Transcript - Julian Evans - Can stoicism help us be more resilient?

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Ross G 00:07
Hello, you're listening to the Future Talent Learning podcast developed to help you build your leadership and management skills. I'm Ross Garner

Ross D 00:13
and I'm Ross Dickey. This week we are asking, is it better to see the glass half empty? Is stoicism the answer? To answer these questions, we're speaking to practical philosopher Jules Evans, author of The Art of Losing Control, Philosophy for Life and Holiday from The Self. Hello Jules, how are you doing?

Julian 00:32
Hey, good, thanks. Nice to see you guys.

Ross D 00:35
Nice to see you as well. I wonder if before we get into the conversation, it might be worth saying what a practical philosopher does, because I suspect most of our audience haven't come across one before.

Ross G 00:45
I certainly haven't.

Julian 00:47
Yeah, well, so I call myself a practical philosopher to distinguish myself from a purely theoretical philosopher. The idea is that I look for ideas that really help people flourish. From, that could be from thousands of years ago or new ideas, and I often try them out in my life as well.

Julian 01:12
So we're talking about stoicism today. Stoicism hugely helped me in my 20s. That's how I got into philosophy, but I've tried all kinds of other things from like 10-day vipassana retreats to trying ayahuasca in the Amazon.

Julian 01:31
So I sometimes call myself a gonzo philosopher as well. So it's like, gonzo journalism was like Hunter S. Thompson. You know, he would throw himself into the story. So same kind of thing. I try to throw myself into different philosophies and see what they're like to live.

Ross D 01:49
How's it working out for you so far? You look great.

Julian 01:53
It's great, yeah. Yeah, yeah. We're all practical philosophers. It's just we're usually unconsciously so. So we've all got life philosophies that we live by. Usually we don't examine them. So, you know, this is just a way to kind of think about the ideas that you lug around behind you for all of your life and think, is this idea working for me or not?

Ross D 02:15
Okay, great. Well, let's talk about Stoicism specifically since that's what we're here for. What do you think the modern person thinks Stoicism is? Well, I come to Ross first. What do you think Stoicism is?

Ross G 02:27
Yeah, as the salt of the earth, every man that I am, maybe I should answer this question and then Jules can tell me where I'm wrong. So I think to me, stoicism is associated with, for most people, a type of resilience, a kind of British stiff upper lip mentality where nothing really phases you.

Ross G 02:46
But I think sort of, so that's the sort of more admirable side of it. And then I think rightly or wrongly it is also associated with a kind of emotional suppresiveness where you never really show or acknowledge the way you feel because it's unbecoming to do such a thing.

Julian 03:08
I mean we can distinguish between stoicism with a small s which is how it's used in general parlance and then stoicism with a capital s which is the the philosophy that came from ancient Greeks. So as you say I think 10 years ago particularly before the revival of stoicism if you know stoic just meant yeah often just hiding your emotions. So a stoic man will be someone you just don't really know what they're feeling what's going on inside and you're absolutely right it'll be associated with the kind of stiff upper lip as well, so emotional repression and actually or maybe not talking about your feelings and that's quite in some ways quite different from ancient stoicism.

Julian 03:50
The ancient stoics no one talked about their emotions more than the stoics they were fascinated by emotions what they were interested in was understanding emotions and how to change them, in order that you never feel any negative emotion. Your life is one long river of serenity and tranquility no matter what fortune throws at you this is the ancient stoic goal. So in some ways the the contemporary idea of it as being in some ways kind of emotionless is kind of accurate the stoics do think of emotions, a lot of emotions as a suffering and so they want to free themselves of negative emotions

Ross D 04:36
Is it maybe worth then saying who the Stoics were? I mean, were they a fun hang or no?

Julian 04:44
Were they a fun hang?

Ross D 04:46
Yeah, if you were like in the ancient great club with them.

