S3 E50 Using emotional intelligence to prevent burnout with author and therapist Farah Harris

**Farah:** Hi, I'm Farah Harris. I am a mother of three little ones, married to a wonderful human being that I've hoped to be with forever. It will be 17 years of marriage and I am currently a psychotherapist and an owner of Working Well Daily, a company dedicated to addressing both workplace belonging and wellbeing.

**Jacqueline:** Great. Thank you so much for that. And I have heard a little bit about your journey before through other podcasts, and I love that you tried so many different jobs in your career and in particular that you talk about recycling the pieces. And I think that's so important for moms to hear, because we often have job changes either through motherhood or through something like burnout or through a positive thing. But to know that we can at any time in our life, take all those experiences and pivot and use them is so helpful. Please tell us a bit more about your journey to where you are now in your career.

**Farah:** Sure. Yeah. I love the recycled pieces. Cos I think sometimes we feel parts of our lives are wasted or that we have resentment or regret. But I really believe that there are so many moments that we may not realize, now, are going to be beneficial to our future selves. And so my journey is interesting. So I wanted to be, for those who are familiar with the Cosby show, I wanted to be the real life, Claire Huxtable. So I went to school thinking I was gonna become a corporate attorney and took my first law class and was like, yeah, no. This is not going to work out, but I still like that pre-law at the end of the bachelor's degree. So I ended up being a economics pre-law major with a minor in sociology.

And unfortunately when I graduated, it was the year of 2001. And for those of you who remember nine 11 happened. Finding a job was difficult. And so during that time, I was like, what do I do next? And my parents were like, go to grad school. And for me I'm like, why would I get a master's in something that I don't know what I wanna master in? So let me actually check out another creative outlet, cos I was very artistic as a child. So I tried my hand at getting a degree in fashion design and my left brain was bored. So, I shifted even within the same program to marketing and merchandising management. And was definitely more excited about that. And then got my first big girl job at a small retail consulting firm and quickly got bored because it was so small that there was no real career path. It was myself, the office manager and the senior leaders. I'm like, I'm not about to become a senior partner anytime soon.

We mutually parted ways and I had a year off, so to speak. And during that time I felt led to get into the mental health space. And that's when I started to feel like, no, this is home. This is where I'm supposed to be. So I got my degree. And even with that, there was still this, but can we do something else? I just wanna do private practice. That's not really where I'm seeing my life go. And that corporate part still there. And my husband's in corporate, he's in banking and my friends are in corporate. And my clients that I was getting were women who were in business, and everyone was complaining about work. And I said, is there a way for me to share my clinical knowledge of what's impacting my clients to the workplace to improve the workplace and therefore, Working Well Daily, which is my baby, that company was born. And I'm like, now, I feel at home. Now this is where all the pieces make sense for me. And yeah, so that, that's my long journey with winding roads, but ever moving forward. So.

**Jacqueline:** I love that. That's such a great example of all the things that we can gather along the way. And that you seem to be really listening to yourself along the way to know, Hey, I'm still looking.

**Farah:** I'm still looking. Yes. Yes. I think that's very important. And I think that's also part of the emotional intelligence work that I do is to be self-aware, in everything that you're doing, what's feeding you, what's fueling you? What's tiring you? Or as Marie Condo says, what sparks joy, does it spark joy? And if it doesn't, it's oh, is there a thing that we can pivot, to shift? Just engage from. So I think that's always been in the back of my mind. And also just being blessed with parents who were like, if you don't like it, then why are we doing it? So it's oh, okay. I don't have to do this if I don't want to.

**Jacqueline:** That's great. That's fantastic. So you mentioned having three children, how did motherhood change your approach to your career or life in general?

**Farah:** I'm very transparent. So I'll start with this. I have a saying that you loan your roles, but you own yourself. So the loan role of wife, or as mother, or as friend, like those may change, you could be a married woman today in a divorce tomorrow. Even your role as mother, the role that you have as a new mom is different from an empty nester. And I find women sometimes lose their identity in their role. And that was not me. And that was never anything I ever wanted. So motherhood is an awkward role for me. I believe, and I ask my kids this, I've always tried to get feedback, even from them being eleven, seven and three, is how's mommy doing? The feedback is I'm doing well , but it's a challenge. Because I really don't feel like it's ever defined me. The responsibilities of motherhood has caused me however to make decisions as it relates to my career.

