**Overcoming Working Mom Burnout**

**Episode 2: Understanding and addressing work-life conflict through behavior change strategies with Researcher Kelly Chandler.**

**Kelly:** I'm Kelly Chandler. I have two daughters and I'm currently an assistant professor of human development and family science at Oregon State University.

**Jacqueline:** Well, thanks Kelly so much for being here today, and I'm sure you were in such high demand given what COVID has brought to us.

So I really appreciate you having time today.

**Kelly:** Absolutely. Thank you for inviting me.

**Jacqueline:** Could you start by briefly describing your journey to where you are now.

**Kelly:** Sure. So I started out with a bachelor's with honors in psychology at George Mason, and really fell in love with research.

And so then I applied to the PhD program in human development and family studies at Penn state university. And after I got my PhD, I ended up staying at Penn state because there was this wonderful opportunity to be a project manager for this large multi-million dollar grants. Which I know we'll talk about later, the work-family health study which was a workplace intervention.

So it was an opportunity that I couldn't pass up. And then from there I took a position. Here as an assistant professor and enjoying the faculty in fall of 2015. And I just submitted my dossier for promotion and tenure the end of last month. So hopefully I'll get good news at the end of June, 2022.

**Jacqueline:** Good luck with that. And I think for folks listening they maybe don't always understand that process of getting promotion in academia is very, very rigorous, challenging; there are so many pieces you have to have, I feel like the bar gets raised constantly. And even though both male and female professors can have what you call a pause or a stop on your tenure clock.

Research has shown that when that is equally given to moms and dads, the moms do not benefit because they are spending that year looking after a new child where the dads are still able to spend some time working on their research. So even though it's available, it may be, isn't a solution that is equitable.

So Kelly, tell me you, you had your daughters during this journey of you having your PhD and becoming a professor how have you coped as a working mom? Not only during that process, which can be very stressful in itself, but also more recently during COVID.

**Kelly:** In graduate school I was working my advisor was Nan Crowder, who studies work and family.

And so thankfully I had her support to be able to, to navigate those different responsibilities in graduate school. I had my first daughter before I defended my master's thesis. So it was quite early on in the program and I was, you know, fairly newly married. So there were a lot of transitions going on and, and quite stressful.

So I had my advisor support and of course my, my parents support and just friends and colleagues especially coming out here. I, from the east coast moving all the way to the west coast my colleagues and friends have been just invaluable in helping me transition in terms of finding a house and finding childcare options.

And especially one of my friends that I knew from Penn state, just having him to be able to just, you know, be honest about the struggles that I'm going through and having someone to just listen and like truly listen and hear what's going on. All of that support has helped me manage and be successful to where I am today.

**Jacqueline:** And one of the things I noticed in, in one of the news pieces on you recently was that during COVID you noticed your daughter was missing social connection. So you moved her into the office with you. I was like, oh my goodness. That is so awesome. I think most people were trying to keep the kids away at that stage.

**Kelly:** So yeah, my youngest daughter D it was quite anxiety provoking in the spring of 2020 when all of a sudden they're no longer in school. And so she really needed that routine and just, you know, just didn't know what was going to happen as is all, you know, kids and parents and everyone didn't have.

And so she felt extremely isolated. And so yeah, I moved her desk into my bedroom where I have my desk and so that way we were able to, to work together, I could check on her, but it was really just having my presence there that was helpful for her. So I do feel blessed in the sense that I was able to work from home with the type of job that I had so that I could be there for her.

And she could set up shop next to mom.

**Jacqueline:** And you mentioned also in your email to me that you're a single mom. So what additional challenges has had that placed on you? I can see why family and friends are so important in that situation, but, but anything else you'd like to share?

**Kelly:** That's one of the challenges that I've had as a single mom is that I feel this pressure to prove, you know, women have this pressure, I think, to feel like they can do it all, whatever this nebulous do at all is.

And for me as a single mom, I want to prove even more, like, I don't need to have a husband, I can do this. I can take care of kids and this rigorous process of, of tenure with highly unrealistic expectations, I would say in terms of the demands there. So for me, in my experience, I think I put even more pressure on myself to just prove to myself and others.

Like, I can do this on my own when realistically. I needed to sort of humble myself as well as not be as stubborn and reach out for help. Because there are certainly times where I just became very burnt out and wondering if I can really accomplish this goal that I had set out for myself and to, to benefit my kids.

