

WorkWell

A Deloitte podcast series to empower your well-being



Practicing the Skill of Happiness

The pursuit of happiness is universal, but do we really understand what happiness means? Happiness isn't the absence of negative emotions and neither is it persistent unfaltering positivity.

This is the WorkWell podcast series. Hi, I'm Jen Fisher, Chief Well-being Officer for Deloitte and I'm so pleased to be here with you today to talk about all things well-being.

Jen Fisher: I'm here with Nataly Kogan. She's the co-founder and CEO of Happier, where they believe happiness is not just a feeling, but a skill that we can all learn and improve through practice. Nataly immigrated to the projects of Detroit from the former Soviet Union when she was 13 years old and worked her way to corporate success, holding top positions in various consulting firms, launching her own publishing company, writing a book, founding an online community for working mothers, and much, much more. Despite this incredible success, she found herself unfulfilled. What followed was a path of scientific research that proved to her and others that happiness is a non-negotiable ingredient in a fulfilling, meaningful, and healthy life. We are thrilled to have her on the WorkWell podcast to share with us her discoveries on happiness. Nataly, welcome to the show.

Nataly Kogan: This is not anything I ever thought I would do with my life. I came to the US as a refugee from the former Soviet Union when I was a teenager. And you know, we began our American dream in the projects outside of Detroit. I spoke almost no English. And so, I start there because it was a really difficult, traumatic experience and I felt really overwhelmed with all the difficult emotions. And I said, okay, I need to feel the opposite. I want to really feel good. And I thought that I could get to the land of happiness if I just worked hard enough, achieved a lot, made myself perfect enough to care for my family. And for 20 years, that's what I did. And I did work very, very hard. This word grit, you know, that's become very popular. I kind of embodied it. That was my survival mechanism and I worked really hard and I did achieve a lot of wonderful things. All of them. I'm very proud of both, career-wise and my family, but what I kept learning was every time I achieved something, while I did feel happy for a while, eventually the happiness bubble would just pop. And because I equated happiness with achievement, I decided that just meant I didn't work hard enough. I didn't achieve enough. So I pushed myself more. I slept less. The idea of taking breaks or being kind to myself was absolutely ridiculous. And after about 20 years of running at this pace, I completely burnt out. It was bigger than that. I still don't have quite the right words. It was a really dark, very challenging time in my life. And I knew I had to find a different way to live. I'm a mom, my daughter is 15 now. She was a little bit younger and I didn't want to give up, but I knew I had to find a different way to live. And so I started to do research. My father is a scientist so I have great respect for science. So, I started researching ways to fuel my emotional health and happiness and well-being, and everything I learned ran counter to everything I thought I knew. And I know we'll

talk about it, but that's how my journey brought me from a media and tech executive to someone who had completely burnt out. And I had to learn from scratch. When I started to learn these skills and I started to look at the research and actually practice it and see the benefits in my own life, I knew that I had to quit whatever else I was doing and dedicate my life to sharing these science-backed skills with others, because if they can work for me, I know they can help so many people.

Jen: Let's dig into that because I think many people, including myself for a very long time, hold the false belief that happiness is really the absence of negative emotions. But you have a better definition of happiness. Can you share that with us?

