E11: Advocating for caregiving skills and support in the workplace with author and movement builder Amy Henderson

**Amy:** Hi, my name is Amy Henderson and I have three kids. Claire is ten, Aidan is eight and Grace is six. I am the CEO and co-founder of a venture called Tend lab. And I'm also the author of a book called 'Tending: parenthood and the future of work', which was published by Nation Builder Books in May of this year.

**Jacqueline:** Thank you so much, Amy, for being here, it's such a delight to speak with you, and I'm so glad that we have gotten to interact and connect over this last year. And I'm so impressed by your mission and your journey. So please, can you start there to describe the journey to where you are now in your career? I know it's a long one and a complicated one. They always are right?

**Amy:** So I'm a movement builder by background. And I was running an organization that I had co-founded with Van Jones and the Rock Star Prince. When I accidentally got pregnant with my third child. When she was born, I had three under the age of four and it felt like the wheels fell off the bus. I was out on maternity leave with my third child when I had a real crisis. I couldn't figure out why it was so hard to be a working parent, a working mom. And I didn't know if it was just me and my bad decisions and the unique shortcomings that I had, or if it was really just extremely hard to be a working parent.

And so I started interviewing first, just the moms I most admired. And then also dads that were highly admired and I found that it wasn't just me. Almost every single parent I spoke with admitted that they felt like they were regularly failing either at work or at home or both. And I called from a pretty raw place. I shared some pretty rough moments with these people that I reached out to. And I found they were willing to meet me with their own rough moments. Those times that they were most ashamed of the things that they hadn't spoken about to others, or really even acknowledged to themselves. And it was really healing for me. And I've been told by many of these other parents, that it was also healing for them to have the space where we could be honest with ourselves and each other about how much we were struggling and how much shame there was . But the second thing that emerged and it had to come after, we were honest about how much we were struggling.

The second thing to surface was that we were forging ourselves, that we were gaining something and that parenthood possibly more than anything else was forcing us to grow and evolve. And that the ways we were growing and evolving really mattered, not just in our personal lives, but also in our careers. And it was that discovery that kept happening again, and again. I eventually ended up doing over 200 interviews and with almost every interview, it followed the same pattern. First we talked about the shame and the pain, and then we talked about how we were forging ourselves through the journey. And it was that second revelation that we were forging ourselves that led me to keep going.

I eventually left "Yes, we code" the organization I was running, to further explore this, to look into research from other disciplines. I have a tiny bit of a background in neuroscience. So I nerded out on the brain research. What happens neurologically when you become a parent. And I discovered that the greatest potential for plasticity in the adult human brain for both men and women, regardless of whether or not they're raising a birth child, is during that first year of their child's life. And this revelation coupled with everything I discovered in my interviews was this massive aha moment for me, that led me to continue to do the research and eventually launch a business called Tend Lab. With two co-founders, the original VP of HR at Twitter and another community builder and senior HR leader, Kim Rohrer, to really explore how could we help companies recognize and realize the value of parents in their workplace?

**Jacqueline:** I think it's amazing that you turn these phone calls, these vulnerable, brave phone calls into a business mission. So what helped you realize there was a mission there and what helped you have the confidence to follow that passion?

**Amy:** Those are great questions. I think the first thing was when my first co-founder, Janet Van Huysse, she was at Twitter when I interviewed her. She was their original VP of HR and also their original VP of diversity and inclusion. And after I interviewed her, I said, hey, look, this is what I'm discovering in my interviews. These are the five main skills that parenthood is unlocking: courage, efficiency in productivity, emotional intelligence, enhanced purpose and the capacity to collaborate. And there's some really significant neurological research behind Parenthood's ability to unlock these skills. And she dropped her fork on her plate and she said, Amy, we spend more money than I care to admit training our leaders to develop those skills. And you're telling me parenthood possibly more than anything else develops them? And that was when a million light bulbs went off in my head. And I thought, if this is something that companies value, then they should be putting money behind it. And then I courted Janet and she eventually left Twitter and joined me and we launched Tend Lab to go help companies put their money where their mouth was.

**Jacqueline:** So let's get into that because I think it is really important. If these are skills that companies value, then they need to demonstrate that value is there. Do you feel like companies are able to do that? I know when we first met you were feeling some reluctance from companies to actually invest in caregiving: caregiving giving initiatives, caregiving cultures, caregiving programs. Do you feel like that has changed since then? Even though that was already during COVID, what are you seeing are the barriers to companies really prioritizing this set of skills and this life that brings these set of skills?

