



SEASON 2, EPISODE 10 - SAMANTHA MCCORMICK

[00:00:00] - Samantha

Welcome back to Calder Navigation, where each episode serves as a compass guiding you through the vibrant tapestry of Calderdale. I'm Samantha McCormick, your host and Artistic Director of Curious Motion.

[00:00:14] - Samantha

I'm delighted to present Season 2 as part of our Culturedale Commission, celebrating Calderdale's rich cultural heritage during the year of culture. In this season, we continue to champion the voices of our remarkable neighbours, celebrating their resilience, diversity, and the shared experiences that bind us together. From intimate conversations to profound revelations, each episode is an invitation to connect, reflect, and celebrate the human experience.

[00:00:47] - Samantha

Season 2 of Calder Navigation is not just a podcast. It's a celebration of community, culture, and the enduring spirit of Calderdale. Join us as we delve into the heart and soul of our community, exploring the myriad of stories that shape our shared experience.

[00:01:04] - Samantha

Today, we're changing things up on Calder Navigation. This is our final episode of Series 2, and so we thought it might be nice to flip the roles and for me to be interviewed instead. It's not often that I share the depth of Curious Motion's story, and a little while back, one of our team members suggested we try it, so here we go. We've roped in my lovely husband, Matt, to interview me. He's also a dance artist and member of the Curious Motion team, and he's been instrumental in our journey, too. I don't think we ever really sit down and chat about this stuff together either, so it was a nice opportunity to reflect. I asked our team if they had any burning questions they'd like me to answer, and they had quite a few. So here's my attempt to answer them. I hope you enjoy it, and thank you so much for listening. Creating this podcast is a real joy for me, and I'd love to know what you think after today's episode. So please do drop us a message or an email, and we would love to hear from you. Okay, it's over to Matt.

[00:02:15] - Samantha

Hi, Matt.

[00:02:16] - Matt

Hi, Sam.

[00:02:17] - Samantha

This is going to be fun.

[00:02:19] - Matt

It is. I have been looking forward to this because although I was there at the inception of Curious Motion, and we've talked about projects and proposals and names and funding and all sorts of things, I don't think we've ever really gotten into the whats, the hows, and the whys. I am interested to ask you these questions.

[00:02:41] - Samantha

Yeah. And we should say that our dog, Mary, is in the room and might be a little bit annoying.

[00:02:49] - Matt

Isn't that right, darling, yes?

[00:02:51] - Samantha

If you hear background noise, it's probably her, but fingers crossed, she'll be fine. Yeah, I'm excited to talk about this as well, and thank you to our team who sent over some questions which are really cool.

[00:03:02] - Matt

Yes, it is going to be fun. And I mean, we should just get straight into it. So could you tell us a bit about how Curious Motion was started and why?

[00:03:14] - Samantha

So my background for people that haven't met me and don't know me is in dance, as is yours, Matt. And I have worked as a freelance dance artist in health or well-being or community context for, well, nearly 20 years, I think, oh gosh. And we moved to Elland in 2015, and I was doing bits and bobs, and I was travelling a lot, going to London, places like that. And then we

got to know people from living in the area, and it became apparent that actually we could do some things here locally that would be hopefully really beneficial, and why not try it?

[00:03:56] - Samantha

So it all started with them trying a few ideas out. I was very lucky at the time also to meet Sue Burns, who's one of our directors, and founded Curious Motion with me. And within an hour of meeting her and her lovely team at Chol Theatre, where Sue was working at the time, we had come up with Welland and all sorts of stuff. This is years and years and years ago, way before Curious Motion. And it resulted in basically me trying a few things, and one of the first things we ever did was Brews & Grooves, our older people's session that still runs now. And 33 people came to that first class in Elland in October 2018, I think that was. So pre-Curious Motion.

[00:04:39] - Samantha

And we also tried Welland out a couple of times, 2018, 2019, and just explored a whole load of ideas and then realised this looks like it might have potential and actually to make a difference and a real impact, it needs to be its own thing. It can't just be me as an artist. So Sue and I went to Square Chapel and created Curious Motion in the, like, café area there in December 2019. And we basically just set a kind of mission to explore, make things accessible for people in Elland and the Lower Valley. It was becoming-, from living there, I think you'll agree, we found that there was much more limited access to arts, culture, creative approaches to wellbeing than we were seeing in other parts of Calderdale and other parts of the UK that we'd lived and worked in.

