



## everywomanChangeMakers Podcast Transcript

### LET'S TALK ABOUT YOU: WHY CHALLENGING CONVERSATIONS WITH OUR DAUGHTERS CAN LEAD TO POWERFUL OUTCOMES

Anna ([00:06](#)):

Progress. It's in the actions we take right now and in daring to think differently. Each one of us can do something to change things for the better, right where we are now. And the thousand small things done with intent, adds up to real change. For some people, that initial spark becomes a fire. Welcome to the everywoman:Changemakers podcast. I'm Anna, your host and every month I'll be talking to inspiring leaders and activists. We're changing outlooks, challenging perceptions and making a difference in the worlds of inclusion, business, the environment, sport, travel, and more. We'll be discussing their work, motivations and vision. And most importantly, how a revolution of one can lead to a positive, powerful change for the many.

Anna ([00:53](#)):

Today, in anticipation of International Day of the Girl, we're talking to Jo Wimble Groves, tech entrepreneur, parenting blogger, and author of, *Rise of the Girl: Seven Empowering Conversations To Have With Your Daughter*, which is out in October. In the book, Jo looks at how we can empower girls and help to build their self-belief, through the stories we tell them and the discussions we have together and why it's so important to do so from an early age. So welcome, Jo.

Jo Wimble Groves ([01:16](#)):

Thank you Anna. Thank you so much for having me, it's an absolute pleasure.

Anna ([01:20](#)):

So tell me, where did the idea for this book come from? Was it personal experience? I mean, I understand you have three children, one of whom is a daughter. Tell me where this came from, because there's not a parent alive who doesn't want to empower their daughters, I'm sure.

Jo Wimble Groves ([01:34](#)):

No, absolutely. And when I think about storytelling, Anna, I think somebody once said to me, "I hadn't really considered how powerful my own story was." Around 10 years ago, I started doing some PR. I worked with a PR company about raising my personal brand, which always feels a bit scary, doesn't it? But this PR company said, "Jo, you've got a really great story. You started a business with your brother, you were 16 years old, he was 20, which is fantastic. You don't hear that many stories like that. And more importantly, you are a woman in tech, women in tech is so vibrant right now." And actually, there's also a big conversation around getting more girls to enjoy and study STEM and how do we find our next engineers and all mathematicians and how do we get people to enjoy these Apple products and the stuff that I get to do every single day.

Jo Wimble Groves ([02:32](#)):

And so without really thinking too much about it, this PR company said to me, "Jo, you've got such a great story," because I left school obviously, sort of 15, 16 years old, went straight into business, without a degree to my name. And so we ended up creating this sort of story board of being a C grade student who became an entrepreneur. And it just felt like such a nice story to be able to tell, even though it's quite odd when it's your own. And what I wanted to do is, although we're all so busy, aren't we, in our daily lives. We've all got work to do, businesses to run, families that need organising, households to keep clean. But there is a big conversation in men and women taking 30 minutes to perhaps join a school assembly and tell the children that are sitting in front of you about your career or how you've got to the career that you are at now, how you started, or what you enjoy about your job.

Jo Wimble Groves ([03:33](#)):

And even though for us as adults, we always think, well, it's our job. It's what we do. I don't think people would really want to hear that. But even for you, Anna, I just think people would really benefit, children really benefit from hearing about different types of careers and how you got to where you are now. And it doesn't always need to be plain sailing. They need to hear the highs and the lows, and they need to hear... from me, they really enjoyed hearing how the bank manager didn't really want to lend us any money when we were sort of 17 years old. We didn't even have an overdraft and actually getting help and support when you are young, was really tough. And I spent, I think, quite a lot of my early years in business wanting to be taken seriously. I was reasonably confident, but equally I think, blessed with a bit of a baby face, which does have its benefits.

