

Michelle Ockers:

Welcome to Elevate, our first Elevate episode in some time and our first one certainly for 2025. I'd like to kick off in the spirit of reconciliation by acknowledging traditional custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. I come to you from the beautiful lands of the coastal area of the Brinja Yuin Nation. So we pay respect to elders past, present and extend that to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who happen to be listening to our podcast. Welcome, Dr. Cathryn Lloyd.

Cathryn Llyod:

Oh, thank you, Michelle. That's wonderful to be here. And thank you for the acknowledgement. And if I can just acknowledge that I'm on Jagera and Turrbal country, so that's Brisbane.

Michelle Ockers:

Great, thank you. It has been a while that we've been talking about doing a podcast conversation. I think Elevate's a perfect format for that and for regular listeners of learning uncut I haven't done an Elevate episode for some time because I've been very busy writing a book, but more about that another time. So I've decided to pick up Elevate again. And of course, Cathryn, I know we'll talk a little bit about some of the writing you've done because you are a published author. And you're also the founder of Maverick Minds, where a key focus of your work is on helping people to shift their thinking. In fact, I think it might be your business tagline. Is that right?

Cathryn Llyod:

It is. Yeah, absolutely.

Michelle Ockers:

Excellent. So can you tell us a little bit about what led you to focus on helping people to shift their thinking?

Cathryn Llyod:

Thanks, Michelle. So when you gave me the prompts for the questions and things like that, which is very, very helpful to have a little bit of reflection time. One of the things that really emerged for me in relation to this question is that I realised that it actually started with me in wanting to shift my own thinking and way of being. And I was in a particular time in my life with a different type of business and wondering where to next in many respects. And personal circumstances, professional, et cetera, et cetera, led me to move overseas. So that was a massive shift in my location, all sorts of things. And it certainly then created a shift in my way of thinking and way of being. And the work that I was doing over there, because my role that I ended up loving was as the professional training manager at the University of Arts London, based at Central Saint Martin's College of Art and Design. And I loved that role. I just loved it.

Michelle Ockers:

Sounds fabulous.

Cathryn Llyod:

It was fantastic. It was like when I saw the job advertised, it was like that job is my job. That is me.

Michelle Ockers:

How long ago was this, Cathryn?

Cathryn Llyod:

Oh, it's quite a number of years ago now.

Michelle Ockers:

We can leave it at that.

Cathryn Llyod:

But leave it at that. But it was definitely, you know, sparked so many things for me being at an art and design college. And of course, that's my background is in creative industries and the arts. And those various things that came together, which was about learning, skills development, creativity, and people wanting to change their thinking and explore problems in different sorts of ways. So my role was to develop these programs drawing on the creative resources of the college. So I was working across the university and the college drawing on, it could have been, it was photography, design, product design, drama, you know, you name it. And I could pull in all these different elements to respond to the needs of clients. And I think at the core of that, what I realised was that at the heart of it was always about creativity and problem solving and wanting to see the world in a different way. And so when I came back to Australia, it was like, oh, those jobs don't really exist here. I'm going to have to think about this in a different way. So, again, I had to do a shift in my own thinking about how I was going to respond to this what was emerging for me and all the things that I was sensing. And so, yeah, I then went on this journey myself of starting to really investigate what is at the heart of this? How do I respond to it? And what can I do about it? And so Maverick Minds was born. My entry into higher education and doing my doctorate to help me explore that further became part of the process. And the two, because it was a practice-led research doctorate, allowed me to investigate that a whole lot more. So in fact, the title of my thesis is Artful Inquiry, an arts-based approach for individual and organisational learning and development. So it was very much looking at the arts and how the arts can be used in the context of learning and development.

Michelle Ockers:

I love that background. I didn't know all of that about you. And of course, I think we've met through the Australian Institute of Training and Development somewhere along the line. We've known each other a number of years now, but that background was not something I was familiar with. Or if I was, I had kind of forgotten it, but it makes so much sense. And we'll talk about some of the tools that you use. But I've always been drawn to your use of art in your facilitation. So this background makes

perfect sense. It makes perfect sense that this started with shifting your own thinking or a shift in the outside world and the inside world at once. And I think that's probably a thread we'll come back to at some point. So it's great to have that background.