[00:05:31] - Samantha

And then, yeah, that's how Curious Motion started, I suppose. We obviously were then followed by two years of a pandemic, which was great fun. But we danced on Zoom, our lovely Brews & Grooves group. We still danced and had coffee together. And we did a different podcast at the time, but there was lots going on and lots we still could do and did do during that time. Yeah, have I missed anything major?

[00:05:54] - Matt

No, I don't think so. I think it's nice for me to also reflect. So, yeah, thinking back to those first classes and setting up the teas and the coffees for you. And yeah, starting to get to know what has become such a wonderful, creative, supportive network of just people in Elland that I don't think would have had the opportunity to be brought together quite like they did when Brews & Grooves started all those years ago. And I think the longevity of this project is definitely a

testament to you, but also the commitment to the mission that you set out all those years ago. It still follows through all the way, every thread, every strand. Yeah, it's nice.

[00:06:49] - Samantha

Yeah. I always thought about, we need to try and find our tribe, our community. And I remember in the pandemic thinking, "Oh, gosh, where are those people?" But we seem to be building that now. And you have been an excellent barista, as well as a volunteer barista, as well as an actual professional member of the team.

[00:07:10] - Matt

I paid her to say that.

[00:07:13] - Samantha

People-, you know, coffee means a lot to us at Curious Motion, it's got to be good and it's got to be served by a friendly person, and you've always done that really well.

[00:07:22] - Matt

Yeah. It was always my pleasure, too. It was lovely to get to know everyone. Yeah, I think that's a really nice-, a summary of, yeah, Curious Motion and the why. So moving on, here's a great question. So if you had unlimited resources, what would be the first thing you would do for Curious Motion?

[00:07:50] - Samantha

I think the people that know us and know me might know the answer to this, but it would be to get a space/maybe a building. I don't know about a building, but definitely to have a physical space in Elland that makes us more accessible to people, where we can realise some of our dreams and ideas more fully. At the moment, we don't have a base anywhere. So we use wonderful community venues and we love using them. And it's important that we are in various different places so people can access us.

[00:08:26] - Samantha

But that means that if we're sort of not in a session, then we're not accessible, everybody has to work from home or a café, or-, and it is becoming harder to manage. And I bang on about this all the time about, oh, if only we had a studio or a café in a studio or an art room and a dance

studio and a café. I mean, I could go on and on and on. And obviously, we're a not-for-profit organisation, we're working with very small resources. We do a lot with what we've got, but it's very small scale.

[00:08:55] - Samantha

But it's absolutely a dream because it would open up what we do to more people and enable us to reach the potential, there are some things that we would love to do that we are limited in because you know, we're using venues that don't belong to us and there's only so much you can do in that respect. And I think to have a space that people can come to to feel cared for, looked after, where they can express themselves, where they could try something new without barriers such as money or access or-, you know, in an ideal dream world. That's what I would do. I keep dreaming about it and feel that at some point in the future, that will-, we'll realise it in some way. I'm not sure how yet, and it is going to take a lot more resource, but fingers crossed, we can do it.

[00:09:51] - Matt

Yeah, and I think off the back of that, what would-, like, if you could describe to us your dream building? Like, you've touched upon the various elements that you would consider and have as part of this. But yeah, describe to us, like, paint us a picture of the ideal building for Curious Motion.

[00:10:14] - Samantha

Ooh, it's quite difficult. I think the main thing really would be to have a space that really is made for dance, which is very hard to find outside of cities, really, or large towns. So that means it needs to be quite big. We need actually quite a lot of space to do what we do. I'm absolutely obsessed with floors. That's the first thing I look at when I go in a venue and people are like, "Why are you bothering with the floor?" But we don't wear shoes a lot of the time. So a carpet or a dirty floor or a very hard floor makes a huge difference to the experience of our community. So a clean floor that doesn't even have to be very posh dance stuff, but clean and hasn't had outdoor shoes and things and stuff all over it and all of that stuff would be amazing. Might sound a bit boring, but honestly, it changes everything if you've got that.