Julian 04:50
Fun hang. That sounds like a kind of TV show on Saturday morning. Hey, Fun Hang! Yeah, with big hair. And he gets gunged at the end. Um, I don't know if they would have fun, a fun hang actually, Ross, I'll be totally honest with you.

Julian 05:07
I think, you know, they kind of descended from the cynics. The cynics school, they were fun. They had like Dioges, the cynic who lived in a barrel. So he was more of a laugh. But I mean, they were definitely accessible.

Julian 05:20
The name stoicism comes from the stoa poikilei, which was a, it means the painted colonnade. This was a place in the Greek marketplace. Under these colonnades, the stoics would hang and they would teach their philosophy to whoever wanted to come and learn.

Julian 05:39
Other philosophers were much more elitist, closed off. Plato taught in his academy and it had a sign outside saying, do not enter if you don't understand geometry. So much more kind of exclusive. The stoics would teach whoever, men and women, slave and free.

Julian 05:55
So in that sense, they, and of course, they were good people to know because you go to them in a crisis. If you are having a tough time in your life, you go and hang out with the stoics because they would offer you a kind of therapy for your suffering.

Ross D 06:12
The notion of having the don't enter if you don't know geometry sign, I had a lecturer at uni who thought that way about the polling booths. There should be a list of things you should know before you're allowed into the polling booths.

Ross D 06:21
But that's a tangent, we won't follow that today. So what did the, if we went to one of the stoics, what did they teach?

Julian 06:32
So I should say by the way that this emerged in 300 BC in Athens originally and then it became very popular in ancient Rome. If you go to the Stoic section of your philosophy, kind of local bookstore, all the surviving Stoic books are by Roman

Stoics, Seneca, Epictetus, the Emperor Marcus Aurelius.

Julian 06:53
What they taught was that we should live life according to reason, that our reason is the God-given part of us and we should develop our reason to live as wisely and virtuously as possible and that all we need to flourish and be happy in this world is to be virtuous.

Julian 07:12
So how do we use our reason? It's quite similar to Buddhism and to mindfulness. The idea is that things are constantly happening to us and we make snap automatic judgments of them. This is awful, this is wonderful.

Julian 07:28
We have this kind of inner self-talk constantly making unconscious automatic judgments which are often wrong or unwise. We, by following the Stoic path, can learn to use our reason so that instead of just reacting automatically and unconsciously, we can say, hmm, is that reaction definitely true?

Julian 07:51
Is that definitely wise? Is that the best way to react to this? What's the most rational or wisest way to react to this external stimulus? Epictetus said, people are disturbed not by events but by their opinion about events.

Julian 08:07
So it's not what fortune throws at you that makes you suffer. It's how you think about it. Our opinions, are usually automatic. So the Stoics train us to use our reason as a form of kind of mindfulness to look at our own thoughts and emotions and try to make them wiser.

Julian 08:27
And we do this particularly through something called the Socratic method. It comes from Socrates, you know, in some ways the father of Greek philosophy. It's just asking yourself questions. So, you know, let's say something happens, you have a very strong emotional reaction.

Julian 08:45
Someone at the office really rubs you up the wrong way and you're furious. And then you use the Socratic method, you say, OK, what's going on? Why am I so angry? You try to find the belief or opinion leading to your emotion.

Julian 09:00
It might be my boss, Jim, hates me. He doesn't respect me. It's so outrageous. You know, that opinion is leading to your emotion of feeling furious and helpless and so on. You can then try to hold that opinion up to the light and say, is that definitely true?

Julian 09:20
Could I be jumping to a conclusion? Do I have a habitual bias to misinterpret this kind of situation? Is it definitely wise? What would be a wiser way to look at this? It may be that your boss genuinely is a difficult person.

Julian 09:37
But that might not be the wisest way to react to it. You know, like just tearing your hair out. Perhaps that's just Jim. And you just have to say, OK, I just have to that's he's just a difficult person.

