**Season 1 wrap up!**

Here we are, with the season 1 wrap up. I hope you have a moment alone to wrap your gifts and to enjoy this season wrap up. According to my husband I am the world’s worst gift wrapper. It’s a fair assessment. I slap it together, patching up the holes and mismatched pieces as I go. Hopefully this wrapping job will be a little more thought out, but heh, I am also learning to embrace my imperfect mess!

I want to start this wrap up with a few thanks. Thanks to Laura Knights host of the Black Woman Leading podcast who inspired me to do a season wrap up. Thanks to **Amy Nguyen Villanueva** who has helped me with the podcast website and for being a wonderful sounding board. Thanks to all my generous guests who gave me their time, their expertise and their trust. Thanks to Amy Henderson and Leslie Forde who both encouraged me in this space. Thanks to the She Podcast team including Traci and the community at Podhive who have been so supportive and knowledgeable.

We launched in mid September. At the end of summer, I had a week at a co-working space, while my husband took full responsibility for the kids. I was so productive during this week. My brain worked properly for the first time in ages. It reminded me how challenging it is for moms to manage the house and kids schedules and have productive creative work time. It also showed me, I can do this! When I can dedicate focused time to it, I am capable! Such a large part of burnout is losing confidence in your abilities. This was so important for me to re-discover. Not only did I appreciate the time myself, I also let my husband know how helpful and productive it was. I went home feeling energized. So we agreed, a week each month I would take for myself to work on my burnout mission.

Unfortunately, 4 days before my next scheduled work week away at the end of September, my husband Burt broke his leg badly on an e-bike. I had to cancel my trip. As I started to try to work out how to manage the kids and get my husband surgery, I realized I could not do this without another full time pair of hands. So Burt’s sister Michelle came down and helped us for two weeks. I was so proud of myself to actually ask for the help I needed. Burt was so upset to have to ask for help and to be a burden on us all. He ended being in surgery for 9 hours and being sent home at 11pm at night, to avoid being in the hospital with the increased Covid risk. It was crazy and I bore the stress in my neck. Three days after his surgery I couldn’t hold my head up.

So it’s been a tough few weeks. I felt so frustrated to have lost my new found freedom again. My husband’s recovery has been slow. He’ll be in a cast through January. But At the same time a friend has been looking after her ailing mother. I realized at least Burt will get better, I am grateful for that. And we’re calling on friends to help us decorate the house for the holidays. We are very thankful for the meals and rides and visitors who have helped us through this time. Keeping up on the podcast has been challenging, but I prioritized it and my TEDx talk applications. My book writing has been put on hold, temporarily.

So I am really pleased to have completed this season 1, to have interviews for season 2 recorded, and to be attracting guests for season 3. As I mentioned on a recent podcasting community call, I know I still need to find ways to make the process sustainable and enjoyable for the long term but I feel more positive about the future than I have for a while.

Before reviewing Season 1 and giving you a sneak peek at Season 2, I want to share some listener comments with you.

I cried on the way to work this morning. Thank you for this podcast.

I have been listening to your podcast today. You have created something amazing. I am wowed by how you have revitalized yourself. Thank you for pursuing this vision – it is going to save people.

I heard a couple podcast episodes -- nice to hear your voice and I think those are important conversations / realizations about burnout that need to get out there more. Good for an employer like me to hear too. I think we're failing working moms right now and it's clear in the workforce data that they're choosing between all-or-nothing propositions for work and it's a huge problem. Also potentially a huge opportunity.

I loved, loved, loved Episode 5 – mostly because it compared western cultures with more communalistic ones.  The way kids are raised in Mexico is very different here and that sense of empowerment can be a challenge as a parent.  It was validating!!

I just listened to your most recent podcast about taking a parenting break. So timely you talking about reducing your time at work on paper but the workload is not reducing. I just went back down to 80% and it feels like the workload jumped to 120%.

I started listening to the podcast and its remarkable how you've put into words what you experienced.

And here was a comment from a listener of the Public Health Epidemiology Conversations podcast where I was a guest and described my burnout.

Thank you for interviewing her, I didn’t know how to define it but I realized my loss of Joy during COVID in 2020 was burnout. I could not explain why curriculum development work with my team became a chore and I was upset all the time about reasonable requests.

I hope I can do more guest spots on other podcasts so I can help people realize these feelings we are experiencing are burnout. Although I focus on working mom burnout, some of my listeners are dads, and some are male CEOs who want to know how to support their mom employees. Some are also moms who do not work in a paid job but who nonetheless also feel burned out. I am grateful to you all.