[00:11:08] - Matt

It does.

[00:11:12] - Samantha

Yeah. It's just about a really looked after space that's suitable for people to come and use their bodies in different ways. And also a really creative space. So I suppose alongside a dance space, it might also have mirrors and things like that. That can be quite nice. Ballet barres. At the moment, our Brews & Grooves group, we use the chairs and create our very own ballet barre. It's a bit too low for all of us, and the chairs obviously move around, but we make it work. You know, we're not complaining. But if we had unlimited resource, then some ballet barres might be nice.

[00:11:45] - Samantha

But also a creative space where we could get messy. An art room. We do some really beautiful artwork with our Curious Youth group and Sarah O' Boyle, who's the artist that leads that. And you know, we're always a bit worried about, we can't make a mess, can't get anything anywhere, I've got to make sure everything looks exactly as it was when we left. And maybe we need a room where things can be a bit messy and we can paint more and play more. So they're kind of two spaces I've always imagined.

[00:12:12] - Samantha

And I think there has to be a social space and a coffee space because we put coffee and tea on the end of everything. It's-, yeah, we're starting to be known for the kind of added coffee, and it's really important, actually. It's an incredibly important opportunity for people to connect, which if they just came to class and left immediately afterwards, they might not do. So yeah, something along those lines, and I suppose a space that feels beautiful, you know, that feels welcoming to everybody, that feels just lovely to be in, where you could relax, where you might feel inspired.

[00:12:49] - Matt

Where you can be you.

[00:12:51] - Samantha

Totally. Absolutely that, where there's no preconceived ideas as to who should and shouldn't be there and all of that stuff that can sometimes happen in spaces. Not all the time, but it can. Yeah, yeah, we'll just keep dreaming.

[00:13:06] - Matt

One day it will manifest. So we've talked about the elements of Curious Motion, about the various mediums in which we are able to let our participants express themselves. And an area that is growing within the company that I have seen and experienced is our performance company. There is a lovely question to come off the back of that. If you could invite anyone to perform at the next Welland, who would it be?

[00:13:40] - Samantha

Oh, this is such a hard question because I could go, I suppose I could think about big famous companies or something and things like that, couldn't I? But actually, Welland really is about the people of Elland and the surrounding area, obviously. Everybody is welcome. And I think-, I don't know if there's a particular kind of person or group that is currently separate to Welland that is like the dream.

[00:14:10] - Samantha

I think it's more about our community and the talents and maybe the hidden potential in the people that engage with us through the year and the people in the wider community that might just pop into Welland, you know, just that's the only thing they engage with us in. They see us when we're doing a festival and then we don't see them again until we're doing another one. So I think for me, I suppose ideal performance opportunities, multiple, I would say, are where we could showcase some of the real, like, potential of people.

[00:14:52] - Samantha

I mean, our performance company has just started, and there was so much amazing stuff happening every week. People work so hard and people are full of talent. And by talent, I don't just mean they're really good at dancing and things like that. Some people came and took part who had never, ever danced before. But by talent, I mean they have a way of caring for each other, of allowing and enabling each other to express themselves without judgement, which then creates beautiful art. So I think instead of it being like a company or a group or a person that we might automatically jump to with a question like this, I think it's more about, can we shine a spotlight on more of that stuff from the everyday people in our community who are actually full of incredible stuff and often won't have the opportunity to share it.

[00:15:50] - Matt

Yeah. That is a lovely answer.

[00:15:54] - Samantha

It's quite hard to answer because it's also great to bring in fresh things that haven't been to our area before in other professional companies and things. Everybody offers something really quite amazing, but I just found it really hard to sort of think of one because actually there's so much bubbling under the surface in what we're already doing, I think.

[00:16:17] - Matt

Yeah. I think from your answer, I would pose the question to the listeners is, who would you like to see perform at the Welland?

[00:16:30] - Samantha

Yeah, that would be great to know.

[00:16:32] - Matt

I think everything we do, everything that is done, is informed by the experiences of the people in Elland and the Lower Valley and all of Calderdale. And I think that identity of ownership is really important. So yeah, who would you like to see at the next Welland? Be bold, be brave, be curious.