Jo Wimble Groves ([04:23](#)):

It meant that I felt that I wasn't being taken seriously as a businesswoman. I so desperately wanted to be older. And then I don't know about you, Anna, but when you're older, you sort of reminisce about when you were younger, it's a full circle that we go through, isn't it? So going back to your point, why did the book come about? Well, I just thought, I have been spending the last 10 years going into schools, colleges and universities, particularly talking to girls, sharing this story about the C grade student who became an entrepreneur and how I got there and the challenges I faced, but what opportunities I've had. And so much started from putting my hand up and taking an opportunity.

Jo Wimble Groves ([05:00](#)):

My brother said to me, "Come into business with me." I never thought it would be long-term. I always thought it was just a short-term thing. We've run that business together for over two decades now, which is multi-award winning company, which is fantastic. But so much of it starts by putting your hand up. So the thought I had, Anna, really, was if I could make an impact standing in front of a classroom in front of boys and girls, for that matter, what impact would a book have?

Anna ([05:27](#)):

It's so interesting what you were saying about this idea of the story, almost as you were talking, I was thinking it's like the hero or rather the heroine's journey, isn't it? Having a conversation, presuming the age range is teens?

Jo Wimble Groves ([05:40](#)):

It is. I mean, my first chapter is based around the number seven, because so much of actually who we are as individuals and human beings is by the age of seven. So when you look at a seven year old boy or

girl, for that matter, their personality is pretty much hardwired, it's really exciting then of what you can do from there on. But what I think the book is really based around seven to teenagers really around that 14, 15 year old mark. But, the early years, we know are really important, but equally, how do we encourage those seven year olds to put their hand up and try something different, or put their hand up in a classroom without fear of failure all the time, or fear of getting it wrong.

Jo Wimble Groves ([06:22](#)):

We have to take more chances as women. And I know that's so encouraged within the everywoman community because it's all about leadership, how do we find our next managers? How do we find our next leaders? How do we encourage our girls to become creators, doers and find their passions? And it's through raising their hands that they can truly turn those passions into possibilities. And that's my driver.

Anna ([06:45](#)):

So these conversations then, never too early. I mean, seven maybe, and then just keep having these conversations and we'll come on to what some of the conversations are because it's so interesting. I want to know how you sort of decided on which conversations were important to put in the book. But are these conversations that are woman to woman conversations or woman to girl conversations, or is there something unique about that? Again, we can share experiences in our lives, mind you, I don't know a teenager alive who wants to hear my experience right now, but theoretically, are these conversations that we are having through the sort of matrilineal line?

Jo Wimble Groves ([07:21](#)):

I think so many people do really need to hear about these types of conversations. And I have really focused this book around girls because everything that I've read in the news and this is for the last three to five years, it's just constant that girls are on par performing the same as boys, but they're not putting their hand up or they're not taking those pay rises and those jobs or those opportunities. And I think the concern was, if they're not doing that from a young age, we then see... Jessica age seven, isn't raising her hand in class, Jessica aged 37, isn't putting her hand up for that promotion that she knows she can do, but she's just got that little feeling inside that what if it doesn't work out? And they're the sort of things that we need to overcome.

Jo Wimble Groves ([08:05](#)):

So, so much of that can start at home, which is why I wanted to gear the book around parents and caregivers of girls. So even if you've got a niece, or a god-daughter, I think I wanted to be really, really inclusive. And those seven conversations were based around conversations that I have in my own home, where I've had my 11, nearly 12 year old daughter throw her pencil across the kitchen, "I can't do this, I'm not good enough, or I'm not good at this." And what I wanted to try and do, is reframe a lot of those conversations because as a parent myself, I'm thinking, I don't have all the answers. I don't always know what to say on the spot, but I wondered what we could learn from those conversations. And to grow that, I brought in over 20 contributors to slot them into the different conversations to say, well, what was life like for you growing up and how did you find your voice when you were really quiet and shy and you didn't want to do that?

Jo Wimble Groves ([09:03](#)):

How did you want all of a sudden find your voice and take it to parliament and get something changed at a government level? How do you do that? And I think, again, it all comes back to that storytelling, Anna, that we really can learn from, what are the conversations that are happening in people's homes? Not only did I say focus on the conversations that were happening with my own daughter, I obviously spoke to lots of friends, who have got daughters and they really agreed as well, that just that lack of self-belief sometimes and that lack of confidence, it just seeps in so much. We feel it as midlife women, but we really want our children to try and have that self-belief from a young age to say, "What are your strengths? What things can we focus on? Let's try and persevere. Let's focus on progress rather than perfection." And that's how we can improve what we're doing.

