

WorkWell

A Deloitte podcast series to empower your well-being



Beating burnout with Paula Davis

Jen Fisher (Jen): Hi WorkWell listeners. I'm really excited to share that my book, *Work Better Together*, is officially out. Conversations with WorkWell guests and feedback from listeners like you inspired this book. It's all about how to create a more human-centered workplace. And as we return to the office for many of us, this book can help you move forward with strategies and tools to strengthen your relationships and focus on your well-being. It's available from your favorite book retailer.

I would not be hosting this podcast today if it wasn't for my experience with burnout. Experiencing burnout was one of the hardest challenges I had to overcome in my life, but it was also one of the most impactful. It helped me define well-being for myself. It helped me discover my true passion, and it completely changed my career path, but you shouldn't have to go through the pain of burnout to be able to accomplish those things. With self-awareness, strong social connections, and resilient skills, you can avoid burnout and be your best self in work and in life.

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.

I'm here with Paula Davis. She's a former practicing lawyer and a stress and resilience expert who has taught and coached resiliency and burnout prevention skills to thousands of professionals worldwide. Paula is the founder and CEO of the Stress & Resilience Institute and the author of *Beating Burnout at Work: Why Teams Hold the Secret to Well-Being and Resilience*.

Paula, welcome to the show.

Paula Davis (Paula): Thank you so much, Jen. I'm so excited to talk to you.

Jen: I am excited to talk to you too about a topic that is near and dear to my heart. So what prompted you to focus on resilience and burnout? I know you're a former lawyer, so I suspect like me, there's a personal story there.

Paula: Absolutely a personal story there. In fact, I burned out during what became the last year of my law practice. And of all the things that I thought might curtail or end my law practice, burnout was definitely not something that was on my radar. I really didn't even know what it was. I think at the time it was happening to me, I simply just knew that I wasn't able to or feeling like I could manage stress in

the same way that I had at other points in my career. And so, seven years into my law practice, I had certainly experienced stress in other parts of my work, but this was definitely something different, and I didn't know what it was, and I always tell people that burnout exists on a spectrum just like stress. And so reflecting now on it, when I started to feel burned out, it was more like I'd roll into work a little bit later, I stopped having lunches with my colleagues as much, I'd check out of the holiday parties sooner than I typically would, and things like that. And by the time it ended, I was having panic attacks on a very regular basis and I was in the emergency room twice because of stomach aches that I was experiencing from the stress. And so, everybody's journey through burnout is different, but having experienced the entire spectrum of it, I feel like it gives me a little bit of a unique perspective, but that was really what prompted me to want to go back. And I can't say I found the Positive Psychology Program at Penn because I wanted to study burnout. I really wanted to dig into the opposite. I wanted to, from a scientific standpoint, be able to guide individuals and teams and leaders and organizations into how to establish more of a positive culture, how to establish the right environment or framework or use the right tools to help people not have to get to that point. And so during the course of my studies, that's really where the idea of resilience came into play for me, so just like with burnout, my whole world was LA, and so I knew what resilience was kind of, but I didn't really know the extent of the body of science behind it. And so, when we started to learn about that science, I just felt deeply connected to it because I thought, wow, like I don't know if this would have prevented my burnout, but it's sure as heck would have helped me in a whole host of ways understand how I was processing stress and what I could have done to get better at it. And so, I've been really excited about how the science around resilience has been developing to include teams and organizations and other aspects of the system, so that's what prompted me to get to get into it.

Jen: There has been a lot of talk about both burnout and resilience. I feel like I hear those words on a daily basis, and we're certainly talking about it more, reading about it more, and before the pandemic, I mean the World Health Organization finally kind of acknowledged and deemed burnout as a real psychological issue like it's a real thing, validated it for us, if we needed that, but I feel like there's still a lot of mystery or myth around burnout. You talk about people saying, "oh! I'm so burned out" or "I'm feeling burned out." How do you define burnout? And then like you talk about it as a spectrum, so can you walk us through that spectrum and then can you talk about the difference between stress and like real true burnout?

Paula: Sure, and I think there's a lot of mystery still honestly around both resilience and burnout.

Jen: Agreed, so we can go there too.