Cathryn Llyod:

So if I can just add into that, Michelle, part of it was that I was working creatively. I had a design studio, but I felt really stuck creatively. I got to a point where it was like, where to next for me? I couldn't really figure it. And it was almost like I had to throw everything out to start all over massive disruption, you know, that whole creative destruction in a way to be able to kind of think differently about where I was going, because at that point in time, I couldn't do it from where I was at. And the opportunity came for me to move. And I thought, this is this is it. You know, this is the opportunity for me to really kind of shake things up and think about things from a completely new perspective.

Michelle Ockers:

It's a pretty dramatic way out of a situation where you felt a bit stuck, right?

Cathryn Llyod:

Yeah. Well, yes. And I guess personally and professionally, I was feeling stuck. So I think it's one of those things that sometimes it's the big shift that needs to happen. It doesn't always have to be so big. But I think there are times in our lives where it is the major disruption that really causes us to kind of go or when we're feeling stuck, we need to create that kind of major change to be able to change and respond to that and do something differently. It's not just tweaking that's required at that point in time or a little shift. It's transformation, actually.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah. So the ability to shift our thinking both for ourselves, let's ground this in the world of the L&D professional in today's environment. Why is the ability to shift thinking both our own and that of others so important for L&D professionals in their work?

Cathryn Llyod:

Well, I think part of it is to do with just change. And it sounds cliché in a way because it's said so often, you know, that change is inevitable, change is with us all the time. We are changing, even though sometimes we don't feel like we may be changing, but things are, we are changing and the world around us is changing. And it is changing, you know, very quickly now as well. You know, there's all sorts of factors, external factors that are changing very rapidly as a world, the geopolitical, the AI and all the technology that's associated with it, globalization, we know these things. And so therefore, as L&D professionals, we need to be able to help people to kind of understand the context and the environment in which they're working in. And businesses are having to respond to that as well. So in a business environment, what are those factors that you're either being proactive about or responding to and sometimes reacting to? And therefore, how can you help the people around you to have the skills and capabilities, the resilience, the creativity, to respond to what is actually emerging and to also plan for the future as much as you possibly can. And

so L&D professionals need to be kind of working on that to sort of recognise the changing environment that's going on and kind of not resting on their laurels, really.

Michelle Ockers:

You know, transformation is ongoing now at an organisational and individual level in many ways. In terms of shifting your thinking then, as opposed to just shifting your behaviour or shaping your response, do you want to go into a little bit more about why shifting your thinking is so important and not just changing what you're doing, for instance, in response to all of this change or amidst all of this change?

Cathryn Llyod:

So it is about changing our attitudes in many ways, our mindsets around things to be able to again respond and understand and I think deeply understand. I think that's part of it and probably for people working in businesses, particularly if they're not at the leadership level at times, may not understand what's actually going on in the environment. So the information sort of trickles through and they may not really understand the imperative that's there. So helping people to kind of really understand the environment and the systems that they're working in can potentially help people to sort of change their attitude around why this is important or why I'm being asked to do this or why I need to change my way of thinking around this in order to respond in a different way. But we are creatures of habit as well. So we fall into habitual ways of thinking, making assumptions around things, jumping to conclusions, and maybe not taking that time to pause and reflect and go, well, what's really going on here? And how do I give myself a different perspective? And how do I help others to gain a different perspective on what's actually going on?

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, our neural pathways literally are kind of strong and our brain is plastic. There is neuroplasticity, but to shift our thinking patterns, we're actually working at a deep level around the way our brain is wired, right, to shift some of that wiring so we don't just keep falling back to the same neural pathways and ways of looking at things, thinking about things if they are no longer serving us well in our world.