Anna ([10:01](#)):

Let's look at some of the conversations then that are in the book. I mean, they're fascinating. And I was going to say, how did you choose which ones to put in? You said you talked to your daughter, to friends and stuff. I mean, there still must've been a lot more than seven. How did you narrow it down? And what was the common theme? Was it this underlying self-belief that unites all seven of those?

Jo Wimble Groves ([10:19](#)):

I think it is actually, the power of self-belief is actually one of the last chapters and a lot of that does, you're right, it sort of threads everything together and brings it all together. So when I was thinking about those seven conversations, it's looking at the individual. So thinking about who they are when they're hardwired, when they're seven, and then obviously it goes on to finding what their passions are. And it's interesting, isn't it? Because how do you find what your passions are, if you don't have the confidence to go and try something? Whether it's a sport, whether it's a hobby or whatever it might be, you've got to go and try lots and lots of different things. And that's where the contributors have been brilliant. For example, Rocky Clark MBE, who is one of the most capped England female rugby players. She was never destined to play rugby from a young age.

Jo Wimble Groves ([11:18](#)):

She was 15 years old, one of her friends, their team, they were a player short and they said, "Rocky, would you play?" And she says, "I don't know how to play rugby." And they said, "We'll just figure it out. We'll teach you some of the rules. I think you'll be fine." And she gave it a go and she really enjoyed it. And the coach pulled her to one side and said, "Rocky, you've got a real natural flare for this." But she said because she always felt like as a kid, she was built a bit differently and actually, rugby ended up being such the perfect sport for her because she recognised how powerful and strong her body was. And she's just become this phenomenal, world-class rugby player, but it all started almost by accident. And sometimes we find our passions by accident and it's stories like that, that I just, well, it almost makes me get goosebumps just thinking about it because I can't wait for people to read, because that's just one contributor sharing her story about how she found herself and found her strengths.

Anna ([12:21](#)):

So let's look at some of the other themes. I'm just having a look at the chapters now. There's a theme about perseverance and resilience. We lost another game, maybe I should quit, is the title of that chapter. That's a very interesting one. There's one about frenemies. I mean, who knows what to say about frenemies? Comparison is another theme. I mean, were there any that really stood out for you in this book? That really kind of touched a chord with you and you feel are, if you're going to start with one, start with that one.

Jo Wimble Groves ([12:54](#)):

Yeah. I think, We lost another game, maybe I could quit. I really love that one. And again, really great contributors in there because throughout our life, I think we get knock-backs and we try things. And it doesn't always work out and actually, getting back up one more time is really, really good strength of character. And again, I'm not just talking about sport. I mean, for example, I started writing Rise of the Girl, around three years ago and everyone was telling me how hard it is to get a traditional publishing contract. I really wanted to get a traditional publishing contract. It was just a life ambition really, one of those big goals, one of those big long-term goals. And I perhaps could have self-published. I could had it out maybe years ago, but that wasn't what I wanted to do.

Jo Wimble Groves ([13:45](#)):

And as I say, everyone said to me, "Jo, it's really hard," because you can imagine how many books submissions land on people's desks every day, whether they get read or not is must be so difficult because it's just thousands and thousands out there. But that doesn't mean that you can't try. And it doesn't mean that you can't persevere with it. And actually, my book went to, I think, around 20 publishing houses and there was lots of nos, "No, this isn't what we're looking for." And you try to take that feedback, not as a criticism, but just to take it as, okay, I'm not what they're looking for. That doesn't mean that it's not a good book. It's just not right for that publishing house. And just when I thought that I'd run out of options because nobody really wants to take it forward.