Especially, I would bring my recent return to new mothering, because like I said, I have a three year old. He was a surprise baby. So not planned by us, but obviously planned by God. And it caused a shift. It was causing me to pause when I did not want to pause, because that was when I was like, Working Well Daily, yes this is the business I'm gonna do. I'm gonna be as public speaker and engage and do all these great things. And it was like, you can't do that. You're going to be tired for these next nine months, and then you're gonna have postpartum depression for a year after. And motherhood has caused me to reprioritize what I do, when I do it. And sometimes, I'm gonna be honest, like I'm navigating now through some mothering work burnout per se, because of the different roles that I'm doing within my business and in writing a book.

And it's this real mix of motherhood and entrepreneurship that's happening and, it's a blessing, but you have to be very mindful to not become resentful. And so I always have to check myself whenever I feel that my kids are pulling me away from new ideas or creative endeavors or my work with my business, and remind myself that my priority of ministries is first mothering over my business. And so there's times where I just have to go we gotta do the mothering first. And so if that means no book writing for a couple of days, if that means, stopping work and trying to give my assistant to do the work as much as she can so that I can focus on my kids who, by the way, the older two are being homeschooled. Yeah we decided to do that, for a year. It was like, no, you can't be excellent in all the things at the same time. And so if I wanna do something well, sometimes something has to wait. And I've had to just work to move in grace and in acceptance, with myself, when sometimes I don't show up the best in either place.

And so it impacts my career and how I move forward, but it never stopped me from moving forward if that makes sense. It may pause here and there, fits and starts is what I say, but it makes me always remember why I'm doing what I'm doing. I want my kids to be able to have a legacy through the work that I do. Being able to have the means to explore the world or be curious about different activities and experiences and me showing up for myself and staying in my identity and saying, mommy is still Farah. Like she has titles mine, but she was born as Farah, and she has her own ambitions and her own dreams. I want my kids to see that. But sometimes it's just difficult.

**Jacqueline:** That's such a good description of those tensions too. And I love how you are managing it. And thank you again for your time. My goodness homeschooling too. Ah and my kids go to a charter school, so they have a homeschool option and my son would love to be at home and be homeschooled. I'm like, oh my goodness. I could not do that.

**Farah:** Yeah it's the oldest thing. My son is the oldest. And if he could do homeschooling forever, he would. My daughter is a textbook extrovert and a creative. So even though she's been home and she's well adjusted, I know that she is missing out on the experiences that you can have socially and within an environment sparks more creativity. So they will be going to school next year. This was because we felt, we didn't know what was going on with COVID. We still don't really know what's going on with COVID, but I did not want to have any regrets by sending them some place where they may be more stressed out because of the stresses that I already knew the administration, the teachers were having, the kids were having. And they also reaffirmed that they were happy. I kept them home, but I was like, mommy can't do this forever. Like this is the one and done one year and that's it. But yeah it's tough. It's tough. No decision is really easy when you are a parent.

**Jacqueline:** And that's just a great example of how you've shown up for them, but also with some limits or boundaries. We put them first when we really can. So tell me a little bit about any experience you have had of burnout, or have you just been able to know so much about it that you've managed it and prevented it?

**Farah:** I know a lot, but it's life. And so it doesn't matter how much, it's going to hit you still. It's funny cos my definition of self care is the intentional daily act of creating a life you don't wanna run away from, but you are going to wanna run away sometimes. You just want to minimize the frequency in which you have this desire. So as I said earlier I'm not knee deep and burnout, but I'm definitely towing the edge of it. And it's mostly because, like I said, I'm working on the new project in writing a book and that brings a level of vulnerability and fear that you just go, oh my gosh, I can't believe I'm actually doing this. What are people gonna think? And I'm not even really stuck on what people are gonna think. It's just still the action of being faithful to the work and going, I want to give value, not necessarily I'm concerned about the critique, but it's I wanna give value in something good.