[00:17:05] - Samantha

Yeah, it's such a good point. I think that's why I'm finding it hard to answer a sort of-, you know, pinpoint one thing because we work in a way that we're led by what people feed back to us and then we go off those ideas. Obviously, I'll have ideas in my head of what kind of fits with what we do, obviously, but we are very responsive to the community and we love to get people's ideas. And then that helps us make sure we're going in the direction that we should be going in. So, yeah, you can let us know if there'll be-, we're working on a Wellend for probably 2026. Fingers crossed if we can raise all the money and all of that stuff. Yeah, be good to know what people think.

[00:17:46] - Matt

Okay, so before we started recording, Sam and I had a little back and forth on this next question, and so I'm looking forward to hearing her answer now. If Curious Motion was a song, which song would it be?

[00:18:05] - Samantha

This is so difficult because there's literally no one song in the world that would sum up Curious Motion, I don't think. So I thought that we really are quite a sort of varied mix of different things. And obviously, we love music, and our classes have sort of songs that have stayed with people and things like that as well. So I was thinking about some of those, but I thought, really, instead of us being one song, we're a mixture of different artists, particularly Frank Sinatra would be one, but also Bon Iver and that kind of really calm-, yes, thoughtful. We're very thoughtful. That kind of music.

[00:18:53] - Samantha

We'd have to throw in a bit of like, Donna Summer or Whitney Houston. Yes, some really strong women in there. We are a women-led organisation. And maybe something a little bit weird, not mainstream. Often in contemporary dance stuff, which is my background and therefore is the main style of dance that we do at Curious Motion, you can end up listening to music that is very unusual. And we like to sort of explore possibilities with music, maybe world music as well. So electronic things sometimes, maybe sound effects, not always songs. This is why it's so hard to pin it down. I can't put it into one song. It's literally impossible.

[00:19:39] - Matt

Okay, so I'm going to refine this question.

[00:19:42] - Samantha

Okay.

[00:19:43] - Matt

Thinking of the different elements, I'm going to just throw out a couple of projects that we've done.

[00:19:51] - Samantha

Yeah.

[00:19:52] - Matt

And maybe, just maybe, there is a song that comes to mind.

[00:19:58] - Samantha

Okay.

[00:19:59] - Matt

And then I will give you a few that I've thought of, too.

[00:20:02] - Samantha

Cool.

[00:20:03] - Matt

Is there a song that describes Brews & Grooves?

[00:20:07] - Samantha

Oh, gosh. I can hear them all in my head with the different songs that we've done. I mean, a special song, and why I mentioned Frank Sinatra is that the first thing we ever did at Brews & Grooves was a routine to Fly Me to the Moon. And we recreated that and relearned it this year to celebrate six years of Brews & Grooves. And even for the people that weren't there six years ago, they were able to then connect with kind of where we started. It's quite different. Brews & Grooves, we don't always do routines like that. Sometimes we improvise for a long time or create our own movement. But I think that has stuck with everybody, so I'm going to go with that one.

[00:20:50] - Matt

That's a good one. When I used to make the coffee, I used to be there from the beginning of class and just stay out of the way. Every now and then, I'd sneak a peek to make sure that they're all behaving. And just to see them express themselves was lovely. But that class makes me-, if I was to describe that class in one song, it would be Annie Lennox and Aretha Franklin, Sisters Are Doing It For Themselves.

[00:21:23] - Samantha

Oh, that's so funny you've just said that because that's our current warm-up song.

[00:21:26] - Matt

Well, it just-, it does what it says on the tin. It's powerful. It's got interesting lyrics. There's loads of depth to that whole composition. In my mind, that's what describes Brews & Grooves.

[00:21:42] - Samantha

Yeah, that's a great choice. We love singing along to that to get warm at the minute as well as the first thing that we do.

[00:21:47] - Matt

Okay, next one is the performance company. If you were to describe our most recent project, so our performance company, what song would that be?

[00:21:58] - Samantha

Well, it has to be the last song of the piece, Tremors by Sohn. It has to be.

[00:22:04] - Matt

Oh, I didn't think you'd go for that one.

