

Jen: First and foremost, everybody is putting their health and well-being first because, because we have to. And my hope for that is that we learn from this and we realize that that's something that we should prioritize all of the time and not just in times of crisis. And so, I think that the recognition that our well-being right now is really important, especially to build resilience. I mean, you've talked about organizations and so my focus is, how do we prepare individual workers to be more resilient? And, we know all of the research says that the best way to build resilience is to be regularly practicing well-being. And that's, and that's however you define it, I don't think that we should define what that means for every single person. In terms of my concerns in terms of remote work is boundaries and building new boundaries for ourselves. For people that haven't worked remotely, I manage a remote team and so we've gotten into a groove and a rhythm of remote work. But I think even for us right now, there are some challenges because there are just things that we cannot do. You know, as my team and as my listeners know, one of my non-negotiables is exercise. And I'll admit right now, my exercise, I've had to take it out of the gym outside and find creative ways without weights and other things and socially distancing or physically distancing myself. That's a challenge, but also an opportunity. My other non-negotiable is sleep. And I have to admit that my sleep has been quite disruptive lately because of the anxiety, because of the unknowns. We have to be hyper-focused on that.

Even those that have worked in a remote environment before, this is challenging all of us in ways that we've never been challenged before. And so, we need to ramp up our empathy, ramp up our compassion. Remember that everybody is dealing with a different situation, but I'm really excited because as you mentioned, this is a global pilot. It's unprecedented. And I think there's going to be so much that we learn from this that is going to allow us in the future to remove stigmas related to remote and flexible work. And truly I talk a lot about work-life integration. I mean this is work-life integration at its best, right? And, people are figuring out, albeit really hard right now, how to integrate those pieces and how to make it work for them and how to work in flexible ways and set the boundaries for themselves, and ask for what they need, and be open about what they need. Because right now, we all need it. And so, it's giving us kind of that global permission to ask for these things and to do these things in the way that works best for us and allows us to be productive at work but engaged in our life. And I think that's exciting. I wish it was under different circumstances, but I'll take the silver lining and be hopeful that this really does change the way that we work in the future.

Annie: Yeah. Jen, I'm smiling because you're talking about work-life integration and I've been talking about this for five years, but I've never lived it like I'm living it right now. It's my husband and myself and our two sons. My son has a rare condition called Kabuki syndrome. So, we have to be super careful about staying isolated at this time. And so, my husband and I have had to create this schedule that is all about work-life integration and I find myself getting to really experience the benefits of that. So, the way that I like it is I don't do calls from 8:30 to 9:30. I don't do calls from 12 to 2 and I don't do calls from 5:30 to 7:30. And in those time periods, those blackout periods, my computer's closed, my phone's off. I'm in this moment where I feel like my expertise is more relevant than ever, I still get to carve out five hours during my day to focus deeply on my kids. It's been this incredible experience that has been such a light in uncertain times.

Jen: I totally agree. I think in many, many ways it's kind of bringing our humanity forward. One of the things that I've been doing, and you know, I tell people this and I think they kind of snicker a little bit, but if you look at my calendar right now, last week I went in and I populated a recurring appointment for breakfast, lunch, dinner, time for movement or exercise. And then I also put in bedtime because I feel like for me, if I don't have that regimented and in my schedule, in my calendar right now, then I'm kind of all over the

place. And I think since our regular schedules have been disrupted so much, that's for me what I need right now.

Annie:

So, I think in describing your own approach, you've really hit on the two big themes that I would want and encourage everybody to think about in this environment, which is that if you want to succeed in this new, highly autonomous, highly distributed environment, you need to build on principles of self-awareness and discipline. Sit down with yourself, think about what your day really needs to look like in order for you to be optimally successful. And I mean that in terms of the work that you produce, the team environment that you create, the environment that you have at home and how you physically and mentally feel. And so, maybe that means that you think about the fact that you're just much more productive in the morning and you start to protect your time that way. Maybe it's that you know that you need access to the outdoors for an hour a day, but whatever it is for you, it really is a thoughtful process of identifying how you work best, what environment works for you, and what you need in a day in order to build that in. And then the second piece, which you talked about when you were talking about blocking things out on your calendar is the idea of discipline. One of the things that people talk about in these remote and flexible environments is the idea of broken-down boundaries, which can be a really positive thing because it breaks down two ways. But I think if you really want to be successful at creating an environment that works for you, it requires discipline. You do need to spend time architecting your day, creating time in your schedule, mindfully identifying what works for you and building the practices to create those boundaries and to have the discipline to honor your own best practices and needs.

Jen: Touched on this a little bit before, but what other suggestions you have maybe from your own experience about how to manage childcare and in the environment of COVID, homeschooling while also working from home and, and I know I've also heard you say that you're sometimes working from "the zoo," which I think many parents right now could probably relate to that. So, tell us a little bit more.