**Amy:** Yeah, that's a great question. I'm going to tie back a little bit too, to something you asked me earlier, which is what is it that gave me the confidence to continue and what I learned early on when we started Tend Lab back in 2015. People did not care about parents in the workplace at all. It was not a thing or caregivers more broadly. My co-founder Janet and I thought that we would, given our reputations and our backgrounds and our network, that we would have a lot of clients. And we did not. We had a few good solid companies who hired us, but we were hired by the marketing budgets to do internal work. And then the companies that hired us, we would do work inside the companies with the HR team who was often reluctant to have to work with us. So that the marketing department could then brand externally that they were a company by and for parents; that they really supported their parents. And here's how and why? Because we worked with this organization Tend Lab. And it wasn't the HR teams that were bringing us in. It wasn't initially any senior leaders who really had investment and commitment in changing the workplace culture. It was people who wanted to have a marketing opportunity and because of that, our ability to impact long-term sustainable, significantly impactful change within the organization was really limited. And that was frustrating.

**Jacqueline:** I bet. That seems crazy. But part of me says, okay, yeah, it's understandable. The PR is so important, but that seems also an area to leverage, that value.

**Amy:** And so I got pretty disheartened with that thinking, I didn't go into this so that I could give somebody a good marketing opportunity. I went into this so I could drive real change. And so I discovered that there were a number of other founders mostly female, but some people of all genders who were also building products and services to make the experience of the modern family better. And together with a few other founders, we started this, what was initially an informal community and has since become a formal network of over 200 founders across the country. We call ourselves the Fam Tech founders, collaborative, who were solving for the needs of caregivers and families. And it has been this incredible experience of finding peers who are slogging against the same challenges and we have collectively come together because we believe that even though we might be direct competitors and there are other people who have offerings that are somewhat similar to what Tend Lab does, the market for our services is vast, and the need for what we deliver and offer is huge. And that if we can come together and shape name and drive the growth in our sector, that we're all going to be better, both individually as companies, but more importantly, broadly as a society. If we can make this part of the national conversation, then we're going to be in a much better place. With the onset of COVID I'm grateful that seems to be happening.

**Jacqueline:** And I think that's so fascinating because your original approach was I'm here alone at home with my third baby, I needed to talk to people and find other people like me. And then your approach, when you struggled with the company was I'm here alone with this company, I need other people like me to understand the connect with. So that's such a superpower, your ability to connect and network and bring people together. I so admire that.

**Amy:** Oh, thank you, Jacqueline. Yeah, it's it has certainly been a gift in my life and it's something that I'm really grateful that I've been able to do.

**Jacqueline:** And I think it's such a, an important strategy. This collaboration, this collaborative approach is such an important strategy. So I think we shouldn't ignore that. Yes, you're good at it, but it also is a really successful strategy.

**Amy:** It is, and by the way, as you will know, from reading my book and all the time we spent working together and your own deep work and commitment to helping mothers in this space that parenthood, possibly more than anything else, unlocks an individual's capacity to further develop their collaboration.

**Jacqueline:** I think I've struggled more than you to act upon that. I feel for me, motherhood unlocked a bit of an unraveling for me and that I was really slow and reluctant to share that, to admit that and to look for help in that area. And I think that's why I ended up in a state of burnout because I shouldered it all and took it all upon myself. So I think that's such an important lesson that I have learned in this process that there are other ways to go about this. And like you said, you started with your vulnerability, allowed others to share theirs. And then from there you made progress. So I think that's something I'm really having to learn to embrace. But I think it's really, really important.

**Amy:** One of the things that I think is important to talk about is my own journey in recovering from post-traumatic stress disorder, because that was the first time I lost my identity. And motherhood, when I became a mom, was the second time I lost my identity and I am so grateful that I had a previous experience with that loss because I had within me the knowledge that I could recover myself and I could use some of the tools and practices that I'd learned in my recovery from PTSD to re-find myself in the wake of motherhood. And I noticed that most of my peers did not have that framework within themselves. They hadn't been forced to develop those tools and practices. And so a lot of the reason that I launched Tend Lab was to bring a voice and recognition to this extreme transformation that occurs with parenthood and the resources and support that are needed to navigate through it with success.