Paula: I loved this question for that reason because I think that that's one of the things that has happened over the course of the pandemic and what happens generally because we don't have necessarily always the vocabulary to explain exactly what we're feeling, and I think a lot of people may have been like me where you're just sort of off. You feel different, but you're not sure what to call it. And so, we just tend to think about stress and burnout as being interchangeable words, and they're not. So I defined burnout as the manifestation of chronic workplace stress, and so chronic being a very key word. So it's more often than not over a period of time you're experiencing the dimensions that I'm going to talk about in a second. And that workplace is also a key component to this discussion because we tend to apply the word burnout to every aspect of stress or just feeling tired or off in our lives. And it's one of the things that the World Health Organization was keen to make aware... to add is that if we're talking about burnout, we're really talking about something that has a workplace component or a workplace root to it, so that's a really important piece of the puzzle. And so really how you know if

you're traveling away from something that looks like general stress into something that looks more like burnout is three big dimensions that you really want to be paying attention to. So it's first of all chronic physical and emotional exhaustion. Especially in the last 15 months, I think a lot of people at some point have experienced some sense of just tired or off. Adam Grant had a fantastic article in New York Times about languishing.

Jen: Languishing, yeah. I felt very validated when I read that.

Paula: Yeah. This is just like I'm not thriving, but I don't know that I'm all the way over to burnout or some sort of end-state piece. I'm sort of hanging out somewhere in the middle, and so I think that helped us to kind of expand our vocabulary around the right word to be using to describe what we're feeling. So burnout is chronic physical and emotional exhaustion. So again, more often than not, you're trying those stress management strategies, you're trying those selfcare strategies, you're doing things that typically would work for you to refill your tank, and they're just not working. Secondly, and this is, I think, an often overlooked component of burnout, but one that is really important is also chronic cynicism. So people are just annoying to you, they bug you, they bother you. For me, this was very much my clients also. And so I think that's what makes it really kind of a pesky aspect about burnout, is that it is the end person who you feel cold to help who's really the person who is probably you're disconnecting from in a really big way, so that could be your patients, that could be your clients, your business clients, business partners, other people who you initially I think, at some point, felt very cold to help. That's why you are doing the work that you're doing and overtime, like for me, there was a lot of internal eye rolling like my developer clients or my internal business clients would reach out to me, and my first thought was like "oh!, do we have to have a conversation about this? Can you not help yourself with this question? Haven't we talked about this already?" And again, that was very internal, but that's not a good way to be thinking. Your job is to help people solve complicated issues or just deal with things that have a lot of impact associated with them, so there's that piece. And then the last piece is having a sense of lost impact. So the research calls it inefficacy. So you've stopped seeing or you're having a harder time seeing how your work is meaningful to you or the ways in which you are impacting the organization or just what you want from work generally just feels off or disconnected. And so I think about that piece as the "why bother, who cares" like "oh, they're not paying attention to me anyways, or they're not noticing what I'm doing, so why bother, who cares." Kind of like what am I doing this for? So again, that's how you can tell that you've traveled into something else that's different from stress, and when you go into that point, you're not going to just go over to where I was in terms of having significant mental health or physical health consequences. It might show up subtly to you such that or to even other people such that it might not register. You're just being a little bit more short tempered with people or there's just other behavioral ways that you're showing a little bit of difference, and so sometimes it can be subtle and hard for people to pick up on that.

Jen: When I reflect on my own experience with burnout, I think one of the things I tell people is that people that know you and people that care about you will point it out. And at least for me, they did, but I also chose to kind of brush them off and just kind of tell myself they don't know what they're talking about. I'm just dealing with a lot of really high stress things right now.

Paula: Yeah.

Jen: Also, for me, other symptoms and I'd love to kind of just discuss some of this, I know you've talked about a few, but I had a hard time sleeping, my relationship with food changed, certainly my mood was kind of this rollercoaster. I had a very hard time controlling or managing my emotions. And so I was a

very high and very low, and very high and very low. It was just kind of up and up all day long, depending on what was going on. My emotions kind of followed the flow of what was going on. Those are kind of things that I experienced, and I often get that question like, well, how do I know? What does burnout look like in me or what does burnout look like in other people?

