**S2 E34: A step by step guide to burnout recovery with author, podcaster and career coach Selina Barker**

**Selina:** I'm Selina Barker. I've got a six-year-old son and I am a career and life design coach, author of "Burnt-out the exhaustive person's six step guide to thriving in a fast pace world". I'm a podcaster and I'm delighted to be here.

**Jacqueline:** Thank you so much for your time today. You are busy and I love that I can talk to you about all these roles you have in life. Cause they're also important. So can you start by describing your journey to where you are now briefly in your career?

**Selina:** Yes. So I, when I stepped out of university and stepped into the world of work fully for the first time, I got very quickly what I thought my dream job was. I became a marketing director for an ecological magazine. So I was really passionate about environmental activism and campaigning. And I felt like that combined with my love of inspiring people and communication that would make this the kind of the perfect dream role.

But very quickly I realized that working in an office nine to five being told what to do. Having a boss was not how I wanted to spend the next 40 years or so of my working life. 'cause I hadn't really enjoyed school. I felt very stifled. I felt very trapped sitting at a desk all day being told what to do, having to work to someone else's timetable. And I had always thought when I finally leave school, then I'll be free . To step into what felt like the same, but in slightly different clothing. I just, I was like, no, I can't do this. And for the first time in my life having been a very good obedient student, a very good girl, I completely rebelled. And I quit after about, I think, a year in that job and to my parents' horror at the time. And I said, I just, I don't know what I want to do, but I know that there's a world of people out there who are doing work, that they love, who are doing it to their own rules who are working for themselves, doing things that they enjoy. I don't know any of them. I wasn't surrounded by people like that at all. I didn't have encouragement to do it. I said, I'm going to go and find those people. I'm going to learn from them how to create my own career in that way. And then I'm going to come back. I'm going to help anyone else who wants to do that too. Not realizing that at the time I was basically saying I wanted to become a career change coach, but I didn't even have, I didn't even know that was a thing.

**Jacqueline:** I don't think they existed.

**Selina:** I don't know. Do you know what is funny? Because life coaching did exist because I remember speaking to a life coach really early on. And so it, obviously there was something, that was appealing to me. And I said, oh, I don't know. It just sounds like there's such a stigma attached to it. It sounds so cheesy. And she was a bit like offended because that was her career. So I had definitely heard of it in those days, but yeah, it wasn't the world that it is today. Though, this was about 15 years ago, I would say. Twitter had just, I don't even know if Twitter had begun, we certainly didn't have Instagram. We didn't have social media in the way we do today. And also here in the UK, we were just about to, this was just as we were moving into a big recession.

And at the time being an entrepreneur, running your own business wasn't something that you did in fact, changing career was only something you did if you were made redundant. Like it was if you were forced to you would change career. So when people think of entrepreneur, they were like why don't you have a real job? There was nothing of this side hustle, the sort of idea of people starting their own businesses and all the glamour that's now tied up with it today. Nevertheless off I went and I experimented, I just decided I'm going to find... I read a quote by Harold, I forgotten his name now, is it Harold Whitman that says, don't ask what the world needs ask what makes you come alive and then go and do that because what the world needs is people who have come alive.

And up until that point, I was all completely focused on wanting to make a difference, wanting to bring about change in the world in this sort of broken world. And when I read that, it gave me permission to stop thinking so much about what I wanted to do for the world and actually start with what makes me come alive and then go and do that. And so I experimented. I worked at festivals in the UK selling ice creams. I did events all over the world from San Francisco to Barcelona. I made jewelry, I taught Spanish in offices. Like I did this wonderful mix of things and realized that you can earn a living out of the sort of corporate cage or even in the employment world. Doing things that are fun and you can be really creative about it. And that really started me off on my path. And then co-founded Career Shifters, which help people to change career. And from there became a coach.

And as soon as I tried coaching, I realized this is the work that I was born to do. And as much as I'm a coach, I'm also love, I'm an artist, I'm a creative. And so I've always loved creating online courses, journals, writing things. I had a blog for a long time. And so over the years I've had the opportunity. I've had a podcast for seven years with Project Love, which is still going and it's in a smaller form just once a month now. I created the audible series, The Career Change Coach, obviously my book Burnt out, but also an end of journal called obviously this year. It's goodbye, 2021. Hello, 2022. The name changes each year, obviously.

**Jacqueline:** It must've been great to write goodbye 2020.

**Selina:** You say that, but we were, we had so much hope for 2021, and then if anything, it got worse. But yeah, ever hopeful that this journal will have some more positives in it, but so it's really been just... and, I love my career. I do say to people that you don't have to love your career, you want to enjoy it, and you want it to nourish you. But I really, it is one of the loves of my life, my career, the work that I do, I feel so fortunate and it has evolved with me and it really supports me to live a life that I love living and that, that is the truth of it. I don't just preach it. And it hasn't always been easy to get there. It hasn't always been easy to get there.

**Jacqueline:** And I love that you are focused on the coming alive because I think that's such a big part of burnout. Folks like me, that was when I was 10 years old, I was voted prime minister of my school for the day. And that was just so me. Because I wanted to change the world and I've always had that desire, but that's serving others and that's what can lead to burnout is that external, passionate, driven, focus. So I love that you're still doing things to serve the world, but you're doing it based on coming alive, you're front and central of that. And I think that's a really important shift for burnout.