Annie: We're literally in the zoo. We've been watching the Cincinnati livestream of the zoo. So, you know, there's exciting opportunities here with the virtual experiences. No, it's true. I would say normally in a remote environment, one of the most critical things is figuring out how you can get childcare support so that you can work in as a distraction-free environment as possible. But that's not the world we're living in today. I think, for me, it's really been about those same things that we talked about in terms of creating the right work schedule. It's been about self-awareness and discipline. So, I know that my children need my attention. It's just too much for them to see me running around and not getting the opportunity to really meaningfully engage with me. And so, by carving out times where I'm not distracted in 50 directions, but I'm actually, for an hour, dedicating all my attention to them, that gives me the space with them to be able to then dive back into work. I also talk to my kids constantly about how important my job is to me, how I identify as a leader. How working makes me proud and happy and I tell them all the time about my business accomplishments and the business accomplishments of people I admire, so that they consistently have a narrative about what work means and why it's important. And that's helped them really adjust in this landscape as well. Because I think they're able to contextualize that mommy needs to go head upstairs and focus on her job because that's important to her and to all of us.

Jen: I would imagine. even before COVID, but probably even more exacerbated in what we're dealing with now, is that probably helps a lot with any guilt that parents are feeling

around the perception of spending too much time working and not enough time with their children. Not only are you showing up for your colleagues, but you know how you're showing up for your children, too. And I think that that's really, really important, especially now with so much worrying and anxiety. The last thing we want to add on top of that is feelings of guilt of not being there for the people that we really want to show up for.

Annie: Yeah. And I think that's such a good call out because I think in the way that I've been dealing with this COVID process, by setting the boundaries and communicating to the people who matter, my team at work and my children at home, and letting them know when I'm going to be available and sticking to that, has eliminated the guilt for me because I know I'm doing what I said I was going to do. And if I didn't take the time to set those boundaries and those expectations, I think I would be feeling really underwater right now. But just as you said, I've been able to show up in a way that's consistent with my own intentions. That's where I feel relief.

Jen: And I think the other benefit to that is it gives everybody else permission to do the same. So, how do managers upskill their teams to help them adjust to a remote work culture? And I realize we're doing this kind of quickly and all day every day right now, but what are some best practices or some advice that you can give for that?

Annie: So, there's a couple of things, a couple of categories that I think about. I think about making sure that everybody is set up correctly. I think about making sure that culture is in place. And I think about making a real concerted effort in our teams to create a space for developing this skill. So, when we are working with clients or where you are creating deliverables for the market, we know that what we produce is incredibly important. But now we sort of have an equal business objective and that business objective is how we get it done. So, I'm talking a lot to teams and saying, you know, at the end of every meeting, have a couple of minutes to just quickly align on what's going well in terms of this virtual working and remote working process and what needs to be optimized. I'm telling people to, turn to everybody on their team and look for sort of a buddy who knows how to use collaboration tools, maybe 10% better than they do, so that they can be really open to learning, really curious. Also reminding people that sometimes, this is all chaotic and frustrating. And I think that, to your point, there's a really important mindset about doing this immediately as well as we can and then growing from that over time. So, an acceptance for tolerance that this isn't going to be perfect overnight but looking at this as a skill that will really help launch us into new ways of working in the future. When I was talking about setup, I think it's really making sure that you have the right bandwidth, making sure you understand your security protocols and your compliance needs from the folks at your organization, making sure that you are all aligned to the same collaboration tools. When I'm thinking about culture, I'm thinking about how do you have an informal space to really connect with people and make sure that that fabric of a team environment exists even when you don't have the benefit of occupying the same building together. I think that there is a really important process of just addressing the uncertainty and coming together to have a really healthy, curious, iterative process to getting better and better at this experience and taking advantage of the fact that you do lose the shared experience of being in an office building, but you gain the perspective of now hundreds of different people's home environments and the families that they're part of. And that's an incredible mindset to bring to this new challenge.

Jen: I absolutely love that because I think one of the things, and I didn't mention it earlier, but one of the things that I do worry about the most, depending on how long this goes on for is social isolation. And people feeling isolated for long periods of time and the impact

that it could have on their mental and emotional health and their ability to engage in and do their best work. And so, I think the culture piece is just, it's so incredibly important. And whatever creative ways that we can come up with to connect with each other. And I've seen some great ones., I'm kind of promoting team hydration breaks or team smoothie breaks. I would say, especially in times of high anxiety, we want to limit our caffeine and alcohol intake. I do have to say that as the chief well-being officer, but even push up challenges of, you know, people on social, you know, I mean, there's just so, so many ways that we're seeing people kind of come together and stay engaged with their loved ones. And some of the other things that team well-being check-ins, you know, at the beginning of every call just ask people, how's it going and give people permission to say, "Hey, you know what, I'm not okay right now. You know, I could use some help.