[00:22:06] - Samantha

Oh, no, it has to be. That is so-, so for people who haven't seen it, there's a section at the very end of the piece that comes from a kind of creative task called flocking, like a bird, like a flock of birds. So the group moves like a whole kind of-,

[00:22:22] - Matt

Pack of consciousness.

[00:22:24] - Samantha

They're all doing their own thing, but they are following each other very closely in terms of directions, space and energy. And it is so moving to watch. I mean, every rehearsal, I was like, wow. And the music, people have picked out just moments in that music that really-, it was a bit like part of the glue. I mean, the glue is you guys, it's the people, but the music really tied everybody together. And yeah, I will always now think of that when I hear that song.

[00:22:59] - Matt

Oh, that's lovely. I like that a lot. My song would be-, I'm torn. I'm torn between Do Your Thing by Basement Jaxx.

[00:23:13] - Samantha

Oh, yeah, that's a good one.

[00:23:15] - Matt

Or something that encompasses, like, community or a communal shared space or experience, yeah.

[00:23:26] - Samantha

Mmm, nice.

[00:23:26] - Matt

Okay dokey. And one last one, and I'm interested to hear what you say for this one. Dance for Wellbeing.

[00:23:38] - Samantha

Oh, so this is the class that you teach. Thanks for putting me on the spot.

[00:23:42] - Matt

Welcome. No pressure.

[00:23:45] - Samantha

Oh, gosh, what would I choose for that class? It would have to be a Bon Iver song because you use Bon Iver a lot.

[00:23:54] - Matt

I love Bon Iver.

[00:23:54] - Samantha

In a great way. It's great. I don't know how I choose one of their songs. Which one? Oh, I don't know. What's their latest one called, Sable?

[00:24:08] - Matt

Yeah, the album's called Sable.

[00:24:10] - Samantha

Yeah. Well, many of them, to be honest, because that class is very, very gentle, and whilst people do work really hard, it's slow and precise and not high impact whatsoever. And then you do this lovely relaxation at the end, and that music, whichever track you use, really, from Bon Iver, I think really creates a really lovely-, because it's an evening class as well, like a cosy vibe. People relax really nicely when it comes on, and it just really fits that group. It's a small group. We love a natter, but we do try and stop talking when it gets to relaxation.

[00:24:51] - Matt

We do love a natter.

[00:24:53] - Samantha

And it's just really lovely for a Thursday night. You know, by seven o'clock on a Thursday night, we've all had that time, but you've worked us pretty hard in a kind of-, yeah, it looks easy, but it really isn't when you do it way. And then we just enjoy this last 5, 10 minutes of stretching and relaxation. And that music is part of that, I think. Yeah, I'd go with that.

[00:25:17] - Matt

Oh, nice. Yeah, I'd take that as a compliment, that it sort of, yeah, it fits Bon Iver.

[00:25:25] - Samantha

Yeah, I think it does.

[00:25:26] - Matt

Yeah. Well, thank you. Tell us about the first time you thought, "Wow, that's a dream coming true."

[00:25:37] - Samantha

Ooh. I don't know what the first time was. I think it's probably last year's performance company pilot. So by pilot, I mean we trialled something to see whether having a performance company sort of strand to what we do had got potential or not. And that involved three amazing participants who all came to us through Brews & Grooves, actually, and you and Isla and Sandile as professional artists coming together to create a dance piece from scratch, and we did it in five days, didn't we?

[00:26:20] - Matt

It was intense.

[00:26:21] - Samantha

We did it in five days, and we performed it on day six. I mean, it was very intense. But that was the first time I think we'd had any capacity to take people on a creative process journey, which if you've ever been part of a creative process, it could be anything. You know, like, things like pantos and musicals and that solidarity that you get with a group of people who have made something together or rehearsed something together or just created this thing out of nowhere, whatever that is, that is really special. There's something really special about that. Hence why I wanted to offer it.