Cathryn Llyod:

Exactly, that's right. And, you know, heuristics can be a good thing and can help us enormously. And so too can rituals and certain habits and things, they can be very, very useful, but they can also be unhelpful as well. So I think it's being discerning as well and recognizing what's helpful and what's unhelpful. What's a good habit or what's a good habit of thinking, you know, the classic sort of brushing our teeth on a daily basis, that's great stuff. But if we're actually applying the same sort of thinking to the problems that are around us or not creating some new thinking around looking to the future and trying to make sense of what the future is and applying that same thinking again to what we don't know, but what can we sense as such might be emerging.

Michelle Ockers:

It's interesting you've used that word sensing and the word responding a couple of times. I think we'll probably come back to that at some point as well. There's some pattern making there involved.

Cathryn Llyod:

Oh, definitely. Yeah.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah. So you've created some specific tools to help people to shift their thinking. Can you walk us through one of these in practice? Let's just start with one of these key tools and look at how an L&D professional might use this tool, what it is, why it works, how an L&D professional might use it in their work, either to shift their own thinking or to shift the thinking of others.

Cathryn Llyod:

Well, I think one of the tools that you're aware of and probably the one that I'm very excited about are the image cards that I've developed. So, the shift your thinking cards.

Michelle Ockers:

I love them, they're beautiful and they're useful, Cathryn. So let's unpack why that is.

Cathryn Llyod:

Oh, thank you. And they were a very important development for me, because I love using images in work. And you mentioned that right at the beginning. And I use images in all sorts of ways, in the ways that I work, as presentation, as well as workshops, and for my own use. I've used lots of images over the years, and I had always wanted to create my own images. And so from a project that I'd worked on, it allowed me to bring these images into creating my own facilitation and coaching cards. And so I have a set of analogue cards, and I'm looking at further how I develop those. And I had the opportunity to meet Leonie Cutts and Craig Brown from CCS Corporation. And they have a virtual facilitation platform, which is fabulous. And they also work with some image cards and things like that. And when they saw my cards, they said, oh, wow. We would love to work with your cards and we'd like to help you develop those and, yes, work with our platform to be able to utilise them. And so it's been quite a collaborative process with them in terms of using their virtual facilitation platform and then using my images to be able to create that tool, which is allowing people to work virtually with a set of very unique images that are all human images. And I think this is why people resonate with them so much. They're actually, they were created by me, they're collage works, paintings, drawing, imagery, and they're quite complex and layered. Some of them are quite simple actually, but they have a lot of meaning to them. And I think when people engage with them, there are so many ways that you can interpret the cards. And the responses are amazing from people. They'll say, I've never seen anything like this before. Wow, look at the layers here. Look at the stories that are there. I think almost people kind of get lost in them in a good way to help them to see things from a different perspective. So it really taps into that people's imagination, the storytelling, the metaphors. It reveals

information for people as well. Things that they're contemplating or thinking about are there to be explored in the imagery. And I'm always fascinated when people choose the same images, but interpret them in completely different ways. And I just go, wow, that's amazing.

Michelle Ockers:

Yes, because, and I think we'll have some links to some of these resources in the show notes. So I'm assuming the listeners will be able to get a feel if they follow the links in the show notes to the, you know, the nature of some of the images, but they are very conceptual. as you say. So participants' reaction or individual reactions are going to vary depending on what you as an individual bring to the table when you're using the cards or looking at the cards. Can you give us an example of an activity that you've facilitated using the cards, which helps to shift thinking?

Cathryn Llyod:

Yeah, I can. A few examples, actually, but one recently with a leadership group that were, you know, have been doing a lot of work on themselves, and they wanted to explore who they are as a leadership team from a different perspective. So again, rather from that very analytical, traditional way of thinking about leadership. They wanted to step into a more storytelling way of understanding and expressing who they are to themselves and also to the wider context. And so through some storytelling prompts and processes, we began working on that and also used the images to prompt that storytelling. So they could then select images that represented for them certain milestones and the description of the images allowed them to express that in a much more descriptive way, in a much more human way. And they started to kind of put this story together about themselves as a team based on the images and what the metaphors that were emerging there. And then they could go back and rework that into a story that they could all share. But there was a part of each of them in that story as well that had emerged from the images that would never have emerged without using the images as a prompt to get them to think about themselves in a different way. That's just one example. And then I've worked with various groups to think about where they currently are, what's their situation now, to have a look at that and to respond to that and to share their insights into where they think they are and how the image allows them to express that again, and what their future is. What do they want that to look like? What is that future? How do you describe that? And we can also use those images to help people to kind of step themselves through that too. Well, what are the images that actually can lead you on that journey? And I think what's interesting about the images more than any one of the things that is really interesting is that there's no right or wrong. That's what's so good about it. It's like, these are people's, this is where the creativity comes in. This is people's creativity, you know, responding to, and there's nothing wrong there. How people express themselves through the images is completely right. There is no wrong in that. Your interpretation of that image is never wrong, it is always right. And it is always your interpretation. And if somebody else interprets it differently, that is completely fine. That is their understanding and how they are expressing themselves. So it's what in a way the images elicit from the person. And that can never be wrong.