Jo Wimble Groves ([14:29](#)):

I had a call and a meeting with DK, DK part of penguin and to sit in Penguin's reception with all the Star Wars books on the wall and you're thinking... and you have the imposter syndrome, Anna, thinking I don't deserve to be here, I shouldn't be sitting in Penguin's reception, but actually, you've got to own it. I'm like, no, I am here. And they offered me a publishing contract and to sign with DK is just amazing. But, just because I got rejected so many times, even though I don't like to use the word rejected, but it's not for us, so many, nearly 20 times before you get... And you hear that from JK Rowling, don't you? You heard about the Harry Potter books, how many people turned that down, but she just kept persevering and she got there in the end and oh my goodness. I mean, what an incredible writer she is, but that's the art of resilience and grit and determination.

Anna ([15:25](#)):

Yeah, right there in action. You're walking the walk there. What about comparison? I mean, that's a really interesting one. So this is chapter five, She's really awesome, I wish I could be more like her. Because comparison is one of those things, if we look at it in the context of role models, it can inspire you, but so often, it's a negative thing, particularly in teenage years where we're seeing children see themselves as having a lack, rather than having an inspiration. Talk to me a little bit about that chapter.

Jo Wimble Groves ([15:54](#)):

So, you're absolutely right. Role models are so important. I think we talk about it more than ever before and when I was growing up, Anna, being in the tech industry as well, I don't think I had many role models. I don't know about you in your industry sector, but for me, I just felt that there wasn't really many female role models that I could aspire or look up to. And it just made me think, this chapter is so important that no matter what you do, whether you're a pilot, you're an astronaut, whether you're an engineer, a politician, or a rugby player, or a writer, girls need to be able to see them. They need to be

able to see them in order to be them. And they also need to be able to hear from really positive, relatable role models.

Jo Wimble Groves ([16:42](#)):

And you're right. When you think about social media, it can be such a beast at times. I love it when it's really positive and really creative and it's just ensuring girls see what they want to see, if they don't like what they see, they unfollow. And they just make sure that they create that social feed that works for them and just fill it with positivity because it's out there. But we do have to go out and find it. And again, the role models are brilliant because social media, in so many positive ways, has allowed young girls and women to use their platform to inspire other people. When you think about Sky Brown, 13 year old skateboarder, what she's doing, I think she's competing this week, but she's just an absolute bundle of energy. And it got my daughter out on a skateboard and I'm sure she got thousands, if not millions of girls out on skateboards, just by leveraging her voice for the power of good.

Anna ([17:47](#)):

I want to just talk to you about the general idea of talking to particularly teenagers. I mean, I said to you earlier and I caught myself as I was doing it. I said, "Which conversations should we start talking with our daughters about?" And actually the question really should be, should we be led by them, when they want to talk about certain things? What's the best way to do it because they are the ones who need to be empowered? We, as parents, want to make everything right and have a conversation, but actually, they're the ones who need to come to us in some ways. What are your thoughts on that?

Jo Wimble Groves ([18:15](#)):

Well, I think you're absolutely right. And in the first chapter, one of my contributors, there's a sort of standout statement that's there that says, "Listening as a parent is so important." And working in tech, I do a lot of talking for a living, but actually, I think my mom always used to say to me that, "You've got two ears and one mouth and that's for a reason, you should be doing twice as much listening than you should be doing talking."

Anna ([18:41](#)):

It's so hard though.

Jo Wimble Groves ([18:46](#)):

I know, I know. And it's the same in business with leadership. Listening to your staff is critical. And actually, hasn't it been more so over the pandemic is, what can we do for you? What's going on for you right now? And actually there's no harm in sitting down with a team. Actually you're right, it can be tricky dealing with teams and getting them at the right moment to open up about what's going on for them. And I know some of my friends who've got teenage daughters find going for a walk with their teen is really great way of... because you're not got that eye contact, you're side by side, you feel quite united, it feels very neutral. And you're able to have really good conversations when you do your walk and talk in nature, without feeling like you've got your mum sitting across the kitchen table, trying to ask you what's going on.

Anna ([19:33](#)):

Yeah. All steeply fingered, "Now talk to me about your innermost world."