Annie: I couldn't agree more. It's been interesting to come into a new environment because my third week we all became remote at Deloitte. And that was really interesting because when I was there for the first three weeks, I was meeting people in the office and I was meeting people by email. But as soon as we moved into this remote environment, I actually felt like I got to meet many, many more people and hear about many, many more people's lives and books they were reading. I felt suddenly more into the culture because we were doing it intentionally

Jen: That need for human connection outside of just the great work that we can do together, but really connecting with each other as human beings cause that's the fabric of who we are. So how can listeners who are passionate about helping others become an internal influencer at their company when it comes to remote work?

Annie: This is such a great question and one that I get all the time. I think that it's about being really focused on developing good behaviors and producing good work and then being unafraid to share your success with other people. I know it's difficult to ask for what you need, but as you said before, Jen, every time you advocate for your own needs in a way that is professional and kind and authentic, you are giving the others the opportunity to do the same. And so, I think that we look at this as sort of a virtuous cycle of self-awareness and creating more opportunity for others. I also think that there is a huge important factor that it's about doing your work really well and taking a lot of pride in the accountability you feel to help driving your business forward. Because when you are somebody who can communicate authentically and inspire other people to action and you're delivering consistently and on time, you know, that's, that's the stuff of leadership. And I think one of the things that is really amazing about this opportunity that we're going through now is that leadership comes from all sorts of places. It's non-hierarchical, you know, it appears in all different ways within a team and in a community. And I think moments like this create opportunities for leadership to influence all of us.

Jen: That was really powerful. I think one other thing that I would add to that is trusting that your colleagues and coworkers are getting their work done too, and in a way that works for them and they are going to deliver on what it is that they need to deliver. Holding that trust close and making sure that they know you trust them as well.

Annie: Jen, you know, I've been, I've been thinking about you a lot over the past couple of days as I've been...seriously. You know, I'm like, on my laptop at a late hour and I think of you and the permission that I have to go to sleep because we all really need to protect our health and wellness right now. I have your voice in the back of my head as I'm thinking about my own well-being and the way that I protect it. I would love to flip some questions back to you and hear just sort of the well-being perspective in general so I can keep using

you as a good excuse. What impact do you think remote work will have on people's physical health?

Jen: So, good question. And I think we've talked about this a little bit already. the real need to create boundaries. I got an email from a colleague late last week that said "I sat down at my computer at 7:30 AM and I was on back to back to back to back calls and I didn't get up really until about 8:00 PM. What advice can you give me?" And so, this is where being intentional about what our days and our weeks looks like, and sticking to those things, like they are the most important things in your calendar. Like you said, with your children, if you have children, put that in your calendar so the time is blocked and hold to those boundaries, because if you don't hold to those boundaries, then no one else is going to hold for them, either. And that's not because they don't care. But it's because you are responsible for setting those boundaries. That doesn't mean you can't be flexible. Sometimes. I'm not saying 100% of the time it's going to work perfectly. It's absolutely not. working remotely, there's not those natural breaks in the day that you might've had. so, what I tell people is use the time that maybe you would have had for commute time to exercise or to meditate Don't just dive into your day because it's easy to dive into your day, because your computer and everything is set up right there, because the work will suck you in. sitting all day, we've all heard sitting is the new smoking. Being in front of a screen all day without stepping away, without getting some fresh air. All of those things are really important. And, so stick to those things like they are the most important things on your calendar because they are, because right now and going forward, we all need to take care of ourselves. Self-care is not selfish. And to really build that resilience muscle that we all need to build right now, very quickly.

Annie: We talked about physical health and we've referenced this a little bit, sort of the impact that physical distancing may have on people's mental health, but how are you thinking about the broader impacts there? And do you have any suggestions about how to combat that impact?

Jen: Yeah, so mental health in the face of COVID and depending on how long this goes on for, I personally am more concerned about the mental health impacts than the physical health impacts. I think physical distancing, social isolation, especially for those that live and work alone now, as time goes on is going to get more and more difficult. And so, this is something that's actually keeping me up at night right now. In terms of how we can combat it, first of all, I would say give yourself permission to feel anxious, to feel worried, to feel not like your usual self because, because all of us are experiencing that. Recognizing that, right now in these times, that's normal. if the anxiety, if the worry becomes persistent, if it keeps you from engaging in your work, if it keeps you from getting out of bed. I mean, I'm a huge sleep advocate, but you know, a sign of depression is sleeping too much. So just being aware of what these signs and signals are. I said it before: ask for help. There are so many resources that are being brought forward right now. I mean, there's so much social good that's going on right now, which I think is such a positive outcome. Reach out to family, reach out to loved ones. If you need professional help, seek out professional help. And don't wait and don't feel ashamed because human beings, we're made for social interaction, right? A lot of the things that are going on right now, the economic impacts, people that we know and love, even ourselves, are being impacted financially. We know that, even prior to COVID, financial stress was one of the number one drivers of the impact to our mental health. And so that has become even more exacerbated. don't wait. If you're feeling any of these things, seek out help now, ask for help. Call a friend, call a loved one, other things that you can do, get OK with just being right now., be okay with being still, be okay with sitting back and reading a book, don't feel like you have to be doing and solving