**Jacqueline:** I think it's so important to address the issue of identity, not only in relation to motherhood, but as you say, in relating to other life events that are profound. So burnout is when you lose your passion for your work, or you become cynical about your work. And often it means you end up leaving the organization. So that is a time when you can lose your identity, especially if your work was such a big part of your identity. So that's what happened to me. I was a professor I burned out and I could no longer say to people, when they said, oh, what do you do? I could no longer say I'm a professor of public health. And it was so painful for me to have lost that. And also so humbling to realize that I thought that was so important. And so I definitely had such a major identity crisis with that burnout. So I think other women who are moms and who are potentially going through burnout will feel this, will resonate with this idea of losing your identity. But as you say, not really knowing how to find it and recapture it. So like you went through therapy, I had to go through therapy as well because during my burnout, I had suicide ideation and that's what I had to do. I told my husband and he said to me, please go see somebody, please at least do that for us. And so that's where I started. And so I do, I think it's really important that we address 1) burnout has really profound health impacts that can also then really undermine your identity and your whole notion of what life is. So thank you for bringing that up because, as you say, you went through therapy and that helped prepare you for this next identity change that you had.

**Amy:** First, thank you so much for your courage and sharing your own story. And I've read your journey and I've heard it from you a few times and I think it's remarkable. And I want to point out that you weren't just a professor, but you were one of the top producing top publishing experts in your field at the height of your career. Give yourself more credit than you have been giving in your listenership here. But I think for me, the recovery from PTSD wasn't just therapy. It was a much more expansive look at what does it mean to heal and what can I learn from others who have done it? And someone that has become a very dear friend once shared with me that throughout the world throughout all the cultures that we know of there's an understanding that when you sit in the center of your wound and make peace with it and get to know it, that you increase your potency, that you discover a deeper sense of who you are and what matters to you and what makes it worthwhile to be here.

And I think that's, if anything, at the core of what healing has been for me. And it sounds like also for you. If you no longer want to be here and you have to look at what is it that makes me feel that way and how far back does it go? And within Tend lab, we do these workshops for working parents, these in-depth workshops. And one of the things I talk about is how a diamond under pressure, it cracks along the fault lines and that parenthood in our working culture in America is extremely difficult. And it's not a matter of if you crack, it's a matter of when you crack and where you crack is an opportunity to discover where you are already weakened the need of tending what places within you were not fully healed or not fully developed, or that needed to be acknowledged. And so while the wound or the pain or the challenge, or the, messed up behavior that surfaces in you, it may not actually even be related to parenthood. Parenthood just triggers it and sets it off and makes it visible and available to you in a way that possibly nothing else could. And then you get to look at it and you get to make peace with it and you get to heal it.

**Jacqueline:** And I think that's so important. And again, others may experience this as well. When you become a mother, you're not necessarily asking yourself, what do you want, but when you burn out from your career and suddenly you're sitting there going, what do I do next? And everyone's saying what do you want to do. And yeah. I didn't have an answer because I had spent my whole life looking out for other people's needs. So that was really what surfaced is that I hadn't ever taken time to say, what do I want? And to feel comfortable asking that question and then feel comfortable asking for what I needed. And I didn't know what I needed until I started to understand what I want. So I agree. Therapy is just the start and you have to dig deep and I've done a lot of coaching as well. And that's why I interviewed coaches on this podcast too, because I really think they have fantastic strategies and tools that can help you work out how to sit with those wounds and come at them at different angles, whether it's through writing yourself a letter from the past or doing a visualization. They have so many tools to get in touch with what that is. But yeah, it's a journey. It's been three years and I am absolutely still in it and learning but very grateful for these opportunities to have these conversations.

**Amy:** Another thing that I've heard consistently in my interviews with particularly moms was this sense that when they became a mother and they cracked at whatever point in their journey, they crack. It made them question what they had been doing with their lives. One woman even said to me that she'd been so busy meeting all the external definitions of success, all the things she'd been told or conditioned to believe she should want to be or do that she'd never really stopped and done the internal. Who do I really want to be? What really makes me feel alive? What makes me want to be here? And she said, and I loved this framing for it, she said she realized she'd been climbing the wrong ladder and that motherhood forced her to fall off the ladder. And then to really look at what will make me want to get up and climb again. And where will I climb?