**Selina:** Absolutely. The people that burn out, the people most likely to burn out are smart, caring, ambitious people. They are driven to make a difference in the world or care for others or to create, or to make things happen. They have visions that they want to bring to life. There is a drive behind them. And what happens when you burn out is that you've clicked into overdrive and you've stopped recognizing, or you've lost touch with actually, you know, what you need to look after yourself and how to manage your energy levels. And of course, plugged into a sort of society that has you attach all of your worth and, sense of self worth to your productivity and your achievements and your output.

And so when I started really diving deep into what causes us to burn out, I stepped away thinking how isn't everyone burning out? Like the systems that we are in are designed in such a way that, of course we're all burning out, I think more people are burning out than ever before. And I think a large part of that is emotional burnout. So I also looked at the different ways that we burn out, and the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual levels we burn out. And I think there's a sort of lack of understanding of how to look after ourselves from a perspective of managing, managing your energy, not knowing what drains our energy and not knowing how to fill ourselves back up again. And because burnout is an energy crisis, ultimately it's a complete depletion of energy. And yeah, you feel the opposite of alive when you're burnt out.

**Jacqueline:** And I think that was so helpful in your book when you talked about being driven, being thoughtful, being caring, being an achiever, and then burnout is when you go into overdrive, overthinking over-giving and over achieving and that just framed it so well for me. Cause I think we can see that transition. I think we can see when we move too far, I felt like I could, in those words I could go, oh yeah, I can see that. So that was definitely really helpful for me. So essentially what you're talking about your career was really, you're an early adopter of like job crafting which people have said, they've shown it's related to job satisfaction. So how often is that, like one of the solutions that you're suggesting for your clients and why do you think that is so important to prevent burnout?

**Selina:** So when you say job crafting, do you mean in terms of consciously creating your career and getting clear on the path that you're going on? What do you mean by job crafting.

**Jacqueline:** I think they talk about it here a little bit more in the US in terms of you can be in a job and then you can work out what parts of that job you enjoy most, and then do more of those parts of that job in your daily job.

**Selina:** Yes. A hundred percent. Yeah. Fantastic. If you're going to feel fulfilled in your work, if you're going to continue to evolve and to continue to grow and to make sure that your career is supporting you in the life that you want to live as your priorities change, then that's absolutely what we need to do is to keep taking a step back regular intervals and going, okay, what's working, what isn't working, what am I really enjoying? What makes me come alive? What drains me? And it's all about experimenting and testing things out and you need to take a step back because I still do it. I still suddenly find, hold on, I'm not doing enough of the creative stuff all my time has dominated now by coaching. Okay. So I need to reduce the amount of people I'm taking on the amount of clients I'm taking on and free up some space for the creative stuff, because I'm really starting to feel that I'm over-giving and I'm not filling myself up creatively. And so I think that's certainly been both the secret to me finding fulfillment in my work.

And it is the core really of what I do when I'm coaching people is to, take a step back and go, okay, what are the ingredients you need to feel happy and fulfilled in the work that you do. So out of the work you're doing now, what pieces of that do you want to, do you want to take with you? What pieces of that do you want to keep doing? And sometimes it's like you say, staying within that company or within that job and tweaking things and do more of the stuff you enjoy and less of the stuff that you don't. Sometimes it's delegating. I think sometimes we forget that the stuff that we really hate doing someone will enjoy it. People don't believe that they're like no one would want to do that. I'm like, are you kidding? There are people who love doing that part. And they're like, wow. And that's what I always do personality tests when I start with a client and I do the sort of Kirsi, which is like the Myers-Briggs personality tests. I find it so powerful and in showing people how different we are and that what's one person's strength is another person's weakness and what one person loves to do and another person hates to do. And that's why, that's why we can all work together, sharing things out. And so yeah, sometimes it is about just tweaking things. In the role that you're in or the company you're in, but sometimes it's about recognizing that perhaps that job never did it for you.

You know that actually so often I hear people say I just fell into this work really. And I don't think I've ever enjoyed it. And I was just told work is called work for reason. Cause it's hard and it's not enjoyable. And it's what we all have to do. And we have to just suck it up. And I show people that is a story that a lot of people are telling themselves and it's not actually true. And you absolutely can find work that you enjoy doing that nourishes you. And when you become a parent, it's even more essential that you do that because parenting is a full-time job and it's really draining as much as it is rewarding. So if you've got work, that's also, that's draining you and not nourishing you and not filling you up. That suddenly becomes a real problem that before having children, you weren't necessarily realizing, the impact of that you could get away with it by having nice holidays and doing those things in the evenings. And so that's when it really becomes a problem.

**Jacqueline:** I think from what I can understand is that you started working on burnout more because you were seeing it so much in your clients. And that you've actually been able to manage your own burnout through some of the things you mentioned, like paying attention to how you're feeling and how much creativity you've got in your mix. So tell us a bit about your experience of being this mompreneur, doing all these things and what do you do to manage all these different roles?