That brings on an extra level of stress. But because of my knowledge as a clinician and just my personality, I'm always looking to be at this level homeostasis, right? It's Ooh, what have I done today that has brought joy in terms of, I love to laugh. And actually my name Farah is Arabic and it means joy and happiness. So I'm like, I live out my name sake. So whenever I feel that I'm not happy, I'm like, oh no, wait what do we have to redo? What do we have to move? And it does not necessarily prevent it from happening a hundred percent of the time. But it minimizes the amount of time that it does occur or how severe it can be.

And I will never allow myself to get so burnt out that, as I call some people, I'll see them and how they show up online and I'm like, they are crispy. Like they are burnt into a crisp and it hurts my heart, but I'm also seeing where they did not set boundaries that have caused them to have this. And my community, which includes my husband and my family members, like they're very much aware of who I am naturally and they value that. And so if there is something that's causing me to not be my best self, my husband's, okay, we need to schedule a time for you to take a break. Or if you can you like not have any meetings today because I think you need rest. So being able to have that extra support, to just be able take my hands off of things for a little bit and decompress, have a day, like yesterday I tweeted; yeah so it's a mental health day. It was a wrap for me. I'm in Chicago, it was dark. The weather dropped, it started to snow. And I was like, Yeah, tears were coming outta nowhere and I was like we're not doing it.

And I told my kids two fingers, peace, I'm gone. And pretty much stayed in my room and napped and stared at the wall and did nothing. And then I had a bit of energy by 8:30 and wrote some stuff and was like, okay. And I just gave myself that space. I think you cannot have true wellbeing without community. When people can watch you, and go, I see how you're showing it, but you don't seem like you're fully yourself, or what can I do to help you? Do you need me to make dinner? Do you need a date where we could just hang out as friends or something? So I'm grateful, so grateful for my community. And sometimes it's just a vent. And they'll listen and go, I hear you and I see you and, take care of yourself. And, let me know how I can support you any other way.

**Jacqueline:** I love that. And I love that example of you showing up so much as yourself that people can see when you're not. Cos I think I did not. I'm trying to show up as this in control, perfect person. And then nobody knows where I'm at because I'm not giving them any clues. Yeah, that's such a great example of why to do that and how to do it.

**Farah:** Yeah I love me too much. But I also, I love hard to those who are in my circle. And so I even tell them in advocating for myself, if you want me, how, you know me to be, if you're coming to me for advice or if you're coming to me to consult on something and I'm not my best self, you're not going to get it. So it actually serves you well, to make sure that I am well. Cos I have friends who I'm like I thank you that you are reaching out to me to check something for you, to look over some copy or whatever, and I don't have it in me, and they go, okay, what do I need to do? This isn't important, you're important. But how can you take care of yourself? And I was like, yeah, cos I know, even in doing this work, when I'm telling clients or even in the workplace like that whole put on your oxygen mask is so important because you think it's selfish and counterintuitive, but in reality, I give the example, if you are in a plane and you are with your child, so I'm talking to the mamas and you need to put the oxygen mask on, if you put it on the child and you pass out, the child has no one to support them and to be there. So a short period or short term discomfort or counterintuitive response of being quote unquote selfish, but really you're being selfless is for the long term relationship so that you can actually show up for those that you want to serve. I'm like, if you want me to serve you you better keep me happy. Find ways to love on me and pour back into me so that I can pour back out into you.

**Jacqueline:** Great. Exactly. So let's talk a little bit more of that pouring out. You do have a book you're working on The Color of Emotional Intelligence. What's the main message of your book? And obviously you're still writing it so that's evolving. Why did you wanna write it? And what would you like to get?

**Farah:** Oh, that's a good, oh, that's a good follow up question. I'll answer the first one first. So what I've realized is that there are very few things that are untouched by inequity. And that also includes the skillset of emotional intelligence. And so my book will walk the reader through one, what emotional intelligence is, if they've never understood or knew what the concept was, but then to understand how inequity has impacted the skill set for those who have been historically and systemically marginalized, how they show up and use it differently.

