EPISODE 54

> *"**JCG:** For me, I think a lot of us too, we started to design because we want to engage with people. We want to create impactful things that mean something to someone. And I think we can get lost down the functional rabbit hole. I mean, need that. But it's also to balance that with the emotive side, which is limbic system, that mammalian side of us that just react to things. So that's where I work hard to try to find that balance."*

[00:00:31] TG: You're listening to the UI Narrative podcast, the biweekly podcast that shares the stories of people of color interface designers and researchers and their contributions towards creating user-centered experiences. And I'm your host, Tolu Garcia. Let's get started.

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[INTERVIEW]

[00:01:46] TG: Hey, hey, everybody. Welcome back to the UI Narrative podcast. Let me introduce you to today's guest. James Castro-Griffiths is a digital product designer at LV. His focus is on creating emotionally engaging and intuitive experiences through UX and UI. He works with brilliantly diverse teams to create impactful products. He does this because he believes we don't want what a product does. We want what the emotions of product gives us.

When he's not working, you probably can't find them because he's scrambling up a mountain or floating down a river.

James, welcome to the UI nerd podcast.

[00:02:27] JCG: Hi, Tolu. Thanks for having me.

[00:02:28] TG: Yes. So let's go ahead and start with my favorite question when I have a guest. What's one of your earliest memories of being interested in design?

[00:02:38] JCG: Okay. Earliest memories of being interested in design. I think, I mean, I've always loved design. It's always been a big passion for me. And I really can't imagine not doing it. The earliest back I can think of is Lego. Probably is the same for a lot of people. I'm sitting in the lounge with my dad, I've got the TV kind of playing in the background. We're half watching it. I think it's playing Thunderbirds, or something similar. And I'm trying to build some of the like the Thunderbirds craft and stuff. And my dad's just – He's off script. He's off brief. He's just doing his own thing. So that's kind of my earliest memories, and just my big love for design.

[00:03:17] TG: Yeah, I think almost every designer loves Legos to some extent because you get the customization feature to like build whatever you want.

[00:03:26] JCG: Massively, massively. Imagination is there anything holding you back, right?

[00:03:29] TG: Right, right. My nephew, he's four now and he's just getting into Legos. But I think like the first Lego set I got him was a bit too complicated, because it has a ton of instructions. And I wasn't expecting that. So he can't even really build it by himself.

[00:03:47] JCG: See? Were you one of those kids who just loves the instructions? Or do you want to go like free? Blue sky? Just can't do your own thing.

[00:03:54] TG: I like instructions. I mean, I have the creativity to create my own thing, but I also, too, have a problem with choosing the direction. So sometimes it kind of just makes my mind go

blank, which sounds kind of crazy. But I really like the instructions of like, "Okay, do this thing next," because I feel like I'm making progress towards my creativity.

[00:04:14] JCG: Yeah. No. I get it. Like I love sitting there building the thing that's on the box cover and then looking at it, playing with it and going, "Okay, cool. Now I got some better ideas." And then go like **[inaudible 00:04:27]**.

[00:04:28] TG: Alright, I want to talk a little bit too about your background growing up, because if some of you guys don't know, from James's accent, he's from the UK. So as you know, there's a lack of diversity when it comes to black and people of color in the tech space. I've shared my story a few times on the podcast about how I've only met like one black UX designer that I've worked with in my entirety of being a designer. And I was a graphic designer for years before I became a UX product designer.

So yeah, there's just not that many of us, which is why I wanted to start the podcast, connect some of us out here to show we exist. So, James, I just want to know like how was your experience been with diversity at your UX jobs in the UK? Like have you even come across any black designers out there?

[00:05:18] JCG: Yeah, I've come across one or two black designers. And being able to catch up with them and share our experiences together has been really affirming. I think sometimes being part of a crowd that doesn't have that much diversity in terms of the hue of its people. It can leave you feeling like there's no really to go if you have certain questions or worries about, "Am I the only one experiencing this?" And I found so much, I guess more than comfort, so much reassurance I think it's probably better when I do get to have these conversations with people. Because it stops you feeling like you're going insane. Like certain things you kind of see with certain characters and kind of like, "Is it just me? Or is that – He's a bit weird? Or she's a bit weird when they kind of do those things?" You can try to talk to friends about this and then kind of like, "No, that's fine. Or don't think about it too much." And you go, "Oh, maybe it's just me. Maybe it's always me."

But then every now and again, you do get to, like I said, catch up with someone who is of color and they kind of go, "Yeah, that's a bit weird. And yeah, I've definitely had that kind of vibe." So

that can really help you stay sane. Because I guess, especially in this creative industry, it's tricky. As much as we want to be designers, I guess more than artists. So we're designing for other people as opposed to for ourselves, you always leave a bit of yourself out there, a bit exposed. And when that gets critiqued, that can be quite raw at times. However seen you are. However well you handle it. You always are a bit putting yourself out there on the line. And so it is really beneficial to be able to share experiences so you can build an honest perspective of your experience.

And I think that's one of the benefits of, for me, I guess, directly as a designer. It makes me more confident. It makes me feel understood. And again, I'd say that this is not for everything. I'm not saying that. The only way to kind of feel understood is to work with black designers. I guess what I'm saying is there are some things that can only be seen through a certain pair of eyes and to be able to speak with someone who's from the same hue as you. It just really helps.

[00:07:31] TG: You know what, James? I totally relate to that feeling you said of like feeling insane a bit weird of even having those thoughts. Because it's like you make good friends with coworkers, but then there's just some people, they may have comments towards you that you wonder, like, "Is that because of the color of my skin?