Nataly: Yes, absolutely. And I'm so, I'm so grateful you're starting there because there are kind of a few critical mindset shifts that I made on my journey that allowed me to transform how I live. And that was one of them. It was recognizing that happiness does not come when everything is perfect. And happiness does not mean that you're positive all the time. True, genuine happiness is about embracing our life as it is with all of its imperfections and challenges. And within that, practicing our gratitude and kindness and awareness to find those moments of presence. And my very simple short definition is that happiness doesn't mean you're positive all the time, it means you'll learn how to embrace all of your different feelings as a human being. The easy ones, the pleasant ones, as well as the difficult ones. And you'll notice that I actually try really hard to not use the word negative feelings because, I know I did. I'm incredibly lucky to have a chance to work with hundreds of thousands of people. So I really have a big sample set. As you said, so many people, we spend so much of our emotional energy sorting emotions. You know, these are the positive ones. I want to feel these. These are the negative ones. I shouldn't feel them or let me try to run away from them. But as you probably know, research actually shows that when you allow yourself to feel a difficult feeling, stress, sadness, anxiety, worry, fear, whatever that is, all of these emotions we're all feeling right now. When you allow yourself to feel it without telling yourself you shouldn't feel it or coping by ignoring it, you actually feel that emotion for a shorter amount of time and you feel it with less intensity. And that is because, as Carl Jung, a famous psychologist and psychotherapist said, "That which you resist, persists." When we resist our difficult feelings, when we try really, really, really hard as I used to, to not feel them because we're afraid that we'll get stuck in them. That's the number one reason why people don't allow themselves to embrace the difficult feelings. But when we resist them, we actually spend a lot of energy fighting with our feelings, fighting with our reality, which actually prevents us from moving through them.

Jen: Wow. So that, I mean, it's hard to not reflect on what you just said and think about what we're going through right now with the coronavirus pandemic and this global sadness and fear and anxiety and all of these negative emotions. It can feel, especially for me, I mean, I almost feel guilty right now feeling happy or seeking happiness. Talk to me a little bit about that.

Nataly: Yes. I'm loving your questions, Jen. I just have to tell you, I'm so grateful, truly, for your thoughtful questions. It's such a gift in any interview. So, thank you. It's such a relevant question. It's been coming up so much, I cannot tell you. This is probably the second most common question I get right now. When this lockdown started, I started doing virtual sessions for teams and companies and also pro bono for the medical community. And this has been coming, actually, so we've been doing a lot of pro bono sessions for doctors and, if you can believe it, these are doctors on the front lines of fighting coronavirus. Like, these are doctors. I did a session yesterday, people came from the ICU. I was humbled to a degree I cannot describe, and they are the ones asking this question. You would think that they wouldn't feel guilty for finding moments of joy. They are out there dealing with the sadness and the loss and the challenge, but it's coming up a lot. And so, I want to give some really tangible answers. And the

first thing I just want to say, guilt is something that is so familiar to me. You know, I am willing to say that as a Russian Jew, I got the guilt thing down and I actually spent most of my life believing that feeling guilt is a good sign. Like, if I feel guilty it means I'm doing something valuable. And so, one of the first things I want to say is the question that I would offer to anyone who may say, or like you said, you're feeling guilty for feeling joy: Is guilt helpful to anyone? This is the question that I asked myself when I get into that headspace. Is feeling guilty helping anyone? Does that help me be a better mom? Does it help me be a better colleague? Does it help me do better work? Does that guilt help me help people who are struggling more? No, it doesn't. Guilt is an emotion that actually the only function of guilt is it feeds our ego and our ego loves to help us suffer. And so, that's one of the first questions to just help think about it. But the other thing and perhaps the more important message, and again this was also a huge shift for me, it was even on the journey that I briefly talked about on my own journey while I was trying to feel good, I also always had this voice in my head of like, it's so selfish to care about your own happiness. There are people in your family who have bigger problems. You should be helping people out there in the world. And here is what helped me is the understanding that we share whatever emotions we have with other people. Human beings are connected. We all sense how we feel and our emotions are contagious, the difficult ones and the positive ones. So if we are harboring the guilt, if we're beating ourselves up, that is what we're sharing with others. That is what we're bringing to our families, our colleagues, everyone we interact with. When we cultivate our well-being, our joy, our happiness, that is what we're bringing to others. So, the question, the other question I would want to ask anyone who is feeling guilty about cultivating their well-being is, what emotions do you want to spread to other people right now? What kind of contagion do you want to create emotionally and that recognition. And there's so much research on that. One of the preeminent scientists, Dr. Nicholas Christakis. He is, probably one of the top scientists (he's at Yale now) who has studied how emotions spread, how behaviors spread. He's actually done some groundbreaking work on the coronavirus spread. He's got this incredible Ted talk that I recommend about how happiness spreads. So, he and his colleagues have studied this. And when you feel happier, your friends feel happier, your family feels happier, you spread that to your colleagues. And I feel that at this time we're all dealing with so much challenge and overwhelm that it is our responsibility to cultivate our well-being so we can bring that to others. Not only is it not something we should be guilty about, but I raise it to a degree that we are responsible for cultivating our own well-being so that that is what we spread to other people.

