S2 E51 Taking time to heal and modeling self care to prevent burnout with coach Christine Anastasia

**Christine:** Hi everybody. My name is Christine Anastasia and I have three kids. My oldest is Emma. She's almost six years old. I have my middle child, Zoe who's three years old and also a newborn boy named Alexander Michael, who joined us during the blizzard weekend in January. And he's seven weeks. And I'm a life coach for working moms. And I'm located here in Massachusetts.

**Jacqueline:** Thank you so much for your time today. It feels such a special gift that you're giving us this time in this moment that you're in, as you describe it your fourth trimester with your son. So let's talk a little bit more about your journey to where you are now in your career, and then we're gonna get all into motherhood and your new one.

**Christine:** Sure. So where I am in my journey I think we're, two years into this pandemic prior to that, I had been in higher education for almost 11 years working in international education and global programs. And from there I was furloughed and then laid off at the beginning of the pandemic. And I just felt that there was something bubbling in me for quite some time while I was working full time and raising young kids. And when the pandemic began I began to write and I began to start to assemble what was going on in terms of dissecting and looking at this intersection of what I was going through with motherhood and career. And from the initial blog I had from writing I've now landed in this new venture for me, which is life coaching. And I think it's a bit more of a calling that is bigger to me than what I first anticipated. And that's where I am today.

**Jacqueline:** That's great. That's great to hear that journey, every journey is different for moms. And I really appreciate you sharing that. Cos moms can then see themselves in you. So let's get into how motherhood changed your career or approach to life.

**Christine:** Sure. One of the things about motherhood that I think was the most um, transformational experience was truly when my first child entered the world. And I think I remember exactly the feeling that I had because in that initial state of caring for a newborn and being with my oldest Emma, 24 hours a day, and then learning that maternity leave would go by in a blink and that I was going to be going back to work full time with a commute that was about an hour and a half into Boston. And I remember at the time, I chose the journey of breastfeeding and pumping and I had about what seemed like 500 bags, packing up assembling things for daycare, assembling things for myself, the lunch the whole nine yards, and then getting to the train station and feeling like you ran a marathon by the time you got to your desk.

And I was so confused by the acceleration of the healing by the arrival at work, trying to understand how this is actually possible, that working moms do this every day. I was puzzled by it and I didn't feel it was sustainable. And it was a feeling of like true incongruence. It didn't feel right but I didn't know another way. And I didn't feel like any other working mother that I saw on the train or at my workplace was really complaining or breaking down about it. Everyone just seemed to be really buttoned up.

**Jacqueline:** We don't share those experiences, but I'm so glad you have here because I know other guests have done as well, that shock of going back to work and not knowing how to deal with breastfeeding, et cetera. It's a challenge and it does seem unspoken. So hopefully we are talking about these things more. And congratulations on number three. What are you doing differently this time? And your approach to motherhood has evolved. So let's just, talk about that, that evolution. And then you can transition into kind of the tips that you would think, new moms in particular need. Today cos you are my first, really like new mom on the show.

**Christine:** I'm delighted. I'll say that this journey work, this personal development work has been an evolution for me. That's been really important and I think it's through the challenges and through the really scary and uncomfortable feelings that I felt has brought me to the other side. I believe I was definitely someone who fell through the cracks with postpartum anxiety and depression, that six week appointment, I think I hit some of the check marks, but not all of them. And I struggled with my first. And then I went on to have my second child who came five weeks early as a Preme. And I don't think I really even processed that because I was in that mode of being the strong mother, get back to work, try to get this child to keep thriving where I was already in that burnout stage. And I think a lot of working mothers that have young children, if you have them a few years apart, you might not even have been healed from the other child that you had. There's a lot of depletion and depression and anxiety going on. So the journey into having my third child, I'll say that I didn't even know that I would get to having a third child because even with my first around 18 months, I said, how does anybody go on to have more children?