And I agree, too, like what you were saying about it being a bit tricky when it comes to the part of like putting your all into your work then presenting it to a group that is not diverse. You can feel a bit unseen, like you said. So yeah, it's this understanding between black people. Like the thought just never leaves your head of wondering like, "Hmm, am I being judged because of the way I look?" And you don't want to go that route because you're just like, "Well, I know this person. They're a good person," and all that stuff. But it's hard to not think that way when you're the only black person on the team.

[00:08:27] JCG: Yeah. I think I spent the longest time just putting all the weight on me until I started speaking to other people and then you can kind of go, "Actually, not all of it should be on me."

[00:08:35] TG: No. It should not.

[00:08:36] JCG: Like I said in design, it's tricky, because you do have to put your stuff out there. It does need to be critiqued. Sometimes it's wrong. Sometimes it needs to be worked on. Sometimes, though, there can be biases. Sometimes people have expectations of how you'll act. What you'll sound like? And they'll show disappointment in just your being, because it doesn't go with what they imagined it would be, whatever that was. And I guess that's the tricky thing to navigate so that you can hold your confidence and not feel like you as a person is being questioned. It should always be your designs, not who you are. I think that's the balancing act I try to navigate in my career. And I feel like I'm still going to do it for the rest of my careers. It's really tricky. But yeah, it does make a difference.

I mean, okay. Here's something. Here's like a little anecdote. So you know on Slack where you can add your emoji and stuff to things and people can see like little thumbs up or little waves and stuff. Tell you what. I always change my skin tone to brown just me representing me.

[00:09:40] TG: Same. Yeah.

[00:09:42] JCG: I cannot tell you how nice a feeling it is when a second brown hand goes there.

[00:09:45] TG: It it. I thought it was just me feeling that same weird like exciting feeling just from an emoji.

[00:09:52] JCG: What is that? I think that literal emotion that was inside I was like, "Why do I –" That clearly means something.

[00:09:57] TG: You feel represented.

[00:09:58] JCG: You're kind of like, "What? After like eight years, I'm seeing a brown thumb number two next to me."

[00:10:07] TG: Yeah. It's a good feeling. It's a real good feeling to feel like you're seen and like your voice is being heard. Like it makes you, too, feel more a part of the team, which is a really weird way to put it. Because, I mean, you are a part of the team, but it's the little thing sometimes that people have to pay attention to.

Yeah, I want to get into today's topic about emotion design, because I feel like a lot of what we're talking about, little things about like how Slack evokes emotion from us. That's probably something they did through user testing of like, "Hmm, how do people feel, people of color, when they want to express their emotions, react to a comet and the color of their skin isn't being represented there?"

So James, he's written a few articles about emotion design. He's written about like why we should design for emotion. How to research emotion. And how to establish emotion. So he's become a little well-versed on this topic, which is why I'm so happy to have you in the podcast today. So yeah, I'll link to those articles in the show notes that are on Medium. But James, I'd like for you to explain in your own way what is emotion design?

[00:11:17] JCG: Okay. Well, I've got a little quote here, a quote that isn't mine. So interaction design foundation says emotional design, emotive design, is a way to create products that elicit appropriate emotions in order to create a positive experience for the product audience. I mean, that's the definition. But I guess, for me, when I started to see in the work I was doing and the work others were doing and the impact it was having or quietly everywhere, I was thinking, people are actually buying what a product does. They're buying how it makes them feel. And coming to that resolution really rung true with me. And that really made me kind of see, "Oh wow! People aren't buying the latest iPhone because it's got extra PPI on the screen or it's got a new piece of software in the camera for like cinematic mode in the iPhone 13." They're buying it because, the big one, it's cool, it's the latest thing. But also what it allows them to do, what allows them to create what it says about them, that's what they're really buying. That's why – Well, I mean that's why we have branding. That's why we have marketing. I think that's why we have – That's truly why we have user experience design, because experience is emotion.

[00:12:29] TG: Yeah. What you said people, don't buy what a product does. They buy what they feel really struck a chord with me. Because emotion is part of being human. And it's always been important. And more companies are starting to value how humans feel when they use their products. So I think asking for research on metrics, like satisfaction with research questions, like how does this product make you feel? Which is typically ignored in the past or maybe missed in the past. But companies have begun to realize that emotion affects the bottom line of like how

companies are being more productive. And what I mean by that is the software and like the systems that make their employees feel good will improve their productivity.

I mean, imagine like a time that you're at work and you had trouble using the software. Doesn't it make you like not want to work? Because I'm thinking like when I'm in a design software form, like several times a month feeling frustrated, but then when Figma releases like a new product feature like I become so happy because it's something that helps with my workflow.

So, James, like have you had instances? I'm sure you have like. When a product you're using provokes like negative emotions?

[00:13:42] JCG: Yeah. I mean, I think that's the big point as well. Like it's never just about creating positive emotions at times. It's figuring out what's appropriate. Sometimes people do need to struggle. Sometimes you need a speed bump. I don't think that's the case, and half of this time it does happen. I think someone just hasn't paid attention to that. They've just gone, "Feature. They'll love this." I'd rather just do something that's like genuinely going to help someone, or excite someone, or help them basically move through their products experience.