So it, it's definitely challenging and still to this day just being able to ask for help and not feeling guilty or like a failure, it's still something I struggle with.

**Jacqueline:** Yes. And that's definitely on my difficulty list as well. I spoke with Isabelle Roskom who is a parental burnout expert, and she sort of described, you look at the stresses and you look at the resources and you decide.

What can you leverage? What can you let go of? And when I think about that kind of approach, I can definitely let go of stresses. I find it very hard to leverage my resources, because if I'm trying to ask for help, I'm uncomfortable doing that. And even if I do it in a professional way where I'm trying to hire somebody to help me, the being able to find someone that actually works with our needs, our schedule and then manage that person as a, you know, as an employee.

To me that is adding stress to my plate, not necessarily taking it away. So it was just interesting to think about the two sides of that equation and realize, okay, I'm not good at leveraging the resource side. Okay. I have a question about work family conflict, because that's your area of expertise.

So I'll put it in my terms and then hopefully you can expand and correct my assumptions. So my work is so important to me. I find I'm, I'm passionate about what I do, and actually, despite my burnout, I'm so glad to have found this new passion. So my passion before was research in public health, particularly with older adults and physical activity.

And when I left academia, I felt like I, I lost that passion. And that was a part of the loss that I felt during my burnout that has made it such a struggle for me. But now I'm focusing on working, but now based on my experience, I'm feeling this new passion again, and I feel so grateful to have found a passion.

And so I really want to work hard at it. And it is a little bit all consuming in some ways, but then I feel guilty when I work. Instead of focusing on the kids, my kids are almost eight, almost 13 in a few weeks time. And I really struggle when I put my work ahead of them. And I try not to, I try to always tell them, no, you come first.

And a lot of times I am making sacrifices and my work to put them first, but that's when I end up feeling that this could be work, family conflict. I don't see these as working well together. I see them working in opposition, even though I'm starting to see overlap because everything I learn about working mums helps me be a better mom and everything I learned about burnout helps me prevent it in future.

Which is important for both me and my family. But can you comment on, on my perception of what I think is, is maybe work family conflict and how you define it?

**Kelly:** Absolutely. So I like the metaphor of sort of tug of war. And so on one side are the is the work responsibilities and on the other side are the family responsibilities.

And so you, you only have so much time. You only have so much energy. And certain behaviors are acceptable at work. And you probably wouldn't use them as at home and vice versa. And so there's this sort of constant tug of war, this conflict, or in compatibility between the two responsibilities.

And so there's different types, right? The obvious one that we talk about the most, or see in the media is this time-based conflict. Right? You can only be in one place doing one thing at one time, or at least doing it well. Right. But there's also strain based conflict, right? So with you're focused on, on burnout, right.

You're getting burnt out from work. And the demands from that, it's going to conflict with how you're able to perform your job as a partner, as a parent as, you know, a child, an adult child taking care of, of your parents and the opposite way as well. And so it's really sort of what are those things that are setting up so they're incompatible and of course, you know, there's a lot of focus on the negative and certainly my research has focused more on the negative, the conflict between work and family. But I just want to make sure that I point out that they actually can, the two roles and experiences can actually benefit one another as well.

There's something called work, family enrichment enhancement. So that's sort of the other side of the coin. But yeah, it's essentially just sort of this tug of war and your time and your energy and on you trying to fulfill these different roles that you have.

**Jacqueline:** Right. And, and the, on, on the enrichment side, it makes me think, I remember when I read lean in and learned about the things I was teaching my kids by being a role model as a working mum, that definitely has swayed some of my guilt. So and my kids used to love coming, coming to campus with me and going to the student cafeteria. I had in the type of job I had some flexibility in the timing and the hours I worked. So I can see that the worth. Things like that could be enhancing. And as I say, the more I try and have a focus that allows me to learn from it, both for my family and for my profession. I can see that synergy can be really great.

**Kelly:** Definitely. I have some of my fondest memories with the girls involve them coming to work with me. And you know, again, I I'm blessed in the sense that I have that I'm privileged to be able to bring them to work. And especially when they come to my class my family undergraduate family studies class they like to come to the parenting class and help with advancing PowerPoint slides and asking questions.

And so it's just, it's really enjoyable to be able to have them a part of that. And for them to experience, you know, what are the types of responsibilities and demands on my time and energy so that they just have an understanding and I think it, it helps them to be. More forgiving or understanding when I'm coming home and really stressed out or irritable.