Jen: Okay. Well I promise you I'm no longer going to feel guilty about finding happiness and joy right now. And I heard you use happiness and joy. It seems like you're using them interchangeably or are they the same thing or are they different?

Nataly: You know, people have asked me that and I try to not dig into words and pick apart. I'm more interested in kind of, I think we all know when we feel it. Do you know what I mean? So, the way I define happiness, I really think of it, the umbrella term is well-being, and happiness is part of it and joy is part of it and embracing our difficult emotions is part of it. And so to me, I think joy perhaps is more momentary. But the other thing I want to say about happiness, which is really important and again for me was one of those powerful mindset shifts is: I consider happiness not as a feeling, not a state of being, but a skill that you can practice. And when I shifted my understanding of happiness that way, it shifted everything for me because again, I used to think of it as a destination. I could achieve my way into or, to be honest, I thought some people were just lucky, right? They just felt happy and I could never feel it, but that's actually scientifically incorrect, right? Research shows that we all have what's called a happiness baseline. So, it's like, it's on our U curve, like many things. Some people are happier naturally than others. My husband, whenever I mention this, I use him as an example. He's one of those people like you could have a really bad day and he wakes up the next morning and he's kind of content.

Like we all know people like that in our lives. And sometimes that drives me crazy, but mostly I'm very grateful. That is my counterpart. My happiness baseline is so low. Like I'm pointing at my floor right now, right? Like I come from a tradition of guilt and suffering. And so my natural baseline is very low. But the awesome news, and this is the empowering news, is our happiness baseline is only responsible for 50% of how we feel. The other 50% is within our control. And this is why I encourage all of you and you, Jen, to think of your happiness as a skill that you practice. Not a destination, not a feeling, but a skill. Because to me that is so empowering because that just means if I feel down, I can do certain things to feel better. Like any skill, it meets you where you are. And so to me that for me was perhaps the most powerful mindset shift that encouraged me to actually learn the happier skills, incorporate these daily practices. And I'll tell you right now, we're going through, as you said, such a challenging time. I, like everyone else, I have bad days, I have better days. But knowing that I have this toolkit, knowing that my well-being, my happiness is a skill that I can practice so if I'm having a bad day I just need to practice more, has been a really huge help for me.

Jen: Wow. Thank you. First of all, I feel like you were describing my husband and me when you were talking about happiness, so I totally feel you there. Tell me, what are some things that you do or that everybody can do to develop this happiness skill or to cultivate this happiness skill?

Nataly: So, there are five core skills that I've developed that I teach. We call it the Happier Method and I'll just describe them briefly and give a tangible thing for each one, because I think that'll be the most of service to everyone listening. The first is the skill of acceptance. And this is something I think that is non-negotiable to practice right now. The skill of acceptance is learning how to look at how things are and how you feel with clarity instead of judgment. And then using that as your starting point to say what is one small thing I can do to honor this moment? To maybe help myself, help my team, help my colleagues and witnessing our feelings, allowing ourselves to actually feel the difficult feelings, not feeling like we need to shift out of them. Acceptance is also about not getting stuck in the should. So, anytime you have should, should is your shorthand for judgment. I shouldn't feel this way. That shouldn't be happening this way. This person shouldn't be doing this. In some way, we're all in this, it shouldn't be like this situation right now, right? We should not be in a global pandemic. But the more that we get stuck in the should, the more emotional energy we waste. And so, the skill of acceptance is really about saying this is how things are, acknowledging the facts instead of getting caught in the judgment. This is how I feel. What is one small thing that I can do to honor this moment? And one of the most tangible ways I offer. So, these are the two steps that I encourage you to practice. And these days I practice this like 20 times a day, because there's a lot of challenges and it's also an incredibly powerful skill to practice with others. One of the most frequent other questions I've been getting recently is, you know, I have a colleague or a loved one who is struggling. How do I help them? We all have a tendency from love. We want to cheer them up. We want to fix the problem. But the biggest gift we can give people who are overwhelmed or struggling is acceptance, is to allow them to feel what they feel and to let them know that it's okay to not feel okay. Because when we give them the opportunity to be present with their feelings, it's easier for them to identify that one small thing they can do. So that's the first skill. The second is the skill of gratitude. Um, and I think we all know what gratitude is. I define it as zooming in on something that is good in your life, even when things are challenging and sharing your appreciation with others. The only thing I want to say about gratitude is you cannot overdo it on gratitude right now. Gratitude is one of the most powerful sources of resilience. There's 11,000 plus research studies that show that when you practice gratitude, it reduces stress. It reduces anxiety, it even helps you sleep better. And I'll offer my favorite gratitude practice – three gratitudes before your first email or your first news article of the day. Before you open your email, before you read your first news article, can you jot down three specific things you're grateful for. The smaller, the better, the more