I have an example of an appropriately negative experience. So a few years ago now, my family dog passed away. Lived a long happy life. Had a lovely kind of passing. So that's all cool. But I was paying for a online food delivery service to be sent back home for her. And obviously dog has passed away. I don't necessarily need to have the food anymore. So going online. And I was, I guess, preparing myself mentally for, "Okay, I'm going to have to jump through loads of hoops. It's going to be really difficult." And my mind already was framing prepped for what this is going to be. I might have to call someone up and explain. All this type of stuff. It wasn't that at all.

Went on, went to my account, went to button said unsubscribe. An option popped up that said, "Has your pet passed away? Has your dog passed away?" Yes. Everything was stripped back. Everything went just black and white. It was one more screen saying. We're very sorry to hear about this. We understand this is a very difficult time. Everything's done. Everything's cancelled. If you want to contact us in the future, please just reach out and we're happy to help. All the best.

I was like, "That's so appropriate." I mean I'm telling you this now. I'm telling your listen to this now. I've told people like everywhere. From an appropriate emotion, it wasn't happy. It wasn't covered in illustrations, and animations, and videos, and all this stuff. It was just appropriate. I think that gets overlooked. And there are so many positive ways that we experience emotion and products too. How we can feel invested in something and go, "Yeah, I know they offer it cheaper, but I don't want to unsubscribe because I put so much energy and effort into this one thing. It knows me. I'd have to start from like all those types of things. They're all these emotional things that we kind of build up to represent us. Because, I guess, emotions are us. And anything that lets us feel like it represents who we are, we want to hold on to. It's what we want to talk about to other people. It's we feel proud about. And I guess we share authentically what we engage with, what we love. And yeah, like the example I just gave, I will recommend tails.com to people, because they were just super lovely in the end.

[00:16:30] TG: Wow! What an amazing experience with a product. Like I have not heard of something like that before. And I think the question we have to ask ourselves is, with the products that we're creating, and the features that we're adding in, are they appropriate? Because a lot of the products we build can be effective and efficient, but does it meet what the user satisfaction is? And as James was saying, like that could look different depending on what mood they're in, what emotional state that they're in. And in James' article, why design for emotion, he breaks down like the ways we can engage the emotional mind through biological, which is how we've evolved to react to the world. Philosophical, how we search for the meaning and needs of moment of delight. And physical, how we shape opinions.

So James, I'd love for you to explain how do we create positive emotions through design?

[00:17:24] JCG: Well, as you say, it starts with that level of understanding. I mean, for me, when I started deep diving in my own passion research in my evenings, I was seeing all these explanations to why we feel things, why we think certain things. And I was thinking, "This is completely tied to what I do in my day job." And that's why I started to look at how the amygdala and the limbic system, the center part of our brain is where our emotions arise. And that's the mammalian part. So that's the bit where we were living in trees. And that connects to our neocortex, which is the like frontal lobe that wraps around the outer side of our brain which is

how we have our rationalized reason point of view and how important it is to not think that if we design something, someone will automatically understand and make sense of it. But to design for how they'll emote to it first, how their initial reaction will affect their overall opinion to it. So that's where I kind of started with that. And it really does affect everything we do and it shines such a happy kind of spotlight on how to create – I mean, for me, I think a lot of us too, we all started to design because we want to engage with people. We want to create impactful things that mean something to someone. I think we can get lost down the functional rabbit hole. And we need that, but it's also to balance that with the emotive side, which is that limbic system, that mammalian side of us that just reacts to things. So that's where I work hard to try to find that balance.

So my first step in creating these good experiences is understanding people, reading people. Research, as every person who is in this industry knows, is such a huge component to us doing something of quality. Being able to sit, and observe, and see how someone's tone of voice changes when they're being asked a question, their body language. What? 70% of communication is non-verbal? And we're not kind of like making notes of that. Like that's so leaving viable insight on the table that'll help us create something that'll be of sincere value to the overall product to the ultimate experience that someone will have.

But again, we can't completely rely upon what we see. We kind of need to ask people how they operate. How they think. What they're currently experiencing directly. And something I've seen do well, and I've kind of checked online and seen other companies, you also use it, is something called a bipolar emotional reaction test, BERT for short, where you kind of a gliding scale and people can say how much of X or why are you feeling? Are you feeling happy or sad I guess is the obvious one. And you can kind of start to map out at certain points in time how people are feeling.

And if you put that through, especially on linear journeys, if you put that onto like a big map, you can all stand around and look at. You can kind of go, "Why is everyone ducking down in terms of their level of enjoyment at this point? Is that appropriate? Why is everyone spiking in happiness at this point? Is it appropriate?" There's no point in us making everyone feel super happy if the next slide is a load of like legal terms conditions text. It just doesn't prime them for

the right thing. It's being able to figure out a balance so you can create that growth of experience.

I mean, the idea would be someone comes in feeling baseline zero and they leave feeling at least plus one when they leave as opposed to like negative seven and you not knowing why, but you've technically ticked off all the checkboxes. They've technically read it. They clicked on the buttons and those sorts of things. I guess that's why I find it valuable to be able to sit in on the research and observe things. So yeah, that's how I start to kind of create a positive experience. Create that healthy experience by really trying to pay attention to the detail that someone is experiencing.

[00:21:27] TG: Yeah. I think that's a wonderful explanation. And I wrote down the bipolar emotional design report. I haven't heard of that before. So I'm definitely going to be linking that in the show notes once I do a Google search for it. But I'm very intrigued on seeing if that's something I could potentially use with a little bit of user research that I get to do.