And then I walk you past that to the place of how can I raise my own emotional intelligence to create spaces where people don't have to hide themselves or don't have to use their EQ, AKA their emotional quotient in a way to assimilate or cause them discomfort and harm? Because they may code switch or have to deal with microaggressions in a way that, doesn't ruffle the feathers of the ones who are causing the aggression and therefore hiding the pain, the disappointment themselves. And so it's like, how could we all raise our EQ so that we're creating these safe spaces where people don't have to? It might be dysfunctional versions of themselves to create functional relationships.

So that's in essence what the book is about. And I wanted to write this, really, it came from a request from an organization. They were looking for a speaker after George Floyd's murder. And they were like, there were so many changes happening with the company. And I wasn't big on doing like listening sessions and like having people pour out their trauma cos I'm like, and how is this helpful? So in this organization I said, well how are you addressing everyone's emotional intelligence while they're dealing with not just the emotional impact of this very publicized murder, but the emotional impact of all the changes that are happening because of COVID, and the impacts of the layoffs and that were happening within the company?

I said, emotional intelligence is a skill, a strength skill, not a soft skill. And it helps us to become more agile to change right. And become resilient. And I can speak to just your Black employees, but I don't know if they recognize that they're using this skill more as a survival skillset than a self care skill set. So it actually was birthed out of this conversation of their need and what I was suggesting for them to do. And so I did it the first time. For an all Black employee group and, their first thing was like, I really wish that my white counterparts were here and that was in my head. That's what I wanted initially, but I understood the assignment. But since then it has been like one of my most asked for trainings. And I was like, I think there may be a book here. And so as I thought about it and it's gone through different iterations as I present and I said yeah, I think the world needs to understand one, the richness, the depth, the breadth that this skill has, that's beyond just being a high performer, that it's a life skill that helps enhance relationships. But as I said earlier, we don't all use it the same way. And so if we're going to talk about training on it, we also need to recognize how you, Jacqueline, may use it different than I because of where we fall in society. And the more we become aware of those differences and uniqueness aspects of it, I think the more we can show up better and make the world a better place. So that's how The Color of EQ, AKA, The Color of Emotional Intelligence was formulated and now cooking. To my mama's, I'm pregnant with it and I can't wait to deliver it and birth it later on this year.

**Jacqueline:** I love that. And I love you saying, using it as a survival tool versus a self care tool makes sense. But I also think as you mentioned, EQ was something I have had to learn about. I realized it was missing, but for it to be a two for one almost that I can be learning about mine and about yours at the same time. And I feel like when we learn skills, it's what's so important about training and all the unconscious bias training and other things. We need skills now, EQ is a really skills oriented. So when I'm learning about a skill and then learning about how someone else applies it and uses it, I learn so much more about that skill. I can't think of another situation where that's the same, but I think it's so important cos It's always in the application of a skill that we start to learn the limits of it, the strengths, what other parts of it. So it's, it seems like a two for one, when you put it in that way, like I'm learning two things at the same time through the application of that skill.

**Farah:** I'm giving hand claps for those who can't see us because that is it. And that's why I feel like it's been very limited in its approach. Not just in what you just said about the two for one, but in where we use it. And we have to have emotional intelligence in all relationships, because we're talking about self-awareness, we're talking about relationship management. We're talking about being socially aware.

That's with your marriage, it's with your kid. I'm teaching my kids now how to have emotional intelligence, because I want them to be not just, assets to society, but valued in society because they are people that folks want to know and be around because they are empathetic. They can communicate well, they recognize and see you as a person. They have a moment to hold themselves accountable when they've done something wrong. Like all of that comes from being able to practice, the different competencies within emotional intelligence. And I say within the book and I tell people all the time, you are never going to be a person with high emotional intelligence.

You can be a person that used high emotional intelligence in a circumstance. But you will never perfect in emotional intelligence because one moment you are great in having an effective communicated conversation with your boss. And you are tempered and calm and you understood and you listened and all of the things, and then you go home and you tell your children, stop that noise. You're raising your voice and you're short and you're curt. And that's the whole thing that, if you are a woman, if you are part of the LGBTQ community, if you are Black, if you are middle Eastern, there are things that you were going to be doing when you're in predominantly other places. So if you're a woman and you're a predominantly male place, you'll use your emotional intelligence differently because it's am I playing on my femininity or am I decreasing it? What clothes do I wear to the office? Do I wear only pants suits to be taken seriously or, all of those things in the way that we think is using our emotional intelligence to figure out how to navigate that space.

