

## Talk CNY S1X4

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In this episode, we have a national expert in burnout prevention and management joining us. Colleen Blake Miller is a registered psychotherapist, mental wellness coach, and international keynote speaker based out of Atlanta, Georgia. Colleen works to combine her advanced degrees in psychotherapy and divinity to embolden individuals to live full and healthy lives. Colleen regularly speaks at conferences and programs across North America, when she's not working with her clients in one on one and group settings. She is also the author of The Life Map, an easy to follow guide to realizing and fulfilling your life's purpose. I'm your host, Kate Hammer, business coach and member at CenterState CEO. Colleen, thank you so much for joining us today.

Colleen Blake Miller 1:31

Well, thanks for having me, Kate.

Kate Hammer 1:33

Yeah, absolutely. I'm excited that you're here because I think you have some great answers to supply us on a topic that seems to be coming up an awful lot over the past few years, especially during COVID, and maybe during this potentially post COVID era, if we want to call it that. But just with all this change, and how we are working from home in the office or maybe back and forth. So what I'm talking about is the issue of burnout. How do we prevent it? What do we do when we're faced with it? How can we support colleagues or staff who are moving into a season of burnout or trying to get out of one? So let's get started with just- what is it? Like, let's just go ahead and define it first to make sure we're all on the same page. How do you know if you're burnout?

Colleen Blake Miller 2:25

Well, I think it's important for you to be aware of how you're doing physically, mentally, emotionally, just in general. And when you have that awareness and you are able to make note of changes that are happening, changes that aren't, aren't like normal for you or aren't aren't typical. So, burnout would be when you're at a place I guess of like depletion. When

you are feeling you're at the end of your rope. mentally, emotionally, it could be physically, and symptoms can be different for each individual. But often some common symptoms are things like feeling really anxious, feeling maybe that you're not yourself. Maybe experiencing headaches, maybe you're nervous and you're not able to sleep, lack of motivation to do the things you generally have enjoyed, you know, in the past or like you know of yourself to enjoy, feeling like you don't really have energy around that. Something that other people might not be able to look from a distance and see in you. But you know from yourself, maybe becoming more cynical about you know, your work about life, what's has previously been important to you. Those are some of the signs that hey, that you might be hitting burnout.

Kate Hammer 3:50

Okay, yeah, cynicism. Man, you know, I do sometimes think like, that we associate just that feeling of, I don't feel like doing a thing today. But, you know, obviously, it can show up in other ways, too. I think that's such an important one to note. Just that feeling of frustration and negativity in your environment toward others, toward your organization, things like that. So if you are noticing these signs, and you haven't really hit a wall, you're not you know, deep in it yet. What are some things that you can do to make sure that you don't continue on to that path of burnout?

Colleen Blake Miller 4:30

Well, I mean, remember, you know, we're holistic beings. So thinking about what are the things that kind of give you a sense of fulfillment? What are some of the things that help to like, bring, you know, energy into you? So remembering to plug into some of those things. So if you're someone- I recently had a huge life transition and our family moved from Canada, to the US and now we're in a new space, new community and our family systems shifted. And so I, myself endured way more frequently than I have been in the past. And so noticing like, I just don't feel like myself as often, a simple thing, like making sure that I'm getting out of the house daily, it could be to do a quick walk, instead of working up in the room that I do my exercises in. Getting out, getting fresh air, going to, like, grab groceries instead of having the groceries delivered, those kinds of things. So, I mean, I'm using that as an example for myself. Thinking for yourself, what are the things that actually bring me a sense of fulfillment bring me a sense of joy, and trying to be very intentional about doing those things. Oftentimes, what burns us out, are our responsibilities. You know, things like work, but maybe like the actual like your nine to five or your business, if you're an entrepreneur, but think about other things that you consider to be work, you know, think about maybe domestic things around the house, other things that are your responsibility, they're the half to do. You want to be mindful about pouring yourself into things, you don't have to do things that you enjoy doing. It could be a hobby, it could be something with friends, something, you know, within, you know, your network that puts a

smile on your face. And it's a lighter load on you. Those are some ideas of things that you should be considering. I mean, if things are really, really bad, and you're beginning to have a hard time, let's say performing at work, getting things done getting out of bed, navigating your mood, then I would suggest talking to professional. Talking to your family doctor first, and then perhaps considering speaking with a therapist to kind of strategize with you on some ideas for how you can navigate that.