[00:27:00] - Samantha

But it's quite a big ask, you know, it does require some funding, particularly. There's quite a few things that we have to have in place, and we have to have enough people in the room and you know, all of this sort of stuff, and energy from people and all of this stuff. And when we managed to do that, yes, we did it very intensively, and very sort of-, therefore, it was a short-, it was just one week. But that felt so amazing because that had been in my head for a long time. And now, we've reimaged that and we've developed it and we did more this year. So I think it was really the start of the sort of more depth to what we do that I really am keen for Curious Motion to offer for those people that would like it. You know, to really come together and be part of a really unique experience with other people. Yeah, I think that might have been the first time.

[00:27:55] - Matt

I think this is probably the most important question out of all of the questions that we've got.

[00:28:00] - Samantha

Okay.

[00:28:00] - Matt

So how do you balance your own wellbeing whilst organising so much for the wellbeing of others?

[00:28:09] - Samantha

Yeah, this is important, isn't it? Because you've got to practise what you preach. And it's not easy. There is no answer to this that would apply to everybody or suggest that it's actually an easy thing to do once you found the answer to this, everything's fine. It's a constant journey. Depending on what I've got going on in my life, it can be much harder than other times. But I would say the key things that I've kind of worked out are to prioritise my own mental health. So I do have counselling sessions, and Curious Motion has implemented some group supervision and counselling support, which I think is amazing. Thank you very much to our board who have put that in place for all of our team. And I have found that has been really important, so that kind of professional check-in with somebody.

[00:29:06] - Samantha

But also, I would say we've talked a lot about how we communicate as a team. We have, I wouldn't say rules because it's a bit too harsh, but we have some boundaries around times that we're going to email each other, whether we, you know, are accessing our emails or our messages when we're actually not working. And you know, So we live in a world that pushes us to be available constantly, and that is very challenging to stop, not do that, and actually rest.

[00:29:36] - Samantha

It's not easy to do at all because it does feel like everybody else is busy being productive, or that's what it feels like to me. But actually, the rest is so important. So there have been some fairly simple things like that, where we've said, "Right, we're going to keep our communication with each other between these hours, or we're just going to be very mindful about how often we check emails." I mean, these are simple things that actually can become so overwhelming if you don't have any boundaries around them. And also, I would say I am a dancer. I enjoy moving my body. So I go to actually more sort of fitness sessions and things like that. That really helps me when I can do that. I would say it fluctuates. I don't have a kind of, Oh, I do this all of the time, and it totally sorts me out. That's not life.

[00:30:24] - Matt

It's responsive, isn't it?

[00:30:26] - Samantha

Yeah. At different times-,

[00:30:27] - Matt

Everything that we're going through.

[00:30:28] - Samantha

Yeah, at different times, I need different things. You know, when Welland is happening, things are intense. They're really, really intense. I'll work more hours and things, but I can prepare for that by planning things carefully, checking, you know, not overcommitting myself as much as I can. I used to-, well, I still struggle with people pleasing and all of that stuff, saying yes to everything. I think I'll always be learning about how to say no.

[00:30:56] - Samantha

Don't need to say yes to everything. Not every opportunity that comes our way is actually what we need or can do, and we have to make some hard decisions, but actually that looks after everybody. So I would say it's very much an experiment looking after your own wellbeing when you do a job or have a role in your life that means you look after other people a lot. It's not a straight line. Some days I'm good at it, some days I'm not. But I've definitely found putting a few things in place, like some counselling support, some sort of logistical practical things about how we communicate, that all makes a big difference. And it's about just having an awareness, I think, is the main thing.

[00:31:38] - Samantha

When I was younger, I probably would have just pushed through and pushed through and blocked it all out. But now I'm much more aware of actually, you can't look after other people if you're not doing the best to look after yourself, you know, whatever that is for you, because that depends on your own capacity and situations. But it's really, really important. It's part of your job, really.

[00:31:57] - Matt

Yeah, I think because everything you do is-, well, Curious Motion is everything that you do, and you do have partners, and you do have people to support you, and dance artists, and artists, and the community. But I think when it is, from my perspective, at least, when I see that everything you do is your vision, is your goal, is your maybe expectation of yourself or of a project or of a thing that needs to be achieved, I think you're very fair.