So that's definitely, I think been a blessing for my family.

**Jacqueline:** That is wonderful. And I do remember going to conferences and women having their kids coloring in the back of the hall and things. So I feel like in public health, we did have some role models like that. And it sounds like to the area that you're working in is of course it's acceptable to have your kids there.

And it's great that your mentor had that understanding. But again my main mentor didn't have kids. So it was, you know, just that understanding is sometimes lacking.

**Kelly:** Yes. And I was just going to say, you're probably aware of this too, the research shows that when supervisors or managers or our mentors have children they're more understanding and supportive of their employees tying to manage these work and family responsibilities and, and minimize that conflict. So it's certainly, you know, being able to understand that experience and do it, actually have the experience of trying to, to juggle all these things helps you be more compassionate and understanding and supportive of your employees.

**Jacqueline:** And that's interesting you mentioned that. Cause I remember I had this 360 degree review as part of a leadership course that I was going through and also actually bringing to my team. And that was one of the things they all said how well I did at managing work life balance. And I thought, I'm glad I've given you that impression because that's important for you.

Cause I had moms in my team and as students and I was like, but that's bullshit. You know, I was so stressed and I was hiding it from everyone. Of course I would always declared no I'm going home now for the kids or I can't make that meeting cause of the kids. But then, you know, I was working through the night to make up time, which nobody saw.

So yeah, I think that's interesting. We can be role models, but I think there has to be honesty in there too.

**Kelly:** Absolutely. Yeah.

**Jacqueline:** And another thing that I loved reading a quote from you is basically that the term work-life balance is misleading. You said balance isn't achieved in equal parts every day and develops over time.

Instead we should use terms like work life integration or work-life fit, which promote fitting responsibilities together, depending on different situations. I think that's great. Tell me a little more about what you mean. What is it we can try and aim for? I think that's what's so important.

**Kelly:** I think in the work family field we use a lot of metaphors, right?

So in the beginning I was talking about the sort of tug of war where you have this rope the most and then there's also like juggling, you know, balls or they'll have like a computer. And I was going to say a baby, but you probably shouldn't throw it, juggle your baby, but you get the points. And then I think the most pervasive or prevalent one is of like balancing rocks or, you know, a balance, right.

I really think it, it sets up this false dichotomy because you have different values that you place on work and family different amounts of time and effort in these two spheres. And so it really sets up this, it, you know, it's misleading that these aren't just two things that can be balanced and there's harmony.

Like it's more complicated in that. And so I kind of have shifted to the, the work family fit term because for another metaphor, thinking about a puzzle. And so you have not just family, you know, responsibilities, but maybe volunteering or engaging in hobbies and things like that. So you have all these things that you want to do.

How can you make it all fit together so that the, the pieces kind of line up as best as possible to promote your health and wellbeing. And to me, that that really demonstrate sort of the action of trying to figure out how to fit everything together to make life happen so to speak. And so that's really where I'm coming from, like trying to shift that language from balance to, to fit or integration.

**Jacqueline:** Great. Thank you so much for that. And in your answer that you mentioned wellbeing. So talk us through why work family conflicts are a public health problem.

**Kelly:** Absolutely. Work conflict is pervasive in the U S among working adults. And there is a ton of research including my own, that shows how work family conflict is associated with a host of negative consequences in terms of depression, anxiety, burnouts number of health complications and even some research has shown that work-family conflict is such a potent stressor that it's related to mortality. So it really is a serious issue that needs to be confronted and having the governments and organizations really realize that it's critical. It's sort of like, yeah, we talk about, you know, parents have needs, but no, it's really in a dire place that this needs to be addressed. It's unfortunate that in the U S just the severe lack of supports in terms of policies and practices and resources for families that really just that's them up for this experience of work, family conflict and those, you know, consequences which is really unfortunate.

And so it has not only consequences on the individual and their health, but there are ripple effects. Right? So research and some of my research shows that it also affects the kids right through parenting the parent's mood and also affects individuals how they're performing at work. So it's all interrelated.

**Jacqueline:** It's so interesting that you kind of say, okay, well, you've got this relationship with mortality now so this is a public health problem. Let's get some attention to it. And, and so from my perspective, as a public health researcher, our area of research, physical activity also has very strong relationships with mortality. And there's very little investment in physical activity in the U S and to be honest, globally.