Paula: Yeah, and I mean it's really can be different for everybody, and so it's for me understanding, like so the cynicism piece was a big one for me. That's one of the ones that really caused me to take a pause and say like what in the world is going on with me because this is not my normal personality. It's not normal for me to not want to go out for lunches with people or organize the Friday outing afterwork or to do some of those things. I'm very much people oriented and I'm the planning person and that type of thing and to notice that I didn't want to do that anymore and I didn't want to hang out with my friends as much because it's sort of joke, but it wasn't really a joke, I just wanted some bad reality television in the couch and I just wanted like the lowest effort activity possible to try and recharge, and that wasn't helpful either, and so it's all of those things and one of the pieces that I tend to notice other people have told me or that I see in other people is what I call every curveball is a major crisis. So when we have too much on our plates and we feel like there's the weight of the world on our shoulders and we feel like we have it organized in just the exact right, precise way, then somebody comes along and it can be a parent, it could be your friend, it could be your significant other, it could be your boss asks you for like a little favor or one thing, your reaction is like a Level 20 disproportionate response. That happened to me on a number of occasions when I was burning out, and it can be very alarming potentially to the other person because they're confused like I'm just asking could you make an additional call or could you stay 30 minutes to do this, for example, and so it can be very much a disconnect, but you understand how the person is feeling and why that's happening, it can help to explain things, so always make sure to mention that that's one of the pieces, but everything else that you talked about too, I started to get achy more, I started to get headaches, more stomachaches more frequently, colds more frequently, so that was something that I would notice every time one of my real estate deals finished was like the adrenaline pipeline turned off, and my body could finally like come down from sort of like the stress high it was on and I would get sick. So those are other things to pay attention to as well. There's some more subtle things that I think happened on the frontend and that as burnout starts to advance, other things like what we've been talking about can certainly come into play.

Jen: You mentioned kind of a misunderstanding that might not have been the word you use, but with resilience in addition to burnout, so can you talk a little bit about that as well?

Paula: Yes, and so resilience is one of the other topics here. I think they really go hand in hand, the resilience aspects of burnout. And I think sometimes where I see a wall tend to go up or where people kind of come at me ready to debate me about this resilience thing is when they perceive it as though I'm about to tell them or somebody else has told them or the message that they get is that they need to be made more tough. And so, oftentimes people will say like, look, I've conquered illness and I've had setbacks and I'm getting divorced like all these things and it's like don't tell me, I need to be made more tough, or I'll hear people say this is just a company way of like making me into something else so I can work harder, and I'm already working the three jobs of three people; however, they tend to express it to me. And so, I try to help them understand that resilience even though we talk about it in popular culture is sort of the sign of toughness or badge of toughness. It really isn't that at all, and what I've discovered for myself is it's helped me quite honestly know when I need to pivot, when I need to quit something, when I need to take a different approach in terms of how I'm thinking about something or how I'm emoting in a situation. It's really our ability. It's a skill set to help you navigate the ambiguity, the setbacks, the failures, the challenges, the stressors in a different way so that you can decide if you want

to persevere, if you decide you want to continue to put one foot in front of the other and keep pursuing a goal or something that matters to you or if you feel like, wow! I need something else. I need to pivot. My team needs to figure this out and adapt and go in a different direction because what we're doing right now just isn't working for us. And so, it allows for all of that kind of flexibility and fluidity and adaptability that I think is so crucial right now because we're all dealing with and walking into environments right now where we don't know the right answer. We don't know what the outcome is going to be. We don't know what things are going to look like. We don't know how the policies we're trying to think about are really going to work long term if they're going to work long term. And so, there's so much room for needing this type of skill set right now, and I think always, because you know, I mean challenges aren't going to go away when the pandemic ends. There's significant things that everyone is going to have to deal with.

Jen: They existed long before the pandemic too. We kind of tend to believe that life was wonderful prior to the pandemic, right?

Paula: I think with burnout also, right? ...a lot from people and they tend to equate the pandemic with the onset of burnout. And in the book, I have a whole almost half a page of statistics across industry and they're all pre-pandemic statistics. And so, COVID didn't cause burnout, and when COVID goes away, burnout is still going to exist so.