**Jacqueline:** And I think that was one part of my learning too, was learning to understand emotions and this book the language of emotions by Karen McLaren basically says even the emotion of feeling suicide ideation is that there's something about the life you have that you no longer want and that you want a new life. You don't want to end your life. It's just your body telling you that it's seeking a new life. So I think that's so important that we can not feel that the shame of those feelings, that they're feelings that are there to guide us to find what we want. And when we have the opportunity to do that, it really is a wonderful opportunity to think again, and to have a new beginning. And not necessarily even a new beginning in terms of I'm not a young woman and I have mastery of so many things, so it doesn't have to feel like a total start again. It can be a pivot. So I like that as well. How you've taken the things that you've learned in your life, and now you're applying them into this new area.

**Amy:** Yeah. And I think that's really important to recognize when you're down on the floor and feeling broken and whatever form that looks like, whether that's, burnout or what I see with a lot of working parents, especially now in the wake of COVID is extreme anxiety. There's a lot of enhanced anxiety. A lot of people that I know who've gone onto anti-anxiety medications who are really struggling to hold it together right now. I think it's important to really look at that question. What ladder am I climbing? And does it feel like it's in deep alignment with who I am?

**Jacqueline:** So let's talk a little more about Tend Lab and your mission and how you see that your approach is also different to some of these other companies that you've collaborated with. How do you approach it? What do you want to see?

**Amy:** That's a great question. We had talked earlier about how companies didn't want to do the deep work of changing the culture. They just wanted the PR opportunity to brand with us externally. And within the Fam Tech founders collaborative, there are a number of companies who provide services through the benefits department, within companies. So I'm thinking of, for instance, Carrot, which is an app that allows an employer to earmark a certain amount of funding for any employee to access fertility services.

So whether that's a gay couple that wants to adopt a child or a heterosexual couple that wants to go through some sort of in vitro process. The company earmarks a certain amount of funds for every employee to access, should they choose to support them on their fertility journey. And that app, that benefit is something that's offered through the total rewards department through the HR team. And it's something that's an easy plug and play. You allocate a certain amount of funding to it, then each employee is given access to it. And I think in the big scope of things, it does go a long way towards saying this company is supportive of building a family. This company cares about diversity and equity more broadly.

But what I think it does not do is it does not address this specific culture of that company and how well it does and does not support its caregivers more broadly. And we at Tend Lab, as well as some other really great organizations working in this space, such as The Village on the East Coast or WRK 360, which is based down in LA, organizations that are more consultancy based that go in to look specifically at the policies and the practices within the company, we're really looking at how do you address the culture in which these benefits exist? And what I have seen most companies do is they want to throw a bunch of money at benefits, but they don't really want to spend any money addressing the culture of the company and how to make it more modern, how to make it more relevant, how to actually create a community within the company that meaningfully supports, acknowledges, validates and allows their caregivers to thrive. I have seen much more reluctance on that front and I like to think of it as one of the other founders in our network, Melissa Hanna, she's founded a business called Mahmee. And her venture is looking at maternal wellbeing in this country. And I didn't know this until I became familiar with her work, but the US actually has the highest maternal fatality rate in any developed nation in the world. But we spend more money on maternal health care than any other developed nation in the world. So it doesn't make any sense. We're spending more money and we're having the worst outcomes. And I think that can also be the case for companies who spend a lot of money on benefits for their caregivers. But don't actually look at what is the culture in which those benefits are being delivered.

**Jacqueline:** That's really interesting. You mentioned that example cause my area of expertise is public health. And so I've been aware of those figures and in my grant writing work, I help people who are trying to change maternal mortality rates in the US and it's going to take a lot to do that. But I think what's so important about that is so one of the reasons that, that type of disparity in how much you are putting in financially into the care and how little the outcome is then affected it's because those two aren't connected.

So in many other countries where they have much better outcomes, the outcomes are connected to the care. So it's really a quality of care issue. And I think that's changing in the US and I've certainly seen that with quality improvement initiatives. And they don't always work either because then if people are trying change the quality of the outcome, but without really changing the experience or the level of care, it can have downsides to o when you get too focused on that. But I think these quality improvement initiatives are so important. Because again, we don't want to see companies investing a lot of money in this and then not seeing any outcomes, not seeing any impact. So I think tying what they're doing to impact is so important and that's so comes from, our research and saying, yeah, let's evaluate what's happening.