And we always used to say, we wish we had this public health crisis around physical activity so we could get some attention or we wish it was like infectious diseases that people actually cared about. So we could get some attention. Well, welcome guys. You got, you got COVID to make your public health problem more.

You know, it's moved right up there right up to the priorities. So I'm really glad for that for you. And to be honest, I think physical activity got more attention too, because we were talking about where the places you can be active. I love that more people have been walking in the neighborhoods in parks.

That was a part of my research is how does the built environment support physical activity. So I was just loving that. You know, not everyone was out about cause some people weren't. But certainly there was a change in our perception of those resources and, and the need to get out and move. So tell me a little bit more, how COVID has helped highlight the problems that we need to solve.

**Kelly:** I think that COVID really I was going to say, put a spotlight on, but really a brighter spotlight on the incapacity ability between working and caring for, for loved ones. Especially as employers were trying to shuffle and figure out, okay, how can we still be productive and meet goals? While folks are at home and their kids are at home and, you know, parents have to put on this additional hat or role as of being a school teacher.

And so really being confronted with that, like, okay, here are the realities, how are we going to negotiate that? And so I think that really just put things to the forefront and my hope I'll, you know, maybe it'll be, maybe it's naive, but my hope is that these discussions and these experiences will show that, you know, there's, there's not one model that fits for everyone. And that is the only way to be the most productive and have the most satisfied employees. So still, as organizations are trying to figure out, you know, how to continue to transition to onsite using remote or hybrid work arrangements. My hope is that they can see how these other ways or modes of working can be successful as well.

And so it really just takes sort of a reframing or a shift in how we're thinking that, you know, You don't have to be at a desk or, or onsite to be productive. For some people they're more productive at home or working at different times. Certainly there are some jobs where you have to be on site.

So I want to, to acknowledge that, but you know, the, the face time culture is really so prevalent. And particularly for managers, I know it can be challenging for them to think about, okay, well, how can I manage people if I don't see them physically? Or, you know, I, I don't have tabs on them, so to speak when they're working from home.

And so it definitely takes a shift in how you're, you're thinking about things and how work can be done.

**Jacqueline:** And are there any new research opportunities or new solutions that, that you see you are seeing emerging because of COVID.

**Kelly:** I definitely think this, this focus on hybrid and remote work arrangements, I've definitely seen some studies and, you know, research about that.

As, as sort of new ways of thinking about how work can be done, I guess, not new ways, but having them be more commonly used, so to speak. And I'm hoping to be able to do a study, really looking at parents' experiences with these remote and hybrid work arrangements and, and onsite work and how it's is related to their experiences at work as well as home life and their health and wellbeing.

So it's, it's definitely a prime time to, to look at how these different work arrangements can work for folks. And again, for some folks, it might be really helpful. And for others you know coming to the office or on site is more beneficial to them. But I think the underlying message or theme is to be accommodating to individuals experiences and needs.

And so it's more of having this people centered culture or approach versus this is how things have always been done, and this is how we need to continue to do.

**Jacqueline:** I love that idea of people centered culture. And I think it's really important as you said, they're not necessarily new solutions. They just have not been well implemented.

And that's also a framework that I come from is studying what are the barriers and facilitators to implementation. And, and again, that's where behavior change science and understanding and approach has come in because creating new habits is challenging, but we do actually know how to do it, but it doesn't just happen automatically.

There are all sorts of cues and practices and role modeling and prompts and tracking and monitoring and feedback loops and reinforcement and rewards. There's a lot that goes into creating positive habits. So I'm hoping that that more people use some of those behavior change tools to support these solutions that we know are evidence-based.

**Kelly:** And that makes me think about the workplace intervention that I referenced before. So STAR is support, transform, achieve results. And this intervention was created as a part of a huge collaboration of epidemiologists, sociologists, psychologists, demographers throughout the U S and essentially what STAR is, is creating workplace culture change.

And part of this is eradicating this idea that that face time is so critical and an indicator of commitment to the job. Or, you know, we always have meetings at this time, so we should have this meeting regardless if there's, you know, anything pressing to, to focus on. But as part of this culture change is talking with managers, employees about what are these assumptions or expectations that they have.

And are there other ways of working that can help them still achieve their goals and perhaps being even more productive and healthy, but two essential components of this STAR intervention, which was designed to specifically reduce work, family conflict included supervisor training, which we'll come back to cause that's the behavioral science piece as well as increasing employee schedule control.