**Selina:** Yeah. I did go through a period of burning out myself and in addition to that, I also saw my father go through what we then in those days used to call it a nervous breakdown, but it was basically a severe burnout that led to clinical depression when I was about 12. And that really is probably no surprise, therefore, that I do the work that I do. And that I wrote a book called Burnout, considering that happened at such a formative time of my life. But what I saw with that was what can happen when you are completely consumed by work and become, and you're a workaholic.

And, but I also saw that burning out to that degree, really hitting rock bottom, falling apart can be a really positive if at the time, terrifying change in your life. Because what happened to my father was prior to the burnout. He was a lot of fun, but he was also exhausted and had a real temper on him because he was so jacked up on, on adrenaline and stress. After the burnout, he was forced to find other, find another hobby, find other things to do that would take him away from always thinking about work, to find more balance in his life, essentially. And he found his way back to sailing, which had been a passion of his until really until we, his kids were born and he couldn't pursue it anymore, but he started sailing again and he came alive. He found his way back to that sort of deeper part of himself. And he became a much happier man. And it led to him having a dream that he wants to sell around the world and following that dream and realizing that dream. And it was when he just sailed across the Atlantic. When I was in, by this point in my. Oh, I think my probably just had turned 30. I was 29 or 30, and I said to him, when did this dream begin? I'd never asked him. And he told me the story of how it had happened, shortly after his big burnout.

And I was like, wow. So I had that context, first of all, what can happen when you do burn out isn't it can be the worst or best thing that's ever happened to you. But also I'd seen what had happened to my father being consumed by work and also was working in the corporate world, which is where he was. So I had always been determined. I'm not going to be like that. I'm going to do work that I love. I'm not going to work in the corporate world. So it was no surprise that I rebelled very early and decided to go off the beaten path, career-wise. But what I thought. And I say this in the book. I thought that if I loved what I did, I wouldn't burn out because I'd be so fulfilled. I love what I do. I'm making a difference. If anything, I think it made me worse because I am my father's daughter and I have very strong workaholic tendencies. And I, my enthusiasm is very fine line between enthusiasm and obsessiveness. I am, I'm competitive. I'm driven. I'm ambitious. I care. So all of these things combined, and I hadn't been taught how to look after myself. Wellbeing was a thing that at that time I looked, I thought it was just something that other people did. I just didn't get it. I just thought it was like a, almost like a hobby that I wasn't into.

Along with exercise well-being and exercise weren't things that were on my agenda and I couldn't imagine they ever would be. And so I was so unhealthy and so surprise, surprise. I would hit what I call mini burnout. So it wouldn't be severe burnout. Like my father had, or like other people have had like where they're signed off work. Panic attacks are common when you have severe burnout, things like that. But I would suddenly be hit with just. My, my brain had just gone was like, my brain had gone on strike. Like a fuse had gone. Suddenly my brain just was not functioning. And the smallest decision I had to make could bring me to tears. And I just felt bone tired. And the first sort of few times it happened, it was really scary. I did not know what was going on. What was this? But after what started to happen, every two to two or three times a year, they would hit these. And it would take about a good weekend of properly canceling all my plans, getting into bed, resting, looking after myself and then one or two weeks of taking it slowly. And then I'd be back to myself again and off. I'd go at a hundred miles an hour until I burnt out a few months later, and this happened.

Then I had my son and it continued to happen. And of course, because I'm a career and life design coach, I'm talking about really loving your life. This was not me loving my life. This was something that was not working. And what I noticed everyone more and more people around me, my friends were also burning out and a lot more of my clients that were coming to me were coming to me because they had burnt out. And I said, what is going on? And what was really concerning to me was how there was this air of acceptance. This is just how it is. Work is hard. The world is fast paced and there's a champ, almost like a a sort of glamorizing of hustle and working hard. And, a sort of badge of honor, a badge of honor working late, working on are being so busy.

And I was like this is all wrong. This is not how it's supposed to be. Like I firmly believe and having written the book and doing a lot of research. And now I feel like I know that we are as human beings, we are designed to thrive. And burnout is like the body's way of going stop enough. No, this isn't working. This is not sustainable. And it knocks you. It literally takes you off your feet and stops you in your tracks. And it's a real wake up call saying something has got to change because you're not thriving. You're running yourself into the ground. And it's when you're treating your body like a machine, and that is something that's so prevalent in our current sort of way of working is that this we've got productivity all wrong. We think it comes from working as fast as we can and long hours. And that's actually. Has proven to show that actually, when you do that, your IQ drops because you're in a state of fight or flight because you're pushing into overdrive. You're not resting when you need to rest. You becoming more and more tired.

And actually at the end of the day, you've achieved less than your colleagues who have been taking regular breaks every hour and a half. So our whole notion of how to achieve your best productivity and performance are all wrong. And it's this. And we treat ourselves as if we were machines and we're not. Human beings don't operate like machines. And we really need to take a really radical look at how we're working in how we're looking after ourselves and managing our energy.