Because I just felt like we had already been so busy with everything going on with working full time and raising a kid and doing all of the logistics. But I think what really shifted for me was that in 2019, when I had to return back to work with my second, my employer was removing all of my flexibility, meaning I wouldn't have any more remote days. And I was petrified of that experience going into Boston every single day and I was gonna burn out and I knew that I was gonna burn out and I had that narrative in my daily life. And so what happened? That was what I created. I created that I was gonna burn out. I wasn't gonna be able to take care of myself and things would just fall apart. And it did fall apart. And that crumbling led me to around January. I said enough is enough. Even if I don't have flexibility right now, I gotta dig myself out of this mess that I'm in of burnout. And I remember my employer not really being flexible about me getting pelvic floor therapy, like going to appointments, personal appointments to take care of myself, cos I had just been on leave. And really struggling through that. Okay, how am I gonna take care of myself when I don't have much flexibility?

And so I just started small. Like I remember, I said, okay, I'm gonna first tackle the pelvic floor stuff that I was really struggling with. So I went to physical therapy and then after that I got myself into to regular therapy and then I just, from there, it was like little incremental steps to start to take care of myself. And then it was in that next months that I was starting to take care of myself, that the global pandemic happened. And I remember on that March when the whole world went remote, it was like this huge blessing right in front of me, like all the things that I had been desiring for so many years. Remote flexibility. Being able to like, try to have some autonomy on my schedule. It all came to be, and it was like a balloon, just like all the air just came out. And I said this is my opening. This is something that's gonna reveal what's next for me. And that was the entrance into the pandemic.

I had this pause where I was able to like really pour into myself and I did it through writing. I was talking about this experience. I was really dissecting all those pre years of what I struggled with and that sort of has now catapulted or launched me into this next phase of being in the fourth trimester with my third child. I figured out what I need for my mental and emotional health to not just survive, to really thrive. And I'm happy to share some of those tidbits, but that's like the short and the long of it.

**Jacqueline:** And I think two things there. One is that you just took it in small steps to start prioritizing self care. Cos I do think it can be overwhelming when sometimes we feel so low and it seems such a big step to move on, especially if we're having struggles with our employer, giving us permission to do that. So I like how you just did that kind of in small increments. But I also think one of the parts of your approach that I would love you to describe a little bit more in detail. What you're doing now for yourself, is that you are prioritizing your healing and self care in this fourth trimester. I don't know why it sounds so strange. I don't know why I feel like the child comes and we are just so focused on the child, whereas actually you are trying to incorporate in more time for your healing in this process. And that seems to be shifting everything and you got organized to do that ahead of time. So tell us more about that because I'm so sad at my reaction of being, wow, this is amazing. This is surprising.

**Christine:** I think what's hard. It's a normal reaction to have because none of us are taught and it doesn't matter, where you are in the United States, this isn't sort of part of the program prenatally, or just, even in those early weeks of getting there. There's a bombardment of so many other baby products and services that you could use, but there isn't really anything that pairs down, how are we taking care of ourselves as mothers and what can we do to support that? So a few of the things I'll just mention I had to really take a different approach to when I was pregnant with my third and this after part, the fourth trimester, and looking at it in a completely different way that I feel like my upbringing was.

And what I mean by that is I come from a really long line of strong mothers and even my own mother that never really put a burden on anyone was always a do it yourself. You can take on anything, independent woman, always doing everything for her kids and grandkids and not pouring into herself or even my dad to really take care of those aspects. And so when I thought about where I was in my pregnancy having had a premi prior to that, I said I'm really gonna do an experiment here and really pour into myself during my pregnancy, slow down, my pace, the volume of my work, the aspects of my life that were stressful before and put in various lifestyle changes. And then I'm gonna set myself up in those early weeks. Everything that was missing in my first two children in that fourth trimester that I really struggled with.

And one of the things that I did early on is I contacted a few postpartum doula agencies and I wanted to find out cos I know that they can be quite expensive and I really value this profession and the sacred work that they do. But being that I was new to this, I thought maybe there's a postpartum doula in training that I could help them with their certification and they can help me during these first early weeks. And so I found a couple actually, and we connected and this woman that was getting her certification said, I can do 12 hours for you. It'll go towards my certification. These are the things that I've been working on. And she did that. So during the whole month of February, she came once a week. She made meals for us. She helped be with my middle child. She helped to organize my kitchen, helped to organize things that were through the day. And it was a completely nourishing and an experience that felt like I was being cared for in a way that I never felt through the first two experiences.

