



## Susan Charlesworth

TEDX SPEAKER

Astronaut trainer and psychologist sharing human performance lessons from space



VISIT SUSAN'S WEBSITE

### About:

- **Gender:** Female
- **Nationality:** United Kingdom
- **Languages:** English
- **Travels from:** United Kingdom

### Engagement Types:

- Speaking
- Training and Workshops

### Topics:

- Leadership & Management
- Personal Development

## Biography Highlights

- Psychologist and astronaut trainer with 15+ years' experience in human performance and psychology, including training European and Chinese astronauts at the European Space Agency
- Awarded the prestigious Institute Lecture by the Chartered Institute of Ergonomics and Human Factors and invited TEDx Brighton speaker on creative problem solving
- Co-author of Handbook of Mental Performance: Lessons from High Performance Domains and keynote speaker for organisations across aerospace, engineering, and infrastructure

## Biography

Susan Charlesworth is a psychologist, astronaut trainer, and speaker on human performance, leadership, and communication. With over 15 years' experience working at the cutting edge of human factors and psychology in space exploration, she brings a rare and compelling perspective to the corporate world.

As part of her career at the European Space Agency, Susan trained astronauts, mission control, and international spaceflight teams to perform

### Websites:

- [Charlesworth Human Performance](#)

under pressure, adapt to uncertainty, and solve problems creatively in extreme environments. Her work has included teaching both European and Chinese astronauts, preparing them with the psychological and teamwork skills essential for success on long-duration missions.

Alongside astronauts and engineers, Susan has worked with diverse professionals across aerospace, engineering, technology, and other high-performance industries. She translates lessons from space, such as leadership under pressure, decision-making in uncertainty, effective teamwork, and resilient communication, into practical strategies that resonate with leaders and organisations on Earth.

Susan has delivered keynote speeches, workshops, and panel sessions at major conferences, corporate events, and professional associations, including the Chartered Institute of Ergonomics and Human Factors, where she was awarded the prestigious Institute Lecture. She is also a TEDx speaker, with her talk “Let’s Teach Our Children to Problem Solve Like Astronauts”.

Her speaking style is dynamic, story-led, and highly engaging. Audiences are drawn into the wonder of human space exploration through powerful visuals, striking real-world examples, and even her own experiences flying on a parabolic “zero-gravity” flight with British astronaut Tim Peake. Susan ensures every session leaves participants inspired and equipped with practical tools they can apply immediately.

Key achievements include:

- Training astronauts, ground control, and international spaceflight teams at the European Space Agency
- Teaching Chinese astronauts as part of international collaborations
- Delivering the Institute Lecture for the Chartered Institute of Ergonomics and Human Factors
- Keynote speaking and workshops for global organisations including Morgan Sindall and across the aerospace and engineering sectors
- TEDx Brighton speaker on creative problem solving
- Co-author of Handbook of Mental Performance: Lessons from High Performance Domains

Susan bridges the gap between the extreme demands of spaceflight and the everyday challenges of corporate life, helping organisations build leaders, teams, and cultures that can thrive under pressure.

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## Videos



## Susan's Topics

### From Space to Earth: Lessons in High Performance Teams

What can astronauts, Antarctic explorers, and engineers teach us about performing in the unknown? In this talk, Susan draws on her work training astronauts and mission control at the European Space Agency to show how human performance principles apply far beyond space. Blending powerful case studies, from spacewalk emergencies to Antarctic isolation, with striking visuals and her own parabolic flight training, Susan introduces the Explorer's Framework of environment, mindset, and open-ended challenges.

#### Key issues covered

- Building an Explorer's Environment: psychological safety, adaptability, trust, and resilience in extreme contexts
- Developing an Explorer's Mindset: self-management, teamwork, leadership, communication, and decision-making under pressure
- Open-ended challenges: how astronauts prepare for the unexpected through EVA, simulations, and parabolic flights
- Future frontiers: long-duration missions, isolation, AI, automation, and wellbeing in space exploration
- Parallels for Earth: applying spaceflight lessons to high-stakes missions in business and everyday life

#### Audience takeaways

- Insight into astronaut training and its relevance to teams facing uncertainty
- A practical framework (environment, mindset, challenges) for building high performance in any context
- Lessons in resilience, leadership, and communication from space and extreme environments
- Inspiration to rethink how we create environments and cultures that support innovation and problem-solving

**Available:** In person, Virtually

### The Human Factor: Building Safer, Smarter Organisations

In safety-critical industries, technology alone cannot guarantee reliability. Human factors play a decisive role. Drawing on lessons from aviation, healthcare, and space exploration, Susan explores how design, communication, and organisational culture influence safety and performance. From cockpit errors to space

shuttle disasters, she reveals how human error is rarely about “bad people,” but about systems, processes, and environments.

#### Key issues covered

- Human error in aviation, healthcare, and space exploration
- The role of communication, teamwork, and organisational culture in accidents
- Human factors methods that reduce error and improve reliability
- Case studies: Challenger, Columbia, and ESA astronaut training

#### Audience takeaways

- A fresh understanding of why human factors matter in every organisation
- Practical strategies to reduce errors and improve safety and reliability
- Insights into how spaceflight training prepares teams to perform under pressure
- Inspiration to integrate human factors thinking into design, management, and daily operations

**Available:** In person, Virtually

### Let's teach our children to problem solve like astronauts (TEDx Brighton)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VuITloI5nVA>

In her TEDx Brighton talk, Susan shares what astronaut training can teach us about creative problem-solving. Drawing on real spaceflight emergencies and her work at the European Space Agency, she introduces the *Explorer's Framework*, a simple way to build the right environment, mindset, and challenges that prepare us for the unknown.

**Available:** Virtually

## Testimonials

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You really gave us an amazing insight into the challenges people face in extreme environments and how your work in human factors makes such an impact. Many delegates said your talk was the highlight!

**Tina Worthy**

Chief Operating Officer  
Chartered Institute of Ergonomics & Human Factors

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Susan presented to the Group SHE Leaders positioning and exploring human performance, human factors and psychological safety with an inquisitive network. It was very well received and valuable to consider the challenges from another sector. I would highly recommend Susan who worked with us on the themes, tailoring the offering to our audience and business.

**Carole Bardell-Wise**

SHEQ Director

“

Susan has a wonderful open and empathetic style of facilitating and leading. She makes every participant feel that they are special and that they have something to contribute to create action and change. She is all about collaboration rather than cliques - an approach that is so important when you are trying to build partnerships and create change.

**Heather MacRea**

Chief Executive

*The Ideas Foundation*