For some of you guys you might be like, "Me too," where you don't get as much exposure to UX research because we don't have any UX researchers on our team. So just within UX design, the main tools that I use as a journey map just to document the user's emotional state while they're completing a task. And I guess like a way that I get to – Like one of my personal pet peeves that I look for when it comes to emotion design is checking whenever the developer is done coding, whether it'd be the website or the mobile apps that we create, I like to go through the cases of any types of errors to see if they have like gibberish that pops up. So I can try and put something that is more like user-friendly other than like 404 or some random number there, because it's something that's always frustrated me if like if there's an error on my part I want to know or I want to know like, "Okay, I'm stuck here now in the flow, and I can't do anything. But it's like I need to get the thing done." It leaves a person confused, and angry, and frustrated typically they're in that spot on the map. So it's when I particularly try to always look for which doesn't always require UX research just because it's something I can find if I'm doing a little bit of the QA testing myself. But yeah, that's a way to implement a bit of an motion design there.

[00:23:10] JCG: No. Definitely. I think that all designers are doing it. I mean, listening to you now, like clearly you are too. Everyone is doing it their own way. I think it's just making sure that we have space to do it. Because, I mean, have you ever found it kind of tricky where you kind of

go, "I feel like people aren't really understanding it." But then, I don't know, people are saying, "Well, technically, they found it." Do you find that kind of like tricky to navigate with them to give evidence to why it's worth looking at?

[00:23:35] TG: Yes, I do. And it depends on the type of developer, because some developers are like, "Well we put the name of the error," which like we'll refer to like something else within the app. But it's like how would that user be able to like have the cognitive load to like remember that? They're trying to fill out whatever they're doing. Or they're trying to move on to the next step. They don't want to have to go back. So yeah it is a push and pull of me trying to explain to them. It's like, "Well, we want them to finish their tasks." So it all comes down to like if they have the time to be real.

[00:24:11] JCG: Yeah. No. Completely. But it's valuable, right? Like it's the thing that people kind of walk away with it's their opinion. But it is tricky. And I guess that's where I was like I need to have some kind of framework. I need to have some kind of rationale that I can say this is why it's important like this will really create that experience that I think we're all really wanting that's going to be of high-quality. But it is tricky to navigate. And I think like talking to my friends, I can hear sometimes frustration of like, "Ah! I wish I knew they just didn't want to do that." And I don't know why, but we couldn't quite convince them to kind of give us more time to do this thing. And when it went live, it wasn't the thing." And it's kind of like, "Yeah. I see that. I see that frustration." I see designers everywhere just kind of going, "We're trying. I was just trying to like convince to make it happen."

[00:25:01] TG: Let's take a short break.
So one of the top questions I get about product design is how do I stay inspired? And the other day I decided to take inventory of what I'm doing routinely. The biggest thing that stood out to me was how I'm always investing time to understand products that are advancing in design and technology. Today's sponsor, Google Design, produces original content like articles and videos to show how Google's products come to life, and to inspire designers everywhere. On Google Design, you'll get to know how the products used by billions actually get made. And hear from desires behind some of your favorite products like Chrome, Google Maps, and Nest. Head over to design.google to get inspired. That's design.google. Or follow them on Twitter and Instagram @GoogleDesign.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[00:25:57] TG: Yeah, there's definitely products that I've put out that it's like I don't even like looking at them and I haven't put them in my portfolio because it was such a battle to try to get – And it's like, "Okay, we'll get everyone else on board as far as stakeholders." But then it's like who is going to be the lead for the developers pushing them to finish the job?" It falls on our shoulders as the UX designers trying to get them to do it. But it doesn't always work out the way you expect it to. Like the design may look pixel perfect how you want it. But then the UX, there'll be some faulty things there because they're like, "Well, we couldn't fix it. It was a bigger problem than expected." Which is why I always try to tell newer designers, "Figure out if there's any technical debt within the code," because typically that's when you can early on figure out, "Okay, there might be some issues here if I try to suggest that we do this. Maybe there can be like a band-aid we put on top of this to help with the experience." But not always the case. You just have to – You win and lose some and you try to make it the best it can be, right?

[00:26:59] JCG: Definitely. You're just kind of trying to push it that bit further. And I think, I mean, developer, content designer, UI/UX service, we're all humans. And I think it really helps to talk things through. And if you're lucky enough to have time and, I mean, let alone be in the same place, we can kind of sit down with a developer or something and just say, "Now, actually, if I show you some of the research, you can see with me that they're kind of reacting this way." It's so important for us to be able to do this. I think being able to just put a spotlight on this stuff. I know sometimes it moves the needle. Sometimes it doesn't. But at least if you do have that project you're worried about putting in your portfolio, you can be like, "At least I try to like convince the most I can." Because, yeah, I've got projects that I'm kind of like, "Yeah, I feel like I could have pushed a bit harder on that." And I guess those are the ones that kind of stick in my mind the most. If I don't put them in my portfolio, it's kind of like, "What will I learn from them?" And that's often the case maybe I could have pushed a bit harder. How could I have convinced people to this point? Or at least shown them this thing that I'm now seeing I'm a bit older with my experience.

[00:28:03] TG: Right. Yeah. Definitely. Definitely. I'm reflecting as you were saying that thinking about some projects.

[00:28:11] JCG: Everyone has those projects, right? I was kind of like, "Oh God! Why did I do that?" Or how young was I when I did that? Yeah.