all of the time because that can mask what's actually going on with your mental health. this is hard, but as human beings, we can also do hard things. Looking for hope, creating hope, reaching out, I mean, please, please, please reach out if you need help. I can't stress that enough.

Annie: It's so refreshing to hear that because I think so many of us are putting one foot in front of the other and just to remind ourselves that it's okay to acknowledge when things aren't going well and to have you kind of verbalize that is really powerful. When you're thinking about finding a way in the face of the fact that we were just talking about the impact of physical distancing, how do you maintain a sense of authentic human connection even when you're in this distributed or virtual environment?

Jen: So, you know, those that are listeners that have been listening for a while or that know me know that I have historically regularly talked about creating boundaries around how we use our technology and how we consume content. And while I still stand by those things, I think now more than ever, it's really important to put boundaries around how we consume our content, especially if it's the news cycle, we're living in amazing times because our technology tools are what is allowing us to maintain the sense of authentic human connection. I kind of shied away from doing video meetings because I had this view in my head that I needed to get dressed for that. Right. What we're seeing now is that people are showing up as they are. I joined a video call with my team. They asked me if I could make a certain time and I said, yeah, I can make it, but I'll just be coming back from working out. So, you're going to get me with headband on, you know, sweaty, and I'll probably be eating a snack. And there's some beauty in that because that's real life. That's, who we are. There are puppies barking in the background. There are kittens meowing in the background. There are kids playing in the background. we're giving each other freedom to not have to conform to those norms that we previously had, which I think is really cool because, like you said before, it's giving everybody a window into who we are, right? We're not all showing up as our polished selves like we probably did before. I think right now more than ever, it's important to, to laugh and to find joy in things. And you know, deep belly laughs. I was on a call with a colleague the other day and I can't even remember what we were talking about, but you know, I said something and then he said something and then the two of us just laughed out loud, you know, for three minutes. I mean, just like, we got the giggles, right? And at the end of that, I think we took a collective deep breath and said, wow, we needed that. And so, times are heavy right now, but it's okay to find joy and it's okay to laugh. And we need that. I think bringing that to one another is also something that's really important to maintaining human connection.

Annie: Where have you struggled most with your own well-being?

Jen: Good question. I feel like honestly, I'm struggling all over the place these days. I think the area that I have struggled with the most more recently, which is very problematic for me, is actually my sleep. My sleep has been disrupted and erratic. Disrupted by thoughts and worries and anxiety. Um, and so, I do have a pretty significant bedtime ritual, giving myself actually more time for that. Starting it earlier, trying to kind of clear out my day and the things that are worrying me, writing things down and journaling has become huge for me. I kind of on-and-off journal. I think journaling right now is a really good release for people, journaling before bed. Gratitude is also a great practice. The science behind gratitude is incredibly powerful. Thinking about and writing down what we're grateful for before bed can allow you to go to sleep in a more positive state and get rid of some of the worry out of your head. The other place I'm struggling right now, which I think we probably

all are, is empathy and compassion. A heightened sense of anxiety, a lot going on. Lots of requests on my time and people needing things in different ways than they have before. And, also, people that are wanting to help, that are reaching out with the greatest good. I'm getting frustrated with myself because I don't have that capacity and the bandwidth to always respond. I've found myself being kind of shorter with people than I normally would or that I would like to be in this time. I think being hypersensitive, taking a few deep breaths, and realize that everybody's doing the best that they can right now, including myself. So, being forgiving to myself but also when I don't show up the way that I want to show up, I am very intentional about going back to that person. Probably especially my husband, because I think the people closest to us often unfortunately get the worst of us at the end of a long day or the end of a long week. And asking for forgiveness and acknowledging and being aware that I didn't show up the way that I wanted to show up and that I'm trying my best and that, too, creates human connection because quite frankly, everybody's going through that right now. Everybody goes through that on normal days, right? But it's, everything is heightened right now. And so, giving yourself permission to not always be at your best, which is hard because we want to show up at our best for the people that we love, but you know, asking for that forgiveness and acknowledging that you weren't your best. There are just multiple benefits to that. So those are some things that are going on with me in my life and my struggle to maintain my well-being during these times.

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