And I thought to myself, like as hard as it was to accept and receive this help, all mothers should feel this after you've been pregnant and also trying to raise your family and feel the light of this precious time that we try to accelerate. It was hugely nourishing for me. And that was one of the first things that I wanted to put in because a lot of people get family members if they have close by. And that's layered with a whole bunch of emotions.

**Jacqueline:** Those words you used, you felt cared for because that doesn't always come with family often we feel judged or, somebody's having to step into help because we can't cope or we are not good enough or something. Ugh. That just sounds so beautiful and emotional.

**Christine:** Yeah. And even the word nourishing, like I don't even feel that a working mom or a mom in modern day society knows what it feels to feel nourished and to feel like her wellbeing is important. And it truly is for you to heal, to get your nervous system back in order. To take that time to figure things out at your own pace without being bombarded with all the pediatricians and specialists and everybody else it's to be seen. And I feel postpartum work is like light workers. And I feel that I'm a bridge like I'm a very intuitive person. And, aside from being a life coach, I just hope that I can connect mothers to these resources that help them fill that well up because there's so many that are already arriving at preconception or growing their families depleted and burned out and it's not going to be sustainable. And my biggest thing with this process was I wanna do this for my daughters. If they choose to have children one day, I don't want them to have to carry the burden of just trying to do it under resourced and on a thread. On a small amount of care for yourself.

So there were, a couple other things I did, a best friend, my childhood friend, who is like a holistic functional nurse, she said to me, how could I support you? Which was an amazing thing to ask. And she said, why don't we set up meal train or like a way for people in your life to be able to bring meals. And I didn't do that with my first and my second and I Felt odd about it, cos it's that act of asking for help. And I didn't know how people on the other side would feel about it. But what I came to terms with is this is a couple week period that I need a little bit of support. It's one meal. If people wanna do it, they could actually delete the email if they don't wanna do it. And surprisingly, I had a lot of family and friends that filled in these gaps for me. And, we got through February in a way that felt a lot less like survival and a lot more like I'm not only picking my volumes up in my energy, but my family members are too, because they're seeing like, hey, we got this covered. So that was another piece.

And then there were other things I reached out to a couple daycare parents in advance of the arrival of Alexander. And I said, does anyone have some hand me down clothes? So I ended up getting like bins and bins of boy clothes of mothers that had boys and their family set that up. Just helped with the overall financial picture of not having to get clothes. And then for myself, I also did therapy through this year. I knew that I wanted that as a way to process and keep me accountable to my mental health, which served me well. And I've been continuing with that. And then, other things that I didn't do from before is carving out some time, even in the fourth trimester, you're exhausted, but ways to connect ways to do a small thing for myself. I've been a big fan of acupuncture and I booked a few appointments like over the months, so I could continue with that. And that's been another healing um, modality for me as I move along. I actually, I wrote a blog post about it. I think there were about 11 things on the list, but it was, it's more about all of these small preparations in retrospect, aren't huge things, but it's just that as mothers and working mothers, we're not conditioned or told to take care of ourselves and to set up the experience in a way to thrive.

**Jacqueline:** And I love how you're explaining how you did have to set it up. You had to be intentional. And in some ways you have these processes in there to partly help hold you accountable to keep to this plan. But also what I'm hearing is how hard it can feel to us for this help and how there's a certain resistance to doing that. But again, people can help or they can't and it's really for them to decide. So I love your bravery in doing that. I also love this approach of thinking about who is going through their certification process and who needs these hours? Because I think sometimes we forget that's such a win-win when somebody's being certified to be a coach. Sometimes it can be many hours of coaching that they need to do to get that certification.

So for people that thinking, coachings just expensive. It's not something I can afford to do. I always try and say a couple of things around that one, ask your employer to subsidize a coach if you've got an employer that can do that. Two, now your example, as well, work with coaches who are going through their certification process and that can even be a free experience. Or so many coaches do have great online blogs and other free master classes and things. So there's a lot of resources that we can leverage out there.