specific, the better. Maybe it's your first email of the day is to your colleagues or your friends: Three things I'm grateful for. Maybe it's something you say to your family, but when you do that to begin your day, it's like a primer for your brain. It actually helps to center you in a more positive energy before it gets taken over by negative news or, you know, the email suck. So, that's a skill of gratitude. The third is intentional kindness. And when I often talk about kindness, people are kind of surprised like, well we all know we should be kind. It's kind of funny to talk about as a skill, but I'm not asking you to feel kind, I'm asking you to actually practice it intentionally, daily. Especially right now when so many of us are isolated and really seeking that sense of connection. The best way to cultivate it is by doing something with the intention to support and elevate another person and not expect anything in return. And my favorite kindness practice right now is check-in. It's the simplest thing, but I cannot tell you how powerful it's been and from how many people I've heard who are practicing it to say, it was the smallest thing, but it was so powerful. Pick a person every day that you check in with. I suggest you do it on video or via phone call, but you can also do it by text or email. But checking in has two steps. One is you ask the person how they're doing and without an agenda, without making it about work. And the second piece is the most essential is that you listen, you listen with your full attention, your full heart, your full open mind. It is one of the biggest kindness gifts we can give to people right now. So, that's your kindness practice that you can practice is checking in. The fourth skill is what I call the bigger why. And that is connecting to your sense of purpose but not in the abstract, but by connecting how things you do daily help someone else. So, we all derive a sense of meaning when we connect, how what we are doing, our strength and how are they impacting other people, how are they helping someone else? And my favorite, it's actually a wonderful skill to cultivate right now because it's really hard to get motivated these days. As we've been working with folks in companies and teams, this comes up a lot. I'm having a hard time feeling motivated, the world is going through so much. I call this practice a to-do list makeover. Look at your to-do list, pick a couple tasks. If you have a task that you really don't feel like doing or it's been there for a while, that's a good one. Ask yourself, who does this help? And actually, answer the question. Some of them, the answer is easy. Some of them you really have to think about it, but who does it help? A colleague, a customer, another teammate, somebody in your family – who does that help? Because in that answer, connecting that task to how it's helping someone is your sense of purpose, and research shows it increases your motivation and actually helps you to be more resilient. And the fifth skill that I really encourage folks to practice, especially right now is the skill of self-care. And I know Jen, I, as I shared all your posts and encouragement about it, I define self-care as the skill of cultivating a kinder friendship with yourself. I think for most of my life, I never bothered asking a question of what kind of relationship do I have with myself. I never asked myself this question. But the reality is that is perhaps our most important relationship because the way you treat others is rooted in the way that you treat yourself. And, if we are harsh toward ourselves, if we're beating ourselves up, if we're never taking a rest, that is the anxious, stressful energy that we share with others. And so, one of the best ways right now, particularly to practice self-care, is to take short breaks during the day. Even a 10-minute break, research shows, boosts your mood, reduces stress, allows you to actually refocus on your work. I call them little 10-minute self-care resets. And if I could encourage everyone to schedule it on your calendar, so what makes it on my calendar becomes more real. It elevates it to the other meetings and calls. Schedule a 10-minute self-care reset on your calendar. When that time comes, just take a breath and ask yourself, what is something that's fueling or restful that I can do for 10 minutes and do that thing for your break.