I'm a behavior change specialist and if I don't actually see behavior change, I have failed. So I'm always looking for that change. That, to me tells me whether it's working. And if it's not, I got to do something different. So I really think that's important. Because as we think about the metrics that we do measure, they aren't about the things that we want to have an impact on. So I think that's really important changing that metric. That say, for example, as you've suggested that managers are held accountable for the number of staff in their team that burnout. That there is some relationship between what they're trying to do and what they're trying to prevent.

**Amy:** Jacqueline first, I just want to appreciate and acknowledge you again for working with us to create a guide for Time's Up that we produced, which was around creating a culture of care and you rolled up your sleeves and got right in it with us to make the case that if you say you care about caregivers, then you must develop practices that you then measure to do that. And one of the examples that you just gave, which is, if you say you care about caregivers, then you need to evaluate your managers on their ability to support the caregivers on their team. And that needs to be part of what is considered when you're looking at performance evaluations. When you're looking at promotions and bonuses, and really needs to be something you measure. Because what you measure matters.

**Jacqueline:** So what other suggestions do you have then to change company culture? Because I think it's really easy for people to think about these things and say, this is a system problem. This is systemic racism. This is systems problems. And then somehow, because they use those words, it's not my problem. It's the system. And the system is this thing. And I'm not the thing. That's the system. Whereas actually we are the system. To me, yes, you can have policies, but it's really up to the people who decide which policies you put in place, how you enforce those policies and how you incentivize and reward people for following those policies. So to me it's so important that the culture does change because to me, the culture is the people and really without the culture changing the system will not change.

**Amy:** I completely agree. And it's, the chicken and the egg, this conversation, isn't it? Yeah. I completely agree. I think there are two things that need to be done on that front: one is companies need to start tracking the caregiving status of their employees, and specifically they need to be tracking how it impacts hiring retention, promotion, and compensation. There's been a great study that Robert Fuller did out of Harvard in which he found that most companies are not tracking the caregiving status of their employees. And they also think that caregiving status doesn't really impact their ability to perform. What he found is that up to 75% of employees or three out of four employees currently identify as caregivers. And the vast majority of them say that their caregiving responsibilities negatively impact their ability to perform at work.

So there's a huge discrepancy between what employers think and the reality of their employees. And it's time for that discrepancy to be bridged. Employers need to track caregiving status so they can see how it impacts these critical variables. And if they see what we have seen inside companies, when we take a deep look at that, then they will be motivated to take action because they'll recognize it has a huge impact on their bottom line. And if they solve for it, if they meaningfully meet their employees who are caregivers, where they're at and create very simple modifications that can significantly support caregivers that don't need to cost any money. If they can implement some simple measures to start and maintain a feedback loop, where they continue to monitor and look at how are our caregivers doing? What are some blocks that they're facing? What are some challenges that they're hitting? What is making them thrive? If they keep that feedback loop going, if they continue to look and track, then they're going to have the information they need to value it to the degree that it needs to be valued.

So that's the first thing I would say. Track caregiving status. The second thing I would say is that at a broader cultural level, not just within companies, we need to transform the way we think about parenting and caregiving more broadly and its impact on work performance. I am one of the first people that's come forward through this research and book with Tend Lab to say that parenting, neurologically and otherwise, unlock skills that are critical for success in the modern workplace: courage, efficiency, and productivity, emotional intelligence, enhanced purpose, and specifically the capacity to collaborate. Most work today is team-based and an individual's ability to work well in a team is dependent on their ability to collaborate. We talked at the beginning of this podcast about the importance of collaboration in my own life. It's not just me that benefits from it. There is significant research from a variety of disciplines that say that collaboration is the most effective way for an organization to succeed. If we are going to succeed as a company, as a nation, as a global society, with all of the challenges we are facing right now, we have got to learn to work together. And it's about time that we acknowledge and support those among us who are forced to develop those skills by creating workplaces that support us.