**Christine:** Yeah. And the other thing about setting up this support and recognizing in the short term, this is actually affecting the long term is that, when I had both of my other postpartum experiences I was burned out. It took me nearly a year to heal and get my energy back up. What I wanna share with mothers today around this fourth trimester is it could literally be, a month's worth of support that is going to do so much more in the long term for you in terms of your sustainability and helping you to create habits and things that support you in your daily life. So I didn't have that long range understanding until I really had a lot of years to have the young kids and go through the challenge to know that it can be setting yourself up for a month, two months to get you on your way in the scheme of life. That's a really short amount of time.

**Jacqueline:** But it can change your trajectory. I think that's, what's so important as well when we think about whether dads can get leave as well. Cos it just having more support during that time changes your trajectory going forward long term. I mean there's data showing that if dads are also taking leave in some of those first few months it absolutely changes the opportunities that mums can take at work. And also, it does seem a strange time to be thinking about starting new habits, because it's such a time when we are feeling so overwhelmed, but yet the way you describe it to me, it makes so much sense to start those habits then and then potentially some of them will endure cos as you say, they could just be habits and self care that you have in those first few months. But it also could change your trajectory of self care because when you feel the benefit of them so strongly, those types of experiences can help say, actually I always need this. I need this going forward too.

**Christine:** And I think that's that's the story. I want to come out for working moms because it's the results and it's the outcome. The healing is not a glamorous process. And so much of what I've done the past couple years has been so much boundary work in order to fill my volumes back up. And that's not going to sound very inviting to a lot of people, but my desire to have peace and energy and even come on today with a seven week old in this process of having my third child. I'm arriving here today with a full cup because of all of this work that I've done over the past year and over the past years, because you have to believe that being at peace with yourself and being in your own energy and your body is more important than being in that rat race or the hamster wheel, because I was on that for several years.

**Jacqueline:** Oh, I so appreciate that. I'm so grateful that you are here today and that you've taken care of yourself.

**Christine:** That's a big deal, but I also think there's like another thread here. That's important to know where some of our circumstances, the jobs that we arrive in, the careers that we've built, like all of these things that are our experience it's not just that alone that has challenge. I also think it's the way we were raised and also who the mothers were in our life. Of how we are showing up as a working mother, as a mother, as a daughter, as a, daughter-in-law like all the different roles that was another layer for me in getting the other pieces of the puzzle here.

And this is also to say that my mother is an incredible woman who I'm super close with, but what she dealt with in her circumstances when she had her three children is very different from today's modern day mom with young children. And some of what I was trying to do was what I had seen her doing. Which we're under resourced and it's a completely different time. So that also contributed to the burnout. So I think one piece was of circumstances. Okay, the job doesn't work anymore. Flexibility isn't working, yada, yada, all these things. But then there's this other piece of what was modeled for me?

**Jacqueline:** And I think that's so important thinking about how we role model. And recently I was doing a TEDx talk about working mom burnout and it was a hybrid event. So it was mostly virtual, but there was some in person meet and greet. And so most of the people that I was meeting were young female student organizers of the event. And they all kept saying to me, oh my God, you described my mother. She never gives herself a break. She's working constantly. She won't even sit down. She never rests. And I'm like, oh my God, this is the role model that we are giving our daughters. And I understand, from books why we can't sleep anymore or whatever from Ada Calhoun, is that the yes, society has changed.

The expectations of motherhood have changed to the point where also, we have to be concerned about the products we're buying, the social causes we support. That there's so much more and she does a great job in her book describing all those things. So I agree. We're not in that same period as our mothers, but I think we really are providing terrible role models for our kids at the moment, because we are just demonstrating that motherhood is all about being a martyr. And I just think, that's not what I want for my daughter. I don't want her to look and think that's what she has to do. So I agree. Like part of my journey is also trying to work out. How do I role model this differently?