[00:28:19] TG: Okay. So there's this article about emotion design on Interaction Designs website, and I'll link the article in the show notes. But I just wanted to share a section with all of you about the cognitive levels in emotion design, which I thought was pretty interesting. So here's a quote, "Designers aim to reach users on three cognitive levels; visceral, behavioral and reflective." So visceral, user's gut reactions to or their first impressions of your design. E.g., an uncluttered user interface suggests ease of use. Behavioral users subconsciously evaluate how your design helps them achieve their goals and how easily they should feel satisfied that they're in control with minimum effort required. And the last one is reflective. After they encounter your design, users will cautiously judge its performance and benefits, including value for money. If they're happy, they'll keep using it, form emotional bonds with it and tell their friends.

And the one that really struck with me was reflective, because I am always thinking about this. If I subscribe to any app, especially if I did like the yearly amount and then like after a month, I'm like, "Man, I should have did the monthly. This is crap." Like it's not as useful to me as I thought it would be, or one of the features doesn't work as well as I thought it would be. Like I've had that instance with a lot of fitness apps of just not working out for me. So yeah, I just thought it was interesting the way that they broke down those cognitive levels.

[00:29:56] JCG: Yeah. No. It is super interesting. Again, it's one of those things just kind of like shines a light through the paper, like through some stuff and you can be like, "Oh wow! I can actually see my own behaviors. I can see some of the reasons why people do things." Like the level of unconscious/ subconscious, and then you only have one rationalized part that you actually think about. That kind of goes to the thing I was saying earlier about the whole how the brain has evolved with us and is wired to think in a certain pattern through that unconscious, through the subconscious. And then we finally get a chance to go, "How do I feel about this?" It shows how out of control we are as these people walking around. We think we're rational. We think we're in control of ourselves. But really, we're just kind of going, "I really love that. I don't know why. I really love that thing. I want to pick it up. I want to touch it. It looks amazing." And then you're like, "Hmm, I picked this up because." And really, you have no idea. You're just kind

of going around the world emoting. I just find that hilarious and just brilliant to just kind of see just we're not as in control as we think we are.

And I guess that's the point. When we do our designs, we aren't designing for rational thinking people. It's only at the end they start to do the whole reflective thing. It's predominantly them just kind of going, "I've already picked it up. I don't even know why. I just liked it."

[00:31:16] TG: It's funny that you say all that, because it's like a lot of apps that I download, it's through Instagram. Like they'll have an ad and then I'll be like, "Oh, yeah. I think I need this app. Let me go ahead and download it." And feel like that's like my subconscious. Like, "Oh, well, I'm seeing it. They've proposed a need for me. Let me try it out." And then I guess that's the part they make you feel like you're in control, but then you'll be limited to like the features on the app like, "Well, I want to get the full experience in order to get the result that they say."

[00:31:46] JCG: That's it. It's that kind of thing that's going, "I'll just tease them. I'll just give them a little bit." It's like the drug dealers of UI and UX.

[00:31:55] TG: I'm addicted to apps.

[00:31:56] JCG: If i just give them a little bit of head space, if I just give them those ten sessions, if I can just give them a little bit of calmness. If I can give them a little bit of calmness, then they'll be hooked. Then they'll want to download and pay for like the 50 pound yearly thing. I'm that person. I love that space.

[00:32:11] TG: Me too.

[00:32:12] JCG: And in all honesty, I don't use it as much as I paid for it.

[00:32:16] TG: No. And that it's funny, like I have instant regret after I do it too because I'm just like, "I'm going to go and I'm unsubscribing because they've wasted my money **[inaudible 00:32:25]** email." But it's just like they already got it. They won. So I try to like get used out of it and then I'll forget about it in a month.

[00:32:34] JCG: That's it. And say you do go through a period of using, say, headspace for a month every day and you get that dopamine hit because it goes 30-day streak. You're like, "Yes, I'm winning. Nice!" You turn like calmness into competition. So that's an emotional thing. And then you're like, "Okay. Well, I've been through a pack. So it knows me. And I put loads of time, and effort, and money and myself into this. It knows me. I've gone through that pack and I feel like I'm a bit better on the other side of it." And then you'll kind of go, "I'll go a day or two without it. I'll go a month without it." But the want to, like you say, unsubscribe, uninstall. It's kind of like, "But I put so much into it and I feel like it knows me. What if I need calmness again in my life? Yes, I want to have access to this. I don't want to have to –" Because, weirdly, subscribing again feels like it's an issue. It definitely wouldn't be. But it's kind of like, "I don't want it to lose me. I've got a relationship with it."

And I think that's where a lot of these companies are trying to really move things towards it. I mean, I was reading the latest Google material. I think it's Android 12 that's coming out now and how they're doing the UI, the color that changes to your phone background. And the rationale behind it is what's the most personal thing that someone can put on their phone? It's going to be the background. It's going to be a thing that they see every day. They're going to choose that. So if you're going to choose a color palette that matches anything. Match is the most personal thing to them. I think that's just crates between the whole, "Am I going to go Apple? Am I going to stay Android?" It's kind of like, "Yeah, but it knows me." It's like kind of like bad relationship, isn't it? It's like, "It just knows me."

And I guess that's where Apple, in comparison, and I guess as an example of loads of other companies, will need to figure out a way to do this personalization so it feels like this product, this experience represents me and who I am. It's that next level. I mean, in that Donald Norman's hierarchal experience. At the very top is love. And I think a lot of companies don't necessarily go to that point. They stay in like functional. It does it. It's responsive. But it's that next level that really gets people spark, that really gets people excited, that want to talk about it, share it. And they're not necessarily constantly aware of it.