Julian 09:51
I have to kind of find a way to deal with that or change my job. So this kind of trying not to be automatic, not to be the slave of fortune, not to be at the mercy of events and at the mercy of your emotion, but building up a kind of strength and resilience and inner autonomy that is able to deal with the what Shakespeare, who was a fan of stoicism, called the slings and arrows about rageous fortune.

Julian 10:20
So it's having that inner anchor. So you're not just tossed up and down like a little boat in the Atlantic.

Ross G 10:30
This is sort of outside of a workplace context. Just when you were speaking there, I was thinking about certain people that I

know who seem to often get into disagreements with other people that they know, with their friends, with relatives, and that sort of thing.

Ross G 10:44
And will then tend to dwell on these things and complain about them and need to talk about it with somebody else and say, oh, you won't believe this thing that somebody did. And you can see their anxiety rising as they're doing this.

Ross G 10:57
And I suppose the stoics approach would be, dwelling on this only causes me to continue to feel more and more anxiety. And it is not going to change the fact of what that person did. So it's difficult to do, but I suppose it's not sort of suppression of emotions or repression of emotions, but it is a recognition of these are the emotions that I'm feeling.

Ross G 11:20
And I can make a choice about whether or not I want to continue to feel these negative emotions, or if I want to, yeah, as you said, sort of make what is the wisest decision for me and how I should react in this situation.

Julian 11:34
I think that their genius insight is this, that our emotions contain beliefs and judgments. And our beliefs and judgments are changeable. We are in control of our beliefs. And that means to some extent we are in control of our emotions as well.

Julian 11:53
So no one can make you feel furious or offended or humiliated without your permission. That's something that you are doing to yourself. So on that example, it reminds me of Marcus Aurelius, who was the Emperor of Rome, the most powerful man in the world, and yet reading his meditations, which is his journal.

Julian 12:16
You see how he deals with similar stuff to the rest of us. Annoying people, he lived during a pandemic. Things would constantly go in wrong with his massive administration. And he has to daily remind himself, and this is an important point, has to be a kind of daily practice, to, you know, in some ways not sweat the small stuff.

Julian 12:41
He says to himself, don't vex yourself at the course of things. It heeds not your vexation. He also tells himself, every morning say to yourself, today I will meet people who are, annoying, ungrateful, irritable, difficult, deceptive.

Julian 13:04
Expect this. Don't be surprised when you encounter someone who is, maybe has different opinions to you, or is annoying. That's the human race. So it sounds like, you know, your friend is constantly, oh, you wouldn't believe what this person said.

Julian 13:22
Well, yes, of course you'd believe it. That's the human race.

Ross D 13:26
Can't even be surprised by it.

Julian 13:29
Yeah, so it's about managing your expectations. This is something the Seneca talks about in terms of anger management.

Julian 13:36
The angry person has far too high expectations of the smoothness of life, and of the reasonableness of other people, and of the benevolence of fortune. The stoics will actually train themselves to expect the worst.

Julian 13:52
I mean, certainly to expect death. Why would you be surprised by that? We're human. We know we're going to die, but also adversity. Adversity is going to happen to us, and we can expect it. And, you know, Seneca says, the stoic sees all adversity as training.

Julian 14:09
So everything that happens to you in the external world, you can use as an opportunity to develop what's most important, which is your reason and your virtue. So the stoics say this is an idea from Epictetus.

Julian 14:25
Epictetus divides all of life into two zones. Things in life we have control over, and the things in life we don't have control over. In zone two, the things in life we don't have complete control over are all external things.

Julian 14:42
Other people's opinions, our health, our finances, our career, we have some control, but to some extent it's in the realm of fortune. So to some extent is out of our control. In zone one, the things we do have control over is only our beliefs, our own thoughts.

Julian 15:01
The stoics say you should learn to accept the limit of your control over zone two. If you say something in zone two must be a certain way, otherwise it's a catastrophe, you are making yourself a slave to fortune.

Julian 15:18
But we always have this possibility to transcend fortune, to be stronger than fortune, by focusing on zone one. Anything that happens to us in zone two, we can use as a way to develop our reason and virtue in zone one.