Jen: I think at least what I've seen, is that we're just we're talking about it a lot more, and we're giving people permission to talk about it more so it's kind of come out of the shadows a little bit. I mean when you talk about resilience, as a skill set. So, what does that look like? What are those skills and what you said really resonates with me because I hear so often, resilience is about being strong. It's about powering through right? and I mean I often tell people you know what.. part of being resilient is like letting yourself fall apart. Like if you need to fall apart, fall apart, that's great. Feel all of those emotions. Just don't get stuck there, right? Like that's part of being resilient too, but that's kind of not what we're taught.

Paula: Yeah, it's one of the things that I when I talk to folks about resilience, I have a whole slide about resilience, myths and facts to kind of dispel some of these notions, and you know, one of the things that I say is resilience is messy, right? It is not just put together, appear a certain way, perfect kind of thing. It's really messy and It's about processing strong emotions and I had a coaching client who said, you know, I came out of the grocery store and sat in my car and I cried for 10 minutes because I'm overwhelmed and I said that's resilience. Don't think that you're not strong because of it and I spent almost four years, you know, teaching resilience skills to drill sergeants and soldiers, and their families in the army. You know, all the populations of people that I can guarantee you do not need to be made more tough. So I hope that that's something that we can take away is that those two things aren't equated, but in terms of the skills associated with resilience, I talk a lot because I was trained at the University of Pennsylvania. A lot of their approach is very much on the mental strength side of resilience, and for me personally has been really I think the biggest entryway or pathway into my own resilience practice and boost in resilience that I know I've noticed over the years. So for me it's a lot about helping people understand counterproductive thinking and you know triggers that can cause counterproductive thinking and re framing thinking that isn't helpful in recognizing things like catastrophizing or worst case scenario thinking and how to help people (a) recognize it and then (b) slow it down or sort of get out of that thinking style, but you know over thinking, thinking traps, our core values and beliefs about the way we think the world should operate. There's a whole suite of skills associated with that big category, and so that's really a big one, but also a lot about making sure that

people are prioritizing things like positive emotions, hope, and self-efficacy. So building that ability within yourself to feel like yes, this is an obstacle, but I can do it. There's something you know about me that can see this as a challenge and I can overcome it. Maintaining and prioritizing really strong relationships, and so one of the things that I love about resilience is that there's no one set way to build it and there's lots of different entry points for people and so helping them see just menu of skills that are at least associated with it and then recognizing for themselves like, "oh OK, this is where I need some help or nope, this is good, this is where I've got it." For me to kind of extending that out to the burnout conversation, I've loved how the science of resilience has started to broaden out to include teams and organizations as well and so that was instrumental in my own philosophy, and thinking about burnout and thinking about how if we're going to start to tackle this in the right way, we have to broaden this out from just a conversation about individuals experiencing this into how can we address and bring in the rest of the workplace system to talk about this, and so being able to wrap in some of the science of resilience, but at a team level or an organizational level, I thought was something I was really excited to be able to do

Jen: Are there certain things about specific jobs or specific job demands that are predictive of burnout? Are there things about culture? There's a lot of literature, just a lot of writing about workplace culture as a driver or burnout, and so I feel like there's a lot of awareness, but the workplace still struggles to change its culture, even though there's a lot of talk and a lot of awareness. So I guess, why do you think that is?

Paula: It's a daunting concept, right? So to think about your big organizational culture where in the world do you even start with that and that can be I think such a daunting thing for leaders and teams to even think about that it almost stops you before you start, so even though it's the same thing with like losing weight. We all know how to do it, we all know that we need to exercise more and eat better, but yet we don't do it or we pursue other things and it's the same thing with changing organizational culture. I think there's a lot about what it is and how we could do it? but we don't because it seems somewhat daunting and so for me.

Jen: We just admire the problem.