**Christine:** Yeah, and there's quite a bit there to unpack as well about the rewriting, the relearning and the teaching to our next kids or the modeling of how we want to be on a daily basis. But there is something very healing among doing that work with your own mother. If you do have one. I've been doing it these past years in subtle ways, and I'm finding that when I'm healing myself, it's actually healing my mother because my light is on. My pregnancy and my fourth trimester. I've seen how my mom has begun to shift and change and many things that she's been dealing with that she's carried. And I think it goes back to her ancestors of what she's been carrying. Different pains, not sleeping, all these things. She's now taking this opportunity through what she's seen through me to say, I wanna try to take some steps to take care of myself.

And I watched her do it three days before I delivered. She went to the acupuncturist I go to and she just was bawling in tears. She felt completely seen. And at 71 years old said, now it's time. I don't need to take care of all my kids, all the grandkids and worry incessantly about them. I really need to start to look at this. And I was pretty moved by that because it was through the work that I'm doing. My light is on and I just did a full stop. I said, I'm not gonna go about motherhood in a burned out way and overgive, and try to beat everything to everyone it's just not going to be sustainable. And even if I wasn't articulating it and saying it out loud, I know my mom is seeing it in a way that I'm watering, the growth of me, but it's also gonna translate to my daughters. And my hope is that more working moms say, yeah, I want a piece of that growth. I want a piece of changing how I'm running on a daily basis.

**Jacqueline:** And the benefits of that too, in terms of that your mom is gonna show up as a more fulfilled grandmother, with more energy and be able to be with your kids when she chooses to be in a different way. That's so beautiful. Oh, that's so amazing. And I wanted to interject here with a little silly story because it's reminding me your discussion is reminding me so much. So when my grandmother gave birth, so my family's originally from Scotland. And I don't know if this was that common in those days, but basically the first two weeks when my grandmother gave birth to my mother, she stayed in the hospital for two weeks. And to the point she never washed her baby.

Now, again, I'm not saying that is a good bonding technique or whatever, but it was literally, she'd brought my mom home after two weeks. Having never bathed her daughter and discovered that my mom had these things. I have as well. And my kids have, which is little web toes between two of the second toes. And she was literally like, oh my God, what's wrong with her toes. And she hadn't seen them before. And then of course my grandpa pipes in and says, what are you talking about? My toes like that. So I was used to ask my grandma how come you had never seen your husband's toes. How come you didn't know? But it's, it's such a funny story. It's, I just love my gran and all her stories like that, but it just reminds me, oh my goodness two weeks. The hospital getting help with your baby? That seems incredible.

**Christine:** Yeah. Yeah. That's such a great story.

**Jacqueline:** So let's transition then to talking a little bit about the coaching you are doing. Tell us about what is your approach to coaching? What are some of the things you've learned along your coaching journey and what are the key ingredients. So many people reach out to me asking about coaches. So I love when coaches can share what it is that's their unique approach and what they bring. So tell us about that.

**Christine:** Yeah. I think, my approach to coaching is that I feel that each working mom or every mom has their own unique set of circumstances and challenges that they're in. And I feel that deep down, that person really knows what they want. And they need to be seen and they need that processing to get through the weeds, and sort process and dissect how they can get to their next step. Because working full time and mixing career with your life is like oil and vinegar. And I take the approach of really having empathy for the current situation that working moms are in. And I think that my approach is that I hopefully am the bridge for them, the bridge to get out of that torn state or that stuck state. So they can find a formula that really helps to foster sustainability, more happiness, more joy better relationships.

My formula and what I truly believe is that it really starts with the mom. When the mom is doing well, both physically, mentally, emotionally, and in all these various areas it permeates and lifts all the other areas of your life. And the reason I know that is because when I was in my worst burnout state, every single aspect of my life fell apart. I literally had to clean every closet out and that's how I did it. I looked at it as closets. I said, all right, the first closet I'm looking at is myself. And the one that really needs to take care of myself, cos of course I was resentful that nobody was doing anything because I felt the world was on my shoulders, but it was also, am I really doing anything to take care of my own unmet needs.