[00:32:39] - Matt

I think your distribution of resources or energy or whatever the word you wish to describe it, I think that you were definitely working towards or working with considering balance in mind and having seen the behind the scenes and the actual application of these things like Welland, having seen how successful they are and the level of effort that needed to go in to be able to achieve those, yeah, from my perspective, I think, yeah, you've been really considered. And I think lots of people could definitely learn from these things that you're talking about. I think it's important to be able to reflect on the level of output that you were doing, improving your boundaries, so not checking your work emails, not checking whether your social media post has had a good reach or whether-

[00:33:47] - Samantha

There's all these things that could draw you back in in seconds. It's quite-, you have to be quite disciplined with yourself, I find. I do, because I could easily just check everything all the time. And also because I think it's important to note that I love my job. So I want to do stuff. So-, and I'm lucky that I'm in that position and my job actually fills me up. Not all the time. Some of the funding applications, particularly, don't fill me up. You know, I've had to learn that side of things, and they are a whole thing in themselves.

[00:34:23] - Samantha

There's no perfect job out there where you're happy all the time. There's no life where you're happy all the time. But I think finding a bit of discipline and sort of really trying to think about, is this actually going to help me in the moment, or am I just reacting? Especially at times of stress and tiredness and running events or really complex rehearsals, you know, where we've got lots of different people in the room with lots and lots of different things that they need from us. That's the time where the discipline is needed the most. But I get a lot of purpose from doing this work. So there is definitely that balance you were saying. That also helps me.

[00:35:00] - Matt

I think that really neatly and nicely leads on to our final question, which is, if you were going to do a TED Talk, what would the topic be?

[00:35:13] - Samantha

Yeah, this is such a good question. Thanks to Mahsid, our project assistant, who has given us some of these. She's so-, I love her questions because they're really interesting. I would never have thought about this. A TED Talk. Oh, gosh. This is also really hard. There's loads of things I could talk about.

[00:35:29] - Samantha

I think it would be a combination of two things. One, being about opening up what we actually think dance is in Western culture, I'm talking about. I don't know how I would do that, but dance is not just entertainment, and I don't mean to put that down. Dance is a fantastic form of entertainment. I love going to see a good dance show or something a bit fun on the telly. But there is a depth to dance that comes from our ancestry, our bodies, our being a human being. We have used movement and dance to tell our stories for centuries.

[00:36:19] - Matt

Forever.

[00:36:19] - Samantha

Yeah, forever. And that isn't sort of recognised, I would say, in kind of maybe the culture here in the UK. Obviously, I'm talking as a white woman. I can only talk from my experience. And so, there would be something around, what's the core of this? Why are we actually doing it? And why is that valuable? Because a lot of the time, dance is kind of not the very well-understood art form. Maybe less access than other ones. I'm not sure, but it does feel like there's less dance available than you might find music or theatre sometimes. And I'd really like to strip it down to why is this thing part of the human experience?

[00:37:05] - Samantha

And then, linked to that, would be the importance of addressing loneliness. When I came across the stats around the impact of loneliness on a person's lifespan, I was just shocked. And there was an international study that has been shared, I think, you know, very widely now. And I may not quote this perfectly, but to summarise, it found that people experiencing chronic loneliness have something like a 45% chance of an early death, higher chance of an early death. Whereas

when you look at obesity, in this study, it said obesity was around 20%. Chronic chronic loneliness has similarities to smoking in terms of its absolute detrimental effect on people's health.

[00:38:02] - Samantha

And again, in the culture we live in here in the West, in the UK, there has been a lot of things that pull us away from paying attention to things like that. Let's just look at our physical health, or let's look at the bits of mental health that we can diagnose, or we separate the body. We separate the mind from the body, from the spirit, from the self all of the time. And there is use in that. You know, there's incredible people saving people's lives every day, and that is amazing. But actually, when you come to people who have got health conditions that we can't put a name to and all of this sort of stuff, when you look at social connection, their wider lives, loneliness is so dangerous.

[00:38:51] - Samantha

And that's why I think at Curious Motion, because we work with so many different people, we don't have a kind of set demographic. We have people of many ages, backgrounds and life experiences that come to us. I remember when I was trying to pinpoint, you know, why do we exist, loneliness was an overarching theme. And that's not to say that if you come to Curious Motion, you're a lonely person at all. A lot of it is about prevention. But when people are feeling very connected to others in whatever way that is for them, because that can be very different for each person, they will be much healthier in general. They will be able to live longer longer. They will live a more fruitful life.