I mean, another thing, talking about diversity. Google, the latest software they've done to make sure that when you take a photo of yourself, especially for someone of a darker hue, it's going to represent your skin accurately. I saw that and I was like, "That is huge." Like who doesn't want

to feel seen? And Google will literally do that for you. Like you can see that they're really going, "Right. Well, if everyone's got really good content design principles, really good UI, everything's accessible, everything's like getting to the pretty top pinnacle, how are we going to differentiate?"

And Apple right now are kind of staying at that stuck level. And it just seems like Google's going, "Well, how do you make people love this? How do they feel really engage and emote with this?" That's so exciting to see, because I think that's the next forefront of what user experience and UI design is going to be. It's that thing that all designers are feeling but haven't been able to put their finger on. And just kind of going, "If someone just gave me space to do this, I could do something pretty special." I think it's out there. So, yeah, I'm excited for where it's going to go. And for the companies that are already starting it, you can see they're already skyrocketing in success.

[00:36:09] TG: Yeah, definitely. Yeah, well said man. So it's been almost a year since you've started working at LV. And for those that don't know LV, is a health and wellness lifestyle brand developing smarter technology for women. And a lot of the mamas that I know rave about the LV pump. So it's like one of the world's first silent wearable breast pumps, which makes it possible for like new mothers to pump anywhere, in their car, or wherever they're going. So yeah, tell us a little bit about how it's been working on their products so far.

[00:36:44] JCG: It's been really incredible. I really don't say that lightly. It's genuinely so exciting to work on products that affect people in such a way. I mean, we have amazing user research team that allow us to listen anonymously to some of the insights that have come through. And you can just hear that there's just such need for this and there is so much emotion in there. And there is so much importance to get this right.

So waking up – We all have those days. You're waking up and going, "Ah, what am I doing this for? Why am I dragging myself into work?" Or rolling out of bed in the work home days. Like, "What I'm doing this for?" But it's kind of like, yeah, what LV's aspirations are. What they're really trying to do. And what we're starting to touch on. Sincerely, I believe it is making, and it's going to keep making a big impact to, I think, a hugely underserved half of the population, which is another thing too. It's insane.

And especially as a man coming into this, it's incredibly humbling. I can't express how little I know. And I think that is both a skill, because I have no preconceptions. I'm absolutely an empty cup looking to learn. But yeah, it's incredibly eye-opening at the same time. I mean, especially for the researchers, it takes a lot for them to listen to this and understand it. So yeah, really appreciate their hard work to empathize and give a level of respect, and care, and concern when understanding about the impact of what we're doing and how we can better support the people that use our products.

[00:38:31] TG: Yeah. I think every designer should have at least one moment of choosing a project to work on that makes a difference in the world. Because I think just, too, it just changes your perspective of the reach that you have, the impact that you can make in a person's life. It's so different if you're just – I mean, of course any product that you make, it might be making a difference in someone's life. But it's so much different when it's like a lifestyle thing, like people use it in order to like have a more enjoyable life. For instance, you know what the products that you make. They're helping tons of mothers everywhere be able to have the freedom to move around in that flexibility.

And just thinking back to a product that I worked on recently for a company that was creating a diabetes app. Being able to like sit in with the user researchers, listening to how these patients feel using that app and trying to get it to connect to their pump and all those frustrations. And then also, too, worrying about their insulin. There's so many like headaches that they deal with. And it's like you don't realize the impact something as simple as an app functioning right for them to be able to check levels and have it automatically pump their – Like all these other things that it's like I didn't ever knew about until I started working on it. Like it brings you a new joy that you don't always have when working with products. So I highly recommend, even if it's like a side project, doing something good for the world.

[00:39:58] JCG: Yeah. So when you go into those research sessions, how do you feel your motivation is when you come out of it or you hear those insights?

[00:40:06] TG: Oh, I'm on a high. I feel like – Also, too, sometimes I get upset. It depends. Because with some of these research sections, like I can predict, "Okay, I know this is probably

not going to work out well, but I have to prove to stakeholders because they really want to see it's not going to work out well." So it's like I'll do the design that they want and then the design that I want. But in majority of cases, like I will leave that meeting with a high of like, "Oh my gosh! There's so much I don't know." Like you think you can feel very confident no matter how long you've been a designer, right? You can always come to your predictions of like, "Well, yeah, I know based off of 101 UX. We should not do that." But it's like until you are the user yourself using that product, a part of your everyday life, like there's a lot of things you just will not understand.

[00:41:00] JCG: Massively. You're right. Like if you can leave a recent session, you can be filled with so much passion. I think as someone who has to work on their confidence, it just fills you with so much drive to kind of do something, do the right thing to really push to have those conversations. So yeah, I think I'm just echoing you. I'm saying if you have the ability to work on a project that will have an impact to someone's quality of life, take it. Just take it. It's so fun. It's so enthusing.

[00:41:34] TG: James, do you have any advice for a listener that might be struggling with how to become a better emotional designer?