So with coaching I just feel sometimes we all arrive at a certain point during motherhood where things aren't working anymore and it's super uncomfortable. And I want women to know that you can find something else that fills you up, like your purpose doesn't have to be in a box of 40 to 50 hours working. You can do wonderful things in the world and show up and be a great version of yourself doing all sorts of things, working for an employer, taking on entrepreneurship, volunteering. And the key ingredient is that motherhood shouldn't be a prescription for burnout. Our wellbeing and joy should be lived every day.

**Jacqueline:** I love that motherhood should not be a prescription for burnout. Oh my goodness. That's fantastic. And I love your analogy of the closet. I think that's really helpful for people to think about it in that way. And I agree in terms of also my experience of coaching is you do know what you need deep down. You are so afraid to say it. I was so afraid to say, I need more freedom. I need a break from being a mom. These things made me feel terrified that I was gonna be, leaving my family and abandoning them if I actually express those needs. But a coach really helped me bring that out. It in multiple ways to the point where I was then able to say no, actually part of my repertoire is having a break from being a mom. I definitely need to take those breaks. I just need to get away. And that took me a while to discover that's what I needed versus having my husband step up more when I was there, I didn't need him to step up when I was there. I needed a break so that he could step in when I wasn't there.

**Christine:** And it sounds like that like little shift helped in so many ways, not only yourself, but probably affected him and your family because of that shift.

**Jacqueline:** Yeah. I think we're still adapting and learning and I'm the one that has to keep remembering to, to do it. Cos I get to the point where I'm tripping into burnout again and then I'm like, I need a break, I need a break. Whereas really I need to have it like organized in the way you have been about your fourth trimester and have it scheduled in. And in some ways I had done it like that and that helped, but then, my husband broke his leg and sort of things went out the window. So I need to get back to that as well. So this is a good reminder.

**Christine:** Yeah, and I think it's hard. One of the things that I'm a big fan of is that, we have these tools in our toolbox and hopefully we can pull some out when we need to course correct, but we don't fall so far into burnout that we need a year of recovery. So when I'm working with clients and I'm just talking with working moms, it's let's ride the bike for a little bit. And then if we find that we fall off or we go the wrong direction that we can get back on and it's not gonna take as long to recover, because I think that's the part that can get really debilitating, physical things can come out. Just your overall state, you can get depressed, but I think there's also something else underneath here around being vulnerable and knowing that motherhood is transformational and that you can say that, sometimes you're at capacity.

Like I'm in a season right now where, I can take on a couple things that I feel I wanna do in my purpose and in the world. But, there's gonna be seasons or years or phases of your life where you don't always have to be so productive. You might have to do mothering for a bit. You might wanna be into your work or do speaking arrangements, or you might not be able to do a consulting project or a project because when you look at it, you literally fall apart. Cos you're exhausted looking at it. Those are seasons. And I think even for myself, I have to be okay that it might be later, it might not be now. And I think I'm someone that is getting more comfortable with sayin, I just might need to stub that one out, or that opportunity might not be right at this moment.

**Jacqueline:** Exactly. Exactly. I was actually having that same conversation with my husband last night, about four different things. I was trying to move along and he's okay, which one are you gonna let go then? And so that's so important. Just before we end on getting your recommendations about some concrete behavior changes for moms to start today, that's how we'll end. You touched on boundaries and that you had to really spend a long time establishing these boundaries to be where you are at now. And that's definitely something I struggle with. So I'd love to get any insights you have on the type of boundaries you set and how you did that. And how you have become barriers to boundaries.

**Christine:** Yeah. I think this is actually one that I can dial back right from when I became first time new mom. I had been completely overwhelmed with just how to understand how to appease your in-laws and your own family of origin relationships. And I struggled for that for a couple of years. And what I found out is I'm this people pleaser and same with my husband. And we tried to satisfy both sides of the family in a way that wasn't ever gonna work. You can't give a hundred percent to both sides and there's always going to be some give and take and of course, like in many families that people see there can be sometimes jealousy, sometimes it be really uneven who you're visiting or who you're tending to on those relationships. And I just found that over time, what I was doing is I was overgiving and accommodating family members and my employer and all these different things, to the extent where there really wasn't any of my own needs of what I wanted or my decisions being seen or heard.