Just to re-cap here are my main take-aways from season 1. In episode 2 Dr Kelly Chandler kicked us off with her knowledge about work-family conflicts and the STAR intervention to encourage managers to talk about personal matters and be role models for limited work hours. I was particularly touched that she brought her daughter into her office space during Covid, to help her daughter with her mental health. This was a time when many of us were trying to get space away from our kids. She also admitted her need to prove herself as a single mom. In episode 3, Rachel Cooke, host of the Modern Mentor podcast, shared her expertise in leadership development. I enjoyed how she kept the suggestions very real, understanding the C-suite motivations and suggesting ways to integrate burnout prevention into daily activities rather than making it another burden. In episode 4, JuJu Hook talked about lack of self belief affecting almost all her female clients. She described her burnout journey and coping with her changing parent role. She also inspired us with her vision of well-paid women entrepreneurs investing back in other women. In episode 5, Dr Isabelle Roskam explained parental burnout and gave us examples of how to reduce the parenting stressors and increase the resources to get more help. In particular, I know listeners appreciated how she identified the issues that making parenting in the US so challenging. My talk with Isabelle, was particularly helpful in thinking through getting help and reducing stresses since Burt’s accident. In episode 6, Torie Henderson, a parenting coach and host of the podcast Supermom is getting tired, gave us permission to take a mom vacation and how to intentionally slack off when needed. I really took this advice to heart during the last few weeks. I did not sign up for any school volunteering. Normally I prioritize this to show my appreciation for the teachers’ efforts, but I just had no time or energy to give to it so I made an intentional slack off rule for myself and it was such a relief to just know I wouldn’t even try to make it work, it was just one thing off my radar. In Episode 7, Dr Hannah Badland set a bold example of work boundaries, working a 4 day week and leaving meetings early without apology. She also had me laughing at her airplane debate about the benefits of diversity. Why not practice our strategies to convince others on complete strangers, before take off! In Episode 8, management expert Leslie Forde shared her burnout story and provided practical strategies to reduce work hours and to let go of unreasonable work expectations. In episode 9, Dr Ericka Hinckson described being burned out as a single mom and student. She recognized the influence of strong female leaders in New Zealand on her leadership style. Not only has Prime minister Jacinda Adhern been a role model on the global covid stage, but I also read recently in What works: Gender Equality by design that research shows female politicians, even more than CEOs and board members, are important role models who can reduce societal bias from gender stereotypes. In episode 10, career coach and author Becca Carnahan described how to start doing more enjoyable tasks as part of your day job and how to make efficiencies in your day through helpful services such as grocery delivery and calendly. In episode 11, movement builder and author Amy Henderson described her work in making caregiving a central part of work values and skills. We talked about the benefits of therapy and learning to cope with the challenges of motherhood. In episode 12, I talked frankly with Dr Gina Merchant about failing to support her in challenging the microaggressions we both faced. In addition, she talked about the practical challenges of breast feeding at work. At the end, I described actions I could have taken on her behalf had I known better. In episode 13, Caitlin Donovan author and burnout expert talked about the challenges of multiple burnout episodes and about bouncing back from burnout. She talked about backing into burnout solutions and creating a safe space first. I particularly liked her analogy the self help hamster wheel.

For each episode I created a behavior change guide to help you act upon the recommendations provided by the guests. The guides focused on:

Prioritizing your needs

Supporting your employee’s life outside of work

Celebrating your team’s small wins

Charging what you are worth

letting go of too many extra curricular activities

Taking a mom-vacation

Setting boundaries around your work hours

only sending emails during work hours

recognizing your burnout symptoms, stopping and resetting

using Calendly to set availability boundaries efficiently

finding your tribe to prevent burnout

addressing workplace microaggressions

 and reducing resentment to prevent burnout

I hope they are helpful.

In season 2 you will hear from

| Lori Prutsman; burnout coach with advice about how to approach a new year |
| --- |
| Jennifer Kuebler; licensed marriage and family therapist about parenting with positive discipline |
| Dr Melicia Whitt-Glover; burnout survivor and director of the Council on Black Health  |
| Jess Galica coach and expert in transformational career changes |
| Joangel Concepcion author, founder of the Track and Assess app, and survivor of a toxic workplace |
| Dr Lara Corr Set me Free career coach who reminds us to filter our expectation through a middle aged man lens |
| Dr Rebecca Pope-Ruark researcher and expert on faculty burnout |
| Stephanie Chick corporate and individual coach and behavior specialist for living free |
| Mary Beth Ferrante founder of Work 360, coach and advocate for gender equality |
| Allison Tsao corporate coach focused on human leadership |
| Dr Kate Murray multi-cultural researcher and expert on representation |
| Selina Barker author, podcaster and burnout coach with a down to earth approach to burnout |
| Toyosi Babalola founder of Abule, an online village solution to help working moms find support from their community |
| Dr Isabelle Torres leader of mothers in science, a writer and advocate for policies to support mothers in STEMM, including medicine |
|  And Allison Venditti, founder of Moms at Work, she is an HR specialist and advocate for maternity leave and pay transparency |

I am so excited to share these conversations with you starting in January 2022.

To end this season wrap up, I am including a recording I did with my Scottish friend Lesley Patterson. I wrote this dialogue between me and my inner critic. She’s a Scottish witch, like the ones from Macbeth. One way I started to face my inner critic was to realize the things she said to me were so outrageous that they were in fact funny. They were the sort of thing a comedian could get away with saying, the things you shouldn’t ever really say to someone else. This little skit takes you through me thinking about doing a TED talk and trying to learn from my experience to write a book. It describes the inner thoughts that kept cropping up and how I eventually learned to befriend that voice. Almost any book you read on burnout will talk about this inner critic. For me, she got stronger after leaving my job, during my burnout recovery.

I know the holidays can be hard. The year I burned out my husband worked most of the holiday period. He didn’t even tell me ahead of time that he wouldn’t be home to help with the kids. We didn’t talk about sharing the load and by the new year I was suicidal. The new year comes with so many expectations of hope and when you are in burnout, your lack of hope weighs even more heavily. Please ask for help over this period. Do not try to do it all. Please call a counselor or a coach or a friend. And I look forward to being with you again on January 5th, not with new year resolutions but with a thoughtful way to look back at the past with compassion and to look to the future with reasonable expectations. Please enjoy this insight into my inner dialogue, my crazy witch, my misguided friend trying to keep me safe. And take care of you.