So, you know, going back to that time and strain based work, family conflict, not having some control of your schedule to the extent that, you know, maybe there's lacrosse events that starts at five and you need to get off work early, or maybe it's a doctor's appointment in the morning, just giving employees some power or control over their schedule.

While still meeting their goals and producing quality work is just so critical. Because there there's so many things that are occurring and, you know, conflict. And so, giving employees that control over when they work it's just so critical and there's, there's plenty of research that shows how beneficial that can be in in many ways.

But going back to the supervisor support. So there's research that shows, you know, general supervisor support is important for employees, you know, satisfaction and performance, but Alan Kostik and Leslie Hammer colleagues of mine they've really focused on family supportive supervisory behaviors and a part of this STAR intervention.

They had this training computer computer-based training for supervisors to understand the, the reality of a work family conflicts and how critical supervisors are in supporting their employees, which can benefit the employees, even their families, as well as the organization. And then after that computer-based training.

They use a tracking system. So it's that accountability and sort of you know, making it a habit or routine to, for example ask an employee, you know, how, how they're doing or how was their kids, you know, track meet you know, showing that they genuinely care about the employee and recognizing their, their life outside of work.

And earlier we talked about modeling too. And so that's another behavior that supervisors can track in terms of, you know, are they modeling staying at work until 9:00 PM and then coming back super early and not spending time with family or not giving time for self care. And so that was really a critical piece of this STAR intervention was this supervisor's family supportive supervisory behavior training, as well as the tracking company.

**Jacqueline:** Thank you for sharing that. And I think one of the points that you make is you focused on work, family conflict behaviors, the training focused on the behaviors. And I think that's part of the problem with training. If it's just focusing on awareness and not focusing on the behaviors you have to change and how you actually can change them again, we're seeing that from DEI training that it, that it can be harmful because it's not changing the behaviors and people think they've invested in the right thing and that they no longer have to invest effort in it and that's not true.

So the behaviors are so important. And I think that just that approach that people can think about it, you know, what are the behaviors I'm trying to change? Cause at least starts us thinking about, okay, name them, focus on them and track them. So how can people get ahold of STAR?

**Kelly:** So we actually have a, a website it's work, family health network.org.

And so I'm a part of this network and there's at this website, you can learn more about STAR but organizations can also access this workplace change toolkit. So essentially being able to implement STAR in their, their own organizations. So that, that definitely was a goal of the network to be able to, you know, test its intervention and if successful, be able to share these toolkits with other employers and organizations to, to help their employees, you know, reduce their work family conflict and benefit their organizational individual and family wealth.

**Jacqueline:** And I took a look at some of those tool kits, and it's very clear as a facilitator, what you have to do to get your training, ready, all the tools, all the things you need to do.

So somebody can take that and, you know, teach themselves how to do it and then apply it in their own institution. Interestingly, you know, where I came across star was in a Time's Up article. I helped an organization called Tendlab with their article, which was a Time's Up guide on caregiving practices in the workplace. And there was another organization that had created a guide around, sort of behavior change or how to apply behavior change science to workplace change.

And that's where I came across STAR. So I was so excited to see this research project and really see an evidence-based program being mentioned in such a sort of wide public venue. And that's how I started to look into that and came across you. So I was really grateful for that connection.

So back to something you touched upon earlier, which was the political and social context of the US that basically in some ways, sets parents up to fail, because it doesn't really provide a supportive environment for mums in particular, to be able to work in the best way that they want to, and, and to be the best mum they want to be.

So tell me a little bit about how you see or what you see other countries doing that is better than, than the US and what are some of the things the US could think about adopting from elsewhere?

**Kelly:** It's it's mind boggling that the US is so subpar compared to other countries in terms of government mandated paid leave.

Just looking at the figure and you see, you know, the U S at the very bottom among 41 countries and zero paid leave and even paid sick leave is, is not guaranteed across the U S and with other countries, you know, not just having paid leave, but, beyond a few weeks, you know, even months and also creating incentives so that fathers also take leave which I think is so important in terms of creating gender equality with policies, you know, outside of the home, but also within the inside of the home. And so really supporting that equal share in terms of raising the child taking care of the new newborn, I think is so important.

I think in the, just the U S culture, it's this you know, the individualistic culture and, do it on your own. And feeling like the government shouldn't be involved or provide those support. So I think there's really this, this tension around that, but, and then it just leaves employees, individuals to try to figure it out on their own.