Jo Wimble Groves ([19:38](#)):

Yeah, exactly.

Anna ([19:39](#)):

I mean, how would you recommend using the book then as a conversation starter or just putting it out there so that when they want to come and start a conversation with you, it's clear that those parameters are there.

Jo Wimble Groves ([19:49](#)):

Yeah. I just wanted to have a book that I felt would be really useful for parents and caregivers of girls to have, that's really inspiring. And actually there's no reason why teen girls couldn't read it if they want to. Part of me really wanted to write a book for the girls because that's what I do when I go in and I talk to the girls, I don't talk to the parents. I talk to the girls, that's my thing. But actually, it's difficult to know what type of books girls are reading as well, right now. And because this emphasis is on so much starting at home, it made more sense that the book was for parents and caregivers, and then they can sort of hopefully use some of the tips, the advice. Obviously, every contributor that's in the book has not only shared their own story, has given some amazing tips.

Jo Wimble Groves ([20:38](#)):

They've all got, in most cases, all but a couple have got daughters, or if they haven't got daughters, they know people that have, or they were talking about when they were a girl and what the experience is like for them. So, there's loads of tips and advice that runs through them. Because like you say, the conversations, you can sort of pick the book up in any order, really. You could, if you were having a day where your daughter is thinking I'm not good at anything, I just can't find anything that I'm good at. Well, go to the chapter about finding themselves and why not ask your daughter to read Rocky's story. Just give her that couple of pages, have a read about that and find out how it happens, how you find what you love. It doesn't always drop in your lap, you have to go find it.

Anna ([21:23](#)):

This is very true. Going back to your own teen child, teen years, did you have conversations about these kinds of things and would it have made a big difference if you had?

Jo Wimble Groves ([21:36](#)):

So, yes and no. I mean, I'm one of three, I've got two brothers. What I loved about my childhood growing up is that, although it's sort of 1980s, great era, spent a lot of time outside. And actually, my dad never told me that I couldn't do anything because I was a girl. I had a motorbike, had basketball, did boxing, played lacrosse, played lots of contact sport. And I never felt excluded because I was a girl. And my dad... even though from an academic perspective, I always felt like I was behind. I was in the lowest set of a lot of the maths and English. And I felt like I was a bit behind, but I think I always found that strength to put my hand up. And I wasn't afraid to put my hand up if I didn't understand something. And it just meant that I had to work a bit harder than the others.

Jo Wimble Groves ([22:33](#)):

But I think, what you find as you get older is, if you really focus on your strengths and focus on things that you're good at, rather than thinking, I'm just really not very good at science. I find it really difficult.

There's two ways that you can look at that, you can either go off and think, I'm going to do loads of learning and I'm going to work really hard to try [...] or you can think, well, actually, I'm good at English and I'm passionate about English. So I'm going to really throw myself into that subject because it makes me feel good. And you can do that. And if you focus on your strengths, I do feel like it really starts to breed that healthy self-confidence. And I think girls do have a bit of a trait of focusing on what they can't do, rather than what we can. I know it sounds really simple, but we've got to try and reverse that psychology. We've got to get them thinking about the stuff that makes them feel great.

Anna ([23:22](#)):

This is chapter four, entitled, I'm rubbish at maths, even my teacher thinks so. So important, I was actually just about to ask you about that one. Why do you think then that girls have this focus, this sort of inverted focus then?

Jo Wimble Groves ([23:36](#)):

I just feel sometimes that mathematics is the conversation that happens a lot within my friendship group. And it feels sometimes like you're either a whizz at maths, or you're not. And what's really great is seeing how my daughter has really embraced maths. And although it's been sometimes a bit of a struggle for her, it's turned into her favourite subject. And again, this comes back to role models. Her teacher, over the last year, has absolutely transformed her learning because she just gets her and actually, how influential a teacher can be sometimes. And that's why I wanted to bring a teacher into this section, a guy called Mark Martin.