Paula: We just admire the problem. I think if there's a silver lining with the pandemic of some sort, it is that like you said earlier, we're willing to have these conversations now I think in a little bit more of an open way, but this is where I start with - with leaders and teams and people when I talk to them is yes, OK, you're going to be focused on how can we help individuals, and that's fine. It's a good starting point, but if we're going to broaden this out, we have to ask a different question. We have to ask if people in our organization are burning out, why is it happening? That's the deeper conversation we have to get to. What's going on that's causing this thing to happen to people to experience it. So, if there's a simple formula that I can give folks, it's burnout is more likely to happen when your job demands exceed your job resources. So a job demand is simply anything that takes consistent effort and energy about your work, so it's not a bad thing. They're just things that you have to be aware of that take consistent effort and energy about your work and job resources anything that's motivational or energy giving about your work. So the research really helps give us at least the starting point of a roadmap where we need to be prioritizing and thinking about both sides of the equation and so job demands that are known accelerants of burnout are things like workload, which is a really tough conversation to have within organizations because everyone boils it down to headcount. We don't have enough people versus, we can't hire more people. So then there's really a catch 22, but it's much more broad than that, and so, helping leaders and teams and people understand that it's also about are you teaming in the right way?

Are you taking advantage of all the resources that exist? How are you communicating with each other? What are the expectations around that? Do you have too many meetings and what could that look like? There's a whole lot of things to talk about within the work load conversation, but from my own work quite honestly, I don't think I've worked with a team or an organization that doesn't cite that, as at least one part of it, and when I have a chance to actually measure the causes within teams, it's almost always the top or a big factor in what's driving burnout. So, it's a tough conversation, but it's one that clearly has to start being unpacked, so that's a big one, but also is lack of recognition and rewards, so I don't feel like I'm being thanked enough. I don't feel like "Is anyone paying attention to the positive work that I'm doing because I think I'm doing good, but it doesn't seem like anyone else is really noticing. You know, I feel like I'm doing work at a certain level, but my title doesn't match." A very common one that I hear from folks in this category, because I tend to see this one quite a bit too, is the frustration around "I'm sitting at my desk or wherever I am, and my boss is texting me asking for my opinion or for an answer to a question because he or she is in a meeting and the person who's receiving that text saying why can't I be in the meeting? Why can't I have a seat at the table where my expertise could be drawn on? Because I'm really the end person who knows how to deal with these sorts of issues." So that can be very exhausting and frustrating, but it's also not feeling like there's a sense of community within the team, you don't feel like there's a sense of team cohesion or that you have leader's support or colleague's support, and it's also a sense of low autonomy, so not feeling like you have a lot of flexibility over your work or a say in how things get done, or you're looped in on important decisions about your work and you know. I don't know how you feel about this, but I think that this is, again something that the pandemic showed us we can do. We can do really good work in a lot of different locations and in a lot of different ways and I think people don't want to give that up, and it's going to be, something that I think is going to be a really key component of the back to work conversation.

Jen: Yeah, absolutely. Speaking of Adam Grant, I saw that he shared something along those lines this morning that companies that are not willing to move forward in a flexible way in terms of the where and how people work are going to lose out because it has become table stakes as part of the pandemic because we have shown those of us that had the ability to work remotely, because there were a lot of people that didn't and you know, thank God for them, right? That went in to serve us every day, but for those of us that had the good fortune of being employed and being able to work remotely, I think so many people tended to be what I would call over productive, right? Like we weren't even productive, we were like over productive, right? So if that stigma still exists, we definitely need to get rid of it. What about passion and purpose or meaning in the work that I do? How is that associated and related to both resilience and burnout?

Paula: It's a critical component actually to both sides of the equation and I will tell you, in the seven years that I practiced law, I don't think there were many days where I felt that strong sense of connection and meaning and purpose and I think it was certainly an aspect or a part of what factored into my burning out. Conversely, I can tell you in the last 10 years that I've been doing this work, there have been very few days where I haven't felt a sense of meaning and purpose. So, in and of itself it is a very, very important job resource to have. We also have to pay attention to the fact that just because you feel passionate or a sense of meaning about your work, it doesn't mean that you won't also burnout, right?

Jen: Right, actually sometimes those people burnout quicker because they are so dedicated to their work.

Paula: Because they say yes to everything.

Jen: I could raise my hand for that one.