[00:41:41] JCG: It is tricky. I think I'd say trust your gut to begin with. I think if you're passionate about design, you're already paying attention to this stuff. I mean, hopefully even paying attention to yourself and how you experience things. That's always a good start. I think the next stage is if you're really passionate about it, there are resources out there. There aren't lots, but there are resources out there. I think there are some foundational courses you can kind of go through. And there's some books around emotional psychology you can go through.
And I think I've been through more than I can even recall right now. But there are some amazing ones that really start to expand on how we think, how we feel, how we emote. And it's fairly simple from there to start to draw the correlation between how we can understand that and how we can better design for someone. So yeah, if you're starting, just get out there and look. I don't think there is any one resource that has it all. I think it's very new. And I think it's an absolute area to kind of start looking in. I mean, as everything becomes more automated, the thing that will help us stand out as creators and designers, I believe, is how human we can be. And to be human is to experience life through emotions. And if we can create the more appropriate

emotional experiences, devices, products, the more engaged they are, the more impactful we are. The more fulfilling it is to be a designer as well. So yeah, I say get out there, read some books, talk to everyone you can. Get close with researchers if you aren't already one. And start listening in where you can on research sessions. and I guess look at it from a different lens. Not just whether they clicked on it where they read it, but how they're moving. How their face is changing. And maybe make some notes of that at the same time and know exactly why you think they did that. What they read that made them act that way. I think that can help grow that muscle, that emotional intelligence perspective so you can help read situations.

[00:43:34] TG: All right. Next we're going to get into listener questions. I asked on Instagram what questions you have for James today. And here's what one of you guys had to say. **[inaudible 00:43:45]** asked, "How were you able to level up and grow your career and your skills as a product designer? And what advice would you give to someone early on in their journey?"

[00:43:59] JCG: Hmm, that's a really good question. I'd say the earlier you can figure out who you are and what you want to do, the better. And that sounds really philosophical. And maybe it is. But I think it's the ability to know what really excites you. What really makes you passionate? Because you can go work at a company where you don't really want to be. And therefore you don't really feel like you fit in. And the level of – As you've said too, like the level of drive and passion you'll have towards something to really push hard against something. You may not necessarily have. But then there are companies, and I've been lucky enough to find a few in my time, and projects in my time, where you kind of go, "I'll work so hard for this. I will learn so much more for this." I think you need that spark. So that's that first level I'd say, is to have that thing for yourself so you're excited for it. You want to keep pushing.

I think the next thing is find people, not just mentors, but they're great, but find teams, managers and people who really look to understand who you are, and support you, and look to represent your perspective and your ideas. Because it's all well and good being passionate, but there's at times some hierarchies you've got to navigate through. And it's always viable when you've got someone who is in your corner with you who can help you navigate things from behind the scenes. Maybe that's a mentor. But yeah, that's another level of helpfulness.

I guess the next thing as well is figure out whether you should stay. Sometimes it's better for you to not sunk and cost fallacy. Keep putting more time into the company you're in with the hope that you'll eventually get that promotion up. From what I've seen, I think sometimes there comes a line where you go, "Actually, I think it's time for me to move somewhere else and apply for a promotion up." That can be really beneficial. It's kind of job hopping around, and it's not necessarily the nicest thing to be shifting constantly. But it can keep you engaged in momentum. And hopefully you'll find that place that gives you the drive, gives you the passion. And you'll be happy to stay there. Happy to kind of push through. It doesn't really matter how long you're there for. You can just keep ascending at a pace that fits you and fits the company. But I think it's just worth paying attention. Trust your gut.

So when I was about six years old, seven years old, I was learning to swim. And for whatever reason, the teacher of the pool I was in decided somewhere down the line in her mind that she wants to keep me exactly there. Where I saw friends just kind of moving up to the badges, going on to bigger pools, deeper dives. I was kind of like left, left in the pool. And I literally got to the point where I was the only person in that pool by myself. And it got to the point where my mom had to come and see for herself, because I was a very good swimmer outside, I was swimming quite regularly, why I was still stuck in one-up from the baby pool. She kind of sat down, watched me swim, and she was like – Said to the woman, "So, James can clearly swim, right? So why isn't he moving up?" There was a bit of a fobby answer of, "Oh, he can't do this." So she said, "James, go do that." So I did it. She goes, "Right? So he should get his badge now, right?" And so I think I only had about three, four months left of school, and I think I ascended four badges in that time because someone, and I wasn't aware of that time, someone had an imagination of what I could do and how far I could go. And they were keeping me pinned in that. And it took someone who knew the truth about me to have the ability to go, "You know what? I think if you just give them a chance, they might be able to do something good."

And I guess the point of that story in this context is pay attention to everything around you. Trust your gut. Talk to people you trust. And just kind of see, "Do I need to move up a badge? Or am I accurate? Am I actually in the pool I should be in?" Sometimes you should stay, but sometimes you should go, "Maybe I need to do something." So I move. Because time will just keep passing. And the thing that kind of sucks is I wasn't able to get my gold badge because I ran out of time. I had to go to my secondary school because I ran out of time at my primary school. So I

can't go back. I can't do that. I mean, it's just a swim badge in the hindsight of life. But that's kind of an idea. Don't let someone else's expectations keep you in the pool that you're not supposed to be in. Trust yourself.

[00:48:44] TG: That is a great story, man. And I want to touch on that a little bit, too, if you're someone who is being overlooked, demand what you're worth. Of course like when you're young, you can do that. You can, but who has the confidence? Even now, like who has the confidence? It's intimidating to go to a boss and say, "Well, I think I should be moved up a level," right?

[00:49:10] JCG: Yeah. I was lucky. I had my Jamaican mom to come help me.

[00:49:15] TG: [inaudible 00:49:15] mothers. Yeah. Like you got to fight for what you're worth. And I know I did an episode on it. It's not coming to my mind right now. But I'll definitely link it in the show notes as far as if you think that you deserve a raise, if you think that you deserve more projects. There comes a time where you have to speak up for yourself or go to another job if you feel like that boss isn't going to give you what you feel you need to grow.