Jen: Yeah, I love it. I encourage the same, I call them microsteps and so it doesn't have to be a big, big effort. But you know, just reflecting on a couple of the things that you said in particular, gratitude and kindness and what I love about both gratitude and kindness is that the research shows, not only does it benefit the person that you are sharing gratitude or kindness toward, but it benefits you. And so the

benefit is kind of all the way around, right? And so, it elevates everybody and elevates their happiness and well-being in addition to yours. And so I'm a huge fan of both of those.

Nataly: It's actually even bigger than that. Research shows that when we observe an act of kindness, even if we're not part of it, we are more likely to feel good and do something kind. So the waves ripple even beyond the people involved.

Jen: I want to shift gears and we talked a little bit about, I think you're calling them difficult emotions as opposed to negative emotions, but what is the role of things like failure or the role of things like sadness when it comes to our happiness?

Nataly: It's an awesome question. One of the ways that I like to think about it is our emotions are giving us information that we can learn from if we can just approach them again with clarity and not judgment. Allowing ourselves to acknowledge our emotions teaches us something, right? If you are feeling sad and you allow yourself to feel sad, you may learn something. Maybe there is something you can shift. Maybe there's something you can do to feel less sad in the future. Right? It's the same with failure, you know? I'm an entrepreneur. I've been an entrepreneur for 10 years, so failure is kind of par for the course. We all have failure in life, but entrepreneurs in particular, it just comes with the territory. And it's hard. Failure is hard. I just want to say that I feel like it's become a little glorified. It's really hard to fail. There's just a lot of inner criticism that comes with that, disappointing people. It's really, really hard. But the more that we can look at failure as something to learn from versus something to judge, the stronger and better we become. And again, it comes to acceptance. It's not an easy thing to practice, but it's incredibly powerful. If you look at your emotions as information that you can learn from, I think the difficult emotions play a role in our lives. And the other thing that I think is really important to recognize about difficult emotions is they make us human. As human beings, we are not meant to feel good all the time. There's a reason we feel all these difficult things. Research shows that people who have the highest life satisfaction over their lifetime are the people that experienced the greatest variety of emotions. Those are the people that experienced the full range of human emotions, including the difficult ones. I think that part of the role of difficult emotions is also to help us appreciate the easier ones, the more positive ones. It's the saying there is no light without darkness. If we never had a sense of loss, if we never felt sad, how would we know when we feel joyful?

Jen: That's something that my husband actually always says to me and we already talked about his baseline being way higher than mine. So perhaps I should start listening to him more often. Just don't tell him that! Another question for you is, is there such a thing as being too happy or trying too hard to be happy?

Nataly: So, it's a great question. I think one of the things, trying to be happy and this is why I reframe happiness as a skill, trying to achieve a permanent feeling of like euphoric happiness, which is what I thought I would get to if I just like made myself perfect enough or worked hard enough. Well, there is something wrong with that, because it's just not possible. It is just not possible. Life will never be perfect. It's just not how we are. And speaking of the human brain, our brain is incredibly adaptive. The reason I mentioned that is because we may achieve all the things we want and we feel good for a while, but then our brain gets used to them and it becomes the new normal and they're no longer bringing us happiness. So, just the way that we are as human beings, it's not possible to get to some state of euphoria. And so, I think this is what stopped me. I think this is one of the biggest traps that people fall into, that I was in this thinking that once I just do enough or make myself perfect enough or do XYZ, like I'll feel good all the time. I think that's a trap. It's like this, I call it in my book, the curse in the moving

