took 15, because it was all the years of time that went into it.
- Caroline: [46:06](#) So I don't know, I do actually have a couple of ideas for other books, and I never thought I'd even say that out loud. But yeah, I wouldn't be surprised if I do. I definitely would like at some point to write a novel, I actually started off in more creative writing than non fiction. So I don't know, I might tackle that at some point but probably when I'm about 70.
- Caroline: [46:28](#) But for now, no, I think, [crosstalk 00:46:29] I do like the idea of a hundred questions for the day, kind of maybe a spin off that really focuses on what are the questions that are at the heart of the science, I mean if you think about those bullet points some of them, they frame those questions you should ask.
- Caroline: [46:30](#) I think it could be a way of reaching a different type of reader that's perhaps a little bit more [inaudible 00:46:30], a little bit kind of wanting the summary, that might be the way to reach them.
- Tim: [46:30](#) Oh man, this, Kurt, I'm sorry, we're going to have to schedule another podcast just to talk about music and Caroline. This would be so much fun, oh man. I mean the fact that you can say EDM and classical and pop chorus in the same sentence, and all have it applied to you, I'm down, I'm so down with that.
- Kurt: [46:49](#) Well Caroline, thank you, this has been I think very informative and just fun and [crosstalk 00:46:54] we appreciate you taking time to record again, so thank you for all of that and thank you for the wonderful insights.
- Caroline: [46:57](#) Yeah, I've thought about that. So that's the other thing to do, I mean I've launched this new website, it's the one that's in the book, but we've really kind of redesigned it and made it look nice, it's howtohaveagoodday.com.[crosstalk 00:47:08]

Caroline Webb

- Caroline: [47:08](#) We've really thought about how do we put all the resources in one place and how do we create sense of it all, so yeah, that would definitely be the way to get that out into the world.
- Caroline: [47:17](#) And then I honestly, generally feel like I might be interested in writing How to Have a Good Night, because I think a lot about how behavioral science applies to how you think about adult friendships and how you think about creating a really good experience for [inaudible 00:47:30] for a house party or yeah, how do you think about sort of finding new friends when you're a grown up and how do you think about how you sustain your relationships really effectively with your other half.
- Caroline: [47:30](#) I think, my husband and I, thinking a lot about behavioral science and how it applies to our personal lives, and maybe that's something we'll write together.
- Tim: [47:35](#) Well let's do it, let's do it again. Yeah it would be a good day, because today is a good day.
- Kurt: [47:36](#) Well this is the peak, when I look back on today, this will definitely be that peak memory, here we go. So.
- Tim: [47:36](#) That's right yeah. So thank you so much Caroline and we hope to connect with you again soon. Okay, we'll cut the recording there, and man, this was, honestly it was so much fun.
- Tim: [47:36](#) We didn't get to talk about Dabos, I would love to talk to you more about Dabos and just there's all kind of stuff in the book. But just out of curiosity, can I ask, do you expect to write another? Do you think you're going to do another book?
- Kurt: [47:38](#) Yeah, it's monstrous.
- Caroline: [47:46](#) Yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah, absolutely, absolutely. And we go to Burning Man pretty frequently, we have done for many years, so you know, that's another dimension in thinking about, how do you build temporary communities and what do you learn from that? [inaudible 00:48:21] So a lot of us are thinking about, what is it saying to the research world, the experience you have at something like Burning Man, and yeah, so.
- Tim: [48:26](#) I so want to go. Next year, I so want to go.
- Caroline: [48:26](#) Do you?
- Tim: [48:27](#) Yeah, I've wanted to go for some time.



Caroline Webb

- Caroline: [48:37](#) Yeah. Yeah, no, a bunch of us do, in fact last time I saw Dan and we ended up talking mostly about Burning Man. It's yeah, a bunch, I don't think it's random, I think the reason quite a few of us go is because it does illuminate some interesting... we know that generosity boosts well being. We know that communal effort tends to make us feel good. We know that being free of judgment seems to unleash something in us.
- Caroline: [48:56](#) And it's just, it's a really kind of beautiful Petri dish of all the things that we know are supposed to be helpful for human wellbeing. So it's definitely worth going, and if you do go [crosstalk 00:49:03], let me, do you want to go, let me know because my husband and I help people go for the first time, we have spreadsheets and we definitely, we help people plan the first time that they go.
- Caroline: [49:25](#) It is a big deal, I mean it's a bit like climbing a mountain, there's definitely a lot of physical prep you have to do. I think it's worth doing at least once. It doesn't have to be something which you do repeatedly, we do it now every two or three years, not every year.
- Tim: [49:37](#) Oh yeah.
- Caroline: [49:39](#) But I think you know, I think if you're interested in the kind of topics you guys are interested in, it's worth a look, it's worth a look at least once, so yeah, keep me posted.
- Caroline: [49:54](#) You guys are too, thank you so much. [crosstalk 00:49:56]
- Tim: [49:56](#) The social world, yeah.
- Caroline: [49:57](#) And I'm so glad we could reschedule and pick this up again. Thank you.
- Kurt: [50:16](#) That would be really neat, I think that whole component of-
- Tim: [50:21](#) Yeah.
- Kurt: [50:21](#) How do you, and you guys are in that, or at least you are, in the unique situation, moving to New York which has to be daunting to a certain degree and being at that stage in life where it's not as easy, it's not like when you're kids and you just go, do you want to be my friend? On the bus, and now you're friends.
- Tim: [50:40](#) Yeah.

Caroline Webb

Kurt: [50:40](#) That would be cool.

Tim: [51:08](#) I so, I so want to go next year. I so want to go. Yeah, I've wanted to go for some time, we just saw Danny Aurieli in San Francisco last week and Dan made a side comment about it and I was like God, I want to go. I really want to go to Burning Man.

Kurt: [52:13](#) Okay.

Tim: [52:17](#) Yes, yes, yeah.

Kurt: [52:19](#) Alright.

Tim: [52:22](#) Yeah, I will absolutely take you up on that because it also scares the living daylights out of me. There's a part of me that is, I have a lot of this reticent about making the commitment to it, so [inaudible 00:52:43].

Tim: [52:52](#) Okay. Alright. Cool. I will, I will. Caroline, thank you. Really, you're just an absolute delight, and this was so much fun.

Kurt: [53:11](#) Yes.