Julian 15:36
So Epictetus says, difficulties show men's characters. So let's say you get fired, or a business project goes wrong, or you're facing massive delays like every company at the moment. You could either say this is catastrophic and have a breakdown, or you can say this is adversity, this is an opportunity for me to practice my stoic philosophy.

Julian 16:03
Because right now I've got a friend who's building a house, it's two years delayed because the supplies are extremely dexing for her. Really, really annoying like with so many companies out there, but she has to practice stoicism for this. Or she can have a breakdown.

Ross D 16:24
There is a middle road. So can I test this just a little bit? Because I think it can maybe sound like what you're saying is an anti-confrontational stance. So something has happened to you, your boss has been rude, your contractors have not turned up on time with this delivery, whatever it might be.

Ross D 16:43
Now, does the Stoic respond or does the Stoic not respond at all to that situation? Or do they respond in such a way to influence that zone 2 stuff? The stuff that they can't change it completely, but they can influence it.

Ross D 16:58
What's the response?

Julian 17:00
Yeah. I think if you know, practically speaking, the Stoics lived in the world. They had political careers. They were not monks in caves. These were people like, you know, Seneca was the most powerful politician under the Emperor Nero.

Julian 17:16
Marcus Aurelius was the emperor. Well, what I mean is, of course, they tried to do things in the world. Of course, they tried to change things in the world.

Julian 17:29
This was more of a kind of inner practice. You know, you could try to achieve goal A or goal B, whilst reminding yourself whether A or B happens is out of my control. All I can try and do is attempt to achieve A or B.

Julian 17:47
So in other words, they would not hang their content or their self-esteem on the achievement of an external goal. That doesn't mean they didn't try to change the world. But you know, you still, I think it is possible to be that kind of Stoic.

Julian 18:07
I think it's possible to be, you know, you so transcended worldly things that really it doesn't matter to you what happens.

Ross D 18:14
The happiest man alive.

Julian 18:16
Yeah, like a complete sage. I mean, there was a school called skepticism. And at similar school, they taught that, you know, what causes the sufferings beliefs, so you should have no beliefs.

Julian 18:29
And apparently the head of this school, he was so indifferent to external things that he had to be pulled out of the way of passing chariots because he was indifferent whether he lived or died. So you can take this stuff to an extreme.

Julian 18:43
With all of these things, you have a choice about what aspects of a philosophy you use and, you know, how far you take it. I, for example, you know, enjoy using kind of stoic techniques on my emotions and stoic ideas without being 100% stoic.

Julian 19:03
I still think that things in zone two are important, like friends and family and career and achievement and, you know, politics. So in that, that in some ways makes me a bad stoic. But but but that's OK.

Julian 19:20
I'm happy with being semi-stoic.

Ross G 19:23
Well, I'm conscious of the audience for this podcast. There tends to be leaders and managers. And so we do not want 100% stoics on our teams because, oh, I've got the most stoic team alive, but no, they're not terribly productive.

Ross G 19:38
But one thing that strikes me is when you hear the stoicism in the context of resilience training, there are certain jobs where you do need resilience. So for example, anything where emotions are heightened.

Ross G 19:52
So emergency services, nursing, care, these kind of things, you are going to face emotional difficulties frequently. And you're going to need to be prepared for that. But there's other jobs like where you work in an office environment where organisations buy in resilience training because it's a very stressful environment.

Ross G 20:09
And what they're actually doing is papering over the issue to help people cope with the situation rather than changing it. And organisations do have power to change these things at work, particularly senior teams.

Ross G 20:24
So to what extent is stoicism useful in that context? Should we be wary of the encouragement to be more stoic rather than addressing the root cause?

Julian 20:35
Yeah, that's a really interesting kind of point of view. I think there are two issues here. Firstly, if management is using well-being programmes in general, as a way to not change things in zone two, like and just say, hey, it's all in your mind.