And it really is a multilevel issue. And so definitely government, you know, federal and state government policies to support families, organizations, communities, having resources, it shouldn't be just left to the individual because the individual only has so much power. And so many, so many resources accessible to them.

And so I really think it's definitely a cultural difference in the role of government in individual's lives. And what's expected of individuals and, recognizing this gender inequality and taking it seriously and, and implementing solutions to minimize it.

**Jacqueline:** Yeah, it's interesting as well, that you put it in that way. Cause obviously I come from a European background and I very much have benefit and lived in, in countries with socialist governments and have seen the benefits of that. And then being here in the U S and to be honest, like you said, mind-boggling not really understanding how those services can be missing.

When I was pregnant, a friend in Germany was pregnant at the same time and our lives were so different in terms of how much support we got. But also then, you know, my husband has his own business and he was back in the office the day after my son was born because he had a business to run.

And so it's just so fascinating because I can sort of see both sides of it because he comes from that side of, I've still got a business to run, you know, it won't run without me. I can't take time off.

**Kelly:** Right. And when I had my oldest daughter my husband at the time, you know, he was able to figure out basically just take three days off after her birth using, you know vacation time or sick time.

And it's. It's really set up to disadvantage women and mothers, and, and I would also argue disadvantaged men in terms of their desire and need and just the opportunity for them to be involved in in parenting a newborn and, and establishing that, that attachment. So yeah, mind boggling.

**Jacqueline:** And interestingly, I was connecting with a family friend in Australia and she was saying that both her husband and her brother were doing a year of paternity leave and I was so excited and said, that's just so amazing.

Oh, no, they had to fight for it. And we're hoping that it doesn't have negative consequences. So even though it was a policy that they could access and use it, it wasn't the norm. And, and it didn't sound like it was necessarily going to be you know, I think it was going to be the best thing for their family, but yeah possibly going to have negative effects on their careers. So it brings me back to the behavior change. So for my understanding of the countries where they're actually making paternity leave the default so basically then everybody takes it. There's no question about whether you take it. There's no judgment.

It's just what you do. And if you then have to actively opt out of it, and that's what we see in many behavior change science fields is if you make the behavior you want people to have as the default then it really helps shape the behavior. And, and the culture and the social norm.

**Kelly:** Absolutely. And your example reminds me of, you know, there could be these policies or practices, you know, on the books, so to speak like HR policies.

But just because they're, there doesn't mean that employees or even supervisors are aware of them. And I've, I've run into that. And in my research where the supervisors just don't know what these policies are that could support their employees and, and their life outside of work. But also the very real concern that it's not safe to use those policies to take time off because especially, you know, post a great recession just a precarious of jobs and not wanting to do anything to risk losing, losing that job. And so to your point, right, just making it the default it's accepted in there, doesn't to minimize that risk of you know, what are those consequences if I do take those.

Women especially are at risk here because there is this ideal worker norm that Joan Williams talks about. Where, again, going back to face time, you know, being ever present at your desk, committed we'll work late. Won't take time off which is unrealistic for, for anyone, but it particularly for women who continue to, to shoulder the caregiving demands.

And so then often supervisors will not see them as committed.

**Jacqueline:** Well, I think that norm has changed. I mean, my goodness, it's 24 7 now, and that you can do it from home and from work and from the car and from the side of the soccer field. So yeah, I think the norm is going in the wrong direction.

**Kelly:** Right on the one hand, you know, technology could help in terms of you can be at a soccer game and maybe, there's a break and you can respond to an email. But on the other hand, there's this expectation that you are available around the clock and therefore making it difficult for parents to be able to, to separate those two things and be able to really be fully present.

And I know when I was a project manager, that was a challenge for me and definitely a lesson for me you know, with my Blackberry, which were popular at the time and trying to manage the project, but also spend time with my kids and, and just. Being so distracted by that little blinking light and feeling like I need to respond right away, even if it's not urgent.

And I can still like hear like my oldest daughter, like, you know, mom, mom, mom, as I'm trying to respond to, to an email you know, which makes me feel bad thinking about it now, but you know, for her to say like, mom, you're too distracted by your, your email. Can you put your phone away? Which was a great learning lesson for me.