Michelle Ockers:

Love that. It strikes me that in terms of shifting your thinking, the cards and facilitating well with the cards helps to shift people from that classic kind of right brain, logical thinking. We're using a lot of assertions, maybe using data, adopting a position from a place of logic to tapping into a different way of thinking. So at one level, shifting your thinking is about thinking in a different way rather than the content of what you're thinking, but just approaching thinking differently, more tapping into a different type of intelligence, a different way of coming to self-awareness and realization and knowing through a metaphor and story and how we're responding to the images helps us tap into something different in how we're seeing the world and ourselves, right?

Cathryn Llyod:

Yeah, totally. I mean, and imagery is very strong, even like, you know, and I know you know, in a context where people might not be able to see the images, but people even who can't see in images actually. Now, they may not be able to see my cards as such, if eyesight is an issue and what have you, but people can still work in imagery. It's amazing. Humans actually work in imagery. We dream in images. People may not remember those, but we actually do dream in imagery as well. So we are kind of image makers and image interpreters as well. And that's why images are so very powerful, you know, because they tell a story very, very quickly and we interpret very quickly as well. So depending on the situation that you're in, you could say, and that's why art, looking at art is, I think, so important as well, because it brings a critical thinking to who we are, to be able to interpret that and to see what's going on. What is happening in this image? What might be going on? What's the backstory there?

Michelle Ockers:

So that's one of the resources or tools. Is there another one you wanted to talk to us about? I think we've got time to explore another one.

Cathryn Llyod:

Oh, Ok. Well, one of the other ones that I well, you mentioned before earlier on that I have also written a few things. And there's a couple of books that I wrote with a colleague, Andrew Rickson, which is the story cookbook, Practical Recipes for Change and Facilitating with Stories, which is ethics, reflective practice and philosophies. And they're great books about using stories. And the story cookbook in particular is extremely good because there's lots of activities and we've got lots of contributors. So many people contributed to both those books. And you get to really, there's a very practical one. And then there's one that's a little bit more philosophical. And it also brings in practical ways of working with stories. And then there's the book that I wrote, which is Seriously Playful Creativity, which is an agency of ideas around helping people to think about their creativity. And we talked about being stuck earlier on. And so the book is really, again, it's prompts to think about you know, if you're feeling stuck or you're not sure about your own sort of creativity or where your project might be at, then you can use these prompts, this A to Z of prompts to start thinking about personal or professional work in a different way. And you can use it either in a linear way, literally going from A to Z. In fact, I actually coach people with

the book and some people love the structure of just working through that A to Z, and other people use it in a much more sort of organic way of opening it up at different points in time as that prompt to kind of look at, oh, well, C is about curiosity. So, okay, well, what do you need to get curious about? You know, what's going on? You know, asking all those questions, those curious questions and putting yourself into that space of curiosity or, E is about energy. Where is your energy at the moment for this? Do you feel energized by what's going on? If not, what's going on that may be causing you to not feel energized by that? But what can you do to re-energize those sorts of prompts and things like that? And I've got little interlude pages that ask different questions as well. And then there's space for people to reflect and write because the current form is like a journal. However, I am thinking of a 2.0 version of it and thinking what's that next sort of stage of the book too. But I think that's a really, it's a lovely tool. And when people look at it, because it's not a dense academic book, it's meant to be a light touch. and just allow and just to sit with and just light prompts to kind of go, oh, ok, yeah, let me think about that in a different way.