And just going back to what James said about the earlier that you figure out like what you're passionate about, it really does help keep that spark in you as you go along, because there will be some difficult times. It's unavoidable. But especially if you're a person of color, you're black, you just have to be a bit resilient about it. And I think it just really helps if you have a team and manager that supports you. But yeah, find your niche, which you're interested in and work towards it. And also find that person that will support you along the way. Of course, you have me. You can always email me, hello@uinarrative. I support all of you guys and would love to hear what you're going through in your stories if you need someone to listen.

But yeah, that's all the listener questions for this week. As a reminder, you could be included in the next episode. Make sure to follow me on Instagram @uinarrative. I randomly ask questions on there. I do a post about a featured guest coming up. So make sure to check that out and post a comment if you have a question.

All right. So I like to end every episode with a random question completely unrelated to what we've been talking about. James, if you could eat at one restaurant forever, what restaurant would it be?

[00:50:54] JCG: Oh, that's difficult. That's a difficult question. Man. So mom and my sister are amazing cooks. I'm sure my mom likes to think that my sister got it from her. My sister is involved in a new restaurant project and food catering business with her partner. I've been lucky enough to have their Christmas dinner. I've been lucky enough to have their Sunday roasts. I'm very excited for their new venture that they're about to open together. So it's family. I'm always going to support that. So I'd say if I had to pick one that I'm going to eat at forever, it's going to be their place. I don't know what's going to be called in the end. But yeah, I can't wait for it.

[00:51:32] TG: Have they decided on like a cuisine yet?

[00:51:35] JCG: I think it's going to be a locally sourced pub grub. So that's going to be like wholesome rich meals of meats, and stews, and steaks and chicken stuff. That's it. Cold long – I know you're into heights. Cold long height. Kind of come back to a pub. Sit by a fire and just have something nice to warm you up.

[00:51:56] TG: That's my place right there. I got to stop by UK just to go to the restaurant.

[00:52:03] JCG: Tolu, do it, please.

[00:52:04] TG: One of these days. It's on my bucket list. And I'm going to hit up everybody in UK, like let's have a party or something.

[00:52:10] JCG: That's it. Do it.

[00:52:13] TG: For me, there's this Nigerian restaurant called Kemi's Kitchen over here. But, I mean, most of the Nigerian restaurants I love. I love Nigerian food a lot. I don't like cooking it as much because it takes a long time for the flavors to marinate. But yeah, it always lapse. And I leave feeling full abundant proud of my life, happy. I'm just like well-nourished. And I feel Nigerian. I'm connecting with my roots since I can't visit there as much. So it feels so good. It's

like my happy place. And also, too, it's memories from my mom always cooking this Nigerian food growing up. And she still does.

[00:52:52] JCG: Yeah. No. Love it. It just means the world, isn't it, when like we can have that thing that reminds us of home, who we are. I mean, you've sold me. I want to have some of that. It sounds great.

[00:53:03] TG: Yes. First of all, let me say it first here on the podcast. Nigerian jollof rice is the best. I know some of you guys might be Ghanaian or from another African country. I love all you. But Nigerian jollof rice. You've heard it here. I said it. That war is settled. **[inaudible00:53:23]** it's always brought up of like who has the best jollof rice?

But yeah, where can we connect with you online?

[00:53:32] JCG: So I guess my Medium is probably the best thing. So just type in my name. I think there's only one James Castro-Griffiths in the world. So I'm horribly easy to find. So yeah, you can find me on Medium if you want to know more about emotional design. I've got some articles there. Tolu has been very kindly to kind of talk about the start of all this. And yeah, I guess that's me. I've kind of stayed off Twitter in the end. I've managed to evade it. But yeah, you can find me on Medium.

[00:53:58] TG: Can people connect with you on LinkedIn? **[inaudible 00:54:00]**.

[00:54:02] JCG: Of course. No. No. Of course. I forgot about LinkedIn. Yes, connect with me on LinkedIn.

[00:54:06] TG: All right, guys. If you have any questions or comments about today's episode, make sure to go to James' Medium articles. Check those out. Or you can connect with him on LinkedIn, or just send him a DM. And also you can tag me @uinarrative on Instagram, or on Twitter @uinarrativeco. And please share this episode with anyone you think would benefit from it. I hope you guys learned a lot about emotion design. This has been a really interesting – Super, super interesting topic.

[00:54:34] JCG: I've loved it.

[00:54:36] TG: And a quick quote, and I know we've talked about interaction design a lot, their website, because they have really good articles about emotion design. But this is quote that I had found on there from Don Norman. And he said, "Everything has a personality. Everything sends an emotional signal even where this was not the intention of the designer. The people who view the website infer personalities and experience emotions." And that's by Don Norman from grand old man of user experience.

So, thanks again, James, for joining us this episode. It's been so much fun.

[00:55:14] JCG: Thank you so much, Tolu. Yeah, I mean, we've already talked about this, but I find UI Narrative just to be such a resource. So thank you so much for, one, having me on here. Such an honor. And also for just having the podcast to begin with. It's definitely making an impact out there, at least with me.

[OUTRO]

[00:55:33] TG: Thank you for listening to the UI Narrative Podcast. If you like what you hear, make sure to show this podcast in love by commenting and subscribing where you listen. You can find me on Instagram and Facebook @uinarrative, or Twitter @uinarrativeco. I also respond to emails at hello@uinarrative.com. Talk to you later. Bye.

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