



# Fiona English

## **Who Am I?**

My official bio tells you my skills and experience but outside of that who am I?

I worked for nearly 20 years in stockbroking and asset management travelling extensively, working with institutional clients and speaking at events globally. I found the work interesting, varied and fulfilling. I'm not the person who hated her job and decided to do something different. In fact, I loved my job. That said, long hours and travel can mean that other interests get side-lined due to lack of time. On my bucket list was a wish to study psychology at some point. People and in particular human potential are topics that have long fascinated me.

## **Why Positive Psychology?**

While training as a coach, I was first exposed to Positive Psychology and it was a "and the lights went on" moment for me. I loved the subject matter. A science which focuses on what makes individuals and communities flourish? Yes please! It became my favourite reading topic. When the opportunity came to step out of my job, I decided this was my time to do the MSc I had thought about for so long and focus on Positive Psychology.

I choose to speak about Positive Psychology because I am so passionate about how it can make a difference in people's lives. In reality, is there anything more important than what allows people to live a fulfilled and happy life?! If we are equipped with the knowledge of the science and the tools and techniques it promotes such as mindfulness, positive emotions, physical activity and compassion we can create better lives for ourselves and everyone we touch. My role is to make that digestible and interesting for people in a way they can apply it to their own lives. There is no one size fits all and I hope when I speak I help people to understand the overlap between the science and their lives. Different things work for different people and I seek to describe not prescribe when it comes to wellbeing.

## **My Research – Why Spirituality?**

My research topic is something I am especially passionate about as I believe people today are searching for greater meaning and purpose in their lives. Depending on who you talk to, we consider Religion to be "normal" and Spirituality a bit "woo woo". These definitions appear restrictive to me and miss the point of what Spirituality can bring to people's lives. There are many pathways to Spirituality. Yet despite this diversity, the volume of practices, ideas and growing secularisation of spiritual practice through meditation for example we remain thirsty for connection and meaning in our lives. This is the purpose behind my research. To shine a light on Spirituality as a lived experience in the hope it will open up new choices for people.

I favour a qualitative phenomenological approach to research which basically means I want to understand each person's "lived experience" rather than apply definitions. The richness and



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individuality of each person's life is what I believe defines the human experience and I am always curious to know more.

## **How I work**

This research approach is a great metaphor for how I view the world and how I work. I believe theory, research and knowledge provide a great foundation for making informed choices in life and business but if we don't understand the person who is sitting in front of us, it all becomes meaningless. I apply this ethos to all my work. My first task when I am speaking, coaching or consulting is to understand the person or people in front of me, what their needs are and how I can take what I know and make it applicable to them. No one should be reduced to a statistic – not a person, not a company. Having knowledge is not good enough, knowing how to use it for a particular person or situation is what we should be striving for.

The changes I have made over the last number of years have transformed my life in many ways. I won't tell you it has all been easy. Making change is difficult, you will resist it and it will scare you. But behind all that fear is the authentic person and the life you want.

So that's me. My greatest wish for myself is that I live a life that is always open to new experience and adventure, fulfilled in the work and research I do and through my work to make a difference for others regardless of how our paths cross.

Someone added me on LinkedIn recently and said "I would like to be connected. We share a few connections and you seem an interesting person". It's the best social media request I have ever received because regardless of the work I do or what I achieve, I'd be happy just to be regarded as an interesting person 😊