Michelle Ockers:

So I'm a big journalist, a big reflector.

Cathryn Llyod:

We'll have to send you a book then, Michelle.

Michelle Ockers:

I was just going to say, I'm going to buy your book. I think people for people's labours, they should be rewarded. It sounds super useful. And I want to circle back a little to something you like. There was a couple of phrases you used earlier on about sensing and responding. And, you know, you talked about it as a personal process when you were talking about some of the key shifts you've made this constant sensing. I think more than ever, we need to be doing that in today's world generally, but certainly the world of organizations, both at an individual level and to help others like in terms of looking at the organization, sensing what's changing inside of us, tuning in, sensing to the external environment, and then figuring out how we're going to respond to that. Because otherwise, all you're doing is running and reacting and being buffeted, right? So this idea of sensing in order to gauge you know, how are we working, what's underpinning that, what thought patterns, what attitudes, what perspectives, what might I need to shift, and then figuring out your response. So I think that sense and respond and reflective practice are important parts of what we as L&D professionals can do to support ourselves and ensure that we are flexible enough and adaptable enough to help others to be adaptable.

Cathryn Llyod:

Definitely. And I think you raise a really important question there about ourselves, because it all starts with the self. And so, you know, each leaders, L&D professionals, people, everything starts with self. And we need to be aware of where we're at and what's going on for us and what our way of being and mindset is at that particular point in time. And are we being reactive? Are we pausing to notice? Or are we just kind of in that business as usual, running, busy, fear-based? There seems to be a lot of decisions made from fear. And I think that people, we need to pause a bit

more, you know, and just actually slow down a little bit. Kind of like that slow down to go faster in a way, you know, to give ourselves breathing space to that reflective practice is so important. Actually, just taking a bit of time to just pause and give space would actually probably help with better decision making, because how can you notice anything or how can you sense things if you're running 100 miles an hour all the time? This is why meditation is kind of an important aspect in all of this too, because you start to realize that when you meditate, there's that dropping away of things and then you start to feel and sense what else is going on around you. Rather than the monkey mind basically driving everything, you start to come from a different or that different way of being and your different mindset rather than just scurry hurry.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah. There might even be a separate Elevate conversation about reflective practice down the line, Cathryn.

Cathryn Llyod:

Oh, I'd love to have a conversation around reflective practice.

Michelle Ockers:

All right. Well, let's make a commitment to do that in the not too distant future. So if we bring it back to advice, let's by way of summarizing and leaving people with some key takeaways, I'm sure people will already have gotten a lot of good ideas out of the podcast. But what advice would you give to L&D professionals specifically who want to do more with shifting thinking in their practice?

Cathryn Llyod:

I think there's an opportunity for L&D professionals to influence what is going on rather than just reacting to what is actually happening. But I think part of that is that collaboration across the organization. So there needs to be that, you know, the culture of learning, that learning is actually valued first and foremost, then why is it valued? Because it actually does help with the business, you know, business performance and business success ultimately. So I think, L&D professionals do need to understand the business imperatives, that's really important. But you also need to understand the learners as well, and then understanding yourself within the context of that. So if you can kind of get that alignment around listening to learners, listening to the leaders, listening to the business need or business imperative, understanding the wider system. So I think there's systems thinking going on here too, our internal system and what's happening externally, our environmental factors as well. But it's perfect timing in a way, because I went to the AITD event last night in Brisbane, there was a panel conversation around some of these questions. And there were similar things that were raised in terms of, you know, that L&D professionals do really need to be constantly reviewing what they're doing and as much as possible, bring leaders on board, bring them into the conversation, have them part of the process as much as possible, rather than at a distance, get them involved as quickly as possible and help them to see the value and understand it. And I think once leaders kind of see the value and can see those shifts and the return, they're going to be more and more supportive of the learning that goes on. And then you need to be able to adapt accordingly. Again, you can't just kind of sit and forget. It's what else

is going on and go off to things, go off to events like the AITD conversations and meet others.