It was really through me leaning into learning about what it took to look after myself properly and acknowledging that something was not working with having these burnouts. And I needed to really take proper look at how I was working, what I was doing and little tweak by tweak. I got myself out of that burnout cycle. And actually even in writing the book, particularly around managing your energy I learnt so much, I really came out of writing that book far more energized, grounded person than I was when I started writing it. So that's why I was so excited to share the book because I was like, it was so excited. It's I want other people to learn this too. I discovered that exercise wasn't just something that other people did, but actually it was absolutely key in keeping me energized.

**Jacqueline:** And I love that it's you that's saying that because that basically was my area of research for a number of years. I did an a master's in exercise and health sciences. That was my way into the sciences. And then that's what my PhD and my research is all about is encouraging other people to do physical activity because my grandfather died in his fifties from heart attack. So all along, I knew that I had much higher increased risk of heart disease in our family. And I, I kinda just didn't want that for other people either. And that was my path. So it was so interesting to hear you emphasizing the physical activity side of things in your book. And I agree it's really important for energy.

I think I haven't gone into this burnout with that sort of upfront and central for me, because I know a lot about how to help people become physically active and maintain those sorts of programs and things. But so much of that work actually was all about the systems around how you help people be active. You've got to make it the easy choice there's gotta be pavements or sidewalks, has gotta be parks has gotta be free programs. So much of it is about that. And so that's really also my same approach to burnout is, work with someone and get them motivated. But if they then return to a workplace that's not supportive of what it is they're trying to achieve then it's limited what you can do. But I'm definitely a fan of that. And also I think for me, I did do exercise and I still burned out. And I think there was two parts of that. One was I think it probably kept me going for longer. I did have stress management because of that. So I think my body breaking down, it really had to break down big time for me to pay attention to it because I had it so managed. I was so well managed with my stress,

**Selina:** It sneaks up. It sneaks up through the side door when you weren't looking. Yeah.

**Jacqueline:** And we laugh about this a little bit now, but we already had this wonderful dog and I would run him every day. And it's a sad story, really. My daughter kept asking what will happen when the dog dies, she was three, three or four. And I was like, oh my goodness, this is going to be so hard. Maybe we should get a puppy now so that when the dog passes, it will be easier that we will, we'll have another dog. So we got a puppy, oh my God, this puppy just drained the hell out of me on top of everything else.

So instead of my morning runs being my time where I freed my creative mind, where I problem solved, I was just chasing this dog through the neighborhoods, trying to hold on to him to be alive. And then, and so I had stress every day instead of, the relaxation and it was so fascinating because it did feel like that was the straw that broke the camel's back. And actually, one time, my husband said to me, well you get your half-hour run every day. And I was like, so that's it? That's what I'm allowed? And I was just like, oh my goodness. Okay. This is a really bad state. If that's what I'm allowed.

**Selina:** That's your allowance. Yeah. But it's so interesting. You say that, you were doing the exercise. Exercise is the number one thing. Cause I did it. I did a survey, lots of people who had experienced burnout and had recovered from burnout. And the number one thing that they said that had helped in their recovery was exercise. And, but that said, like you say, you were doing exercise and you burnt albeit your exercise that had once been time for thinking ruminating time for you. Quality time with yourself, stress release. Suddenly became running with stress and without any other quality time. But, it's, I know yoga teachers, meditation teachers who are severely burnt out. And I'm just like meditation is also a really useful tool, but it doesn't mean that, oh, if you meditate, you'll, that's all you need to do.

And you will be completely immune to burnout because it's, there's so many factors involved. And one of them. And I do, men burn out a lot. I don't, I think I'm not entirely sure about the stats on this, but I do think women tend to burn out certainly a little bit more than men. And one of the reasons I think is because the deeply rooted narrative we have around women and what it is to be a good woman, is that when you went to be a good woman, you put the needs of others first. And so there's very much this self-sacrificial narrative around being a woman. And and the struggle with holding boundaries with saying no. Women are far more likely to be people pleasers. And so that plays a big part. But also, so does the overachiever, is the person that piles way too much on their plate. The number of times that clients tell me what they've got on and then wonder why they're burnt out. I'm like, are you crazy? Why did you think you'd be able to do that, that, and that, and you've got three children and it like, of course you're burnt out now. That no human would be able to do that. And what, and tell me about how, what your self care is. I don't really have time for that. Of course you burnt out. So again, I think there's so much around us in terms of noise about, the lives we can have and having it all and what that looks like.

And I was listening to something today about the sort of side hustle this new thing that has emerged side hustle, which, really has, like I say, 15 years ago, no one was talking about a side hustle and actually 15 years ago, When I was, I've always said for people, if they're wanting to start a business you start it on the side while you're still working. Very few of us have enormous amounts of savings that we can just quit our job and spend three years building up a new business. So of course you have to start them on the side, but it's a transition period. Whereas these days side hustle has become something. You can do almost indefinitely or you've got my, I've got my full-time job and a side hustle. I'm like, so you've got two jobs, one in the day and one in the evening. That's crazy. You don't, that's not sustainable. That's real. I understand some people need to have two jobs just to survive, but when people are choosing it because, oh I've got this spare time. I'll use it to make more money and start another business on the side. I'm like, whoa, this is going bananas. This is what is, and that's all still for me, it's all part and parcel of this obsession with achievement and perceive what success looks like of, status and money and Looking good out in the world and how busy you are and all that. And activity, progress, speed. And that's what's burning everyone out and I hope that doesn't become the new norm. Like your badge of honor is your side hustle. What's your side hustle, not what's your job? What's your side hustle? I've seen burnout be sort of embraced like a badge of honor. And that was when I started to get really concerned. And I was a like, I'm writing this book because this has got to stop. People are getting ill.