But if it causes you to almost disassociate with who you naturally are and who you want to authentically be, then that's not real emotional intelligence and it's not safe. Because it's going to negatively impact your wellbeing. The less you end up being, in these spaces. So I really want people to walk away from this book one, understanding what EQ. Two recognizing the difference in the application. And then three, just being honest with yourself and go can I be better so that another person can show up better. I think I can let me apply some of these exercises and let me think through different circumstances where maybe I missed that someone was doing something extra, just so that they could feel like they were okay or that I would listen to them or respect them. And I don't necessarily want that cos I wouldn't want that for myself.

**Jacqueline:** Yeah, that's such great examples there. And I think too, one of the things just, even in you describing that there a fundamental of it is the fixed mindset. That was one of the things that I really had to learn is sometimes I'm good at listening, sometimes I not. And as soon as I could let go of that, I stopped telling myself I was a bad listener, cos I could recognize the times I was an okay listener or a really good listener or whatever. So yeah. I totally feel that way. You're saying sometimes I have emotional intelligence sometimes I don't. And that's almost like one of the opening door keys to it as well.

**Farah:** Yeah. Because you allow yourself grace, right? Because you say I showed up here, I didn't show up so well here. What's the learning? What happened in this situation that did not allow me to show up well? And that's even practicing emotional intelligence to recognize your emotional intelligence, is to be able to go, oh, I was short and irritable because I hadn't eaten yet. Or I had a disagreement with my partner and my head was still in that conversation there that I didn't see my coworker wave at me and say, good morning. So it's just slowing yourself down to just recognize, okay what can cause you to not have high EQ? What kind of fuels that low emotional intelligence and so often if you're burned out, we're not having high EQ? If we're tired, if we're stressed if we're hungry or hangry, you're hungry and angry at the same time. All of those things can cause us to not be able to practice that pause, so that we can use our brains more effectively in our responses to whatever circumstance we're experiencing.

**Jacqueline:** Great. Thank you. So let's talk a little bit more then about this intersection between DEI and burnout and how we can support the mental health and the work of DEI offices. And as I had mentioned in our little chat beforehand, you had this amazing post this week on LinkedIn, about some of the things, the five things that folks in DEI should be thinking about in terms of and I think that's really what you were saying. What are your boundaries? What are your emotional intelligence tools here that you can apply? Please speak a little bit more about how we can think about the mental health and the intersection of DEI and burnout.

**Farah:** So let me make it clear. I'm not a DEI practitioner. I am a clinician who specializes in belonging and wellbeing. Uh, DEI practitioners are so wonderful to even get into this field, right? It's selfless work. It's work of advocation. And at the same time, the advocate is the abused. And so the intersection of the mental health piece is there's so much trauma that the DEI practitioner, consultant, leader, whatever title they may have within their organization is dealing with whether it's their own personal trauma based off of wherever they fall in that historical marginalization group. But it's the vicarious trauma of recognizing when they're speaking and advocating on behalf of a group that they may not fall into. So for example, maybe the disabled or part of the LGBTQ community, you still have to be aware of what they suffer with and what their traumas are. Their need within the organization.

And I find however that many DEI practitioners really struggle with burnout quickly. One, because it's just so emotionally labor intensive, but it can be alleviated a little bit or a lot, if one you're aware of your own trauma, right? That you didn't just go into this work blindly. Because I have seen people who they're getting frustrated by it, and then I ask I'm like, have you processed your own, whether racial trauma, sexist trauma homophobia, whatever? And if it's a no, and you wonder why you're just out here bleeding. Like you're just an open wound. So I really advise for there to be therapy along with the work that they're doing, not just to process their past trauma, but their present and persistent and vicarious trauma that they're experiencing. Also to have support.