Paula: Back to Adam Grant. I think he's coined the term generosity burnout where he's found empirically that that can certainly have some downside to it. But yeah, one of the neat skills that I found in a study that I read and I put in the book I called the 20% rule and what the study found was that people who were able to very clearly say "you know when I am in the zone when I'm engaged, when I'm feeling that sense of connection to my work and meaning and what have you," they're easily able to describe what those behaviors are. What are they doing? and I have asked audiences this question and oftentimes I'll hear things like I'm helping people, and I'll push them, and I'll say but what does that mean? Like literally what are you doing? I want to crystallize behavior that I can visualize you doing, and make a list of those things and the people who spent up to 20% of their time, it did not have to be all day, and it's just sprinkling some of this in a little bit more of an intentional way. But people who spent up to 20% of their time doing those things that they were able to say actually had half the rate of burnout. So there's clearly something about knowing that we are having an impact and that we are experiencing meaning in our work, that is protective when it comes to the burnout conversation. In most of the world we do a great job of talking about that and being as explicit as we could be about that.

Jen: Yeah. I completely agree and I think that is something that you're starting to see change, so I hope that you know going forward, a little bit more of that will be pulled through in organization, so I want to switch back to the team construct, the subtitle of your book, "why teams hold the secret to well-being and resilience" because I think this really resonates with me. I feel like it is so true on so many levels, but in particular because for those of us that are working, we spend the majority of our waking hours working and the people that we spend the majority of our time with tend to have the biggest impact on our well-being. So can you talk about why teams hold the secret and what are some of those secrets? And I know you've talked a little bit about it already, but let's dig into that, because I think that this is so powerful for people.

Paula: This was really the big a-ha that I've had. I called it my 10 year unfolding a-ha moment when it comes to this because I had to figure out a way to get us away from just as I mentioned, the solely sort of individual focus lens that we've oftentimes approached the burnout conversation with and into more of the organizational and systemic piece as we've talked about. But as we've also mentioned, I have to be able to sell this. I have to make this doable for people, and I can't just walk into an organization and say, "Hey, let's change your culture" because as we've talked about, that's a hard thing to do, and so for me it became, where in the system then makes the most sense? What is the entry point then to make this feel doable, and so for me that answer was teams, in part because most people work in the context of a team, certainly not everybody, but a lot of people do, and teams can be two people. Teams don't have to be huge 200 entities or things like we sometimes think about teams as being and so teams can be very small and so recognizing them within the context of that team, I can still offer strategies to help individual team members so we can still preserve that piece of the equation with the burnout conversation. But leaders play a huge role in whether burnout happens within the context of an organization and team, and so it's really powerful for me to be able to talk to leaders. But then I can also explain what can the team collectively do to build its resilience and build a sense of thriving, so that collectively we can move in a different direction, and I think of teams as little mini systems within the big organizational system, and if we can get each of the individual systems or as many of them as possible, kind of going in the right direction that can have ripple effects throughout the organization as a whole, and to me, that's how change becomes more doable is by approaching a kind of in those smaller

increments, and so that was why teams and that took a while for me to zero in on, that was the first piece of the possible, then it was ok, if the answer is teams, what do we need to do? Like how do we need to make them look? That's the Part two piece of it and so that's where I drew on a lot of the resilient teams research and wrapped in other pieces of research around thriving and some other parts to really kind of look at and study multiple dozens of studies talking about teaming in this type of way. What were teams doing that was working and so those were the threads that I pulled from those studies that became the model that I used for my book. That PRIMED model, that acronym that I use really stands for all of the different, again entry points or components that teams can work on to really make this kind of shift happen, and it doesn't mean you have to do all of them. My guess is that there are teams, most teams are doing some of this well, but just recognizing now you can keep doing it with intentionality because it's really having a positive outcome in terms of stress and burnout and the way you want your systems to look, but they can also realize that how I didn't realize that this was also an important component. We're not doing this well at all, and we have to figure this out. Again, it becomes a really nice offering of different entry points for teams to use.

Jen: Give us some examples of those entry points? I know you talk about a bunch of them, but what are your favorite too?