**Jacqueline:** And so it's interesting this kind of, that tension between burnout as a badge of honor, because it shows you that you have worked hard enough to have broken yourself down. That's my ultimate proof of working hard. But on the other side, then people not relating to it. So like your dad, I assumed I was having a midlife crisis. This was, I was having a mental health breakdown and midlife crisis, I, I didn't really understand it as burnout at the time. And it was only then when I started reading about burnout then I went, oh goodness, that was exactly what I was experiencing. So maybe that's one of the things you could do is help distinguish that, burnout as a badge versus burnout as the experience that people are having that really needs treatment and care. Because I think I'm still trying to work out do people relate to this term? Do they understand what it means?

**Selina:** Yeah, I think, to be honest burnout, a midlife crisis can very much come hand in hand. And number one, it depends, you can have it two very different degrees, so you can have real severe burnout where people having panic attacks, where they need to be signed off work for a long time where their nervous system has been so impacted that it takes months, if not more, to really properly recover. People often ask me how long does it generally take to recover from burnout? Unlike this, there's not a length of time. And it depends to what degree, if you had a mini burnout, like I used to have then a weekend of really just really taking time out and really focusing on relaxation and recovery and taking it a bit slowly over the following weeks, couple of weeks can be enough. Severe burnout can, it can really take a long time. And so the symptoms of burnout are perhaps I'll explain the symptoms of burnout so that it could, because this is the thing it's really interesting. A lot of people don't realize that they are burnt out. And so being able to identify, okay, oh phew, okay. It's a thing. Can help it feel a bit more manageable.

**Jacqueline:** And then you can also look for the right solutions. There's so many resources out there for burnout. And I keep thinking, why didn't I know about these? Why didn't I look for them? That's what's really hard for me to think is how can we have helped people realize where they're at so that they can then use all these resources?

**Selina:** Yeah, exactly. And I think so because the symptoms are so varied, so some people can experience it. So emotional burnout when you're really emotionally drained, which a lot of people's experiencing through the pandemic, a lot of parents experience it. A lot of people who are working, caring, professions, experience it, and it comes from either over-giving overextending yourself, or also going through a prolonged period of time where you're having to navigate big emotions, like fear and uncertainty, which we all have collectively for, over 18 months. When you experience emotional burnout, but not always, comes with the fatigue and the exhaustion and underlying all experiences of burnout is a feeding of, I just, I don't think I can go on I am not handling this and a fear that kind of comes with that emotional burnout, you can start to feel really resentful. And particularly of the people that normally really care about if your loved ones, you can really start to feel resentful, which can feel a bit like what is, who am I becoming? Because it's normally the really caring people who then start to feel really resentful, really irritable. Often you can really lose touch with your family. A job that you once loved. Do you feel like you don't want to do it anymore? That can feel terrifying because also your identity is so caught up in that.

What am I going to do if I don't do that? People frequently come to me saying I just think that's just not the career for me anymore. And I can always tell if there's still a spark there, but actually what it is the burnout has completely dampened it. So they feel like they don't want to do it anymore, but actually once we get them reclaiming their energy, recovering and recognizing that they are burnt out and of course they're burnt out. Like, why wouldn't you be from that fresh perspective? And after a while after they've started recovering and reconnecting with themselves and finding that energy again and coming alive, they'll look back. They'll look again and go. Actually, I do really enjoy this, but what I need to change is this and this, but it can really, while you're in it, it can be very hard to judge what you want anymore, what you enjoy anymore.

You can feel completely out of touch with a sense of joy, a sense of peace. And also then there's mental burnout. So the overthinkers, that's what I always used to get. You can be all of, I call it overachiever, overthinker, overdoer and over-giver, and you can absolutely be all for but when you mentally burn out, that's when you that's, for me, it would like a fuse had gone completely frazzled. You get decision fatigue, you fight, you struggle to focus. My father used to talk about this, just pushing papers around just, not, just not being able to just pushing papers, knowing you had to do things, but not being able to do anything. And I think it's really important to really acknowledge how scary that can feel. And so it is for many people does go hand in hand with the midlife crisis. And sometimes it is simply that you have been in such a stressful role for many, many years. So doctors, for example, here in the UK, I don't think you can find a doctor who isn't, who hasn't basically been living life from burnout for years.

And then the pandemic. Cause I was interviewing quite a lot of doctors, nurses, midwives before the pandemic began about burnout because here in the UK, all of them are suffering from burnout. And then the pandemic began and I was like, I didn't even know how they're getting through this. Now we're going to have a serious problem with our, our frontline workers who already pushed to the max. If you're living from that state for years, It's like your whole nervous system has fried basically. Other people, sometimes the burnout is more of a, comes from a sort of spiritual burnout, which I mean that they've realized that the work that they're doing is so misaligned with who they really are.