Julian 20:55
If you just practise stoic resilience or Buddhist mindfulness, we don't have to change any of the conditions that are causing you stress. Like bad managers, long working hours, toxic work culture and so on.

Julian 21:11
So I completely agree with you that in terms of flourishing or eudemonia, the Greeks call it, I think there are internal and external factors. And I think you can... The focus for managers should be on changing external conditions.

Julian 21:35
But I think, first of all, managers may want to practise this stoicism for themselves. I know a lot of entrepreneurs and senior executives who swear by stoicism, but for themselves, as a practise for themselves, to manage uncertainty, to manage volatility, to develop their own resilience.

Julian 21:56
Can we offer it to others? I mean, I think you can, but it's interesting, you can't force someone, you know, to practise stoic wisdom or like Buddhist wisdom. Marcus Aurelius could have demanded that every Roman became a stoic.

Julian 22:14
He was the most powerful man in the world, but he didn't. He said, you know, words the effect of, unless people really want to explore this, all you're going to get is just feigned ascent. People just pretend to be into it.

Julian 22:27
But these kinds of stoic techniques, I mean, if, you know, it may be that employees are interested in going to a workshop on stoic resilience. I mean, and there's, you know, there's a good evidence base for these practices.

Julian 22:43
They inspired cognitive behavioural therapy, which is the most evidence-based form of psychotherapy. I ran a philosophy club at Sarasen's Rugby Club, who were like the, you know, the European champions of rugby.

Julian 23:00
And they once a month, I would go in and run this philosophy club. We'd have about 10 or 15 people there, players and coaches, people like Owen Farrell, Jamie George, Maro Toge, who come along. And we would discuss an idea from stoicism or another kind of ancient Greek philosophy.

Julian 23:18
For example, dealing with anger or like accepting what you can't control if you've got a difficult referee, say, or focusing on the little things so that, you know, the big things come naturally. And we would, I would teach this and then we would have a discussion.

Julian 23:34
And I think, you know, in terms of how companies can do this, what was interesting is they loved these ideas, but they loved being able to discuss them for themselves. Rather than just me as the external speaker coming in saying, all right, do this and you will be wise and happy.

Julian 23:52
They liked philosophy as an opportunity to discuss. When is anger appropriate? You know, what do we have control over? How should we relate to our teammates? Then it didn't feel like some patronising external speaker, some sage on the stage telling them how to be wise.

Julian 24:10
In this way, philosophy can be an opportunity for employees to have the kinds of conversations they don't usually have.

Ross G 24:19
Quite interesting, you describe that. It sounds like you're pitching anger as a tool to be used to achieve an end. And it's not necessarily that you feel angry or are going to be beholden to that emotion, but you can use almost the performance of anger as it was at your event.

Julian 24:37
That's not what I'm pitching. What I'm pitching is you can teach, say, the Stoics attitude to anger, the Stoics thought anger was always bad. But the point is, you can use that as a starting point for a conversation where you say, what do you think?

Julian 24:53
Do you think anger is always bad? Is there an appropriate place for anger in your life or even in the workplace? What about other kinds of, for example, one of the Saracens had these team values, like discipline, workrate, teamwork.

Julian 25:14
What do these values actually mean? How do you stop them just being words on the wall in your company values, mission statement? What does it actually mean in this situation or in that situation? How do you live up to it?

Julian 25:27
This is how a kind of values led culture cannot just be, you know, just talk, but you know, or not just be something hanging

on a wall. In other words, how to get your employees to reflect on the values of your culture.

Julian 25:45
And also, I think that, certainly, the Saracens, they found it very bonding to have these kinds of conversations with their teammates and coaches. Philosophy, particularly for men and women, is an opportunity to talk about your life and your ideas in a way that's quite different to just therapy.

Julian 26:05
Do you know what I mean? Certainly, men find it less off-putting than if you said to your employees, come to this therapy session.