baseline. It just keeps moving. But on the flip side, cultivating your happier skills, cultivating your well-being. I think it's one of the greatest responsibilities we have as human beings because research shows that people who are happier, people who cultivate well-being are more productive, they're less anxious and stressed. They make for better teammates at work, they are more resilient. They're more likely to help others. They donate more money, they volunteer more time. I can keep going on and on and on. The ultimate headline there is that when you cultivate your happiness and well-being, you allow yourself to be at your best in every other part of your life. And so the question that I ask folks, you know, when I speak, I say, I put up this list of all these different research proven benefits and I say, maybe happiness is important to you. Maybe it's not. Let's put it aside for a moment. Is there something that I've listed that is important to you? Helping other people more or having more, stronger relationships or being more successful or being a better problem solver. Is one of those things important to you? Research shows that if you cultivate your happiness, you're better at that thing. And so, our well-being, I think it's wonderful to actually feel good, but I think it's even more important to recognize that our cultivating our happiness and well-being is really essential if we want to be at our best at work and in life.

Jen: You touched on this a little bit, but what would you tell people who you know are waiting for that perfect moment to be happy and it kind of seems like the story arc of your life and your career, right? It was when I achieve this, I'll be happy. Or when I do this, I'll be happy. What would you tell people that kind of have that mindset?

Nataly: It's that "I'll be happy when..." trap. It's so easy to get caught up in it. It's a story that our brain tells. I actually want to share a quick story that, to me, just has the wisdom and the answer. I mentioned we came to the US as refugees. We spent a couple months in refugee settlements in Europe applying for permission to come. And the first settlement was in Vienna, Austria, where we lived in this kind of really disgusting, dilapidated building with a bunch of other Russian Jewish refugees. And my father, who is my hero, who was a brilliant, brilliant scientist, but he got a job at night unloading crates at a local fruit market just to make like a couple extra dollars for food because we had almost no money. And one morning he comes back and he and my mom and I shared this tiny, tiny room, the three of us and he walks in, he's all like dirty, you know, smelling. He goes, "Girls, we are going to go see the Vienna Opera House today because it's gorgeous and they have free tours." And my mom was like, yeah, great. And I remember I looked at him and I said, "You are crazy. We are in this disgusting place. We have no money. We don't even know if we'll get to the United States and you want to go sightseeing?" And I'll never forget what he said. You know, it was one of those moments in slow motion. He looked at me and he said, "You're absolutely right. Life is awful right now. Awful. But we have a choice. We can either wallow in the awfulness or we can do something together as a family. We can go look at something beautiful and we can enjoy that moment together." Now if you think that, I was like, oh, great advice. Absolutely not. Okay. There's absolutely no way. I mean at 13 you're not allowed to agree with your parents. I was just not willing. So I went. I mean, I didn't have a choice. I had to go. So, we went to the opera house and in line to get the free tickets to go in, my dad befriended this gentleman who offered to buy us all ice cream afterwards. So, here is the scene. We're outside of the Vienna opera house, he bought us ice cream at this beautiful cafe. Like, we don't have enough money for food. And here we are enjoying this gorgeous day, beautiful ice cream and there's a picture of our family that day and everyone in it is smiling because it was such an incredible moment of kindness, right? And my face, I cut it out of the picture a couple of years after we came to the US because I couldn't stand the look of just suffering and struggle because, I, Jen, could not allow myself to enjoy that moment because I believed that you only feel good when you make everything perfect and nothing was perfect. So, I refused to allow myself to find joy in this moment. And I share this story because I've been thinking about it so much these days when so much in our lives is imperfect in every way. So many people are struggling and there are

challenges all the time that it is really easy to kind of give up on feeling okay or good or joyful and to say like, I'll only be happy when this is over or I'll only be happy when I know my family, everyone's fine, or I'll only be happy when I know there's no more uncertainty. Right? Because that's what we're saying when we say I'll be happy when. We're defining conditions for our happiness. And so, I know it's so easy right now to be in the future, to be in the, I'll be happy when, particularly in this challenge. And I share this story to encourage everyone to recognize that by practicing gratitude and kindness and acceptance and the bigger why and self-care and finding those moments of goodness in our lives as imperfect as they are, that is our fuel to keep going. That is actually the source of our resilience, which is the lesson my father was trying to teach me 30 years ago.