Jo Wimble Groves ([24:18](#)):

He's had an MBE awarded for the work that he's done for young people. And he is a brilliant, really inspiring teacher, who's great fun. He's got an absolute love for STEM, for technology. And yeah, I really wanted to sort of get his advice really on why mathematics gets a bit of a bad reputation for being difficult or challenging. And how can maybe we can sort of change that conversation because actually, throughout our life, we all need to have a good, basic understanding of mathematics. So yeah, it was really good to just to sort of reverse that conversation and how do we start that.

Anna ([25:06](#)):

Do you have different conversations with your sons then? I mean, just because you have two sons as well as a daughter, are the conversations really so different or are they just a different framework?

Jo Wimble Groves ([25:16](#)):

They are just a different framework, but really, really interesting that you make that point. My son is nine and sometimes I think it's his confidence I have to work on because a lack of self-belief and self-confidence can happens whether you were a boy or a girl, really. And what was lovely and I'm so glad that you mentioned it, is the lady that did all the editing on my book. She was fantastic. When she came back to me, she said, "Jo, I've got two sons, two young sons," but she said, "I used one of your examples, when he was trying to learn to ride his bike the other day." And she said, "This book can be just as powerful for boys as it can for girls." I do think there's some changes I would make for boys, definitely, but I really hope I get the opportunity to write a book for boys as well.

Anna ([26:07](#)):

I was just going to say, it's got to be the next book, hasn't it?



Jo Wimble Groves ([26:09](#)):

I hope so.

Anna ([26:10](#)):

Okay. So in sort of broad terms, what's the mindset then that we should all be embracing in terms of the conversations, the narratives that we're having with our girls? And is there anything that you see in your everyday life that needs to change? Finally, what is the change that you would like to see and how is this book going to do that?

Jo Wimble Groves ([26:29](#)):

I think Anna, when we think about the progress that have been made already and again, I was looking at the full picture, women have made a huge amount of progress over the last 100 years, from being able to vote, from being able to run a marathon. There's so much stuff that we couldn't do, that we now can and Rise of the Girl feels like a really important time now to think, even when you think about girls in sport, we've got a massive rise of hopefully seeing more women's sport on the TV. And we think about this gender pay gap, then I mentioned about finding our next leaders. We don't have a clear balance when it comes to directors on boards and women in leadership. There's so much, it's such a big picture, isn't it? But we can't change it all in a day, but we are making good progress. But the big question is, how do we make more progress quicker?

Jo Wimble Groves ([27:26](#)):

And we can do that by channelling all of this positive energy into our youth, because they're our next entrepreneurs, they're our next doers and thinkers and leaders and it's got to start now. And I really feel that girls can be just as resourceful, as powerful, as strong, as brave, as resilient as boys can. But I just wanted to use the book to package it all together to say, with a growth mindset... I read a lot from Carol Dweck, as you might know, she's such a fantastic woman who really talks about the importance of a growth mindset. And actually, girls can do some incredible stuff. I was talking yesterday to another lady about sometimes, the women that have been such an important part of this pandemic, the scientists and Kate Bingham, who sort of led the vaccine rollout and how she hardly really even gets a mention.

Jo Wimble Groves ([28:22](#)):

But everyone talked about how incredible the rollout was and they brought the army in and there's a woman behind that. And I just think, oh, it just makes me feel so, so proud to be a woman, but also to be a mother of a daughter. And I can't wait to see what my daughter does, but equally, I just think, yeah, it's a brilliant time for girls to have an opportunity to do any career that they want, with the right mindset, with the right career ambitions. There shouldn't be too many obstacles now and the more we come together and fight that, it is girl power all the way, as far as I'm concerned.

Anna ([28:59](#)):

That's a great answer. Jo Wimble Groves, thank you so much for joining us. Rise of the Girl: Seven Empowering Conversations To Have With Your Daughter, is out on the 7th of October, published by DK and available to pre-order now from Amazon, Waterstones and other booksellers. Everywoman is a global platform for women in business, that drives positive change by empowering women to achieve their professional potential. Visit [everywoman.com](http://everywoman.com), discover how we're advancing women in business and inspiring a generation of future female leaders, for every woman, everywhere.