And some of the people will say this. I know it sounds dramatic. I really feel like this job is sucking my soul dry. And I'm like, I hear that a lot. So that can lead to such deep lack of connection with who you really are and who you want to be in the world. And knowing that this path isn't right for you, but feeling so trapped in it and so lost because you don't know where else to go, that can lead to more of a, like a slow burn descend, like descending into burnout rather than, the other type where you're just working like crazy at all hours. And you're fizzing up into a burnout. It can quite different energies. But so that one can really, and again, like with my father, although his was from overwork and stress, it can lead to huge a huge reassessment of your life, your values, your goals, where you're going, how you want to be spending your life.

And, but first it as so often happens with big life changes. It does happen with a crisis and sometimes it's really with an identity crisis. So it's complex, it's nice to be able to go, oh, burnout I've got burnout. Cause it was like, okay, good. It's a thing. I can do something about it. But actually the causes of it are, very complex and very nuanced and different for different people. And the symptoms of it are varied. But, yeah, so it was quite a challenge to fit that into a book and take people through that journey. But that's why I found it really valuable. I discovered the work of Tony Schwartz and Jim Lower, who wrote among other books, 'The power of full engagement'. And that was like, I don't know if you've ever read it or come across their work, but it absolutely blew my mind. And they are the people from whom I learned about managing your energy and getting back into this rhythmic way of living, as they say that's our inheritance as human beings is this rhythmic way of living.

And we've lost touch with that. And we're trying to work, operate like machines and, that's, what's burning us out. So then my first thing was like, whatever's caused your burnout. We need to help you get your energy back and your life back and your time back and reconnect with you. And then you take a look at... once you've got your energy back, you're able to see more clearly what has been causing my burnout. Is it me just having no idea how to look after myself or is it that the place the company I work in is a toxic work environment. It's the wrong people. They're not giving me the sort of respect or the support that I need to thrive, or is it that actually your whole career isn't working for you and that, that needs to change. Then it takes people on a journey to identify what it is what caused them to burn out in the first place. And then they can do something to change.

**Jacqueline:** And I think that was so valuable in your book, because basically you're saying, yes, we'll talk about your job, but it's in step six, you have these other steps first. Whereas I was like headless chicken running out the door, going, oh my God I can't do this anymore. I'm leaving. And if I had actually had more ability, I took a three month leave of absence, so it helped me manage my stress and recalibrate. But then I stepped back into exactly the same place and the stress hit me like a 10 ton truck. And I remember that first day going back, I had three people come up to me and say, because my first day back was actually, I was presenting at an internal conference at the university and I had three people come up to me and say, oh, can you mentor me? And I was like, oh my God, I've got to say no, I've promised myself. I'll say no. And I just couldn't, I was so stuck on I loved, helping people and mentoring people. And I literally I was like a deer in the headlights. So yeah, I think that was so important. And how much you focus on rest and reenergizing. I think that was really key. So what are some of the things you encourage people to do?

**Selina:** So in the book right at the start I say, in the introduction, if you are feeling burnt out right now, then the only thing I want you to read in this book, there's a section and a few pages called burnout SOS, go there, read that, follow the instructions and do not come back to this book until you're starting to feel more like yourself. Because the last thing you need to do is to fill your head with any, already frazzled brain, with more information, like this is not time to be trying to fix things or sort things out. And in the burnout SOS, I say, whatever you've got going on this weekend, or the next few days, cancel your plans treat it like you've got flu.

And I was literally speaking to someone this morning, in fact about, they're saying you need to speak to your partner and say, I needed to have the kids on Sunday because I need a full day where if I, where I don't need to get out of bed, if I don't want to, maybe, it can be, nice to go on a gentle walk. But if you just want to lie in bed with the curtains closed and you want to read, a nap and watch Netflix and eat a tub of ice cream, like all of that is just whatever you need to do to just have a hot bath. Movement is good, but I just, in those early days, don't put any pressure on yourself to do anything you think you should, because you've been living with too many shoulds, ruling your life.

And that is one of the reasons you got into this mess in the first place. So you let yourself do whatever you need and whatever you want, but as it has to be with the sole purpose of resting and recovering. And so some people will watch six hours of Netflix, probably not the best thing to do to help yourself recover and recharge your batteries. But like I say, in those early days, you just do whatever you want to do, but then it will be things like getting out in nature, gentle movement, whether that is some gentle yoga, and to not go into trying to do like a hardcore hit workout, because that will make you feel worse. You have not got the energy for that.

Maybe it's talking to a friend or a loved one about really what's been going on for you. Cause a lot of the time people have been bottling up and pretending to be I'm fine. I'm fine. I'm fine. I can't be falling apart. I'm the strong one. I'm the one that looks after everyone else. This will be a weakness. I can't fail. I must be able to get through this. And then when eventually, usually I'm often the first port of call for someone to really admit to what's going on for them. And. And it, then it really hits them. And then the tears come and the really feeling what they've been staving off, really feeling the feelings they've been trying to keep at arm's length.