Jen: I was going to say maybe that was a foreshadowing of your future work and research into happiness. You know, this is the WorkWell podcast, so I do need to talk about the workplace. What's the biggest obstacle that you've seen in your work related to happiness in the workplace? Because I feel like historically, you know, people don't go to work to be happy, right? That's not what work is about. Work is about work. And more recently, I have, thankfully, seen that shift. So, what do you think the obstacles are to happiness in the workplace? And do you get any kind of pushback when you're talking about this?

Nataly: Yes. I'll take the second part first, Jen. The answer is yes and that's what I do for a living, right? I teach emotional health skills to leaders, to teams, to companies. I talk to companies all the time and yes, there are many, many leaders, many, many companies who look at me like I'm crazy. Even with all this research that I bring, even with all this research that's been published everywhere, and I feel like we have a mountain of research because they kind of look at, well, happiness and well-being of employees, like, yeah, what does that have to do, like that is not my responsibility at work. So absolutely get a lot of pushback. I try to approach it with compassion. Maybe it's why we get to work with so many great companies because I used to be that person. I used to be that executive. I used to be that person who would think that it's absolutely ridiculous to talk about happiness at work. You should talk about revenue and success and achievement and motivation, right? So, I really understand, and I try to counter that with research and that is kind of the best tool that I have. To the first part of your question of the biggest impediment to happiness at work, I really believe that it is our, I guess the word assumption I would use, that when we come to work somehow, we chop off a piece of our humanity. Like somehow when we come to work and become employees, we can put away any of our human emotions and become robots or something. I think the biggest impediment to happiness at work is not recognizing that we are not employees, we are human beings. And the same human being who had a stressful morning at home is coming to work. And that stress does not get left behind the door. That's stress as part of that human. The same human being who had quite a wonderful morning with their family or because they exercise, then it fuels them or because they meditated and, and fuels them is now coming to work with better ability to get their work done. And so, to me, recognizing that we are humans first and employees, managers, leaders, teammates, that's just a function that we fulfill, is the core to shifting our recognition of why employee happiness and well-being is absolutely essential. And it's that recognition that as human beings, we have feelings, we have emotions, and we don't leave them at the door when we come to work. And you know what, you mentioned, there's a shift. I'm seeing it, too. This might sound really weird, but in this crisis, I am seeing more and more companies shift from looking at well-being of employees as a nice to have to a must have. And it feels weird to celebrate that, but I celebrate that and I always want to highlight those companies because I think what we're learning in a challenging time is that unless we invest in the happiness and well-being of ourselves at work, we are truly not able to get through the inevitable challenges and change. We're in a huge challenge, but there are challenges all the time. Actually, the next book that I've started just working on, the working title is, "Struggle as Optional" and it's a guide for how to help you get through challenges at work with a little

more ease and less burnout and even some joy. And I think this is the lesson that so many companies are learning right now. So, if there is a silver lining to this crisis, that is absolutely one of them.

Jen: I keep saying the same thing. So, you were speaking my language and I feel incredibly fortunate and grateful to work for an organization that has been investing in the well-being of our people for quite a while now. There is a quote that for your new book that I was just reminded of by an author named Haruki Murakami and he says, "Pain is inevitable. Suffering is optional." It's one of my favorite quotes of all time and he's fantastic. I love his books.

Jen: In challenging times, happiness is not a luxury. It's a necessity. I'm so grateful Nataly could be with us today to share strategies on cultivating and sharing happiness. Thank you to our producers and our listeners. You can find the WorkWell podcast series on deloitte.com or you can visit various podcatchers using the keyword WorkWell, all one word, to hear more. And if you like the show, don't forget to subscribe so you get all of our future episodes. If you have a topic you'd like to hear on the WorkWell podcast series or maybe a story you would like to share, please reach out to me on LinkedIn. My profile is under the name Jen Fisher or on Twitter @Jenfish23. We're always open to your recommendations and feedback, and of course, if you like what you hear, please share, post, and like this podcast. Thank you and be well.

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