Paula: I know you know this because you posted this article on your LinkedIn site, but my favorite entry point to talk to, especially leaders and teams generally about a psychological safety. That sense of trust, how do we build the sense of trust and cohesion within our group because if you don't have that, a lot of the other pieces are going to be much harder to implement, and so I think that's a piece. The other component, it's the M in my PRIMED model is the mental strength and I think that because it's had such an influence on my own resilience and because I see it play out in such interesting ways within teams, I think it's a wholly underdiscussed and underappreciated aspect of good teaming, and how either at individual's mindset or the collective mindset of the team can really impact in very positive or very negative ways outcomes associated with not only burnout, but a whole host of other things as well.

Jen: Yeah, so let's talk about psychological safety. What can leaders do? What can individuals do to help create psychological safety on a team?

Paula: Well, again, I think this sounds like such a big concept and when you really don't trust, you think Oh my gosh, how in the world about you know how do we even approach something big like trust? It really struck me. This was a big kind of again aha moment for me in terms of researching the book that it really boils down to a lot of what I call you matter cues, really small. It's the really small ways we interact with each other or a little 5-minute interactions or a little 10-minute interactions that we have consistently day to day with people that are really kind of the underpinning. The thing that's really doing the most to either build trust or erode trust, and so when I get people thinking in that way and that it boils down to things like just being accessible and approachable. I feel like a lot of people have a handle on the accessible piece, not always on the approachable piece. I know how to find you, but when I find you, do you seem like you want to have a conversation with me or interact. It's things like that and it's making sure that you're hearing everybody's opinion that you're seeking out contributions from everyone on the team because our tendency is when the leader has arrived on the Zoom call and we are now going to sit back and listen to whatever he or she has to say, and that's not good because in knowledge base work especially we got to know what's on everybody's mind. That's where the innovative ideas come from and that's how I understand if something is going wrong sooner rather than later as well. So, really, not only seeking out other people contributions and ideas and you might have to be really intentional about that. You might have to go into a meeting with an agenda or be more

intentional on the frontend saying here's a topic we're going to talk about. I want to hear everybody's opinions so people can come prepared, but then also demonstrating how you are incorporating those opinions and ideas because that's also frustrating, when people keep asking me for my opinion, If you don't take it, I don't see how it's being used is another thing, but transparency and clarity about just what's going on in the world is important. Peer to peer recognition, catching each other, doing something right, just reaching out to a colleague to say hey how's it is going? How are you doing? Something as easy as just limiting side conversations, gossip and cliques become really important, and I oftentimes talk about how, when I first started doing the army resilience training work, I was really nervous about it and I remember the first morning walking into my very first morning training team meeting and the first thing I saw when I walked into this big ballroom where like three people huddled on the side of the room and they looked up at me when I walked in and then they kept whispering to each other, and I know they weren't talking about me, but I felt like I was back in 6th grade trying to find a seat at the lunch table and it felt really weird. That was 10 years ago, and I can describe for you exactly how it felt all of this time later, and so these little interactions and these little moments may not register very much with us in terms of importance, but psychologically they're huge. It's all of the little data our brains are constantly looking out for in our environment to say oh you matter...

Jen: You are not safe?

Paula: Yeah, I'm safe, this is where I belong. This will make me feel trust.

Jen: So, I want to kind of switch back to the burnout conversation a little bit because I regularly get questions, kind of along the same lines of I guess what advice do you have for someone who believes or is experiencing burnout right now, is the only way for them to address that to leave their job, and then, I think kind of a second piece or a related piece to that is, if you believe that a colleague is at risk of burning out or you might be burned out. How do you approach them? How do you have that conversation in a psychologically safe way?

Paula: Well, that's the key, and I think that's one of the magical things about trust and psychological safety is that if it's present, it can unlock the door to having these types of conversations and if not there, it's going to make people hold it in potentially a lot longer, and then make burnout potentially get worse. I'm asked those questions very frequently as well. My going in position is always to (a) have the conversation because I think a lot of times people think should I say something? I'm not sure if I should. What should I say? What if I say the wrong thing and I don't think I have talked to a person yet who has said, I wish they wouldn't have said something. It's always I'm so thankful they said something or why didn't they say something if I'm being cynical and I feel like I'm keeping those internal eye rolls in, but you're noticing them. Please tell me that that you're seeing something in a little bit of a different way. I think first and foremost understanding that having the conversation is going to be the important piece whether it's you feeling a sense of burnout and you need to talk to somebody or you're worried about somebody else, it's figuring out who is the right person or how to kind of approach that becomes important. I think when I talk to people, especially folks who are feeling burned out, I always tell them who's the best person, kind of within the organization, if you can find somebody to have this conversation with is that your immediate boss, is it an HR person, or is it just a trusted colleague? Find that person, but then be very intentional. Do some thinking on the frontend, what is it that you want to get out of the conversation? What are you really looking for because if I just Zoom with my direct leader and I just tell him or her I'm feeling burned out, they might be able to provide a sense of empathy and some support, but they can't necessarily help, and if you can point them to hey, I just need some support or this is getting really bad. I think we need to be talking about what a sabbatical looks like or