So talking it through and allowing yourself to get upset, because this has been hard. If you're burnt out, you've been going through a really tough time and eating, ideally eating good grounding, nourishing food. But like I say in the book, what if a tub of ice cream is what you feel like having right now, you do that. Like just let yourself flop and cancel your plans and put off any, trying to plan what you're going to do next, because people often say to me, oh, thank goodness you said in the burnout SOS, don't try planning your life and how you're going to change it. Because like you were saying, you were feeling burnt out, so you're rushing out and saying, oh, this, trying to definitely taking a break is really important, but trying to figure out what new career path you're going to take when you're burnt out. Really actually isn't possible, when people come to me and they're burnt out first things, first recovery, okay. We need to get you back to feeling like yourself and then we'll be able to see. Where what your path is next because you can't see when you're in burnout, you're in survival zone. You're not able to access the creativity and the sort of intuition and the sort of deeper parts of yourself that you do when you're deeply relaxed and calm and at peace. Yeah, it's a journey.

**Jacqueline:** Right. And it's so interesting. You starting with that, like the description you had of the mum saying, okay, you got to take the kids today. I'm not even getting out of bed if I don't have to. And then that whole identity around that, because it really took me back to what I was experiencing. And again, I think that was when my husband said, but you get half an hour every day for your run and just him not understanding that. The same person that I was like when you've been super mum and for everyone, I think it's actually really hard for other people also to adapt to the new you and me too, because I was so feeling like a failure and so caught up in that identity of never being weak of never having to take a break.

So then when you start to, they're confused and I remember refusing to go to social events and my husband being really upset with me. And it was so hard for me to set those boundaries and stick to them. And I often didn't, I would often end up going and then I'd be more miserable, and so I do think that's really hard when you've always been the person that will be up for anything and, to make that shift and have other people adapt to that shift because I think that's, what's so hard about boundaries. When you start to set these new boundaries, other people don't really understand why they've suddenly happened.

**Selina:** Yeah, absolutely. And also because, I think sometimes it helps that my clients can say in terms of their partner or, whoever it may be and say, my coach has told me that I have to do this because then they're following instructions, so I decided, so I say, Tell them tell your partner that you've been you're under strict instructions that you must take this Sunday as a day for full rest. And so that means the kids can come in for cuddles. Okay. No one's being kept at arm's length, but quiet cuddles. They're not jumping on the bed. No coming and asking you where's this where's that? Can you do this? Can you do that? No. Okay. And you need to make it clear. And I think the scary thing is, with a partner with family, like you say, when they know you to be you're the strong one, you're the rock. You're the supermom that can do everything. When you're starting to get really shaky and wobbly and go, I don't think I can do everything. And you're scared. You don't know what's happening to you.

Actually you're burnt out. You're exhausted. You need to recover and you will get back. In fact, even, an even more vibrant version of yourself, but you can't rush there. You can't cut corners, you have fully overdone it. And we're going to unpack how that happened at a later date. But right now you need to have this time to rest and recover. And this is what it needs to look like. And but I assure you that this isn't, you haven't unraveled to the degree that you'll never be able to put yourself back together again. And I think that's sometimes what's happening when you're going through it is that you don't know what the hell is happening to you, will you ever be your old version of yourself again?

And your partner also doesn't know what's happening to you and if you'll ever be that old version of yourself again. So it's, that's what I mean. It's really scary. And really challenging. I think it can be helpful for to be almost given the instruction of this is what you need to tell your partner that you need. And that's actually the thing. And I talk about this in my book. A lot of people struggle to voice their needs. Again, particularly women because we feel guilty for having needs because we're not supposed to have needs. Our fulfillment is supposed to come from looking after the needs of others. That's the narrative that a lot of us are living by. And just even voicing our needs can throw people into a panic and be anxiety inducing and come with a sense of guilt that they're even asking for that space and that me-time.

**Jacqueline:** Right. So I love that. Everybody Selina gives you permission and that's what coaches do. That's what, when I started out coaching, I got a parent coach and that's exactly what she, she did for me. She gave me permission.

**Selina:** Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. It's I remember someone asked me that, what do you think, ultimately, coaches, what is it that they're giving people? And I took a moment and I said, giving, we give people permission to do what it is that they really want to do, and what they need. And it's funny. Yeah. Sometimes we just need someone that we've put into a position of authority and guidance to tell us to do that thing that actually we've probably knew we needed but felt too guilty or thought that it was a sign of weakness or in what would happen if I'm not the one holding the family up for a day, they'll survive, the house will be a mess, but don't worry about it. You can deal with that the next day or they can.

**Jacqueline:** So let's just end by talking a little bit about your inner critic this storyline that we have to ourselves and I'll let you introduce your concept of the inner critic to people, my inner critic, because again, I learned through coaching to name my inner critic to draw my inner critic and to try and work get to know her, talk to her. So mine is one of the witches from Macbeth. She's a Scottish witch. Tell us your approach to the inner critic.