Many DEI practitioners I see are very isolated. They're alone to do the work. We're gonna point to you that you'll be the one to do all things. Change our culture, do all these things. And it's funny. It's okay, you've given them this title, this position and they're alone, but not just that they're alone. It seems this position would give them authority. But in reality, it's almost like resounding gong. So they try to do certain efforts and activities and initiatives and processes and all other things, and they get their hand slapped away. They get the red tape, they get small budgets or, maybe they do an event, but we're not getting buy in from senior leadership.

So it's do I really have any authority or is it just a check in the box to say we have a DEI person within our organization? So really being able to provide them with a team to support them to bounce ideas, to shoulder, all of that emotional taxing work that they're doing. But then also to make sure as a senior leader that you are backing them up and giving them financial support, administrative support, the green light to do things instead of making them feel as if it's a tokenized role or that it's almost a joke. So everybody else is going to them thinking I can only vent to you as a marginalized person to another marginalized person.

And they can't do anything about it. So it's a difficult field to be in, especially in this time in space in our world. And it's work that needs to be done within the organization, but we need to do a better job at stewarding the people who are in that role and caring for them. While they're trying to care for all of the people that they serve, but also making the workplace just a better place where people wanna stay and thrive.

**Jacqueline:** Thank you so much for that description. And also for explaining that importance of the self care in this role. So you've moved from, being the therapist on the couch to now focusing on organizations. So do you take a different approach because you see it as organizational change or is it you still just focus on individuals within organizations? How do you approach it now in your role in the workplace?

**Farah:** That's a good question. It's both, it's almost a chicken and a egg, right? Because the organization, it's a system and, so to do organizational change it may be cultural related. It could be technology. It can go from we're we used to be brick and mortar and now we're, completely remote, all of those things. But the impact, the individuals who work within the organization and systems aren't erected or created without people. And if I can impact the individuals, that's great. But if they're not creating change within the organization, then nothing really happens. And in a way, the organization or the people who were at the top have to lead to change.

So we're for individual change. Yes. That's what changing behaviors, changing feelings, changing thoughts. Oftentimes we're trying to change hearts. That's a beautiful goal, but you're not always gonna do that. But you can change behavior and I say that, you know, you want Uh, the hand to connect to the heart and the head. And sometimes we get so focused on the head and the heart that we are like, but the hand's not doing anything. There's no action that follows. Sometimes you may have to move somebody's hand to be like, this is where I want you to go. This is what I want you to do. And in them doing it and getting reinforcement of how it's actually something that's good, will then maybe get them to go. Okay. Maybe I thought about this the wrong way, or maybe I felt about this the wrong way. Maybe there's a different way to approach it and then you can start seeing that organizational change.

But if the organization doesn't change, and this is actually a great example , I know that they're calling it the great resignation, but I would say it's the great awakening. So the organization does not change, but the individual is changing. This is when we see people exit, because it's I'm recognizing for me, I want a place that values me a place that recognizes that belonging is comparative in the work that is done. And you don't see that. So you're forcing me back into the office, even though it's not necessary. Like you're just so stuck on what the culture was that you don't allow opportunity for there to be changed. So I'm going to now leave and go to another organization.

So there has to be some agreement and alignment with the changes that the organization is doing and the changes that are happening within the individual. And I like to find a way to squeeze in between the two and kind of point out hey corporation organization I'm gonna go down your street and highlight this for you and bring some awareness. But then also to the individual people who make the organization going, hey, I want you to look at yourself too. I need you to look in the mirror and recognize what you can do differently that can change the environment. And it's not always leaders. Culture is everybody. It's I like to bring awareness. And I bring the difficult topics, but in a very digestible way because I don't want you to feel condemned. I want you to feel convicted. Right Because condemnation is when you hide you have shame, you become defensive low emotional intelligence. And then conviction is awareness that brings about the change because you go, ah, accountability. I recognize where I was wrong. My plan now and take away is to move forward in a different way.

**Jacqueline:** Oh, I love that. Those two words, condemnation versus going for conviction. It's such an action word. And I love how you described that there, because that was one of the things I remember when I was trying to explain to students. You know how society all works and how we want to have change in society. And I was like, yeah, but how do we change this thing society and how do we change these things systems? And then I suddenly had that kind of aha moment for myself. Oh, it's still behavior change 101, it's just different people in different places with different priorities.