And over time I just learned that that was a really defeating and uncomfortable state to be in. And so again, just like the other process of starting out small, I just, I ended up not going to a lot of things. I just said you know what, I'm tired and I'm not going to go to this family event because I need to take care of myself. it was for all intensive purposes being like a cycle breaker, I just had to cut certain things off for a period of time until I found that I had my grounding where I could make my decisions from an empowered place instead of feeling like I was letting out almost like the fishing line, like all the way out to the other side, to the person instead of tending to my own needs.

And if that visual helps, You have to put the oxygen mask on, you need to figure out a way to throw the life jacket or throw the lifesaver to somebody and still meet your own needs. There's something in the middle there. And I think now, even with my third child, I don't over give anymore. I look at people's needs and I say like, how do we meet in the middle? I'm not trying to go all the way over to the other side. And I'm finding that's a better balance for me, because it feels more authentic and it feels like then that relationship is being met in the middle and not one person is going too far out. And the other big thread with that is accepting all these people in your life without trying to change them.

**Jacqueline:** Yeah. That's so important. I really like that alternative idea of throwing somebody the life vest or the life saving ring or whatever it's called, because again, it isn't always the safest thing to jump in the water and save someone, sometimes the best thing to do is to throw them something. And so I think that's such a great visual and way of thinking about it that we don't have to jump in and put our own selves at risk because sometimes staying dry is part of what is the safest thing to do.

**Christine:** And I think when your boundaries get strengthened in certain relationships, you're showing that other person where you're at and where you are from a really authentic place. And for most of my relationships that were strained, it's actually gotten better. Boundary work is challenging. If you are recovering people pleaser, or just, general mother of today that, we're all conditioned to be human givers. It is a lot of work, but I think when you get to that point where you know what your capacity is, and what boundaries that you need to have, it actually gives you more energy because all your energy isn't out outside of you, you actually are conserving something for yourself.

**Jacqueline:** Exactly. What is one behavior change you'd recommend for working moms or companies to start today?

**Christine:** This is one I feel really strongly about, but I think through my journey I was with the same employer for almost 11 years and I think if there was possibility during those years to go part-time or to work 80% or to do core hours or a job share or project based work, like even just a varied way of looking at time and schedules and work. I would've been in such a different place in order to manage both family life and my career. And I think I would've been able to do it better and I would've been able to create a little bit more of a buffer that just isn't in existence for working parents and, many of the women that I work with are in dual income families. And that's a huge problem is the bandwidth. It's like the house of cards. If you have one child or you have five children, someone's always sick. And the house of cards is just always falling apart. And I think what so many parents need is that autonomy and a bit of a buffer.

I think that without people saying it out loud is a lot of people go into entrepreneurship or create their own businesses because they want their own schedule that they can create. And there are challenges that happen when you're inside an organization. If you don't have that ability to move the different blocks around. So I know for me, Part-time work, probably would've been the best option. And just more autonomy over my hours and where you do your work and how you do your work. And I think that's starting to shift now, but there's certainly ongoing conversations that need to happen.

**Jacqueline:** That's great. I think that's so important. And I know there's other folks out there really trying to make good cases for job sharing, cos then you get the best of two brains. There's so many advantages to it. And then something for then just working moms themselves, anything that you would recommend for them to try start today?

**Christine:** Yeah. I think overall. The working mom formula can be a simple one and it can be one that any working mom can do, but you need to give yourself permission to get there. And there is a bit of a journey in figuring out how you want to put together your life of career and family and all of these pieces. But, we're all here for a reason where we have different gifts and different purpose and we all strive to live a full and a fulfilling life. And I think this one needs to be recreated or rewritten. I think the one that we were doing pre pandemic, we've seen that that one needs to be dismantled.

And I hope that through the work that I'm doing and hopefully, my own being an example of the modeling as well, that there is something more to our daily lives where reaching for joy and reaching for happiness and enjoying both our families and our work is going to be the way of the future. And I think that ties into everything that we're seeing just through this pandemic. I think that will raise our mental health, our emotional state and just how we are connected as humans.

*Thanks to Veronica Rol for checking and editing this transcript*