Like I have to actively separate the two and that may mean putting my phone away and actually the girls and I, we have evening regular evening walks and we implement the rule of everyone putting their phones away because of course you know, Kids are, are on their phones quite a bit these days as well.

And so it's this intentional act of we're going to remove distractions so that we can be be present psychologically present. And so that was definitely a learning lesson for me that I, I need to have actions or behaviors to separate those two so that I can. Truly be there, not just physically there, but you know, psychologically and emotionally there.

**Jacqueline:** I agree with that. And mostly I'm trying to just use my computer. I find I lose track of things when I respond to them on the phone. And to be honest until this year, I wasn't on social media at all, so I wasn't checking my phone. So I found that definitely helpful.

And I found it helpful just for the lack of comparison of knowing what the rest of the world is doing so perfectly. I'm so glad I've been out of that loop. But sometimes I do need to take a moment to do something. So I'm always sort of trying to say that to my daughter.

Could you give me a moment to respond to this so that I can get it done and then I can then pay full attention to you. So I'm always sort of trying to do that transition to saying to her, I do have to attend to something mini boundary around this is let me focus, let me get it done quickly. And then look at me, I'm back eyes on, we'll do this thing together.

So even in small ways like that, I try to make sure she understands, I want to be present with her and that I'm coming right back to be fully focused on her.

**Kelly:** And explaining to the extent that's developmentally appropriate, why it's needs the work responsibility or task needs to be attended to right now.

And not something that can wait such as, you know, telling my daughters that there is a 5:00 PM deadline. So if I can focus on this and then we can go do this and have fun. I think is helpful. At least with my daughters, that's helpful as well. So they really understand why I really need to focus on this work task right now. And not later.

**Jacqueline:** Yeah, that's a, that's a good extension to that, thanks.

What is one thing that you suggest that moms can do today to think about this? That I can then develop a behavior change plan to help moms actually try and develop a new habit around your suggestion to help them create that work-life fit.

**Kelly:** It's funny. People will, you know, say to me, you study work, family conflict.

Why do you experience work family conflict? Don't you have this figured out? I respond. I don't know if you've heard the saying that research is me search, you know, I researched this topic because I experienced work-family conflict and I want to figure out how to resolve the issue, not just for me, but, but for others

In terms of like a measurable outcome behavior and outcome, I think setting aside time for self care and I am guilty of saying, well, I don't have time to go for a run or just, you know, relax and listen to music.

But we do have time even if it's just 10 minutes, you know and just having that time to sort of re-energize and reflect and put things in perspective instead of just, you know, constantly on the go. Or even just like, sort of, you know, using an app on a phone that, you know, throughout the day, maybe a couple of times a day, a day for like five minutes, just pausing and reflecting.

Just sort of manage that stress and burnout and keep focused on what's important and just, you know, mom, guilt is a real thing. And so I try to remind myself that self care. Is also helping me care for my kids because the healthy, happy mom, you know, and not a burnt out mom is going to be a better mother to, to their kids.

So I guess that would be a measurable behavior change that might seem, you know, manageable, like, you know, maybe five minutes, three times a day to just pause and take a deep breath and, and reflect.

**Jacqueline:** Yeah. To reset. Yeah. And, and what do you think one thing that you'd like to see companies do?

**Kelly:** Well, that's a tough one. I think a priority would be a real commitment to investigate investing in supervisor training. So often I've read employees talking about either how wonderful their supervisor was and being so supportive and flexible and how that made a difference in their lives and their family lives and just being a better employee and producing better work.

And, and then also the very heart wrenching stories of just how an individual is, is just seen as an employee and not a whole individual with experiences and, and needs that aren't just focused on the job. And yeah. So I think if there's one thing to prioritize, I would say it would be organizations investment in supervisor training their knowledge of, of policies but also just how to be supportive of life outside of work and, and recognizing that that behavior helps an employee feel a sense of belonging and feeling seen and heard.

And that is so critical for an employee to be satisfied and, and do well in their job. And so I'm not saying that, you know, organizations should do a certain thing because there's a return on investment, but I would say that it's a win-win right. It's benefiting employees, but there also, there is a return on investment for organizations in terms of having a more holistic or person centered approach to their organization.

**Jacqueline:** Great. That's wonderful Kelly. That's, that's just a great way for us to end. So thank you so much for your time today and for your extra expertise and, and your dedication to this topic. I really appreciate it.

**Kelly:** Thank you. I appreciate being here and chatting with you.