Michelle Ockers:

Expose yourself to the outside world, right? Expose yourself to the thinking of others to help you to explore. And sometimes I find, and I don't know, I'm not going to make the assumption everyone is the same, but I know some people will be like this. Sometimes I don't know what I'm thinking until I either write or speak. It helps both acts help me to discover what I'm thinking or to shape my thinking. So that's another part of connecting with others and getting feedback as well.

Cathryn Llyod:

Yes.

Michelle Ockers:

Yes. So incorporating and making space and time. You talked about a little about learning culture there and the World Economic Forum 2025 future of jobs report, which was out in January talks about skills on the rise. And I think it was the skill list. There were some similarities from 2023 as well. And one of those is that increasingly we need curiosity, we need resilience, we need learning agility. So leaning into supporting people with adopting learning behaviors, knowing how they learn, learning more effectively.

Cathryn Llyod:

Absolutely. And helping people to adopt a learning mindset. really, and to encourage that learning mindset, I think is really important.

Michelle Ockers:

I think this is a key point for me, is that if we're talking about the need for adaptability in a world of continuous change, that's not just about skills, it's not just about the things we can do, it's also about how we think and what our predominant patterns or sort of habits are around our attitudes and how we think about different situations, about our role, about ourselves, about others, and challenging that and shifting that is all part of adaptability.

Cathryn Llyod:

Definitely, and resilience ultimately too.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, yeah, which are skills we very much need to be leaning into both individually and organizationally at the moment. So thank you, Cathryn, for sharing your insights and some of those practical approaches with us. There's a whole stack of links in the show notes for people who would like to take a closer look, particularly at some of the tools that you've just mentioned. So that you shift your thinking cards, your books, including Seriously Playful Creativity. I think you've also got an upcoming virtual facilitation course as well.

Cathryn Llyod:

Oh, yes. If I can mention that, that would be great. So that's Beyond Icebreakers, and that is going to be using the cards and is a three-part course, and I'll be doing that with Leonie. And we are going to expose people to the cards and to the virtual facilitation platform, so you get to understand and learn about that. And then with the two of us go through, you know, how to use them, from beyond icebreakers right through to, you can use these cards for all sorts of interesting, engaging experiences. So I'd love people to check it out and reach out if you want to know more information or you can just register for it. But it will be a great course to expose yourself to some other ways of working, particularly with visual imagery and a new platform, a virtual facilitation platform, which I think could be incredibly useful for people who are doing a lot of virtual work as well. We kick off in March. So I think the first date is the 7th of March.

Michelle Ockers:

March 2025. So I'm sure if the date has passed when people are listening to this, they can still reach out to you. Your website link will be in the show notes as well as a link to your LinkedIn profile. Cathryn, thank you so much for joining me on Elevate today and talking about shifting your thinking. Really appreciate your time.

Cathryn Llyod:

Oh, Michelle, thank you so much for the opportunity. I really appreciate it. And I've loved the conversation, of course, catching up with you again. And to your listeners, thanks for listening in



Learning Uncut are learning and development consultants that help Learning and Development leaders and their teams become a strategic enabler so that their businesses can thrive. We work in evidence-informed ways to drive tangible outcomes and business impact and are strong believers in the power of collaboration and community. We specialise in helping to build or refresh organisational learning strategy, update their L&D Operating Model, enable skills development, and conduct learning evaluation. We also offer workshops to shift learning mindset and practices for both L&D teams and the broader workforce – as well as speaking at public and internal events.

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Michelle is the co-founder and Chief Learning Strategy at Learning Uncut. She is an experience, pragmatic organisational learning strategist, L&D capability builder and modern workplace learning practitioner. She also delivers keynotes, workshops and webinars for learning and broader professional or workforce groups at both public and in-house events.

Michelle received the following prestigious industry awards in 2019:

- Australian Institute of Training and Development Dr Alastair Rylatt Award for L&D *Professional of the Year – for outstanding contribution to the practice of learning and development*
- Internet Time Alliance Jay Cross Memorial Award – *for outstanding contribution to the field of informal learning*



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