So exactly how you described it there was how I came to my thinking as well. And I think what that's so important from two perspectives, one is really thinking about this is individuals, these are decision makers here. Cos I feel like one of the shifts we had was talking about the system, systemic racism and what concerned me about that was yes, it's built in and it's a big problem, but it's not some system that, then you're not responsible for changing, it's not something that you have no control over. We are all part of this system. So I really worried about that. I felt like when we said system, it was like we were distancing ourselves from it. And I also see what you're saying, so I'm really glad that you are in that middle piece. And I think that's so important, cos I have worked with some companies who are an external resource for the company, and so they're working with the individuals. And so that was my question is do these individuals take these skills that you've taught them and apply them back to change the workplace? And they're like, no, they're not having that conversation. So I love, like you said you are going up that corporate street and you're gonna be shining a light up that street.

**Farah:** Because it's like, what's the point? What is the point? I don't have a major corporation yet. But I don't wanna waste money even now in my humble beginning. So why would you spend money to bring somebody in, to do a keynote or to do a training or to do whatever? And it's funny, cos sometimes the things are like Farah, can you address this, like you want me to give you the kitchen sink and everything else and then you go right back to the very things that you've always done, even though feedback, the qualitative data has shown that your employees are like, this is wonderful this is valuable. How can we learn more? Can we do a deeper dive? And it's crickets. And so it's like the decision makers to what you've said, those individuals who are able to help to create the change don't put action behind it. And it becomes this check in the box and it's how much do you really want to create a culture that doesn't have this revolving door, of people coming in and coming out and actually trying to create a culture that is not revolving, but evolving and not everybody's there yet and that's okay. I'll take your money. I'll still come and do your keynote. But it's so frustrating because I feel frustrated for the individuals who hear something different who start feeling something different and they wanna know how to start doing something different. And there is not given an opportunity to try and implement their learning because there's no follow up.

**Jacqueline:** And that's one of the ironies, right? If you just invest externally in your individual employees and they suddenly realize, okay, there's more that I want, they become more self-aware they become aware of what they can do as a person and then you expect them to come back to your organization and not do any of that. You've actually made it worse for your organization because you've given them an opportunity and then you've quashed it. And so they're aware now of what else they can achieve. It doesn't make sense. So internal and external investment. That's how you can tell when a company's caring and changing. Let's talk a little bit more about working moms in the workplace, let's focus in there. Cause obviously as an entrepreneur and a working mom, there's a whole host of challenges and some of them you talked about at the beginning. But in the workplace and the working moms that you are working with in the workplace what else are their additional challenges? What other things do you bring to them? Do you feel like you work differently with them as a group? How do you manage some of the challenges that they are facing?

**Farah:** I think back to when I'm starting my private practice, listening to all the people who are telling you how to start your business and what you should be doing as a therapist find your avatar, find your target market, which is extremely smart. You should do that. But I struggled a little bit because I felt like I knew how to speak, not necessarily to everyone, because I knew I did not want to work with a certain group. Like I wasn't going to work with those who struggled with addiction. I wasn't going to work with couples. I wasn't working with those who may have more severe psychosis, like schizophrenia and bipolar.

But I knew that I wanted to work with those who from their intake I can hear this uncertainty around identity. So whether they were a man or a woman, or in between, ages from 21 to 65, whether they were a school teacher or a corporate person. And I was like, there's this identity piece. And so I would say that I work the same yet differently with working moms. In the sense of I'm speaking to you as the person? With all of your roles, what does that look like? How can we identify what your values are? Because your values are what helps set those boundaries. What is it that you want? Are we just doing things because this is what others told us we were supposed to do? The narratives of what a working mom and a wife or, is that you, do you want that to be you?

What does boundaries look like when you have to maintain them? Because people don't necessarily have an issue with creating the boundary. It's the maintenance of the boundary. And so with my clients, particularly women, I feel like they struggle more here. What's the why? Why is this here? Why are you putting it in place? So, for example as a working mom, if you value quality time with your children you want to make sure that you're intentionally clocking out. I'm an entrepreneur, so I don't necessarily clock out or clock in.