**Jacqueline:** And I think that stands in some ways in opposition to some of the founding principles of the US which is individualism. So I think it is going to take more here in the US to make those changes than it might take elsewhere. And that kind of reminds me also, when you said the point about the chicken and egg, I have a comparison here. Again from my research experience. One of the things I worked on was changing communities to become more walkable. So you might put in a crosswalk or a bike path or a traffic circle. There's all sorts of things you can do to make communities more walkable, bike stands instead of park space, lots and lots of things. And unfortunately, here in the US it seems to be that it's a little bit piecemeal, there's little pieces. They then don't all connect. And it's really hard to get a culture of change, for example, towards public transportation, towards walkable communities. But I was talking with my colleague who was in Strasberg in Europe. And so I said to him, oh, the problem is if you build it, they will not come. There's this principle that if you build it, they will come and it's just not true. It doesn't happen outside of films and it definitely is not happening when we do the research and we actually build something different if people don't know about it, and it's not something that fits into their schedule and their culture and their way of life, they don't come, nothing changes.

So building it doesn't make a change. So I think that's the same with these policies of caregiving. Simple policies and caregiving will not have an impact. But what he said was that in Strasberg they changed the whole city center, everything changed. They had massive change. They made this whole pedestrian area and everything changed. The change was large and comprehensive and he said they absolutely came. So we were debating this, oh, if you build it, he said, yes, they do come. And I was like, no, they don't. But I do actually think what I could learn from that and apply here is to say it has to be comprehensive. These little pieces although they are a great start, need to be part of a bigger effort, a much more comprehensive effort.

**Amy:** I completely agree. It's funny, we started out with Tend Lab focusing exclusively on parents. And then in the wake of COVID, we've really been looking at the importance of caregivers more broadly. But there's an argument to be made that it's really for anyone, for any employee. They need to exist within a culture, not just within their individual workplace, but within their world more broadly where caring for others and themselves is something that is valued and supported, which unfortunately is rarely the case.

**Jacqueline:** And I thought that was so great in your Time's Up work, that you really showed that everybody can be a caregiver at some time in their life. So in fact, everybody may need this help. They could have a mental health crisis of their own. They could have a child with special needs. A wife could get sick. It's not even necessarily that this is like elderly and children, there can be lifelong challenges or temporary challenges at any stage of our life that we have to attend to in a certain way. So I thought you did a great job of making that case, but I also think you did a great job of really presenting the care that teams need to have when somebody goes on maternity leave, the rest of the team should not then suffer because of that. There needs to be opportunities to skill up, there needs to be real thought about how that changes is managed and an investment in a new team member to actually help so that others aren't taking the burden. So I thought that was so important that you were really thinking about not setting up caregivers against everyone else in this situation.

**Amy:** Yeah. I think that's a really important lesson we learned early on with Tend Lab, that it's not about caregivers against people who are not currently caregivers, but are likely to become caregivers at some point. It's about looking at the overall systems and policies and practices in place. Do they care for everyone? Because if you're taking care of your caregivers at the expense of your other employees, that is not a sustainable solution, and it's going to lead to some really significant problems down the line.

**Jacqueline:** So tell me a little bit more about your efforts to get companies to sign up to a care giving pledge. I'll let you tell us the audience about how that came about. But it really caught my attention when you did that, because I was seeing other companies with say, taking pledges to include companies of racial diversity in their product lines or companies were pledging to do something for the environment. So it seems to me like this seems to match a little bit back to your PR side of things, which saying let's get companies to step out and make a pledge, and this will give them some public recognition for the efforts they're making, which I think, that speaking their language. So I think that's a great way, but tell me about your experience there.

**Amy:** Yeah. I developed a campaign between the E launch of my book, which was in May, on Mother's day and the print launch of my book, which was in June, on Father's day. There were roughly 40 days between those two days. And so we said let's build this what we called the tending to care pledge, where we get employers to agree to track the caregiving status of their employees and how it impacts hiring retention, promotion, and compensation. And we thought it would be an easy ask of employers to do this. And we found that it was not, and there were a number of reasons. First I want to say that there were some really wonderful companies who did agree to do this, but they were very few and far between. The vast majority of companies said, there's no way we're going to do that. Because of COVID, we are now tracking caregiving status of our employees because we have recognized for the first time that it has an impact on our employees, but there's no way we're going to make it available to the public that we're doing it. Because if we tell the public we're tracking it, then we're going to be accountable to whatever we discover. And we either don't want to be accountable or don't know how to be accountable, to solving for what we discover. And they were afraid of the negative backlash they would get.