Ross G 26:14
Well you're less, talking about yourself, I suppose, it's more that you're talking about a framework that you can apply. And that would probably you'd end up reflecting that back upon yourself, but you're not immediately starting from the position of making yourself vulnerable.

Julian 26:28
That's right. You can bring in as much or as little of your own life as you want. And you have the freedom to disagree. The therapist says, well, I know, I'm the psychologist. I've got the evidence. Philosophy, you can say, well, this is about values.

Julian 26:42
There's no scientifically proven right answer. So in that sense, that kind of philosophy for well-being could have a place in companies and organisations. I think the way most people use stoicism in business is for themselves, if you're a kind of manager or an entrepreneur, as a personal practice.

Ross D 27:09
So how you respond to setbacks and how you feel about external circumstances and how you plan for the future and this kind of thing.

Ross G 27:15
So, yeah, I mean, I suppose an example would be if, you know, if I'd assigned, say, Ross a piece of work and he was late delivering it. My, like my emotional reaction, my emotional reaction to that might be anger or frustration.

Ross G 27:31
But if I take a stoic mindset when approaching that or thinking about that, I might want to consider, well, why is Ross late in delivering this piece of work? Why am I feeling the way that I'm feeling about it?

Ross G 27:46
Is this a one off or is it something that is recurring over time? So not immediately being enslaved to those emotions and reacting angrily. I think in some situations, anger might be appropriate, frustration might be appropriate.

Ross G 27:59
If this was a pattern of behaviour, if say I'd assigned Ross 10 pieces of work and every one was late, I think that we certainly wouldn't be advocating for just to like, well, it's all right. You know, these things happen.

Ross G 28:11
It's no big deal. But I think it's sort of having the presence of mind to reflect on why you're feeling the way you're feeling and also understand what other people are feeling and the things going on in their life. And I think just sort of, yeah.

Ross G 28:27
When I was preparing for this podcast, I was reminded of a piece of writing by David Foster Wallace. This Is Water you familiar with it Jules? Where David Foster Wallace talks about how, you know, when you're in a car at night driving to get home, say, and you're stuck in traffic, you're frustrated.

Ross G 28:47
There could be any number of reasons that that that you're stuck in traffic could be that there's an accident and how is that affecting the people that are involved in that accident and their families?

Ross G 28:59
And so it's having this sort of he talks about how the value of university education this is a bit of a tangent note is not teaching you what to think or how to think, but giving you control over what you think, which I think is kind of what you were saying about giving you the ability to sort of control what you think and accept things that you cannot control.

Julian 29:24
Exactly. I mean, both, I mean, stoicism and Buddhism at their heart are saying everything is a view. Everything is a perspective. Philosophy can teach you to be able to choose your perspective. So if you think of it as like a, you as like a film director, you might feel like there's only one view.

Julian 29:50
So everything you shoot in your life is always from the same angle, using the same camera. Stoicism is trying to teach you a kind of epistemic flexibility to choose your lens, to choose your camera. You could zoom in, you could zoom out, you could pan, all these different options, which gives you the ability to, it gives you freedom because you're not stuck in one automatic response.

Julian 30:22
You can think about the appropriate way to react. So that's, I think that's hugely helpful in any field of life.

Ross D 30:38
Alright, let's wrap up with some quick reflections from each of us. Ross, I wonder what you'll be taking from this conversation and applying in your life this week.

Ross G 30:51
I think this conversation just make me more mindful of the way that I respond to things at work. I think I've also been encouraged by speaking to Jules to dig a little deeper into stoicism. That's not really a field that I'm that familiar with.

Ross G 31:06
So actually, Jules, I don't know if you have recommendations possibly for readers of good starting place for like if people want to learn more about stoicism generally.

Julian 31:19
Yeah, the best place is to start through Marcus Aurelius', meditations about 200 pages long, really beautiful, accessible read, Epictetus's discourses, that's his lectures, it's hilarious, it's him just, you know, doing tough love lectures to, a few Greek aristocrats, telling them to toughen up, so his students, that's really good.