I don't go somewhere, but when do I say no, my kids want to spend time with me. Let's go make sure we are watching a movie or show together or we're going to eat together. And am I making decisions that are completely misaligned to the values that I say are important to me? So if I value quality time does staying at work late every day, help this? Does it match? If it's not matching then we are not doing something, I think whether it's a working mom or a working dad or a single parent, I'm always asking like, but who are you in this? Who are you? How do you want to be? How do you wanna show up? What is it that you wanna do? And always, how does this impact your wellbeing? Cause at the end of the day, it's your life. So I can give you advice as a consultant or a coach, or I can come alongside you as a therapist, cos as a therapist I can't give advice.

But at the end of the day, the decisions that you make are your decisions. And so I don't ever want anybody to say Farah told me to quit my job because it wasn't making me happy. And now I'm homeless. And I'm like, that's not what Farah said. Farah said, does it bring joy? If not, what plans can you put in place to create, more wellbeing in your life? If it means that you eventually need to leave the job because it's impacting your wellbeing, what are you putting in place? What plans what strategies are you putting in place while you're transitioning out? Are you making sure that you're spending time with those that you love? Are you making sure that if you enjoy exercising, it you're going for run after a hard day at work? Like you still need to implement those self care practices while you are making those decisions to better your overall wellbeing. So I think for working mom, I don't know necessarily that the framework in which I work is different. It is more so the input that I'm getting from them allows me to figure out how best to serve them.

**Jacqueline:** And I love that uncertainty around identity, being your focus and you can see how motherhood can affect your identity. But also if you do then burn out and leave your job, losing some identity in that process can also then lead people to your door. So those are definitely things that I struggled with as well. So let's just end here with one behavior change that you would recommend for working moms or companies to start today.

**Farah:** I think it's more with a question. I actually came up today in the post that I shared on LinkedIn. It's the, what did I do for myself today? What self care action that I do today? How did I serve myself today? Again, as mothers we're always serving others. Whether we're serving our children, if we're working moms, then we're serving our workplace depending on what role we play in the workplace. During this time of COVID the almost maternal way we will show up within the workplace. So it's oh, I'll get the extra coffee, I'll get the snacks. And we'll do all these extra things, but what did you do for you? And so I think this practice of serving yourself first, making sure you're filling your cup first is so important for a mother.

And for organizations. I'm trying to make sure I protect myself and people don't take what I'm saying the wrong way. But act with integrity. I guess I'll leave it with that. To make sure that what you say aligns with what you do, and it's not lip service, it is not window dressing. But if you say we are going to work on Increasing the diversity in our team there can't be silence in action. If you say that you want to be an anti-racist organization, what is the action step? Because I think that's integrity. Let your word be your bond. So if you say you're going to do something let it not just be abstract or theory. The integrity's in the practice.

**Jacqueline:** That's perfect. That's such an important one too. Again, it sounds simple, right. But it is not then as easy. What did I do for myself today? It's almost for the companies to say, what did I do in alignment with my promises or my message?

**Farah:** Your mission your values. And because we can just get so used to getting through the monotonies of the day, the rigamarole, just okay. And then all of a sudden, another year he goes by. And it was like we put a statement on our website. What did we do after that? Nothing. Why did we do nothing? What is our integrity? How do we have integral actions? It's to say, what do we do? It's to ask those questions, how are we gonna do it? When are we gonna do it? Don't just say, we're gonna do it. There has to be follow up questions to that. So it's we're gonna hire a DI person. Okay. How are you gonna support them? What can they actually do? What are you giving them permission to do? What authority do they have? Who do they report to? You have to think about all of those things.

If you say you wanna be a healthy mom. Okay what did I do today? Did I exercise? Did I eat well? Did I stay hydrated? Did I drink enough water? Did I take a moment to rest or did I just have meeting after meeting and then am so short and tired at home that I'm not giving my kids the best? That does not align with the values that you say that you want to live and live out. So we have to be better self auditors. And ask ourselves the questions every day. How am I serving myself? So that I can be well, live well, and do well.

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