The second thing we discovered was that the tracking systems that companies use to assess things like caregiver status, they're not yet equipped to even track this data. So the HRIS systems like Namely or Workday or Oracle or SAP, they don't have the functionality to allow employers to even assess this information. So there's a lot of work that needs to be done to enable this to be a possibility. And so we looked at other campaigns that have been successful in getting employers to track demographic data. And I've had some wonderful conversations with the former Senator Hannah Beth Jackson, who made it so that companies in the state of California had to track the data around gender and race and how it impacted an individual's position within their company. And so she created the legislation that required companies to track it, required companies to report on it. And that leveled the playing field, because if everybody's doing it, then there's not a resistance to it because, it's just something that's required. And so we're looking at how can we push for similar legislation to make caregiving status something that we track so that we can have some visibility into it.

**Jacqueline:** And I think that's so amazing too. We're talking about therapy and we're talking about policy and that's what it takes. It crosses all these things. Government policy, not just workplace policies. This is a complex problem and it is this multi-level problem where, yeah, you have to do your own work personally, but there also has to be a government support to make these things happen. I love that you span that whole approach.

**Amy:** Thank you, Jacqueline. I have to say one of the things that gives me hope for the future is that there are incredible individuals like you with your background and your passion and your real critical eye that are getting involved in this conversation in a meaningful way, because that's what's going to build a better future for us.

**Jacqueline:** I hope so that feels very intimidating to me but I am okay to be sitting in that space. One of the things when I left academia was I was like, okay, I want to have an impact beyond my scientific field. So it's intimidating, but it's also something that I'm trying to sit with and embrace. And I think that comes back a little bit too, to the company's experience of this fear of failure. And so I think we really have to address that in some way. Because I don't think we don't know what to do. That's what I started to realize is I started to try and track all these different recommendations that were out there. So including the recommendations you made in Times Up. For example, the National Academy of Medicine has recommendations to prevent burnout in physicians. There's so many organizations that have actually told us what to do. There's so many solutions out there. So I don't believe we don't know what to do. If companies are saying we'll discover this problem and we won't know what to do. I'm really struggling to say, no, we have solutions. There could still be lack of awareness of what those solutions are. And I think there's still an issue of how evidence-based, are those solutions do actually know they're going to work. But I think that's what's so important. And back to these quality improvement measures. You get quality of improvement by experimenting because what works in one workplace might not work in another. So I think that is actually really an important part of the approach, but I think this also fits back into the DEI work and the national conversation. No action is not acceptable anymore. The action we take is going to be imperfect and we have to start getting comfortable with that. And instead of calling out people's failures, call out their attempt to try to do something differently and be open to learning because we will mess it up. We will do imperfect solutions. Can you talk a little bit more about how this work does relate to the diversity, equity and inclusion?

**Amy:** I'm so glad you said that or asked that question because early on when we were starting Tend Lab, a lot of people felt as though we were asking for companies to take their limited budgets and apply them to parents at the expense of other critical diversity initiatives, supporting women and folks of color. And what we know from the research is that women and folks of color are disproportionately impacted by caregiving responsibilities. And so you actually can't look at these other critical variables, like gender, like race, or even like LGBTQ status without also looking at the intersection with caregiving. And that if you want to meaningfully support the folks who are already the most marginalized in the workplace, you need to be also looking at caregiver status and you need to be looking at the way it impacts the ability of folks from these groups to equally participate in the workplace.

**Jacqueline:** Thank you so much for making that connection. It comes back to that data of saying these people are marginalized and caregiving is a huge part of their life and that marginalization process. So that's really helpful.

**Amy:** Thank you. Yeah. And if you look at the data, you can also see that there's very specific and nuanced ways in which these particular groups of people, are likely to be impacted by their caregiving responsibilities. For instance folks who are African-American are likely to have more of a financial burden, are likely to spend up to a third of their income covering their caregiving responsibilities at a critical phase in their working life. Which impacts their ability to take risks or to really be pioneers in their work. If they are carrying such a heavy financial responsibility for the people that are their dependents.

**Jacqueline:** So what's next for you? You're going to shift focus a little bit. Cause of the caregiving pledge not being the right time. And I think that's one of the things I learned from the policy work I did. You have to have everything in place and suddenly this window opens and you can go through it and actually have policy change and have meaningful change. But sometimes we have to sit and wait until that window opens. And COVID smashed the window wide open, but companies are still afraid. So again, there's something that has to shift there before we can actually have this willingness to really invest in comprehensive change. But what else going forward? I know you've talked about action cohorts and you've been developing a new podcast. What's next for you in terms of the change you would like to be leading?