[00:39:34] - Samantha

And I just think we have come away with learning about mental health if you want to separate it out, but loneliness is affecting every aspect of our lives, not just the mind. There are physiological changes in the body that happen from all of the experiences we have in our lives. We store our emotions in our bodies. So I think if I did a TED Talk, I would be-, get some science out properly because I think the science is fascinating and really good to help people understand stuff. And I would do something around this why we dance and why that can help us with this difficult thing called loneliness that needs to be as important as other health things that we pay attention to.

[00:40:29] - Matt

That is very thought-provoking as an answer.

[00:40:34] - Samantha

Yeah, that's not a very straightforward answer, is it?

[00:40:37] - Matt

No, but it's a wonderful thing to have to consider because, again, we are compartmentalised as human beings. We are given an average human being, the average amount of food to eat, an average size, an average weight, where, again, looking at, like, social-, or social interaction impacts into our lives. Yeah, 100% affects more than just the mind. So yeah, you've left me with food for thought.

[00:41:14] - Samantha

Yeah, and these things are really complicated. It's not saying that we can just solve this stuff. You know, it's so personal, and everybody's experience of things like loneliness or connecting with other people will be different. But we should respect that and allow that to be all right rather than trying to put everybody in two boxes that makes sense to a certain portion of our society. The more we can learn from each other's actual experiences and stories, the better we will all be, I think, anyway.

[00:41:48] - Matt

Yeah, I agree. What a lovely insight into you, into Curious Motion, into your aspirations, goals, and dreams. Yeah, and I think I'm just going to take this opportunity to say thank you on behalf of your community, on behalf of your artists, on behalf of everyone you interact with, you have brought a lot of change, and I know you, and you will continue to bring change regardless of the barriers that we face, and we face them together, and we will achieve them together. So thank you. Thank you for being you.

[00:42:35] - Samantha

Thanks. That's very lovely. And it was nice to talk about it this way round. Yeah, I don't often get to talk about things in a bit more detail. And nice to see what questions the people in our team had. Yeah, and a really nice way to end this series of Calder Navigation as well, I think. There's going to be a little pause now with the podcast because we have a baby on the way. Very exciting.

[00:42:58] - Matt

Very exciting.

[00:42:59] - Samantha

So Curious Motion is in a little transition of change, of positive change. There'll be lots of great things to come, but there will be more. We'll be definitely doing more. We'll be exploring Calder Navigation again in the future. And if people haven't listened to-, there are loads of episodes, I think it was about 20 now. Really incredible people from our borough. My gosh, they're all amazing. Sit back and have a little explore, see whose stories you haven't listened to yet, because they're all really great. And it was very lovely to include the Curious Motion story in that as well at this moment in time.

[00:43:38] - Matt

Yeah. It would be nice to be able to also keep touching back as time goes on to see, to reflect on the evolution of curiosity. It'd be, yeah, wonderful.

[00:43:51] - Samantha

See where people's lives have led them.

[00:43:54] - Matt

Yeah. So yeah, thank you, and thank you everyone for listening.

[00:43:58] - Samantha

Yeah. Thanks, Matt. It was nice doing it this way around.

[00:44:01] - Matt

Yes. I've enjoyed it a lot.

[00:44:02] - Samantha

Thank you.

[00:44:03] - Samantha

It's time to wrap up another episode of Calder Navigation. And as we do, we want to express our gratitude for joining us on this journey through Calderdale's stories. We hope these conversations have moved you and reminded you of the power of human connection.

[00:44:21] - Samantha

Calder Navigation is part of the Welland Activator Project, aimed at combating loneliness in Elland and Calderdale. A massive thank you to our funders, Calderdale Council, Culturedale, and Reaching Communities from the National Lottery Community Fund, empowering us to continue our mission of fostering connection and combating loneliness through projects like the Welland Activator. A big thank you to Untold Creative for production support, too. Remember to subscribe to Calder Navigation on your podcast app, share it with others, and please leave us a review. Keep exploring and connecting. Until next time.