**Selina:** Yeah. So I like to call it the inner critic, all of our inner critics, the shitty committee, because you can have your witch in there and you can have all sorts of characters in there. And it's just a fun way. Whenever I introduce people to the shitty committee, they always laugh and go, I've definitely got one of those. And we all do. We all have a shitty committee. We all have an inner critic that is quick to tell us, that we're not good enough where we've done something wrong, warning us about how we're going to mess up, how are we going to fail? How are we going to look ridiculous how everyone's going to judge us? And it can be really mean and nasty. And we all have one. But the good news is that we can all learn to turn the volume down on the shitty committee. And you really do that by first turning the volume up. And as I'm sure you probably done through your coaching, really tuning into what your shitty committee is saying to you.

And then one by one, sometimes people, I get my clients who I connect with them on WhatsApp between sessions. And sometimes they'll say, oh, the shitty committee is really in town today. And I'm like, oh, the shitty committee is welcome. And I'm always like, bring your shitty committee. And I can't wait to meet them. What are they saying? And though sometimes it's, they're just writing it down and certain elements of it. It's I know this is, I've just, it's ridiculous. Now I'm reading it. And that in itself can start to take the power out of it. As you start to write down what your shitty committee is saying, some of those things you wrote down, you're like, this is daft. I'm even thinking this is so crazy, but other things are still, you write them down and it really gets you in the heart. And you can admit, I really believe that I don't know how I'm going to shift myself out of feeling like that. And sometimes it's deeper healing work you need to do with a therapist, where has that really come from that feeling of not being good enough, which we all have, but sometimes it can be things like it's a sort of limiting belief. And so what you want to look at is both where that sort of came from, but also finding evidence to prove the opposite true. Because the thing is with the shitty committee with that inner critic, is that we believe the, what it's telling us is the truth. And it isn't, it's a belief and it's not a very helpful belief.

And so the more that you can build up evidence to show the opposite, to be true, the less you, the less that belief, that some negative limiting belief, the less power it can hold over you. And you're never going to get fully rid of it. And your shitty committee will flare up any time you try something new, anytime you step out of your comfort zone, it will be there. But the more you get to know it, the more you accept it, the more you give it, a little cuddle that Scottish, witch pull her in and give her a cuddle and start to see the fear that lies beneath that actually the sort of quieter it will become. And then the other thing I do is get people to turn the volume up on their inner wise cheerleader, which is that loving, supportive voice that we also all have within us, but that we tend to use, tend to reserve for our friends and our loved ones and people that we want to support and encourage and tend to keep the shitty committee as the voice we use for ourselves. So it's then practicing, turning up that, turning that voice in on ourselves and being our own supportive and loving, cheerleader.

**Jacqueline:** And it's so funny you say that. Cause that's what I actually imagined doing was giving her a cup of tea and saying, okay let, like she's flying around on this frigging broomstick, right? Screaming, screaming at me. And so many times when I have I've written it down and said, my God, this could be a hilarious t-shirt to wear. Or, this is actually a standup comedian, this woman, cause, imagine saying these things to yourself, like only in stand-up comedy, could these words come out of your mouth and be acceptable, cause they're so awful. So I did I was able to transition into thinking this is hilarious. My goodness. And what would happen if I gave her a cup of tea? Why is she like this? What is going on? And literally imagine her as this, witch who's exhausted and somebody just gave her a cup of tea and she was like, oh, that's all I wanted. Thank you.

**Selina:** I love that you shared that. That is, it's so powerful. And I do a really similar thing that I sometimes, in fact, when I'm going for a run, although I don't run so much these days, but I will imagine that I'm having a conversation with an aspect of my shitty committee and we're all, every part of me is there and I'll have the wise woman and usually have the sort of upset one, little girl version of me and then the furious raging kind of crazy one. That's like very similar to your witch in fact, and, here's your moment. Let's hear you speak, what is it that you're saying? And we are listening cause often it's just, it's that part of you that does actually really need to be listened to. We mustn't dismiss that part of us. I call it shitty committee in a sort of like to bring a bit of lightness and fun into it, but we mustn't dismiss it and try to suppress it or reject it.

It is a part of us and it's a part of us that needs to be heard. And I just love that, that, that vision of you getting her to enticing her down with a cup of tea and getting it to open up and what's really going on because always beneath that harsh critic is a wound and a fear and a hurt. And so if we can get to that, then it's okay, let me reassure. I'm now here to protect you. And I will look after you. And actually, if that's something that's of concern, how can you feel more supported? And when I'm doing that, and it's amazing how we can have these conversations with our inner selves, the different parts of ourselves. And yeah, you've reminded me of that tool. It's so powerful to do that and fun and creative.

**Jacqueline:** Yes. Yeah. Brilliant. Listen, thank you so much for your time. This has just been such a wonderful conversation and I really appreciate your approach to this and that it's so important to you as it is to me. And that there's so much that we can do to recover.

**Selina:** Yes, absolutely. And I think that's the most important thing to hold onto is that when you are feeling really burnt out, that it does feel scary and it does feel like it's hopeless. That's a very common feeling. I can't do this anymore. Haven't got what it takes. But you absolutely can recover from burnout and you will recover from burnout and it's step-by-step and rest and recovery is that first step. And often burnout can be the start of you going down a new path in life and creating an even better life for yourself. So sometimes we do have to break down to build up again.