Julian 31:45
If you wanna, you know, so there's this big stoic revival that's happened in the last 10 years, there's loads of like modern stoic books now. Mine came out a decade ago, next year, Philosophy for Life and Other Dangerous Situations, that looks at modern stoicism, but also how people use Epicurus and Plato and so on.

Julian 32:09
So yeah, those, and now there's so many like stoic podcasts, Facebook groups, YouTube videos as well. So it's really big, particularly in Silicon Valley.

Ross G 32:21
Yeah. Oh, great. Well, plenty for me to sing my teeth into there. Ross, what was your main takeaway from this conversation?

Ross D 32:28
I think what I really like is the separation of things that are happening into the external events and then my responses to them. And I think probably framing my thought pattern in that way is quite a useful way of thinking about what I can change and what I can't.

Ross D 32:44
And Jules, is there anything that you're going to take from this conversation?

Julian 32:47
I'm going to take deep respect for Ross number two doing this with COVID. One of the Ross's has got COVID, how about that?

Ross D 33:03
I do indeed.

Julian 33:05
I forgot which Ross has got COVID.

Ross D 33:07
I have COVID Jules but I can't change it. There's nothing I can do about it. I just have to accept.

Julian 33:14
Unless you get hold of antivirals. Yeah, just drink lots of water. Stay at home, but that's pretty impressive.

Ross D 33:16
Let's move onto our regular feature, one thing I have learnt this week. Ross, do you want to go first?

Ross G 33:36
Absolutely, So this week I have discovered a new favourite author, Colson Whitehead, I recently finished his book Harlem Shuffle, which focuses on character Ray Carney, who has a slightly murky criminal past.

Ross G 33:55
His family did criminal connections, but he's trying to escape that and carve out a respectable life for him and his family in Harlem. And it's a bit of a keeper. There's lots of sort of like heists and various things, but there's also sort of various literary elements underpinning it.

Ross G 34:13
I thought it was like a literary novel that was also a great page turner, super entertaining. And I would highly recommend it if anyone's looking for a new piece of fiction to check out this year. It was my favourite book of 2021.

Ross D 34:27
Great, I keep hearing that book get recommended, I'll need to check it out. Jules, what have you learned this week?

Julian 34:34
A couple of TV things. I watched a Netflix series called Midnight Mass. It was a really good kind of thoughtful horror thing. And that got me into the music of Neil Diamond. I've never really listened to Neil Diamond. You know, have you?

Ross D 34:49
No, sweet Caroline, but I mean, that's what it is. It's as much as I can go for ya.

Julian 34:53
So this soundtrack really uses Neil Diamond to great effect. So got into that. And then there's a English Japanese guy called Will Sharp. He's a genius and he makes these amazing series. He made a little watch comedy show called Flowers, which you can get on channel four.

Julian 35:12
That's brilliant. And he's got a new series that he's directing called Landscapers with Olivia Colman in it and David Thewlis. So I watched the first episode of that yesterday. Will Sharp. He's great.

Julian 35:26
He's really great. I can't wait to see his first movie, but he's about, he might even be in his 20s, but he's a genius.

Ross D 35:36
That's great. Well, as you referenced, I'm on day five of self-isolation just now following a positive PCR test, so I might have to check some of your recommendations out. I have to say, after I got the positive result, I actually felt quite calm about being stuck inside because ten days out of the hustle and bustle of life seemed like an opportunity to get a lot of stuff done around the house.

Ross D 36:00
Up until day three, when I started to experience symptoms, I started to struggle to concentrate and can no longer do anything. COVID really is rubbish and it's very difficult to concentrate with the disease, so that's what I've learned this week.

Ross D 36:17

Thank you for tolerating me during this podcast.

Julian 36:21

Not at all, well done.

Ross G 36:27

And that's it, you've been listening to the Future Talent Learning podcast with me, Ross Garner and Ross Dickey. Our guest this week was Julian Evans. Until next time, bye for now.