this is not the team for me that I thought it was and is there a different spot within the organization or a different division or what have you that I could potentially look to? What is it specifically that you're looking to get out of the conversation and not being afraid to start to put that on the table? Because no, the answer isn't or shouldn't have to be that you have to leave your work. It might be the answer for some people. It was the answer for me, but that wasn't even my first option. I actually tried to stay in the legal profession a couple of times. I'm a little bit more of the exception rather than the rule. I think that clarity and keeping for both parties an open mind that this should be a two-way conversation. You're not accusing anybody of anything. It's a very factual. Here's what I'm noticing. Here's what I'm seeing kind of conversation inviting the other person perspective so that you can have a dialogue about it and then just at the end of the day being clear about what the next steps are supposed to be for both people, and I actually I have a little worksheet in my Resource Center on my website for folks to download if you want a little bit more information about how to go about having those conversations and some things to think about both on the frontend and during the conversation, because it keeps coming up for me and I think it's such a critical aspect of the burnout conversation.

Jen: I have two final questions for you. Why can't you yoga or retreat your way out of burnout?

Paula: Oh yes, and I love the yoga folks too. This is a little bit of a cheeky title to Forbes article or an article that I wrote on a blog of mine and it was my way of saying that when we think about burnout as first of all just an individual thing, and we even then boil it down to just a syndrome of exhaustion, we forget about the other components to it, we use the wrong strategies, we misapply very well intentioned strategies to the wrong type of problem. We're bringing the wrong solution to bear in the conversation and what it gets to is that we have to start having first of all the systemic conversation, but also the deeper conversation around why about the causes and so if the cause of somebody's burnout is a micromanaging boss or excessive workload or not feeling supported by their team or not having a sense of flexibility, yoga isn't going to help any of that. It might help you deal with the initial sting of some of the stress that you might feel associated with those things, but at the end of the day it's not going to solve the problem. So that was why.

Jen: I wanted to get that in because I think that's really important. I mean, yes, taking a vacation may help in that moment, but it doesn't. You're going to find yourself right back in the same place 3-4 months, maybe sooner right down the line because you're coming right back into what got you burned out to begin with?

Paula: It proves the point that there's a workplace root associated to it, because there's research showing that when you go on a vacation, you do feel better, but then when you come back, you usually return to your prevacation burnout rates within, one research study suggested like two to three weeks.

Jen: Wow. Okay. My final question is when I ask all my guests what's your personal definition of well-being?

Paula: Oh, this is not something I have been asked.

Jen: Oh, did I throw you for a loop here?

Paula: We are just going in lots of different ways here, I could answer this in so many ways, but I want to settle down to just a simple kind of thing that I keep coming back to when I think about my own well-being and that is, do I feel like I'm making an impact in the world such that when all of this is done, I feel

like I've left the world in a better spot, that's one piece of the puzzle and am I doing it and am I surrounded by people who I love and to me it's those two components. If I have that sense of connection and meaning and impact, and that I have the right people in my life who I can reach out to, who can help me who uplift my life and make it better than I feel like I'm doing a pretty good job.

Jen: I love that. This is why I ask because every time I ask somebody I get different perspectives, different definite, which is what I love because I love to show that there's not one single definition of well-being, and that's what makes it beautiful. Paula thank you so much for this conversation. I got so much out of it. I know the listeners will too and I just appreciate your time and your wisdom today.

Paula: Thank you so much Jen. It was so excited to talk to you and I really just enjoyed this conversation as well. Thank you.

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