**Amy:** Yeah there's a couple of things I'm doing. One is we are going to be hiring an executive director to lead and run the Fam Tech founders collaborative that I started. So I'll be supporting her in getting that up and running and getting really deep into expanding the vision of it to be even more comprehensive than it currently is. I'm really excited about that. This nascent sector that is Fam Tech has increased in visibility since COVID and I think this is a great opportunity to meaningfully support entrepreneurs who are innovating in that. And hopefully to connect some of those entrepreneurs to the government focus on this. And I'm hopeful that our current administration is really going to invest thoughtfully in learning from the entrepreneurs who've been innovating in this space for a long time. So hopefully that will happen. I'm also really interested in continuing to get out there with the message of my book and to change and transform our cultural narrative about parenthood's impact on career performance. So I'm continuing to work inside companies and doing lots of public speaking, which I love. And then I think one of my favorite things to do is to facilitate conversations in which these revelations can occur; public conversations, facilitating panels and dialogues in public forums. Where what I've noticed in my work is that when you can see your story reflected in the stories of others, then it helps to validate and give a voice to your experience.

And this experience, there's two things that I talked about in the beginning of the podcast that parenthood does. One, it brings you to your knees and makes you experience a lot of shame. And two, it forges you, especially if you're willing to just sit with that shame and pain and really look at it. And so creating forums for people, from all different walks of life, to be able to articulate their experience with that, gives this experience, gives this whole transformation a voice and gives it validity and makes it visible in a way that it currently is not. And I think we will be much better off as a culture, as a people, as a world, as a nation if we have more opportunity to reflect and consider and learn from the transformation that parenthood offers.

**Jacqueline:** And I think storytelling is such an important transformative strategy in itself. And lots of companies are starting to realize that. Lots of organizations are starting to realize that. I think we should embrace it and I think there are some great storytellers out there like yourself. I think your story has been impactful and resonated with me. And I'm sure with many others. So one of the things that I really try to do after the podcast is come away with a behavior change guide that I can include as a resource with the podcast to help moms or leaders today to try and make some change. And I use my behavior change principles because what you want to change is the first step. And then actually, how do you set yourself up to succeed takes quite a few other steps. We know what they are from behavior change science, and they can really help. So what would be something that you would do today, or you recommend a mom or a leader could do today to start this process of change?

**Amy:** I would go back to where we started in this conversation, which is, I would find a community of peers. I think critically important to find a community of peers, however you identify that, who are striving to really heal and grow through the challenges they're facing, who are capable of being honest, bitching is critically important, but also who are looking to drive towards solutions. So find a group of peers who are also trying to become better versions of themselves and not in a sort of a false positive thinking leads to change kind of way. But in a way that is really honest and heartfelt and deeply supportive. That for me has been a lifesaver. Literally, I would not be alive today had I not found others who could see me where I was.

What we know from research and recovering from traumas, that there's three main things that people who are able to survive and thrive post-trauma have. One is the sense that they're not alone, that they feel seen by others. And I think that's where the talking about the pain and the shame is so critical. The second one is that they have a sense of agency that they feel empowered to take action in their own lives. And then the third one is a sense of purpose that they're part of something and contributing to something that is about creating a better future, not just for themselves, but for others too. And so the three things I would say to any person who's listening to this podcast is find a group of peers who allow you to feel seen and heard. Find a way to take some agency in your own. And then find a way to recognize that you have something to contribute to a greater purpose than just yourself.

**Jacqueline:** That's wonderful. And what I love about these behavior change challenges is I try to do them myself so that I can see what are the struggles, what are the barriers to making these changes? So I'm really grateful for you to give me this challenge to continue to seek my tribe. And that's something that yeah, my therapist said early on, she said, you've got to find your tribe. It's going to be so important for you. So thank you for throwing down that challenge to me and to others. I really appreciate it.

**Amy:** Jacqueline, I consider you to be part of my tribe. You're just a real important force in my life and the way that you so courageously faced the challenges that you've had and spoken about them and are working to create a better future, not just for yourself, but for others too. It's really inspiring.

**Jacqueline:** Thank you so much. And thank you for your inspiration and your time today. It's just been such a pleasure to speak with you.