Kate Hammer 6:48

Oh, yeah. Yeah, absolutely. I mean, gosh, so often, we feel like we have to figure things out ourselves, that we think we should, that maybe there's something wrong with us that there's some deficit if we don't have those solutions, top of mind. But I think that's such a great point, you know, outward toward experts getting the help that we need, whether it's through a therapist or some other sort of resource, like I know, for example, you offer The Wellness Village, which is an amazing community of mostly women who are trying to ensure things like not getting into a season of burnout. Can you tell us, actually, a little bit more about Wellness Village?

Colleen Blake Miller 7:28

Well, you know, I'll say this, that this idea of it takes a village, right? I don't think that it's outdated, I think it's very relevant still. We often say the quote we hear so it takes a village to raise a child, but I don't think we ever lose the need for our village. And so for me in the work that I do, I kept hearing a lot of the clients that I was working with, talking about feeling isolated, and mind you, we did start this community in the in the height of the pandemic, in 2020, that summer. You know, it was really like a response to the community that I was serving and to say, you know something, let's actually be intentional about gathering like minded individuals who are wanting to focus on their wellness, right emotionally, mentally, physically, spiritually, and be very, you know, careful to create curriculum and create workshops to help to have them keeping their wellness at like front of mind. So we all want to feel good, we all want to feel well, we want to feel fulfilled in our lives, we want to, you know, achieve goals and see improvement in all aspects of our life. But it doesn't just happen organically. It has to be intentional, we have to set things in place, carve it out, carve our lives out in a way that allows for those things to come to us. So that's a space that I have been in for a year and a bit or two years, and have been just thoroughly thoroughly enjoying serving the community in that way. And I also get gained so much from it, too, because you learn and grow together in community. Yeah.

Kate Hammer 9:05

Yeah. Yeah. I love that. And just that idea of having peers around. I mean, I think, you know, the situation's vary what your needs are, and maybe it's both, maybe it's some one on one assistance, maybe it's getting into group and seeing, you know, some of those common

issues appear in your cohort like, you know, and your peers and feeling less alone and that way. So, yeah, I love both of those suggestions. And so we talked a little bit about how to recognize if you're entering into a time of burnout, some things that you can do to prevent that from progressing. Well, what about when you're recognizing that in a colleague. If you are seeing those signs or symptoms of burnout, it's someone you're working with, it's someone who maybe reports to you, how can you show support, and how can you really show up in a meaningful way?

Colleen Blake Miller 9:57

So important, it's really important to do talk to the people who you're doing life with. And doing light isn't just outside of work, it includes work because we spend so much of our time. I think it's going to be hard to broach a subject like this with someone who you have no rapport with, you know, no relationship. And so here's the plug for building stronger relationships at work. So that when you do notice your colleague is, I don't know, like extra snippy, you know, over the last few weeks, really kind of not themselves in and and saying, you know, you hear them connecting with with, with clients in a way that's like what's like, not just, it's not that it's not, it's not professional, it's, it's not you, you know, it's not what I know of you, to be able to check in with them and sort of, say, "How are you doing? And I'm noticing, you know, you feel you seem tense, it seems like you're not yourself," and really giving them the opportunity to share and open up, I guess, as much as they feel comfortable kind of talking, talking with you about what's going on with them. And then perhaps, it might be time that you can ask or recommend, like, "Okay, why don't we instead of having lunch at our desk, let's actually go out, let's, let's, let's let's, let's get away from the screen and do something that's a little less heavy." Within the workspace, I think, in order to support people, you've got to have a connection. And in some way, if they respect you really, genuinely care about them, then they're likely going to be honest with you, you know, and then of course, when it comes to people's boundaries, sometimes you see someone that you that you recognize might be struggling, but they're not ready. They're not they're not at a place where they're where they're comfortable talking about it. And that's hard to watch. But waiting for that time for them to feel comfortable sharing with them, that you're there for them and open to connecting with them and talking with them you're noticing, and when they're ready to express and talk then be able to recommend or refer them to a resource of some of some kind. And I mean, you don't have to be the expert. It's just a matter of saying, hey, like, let's talk about it. Oftentimes, people have ideas already internally and what they need to probably be doing, but they're not doing it because there's no accountability. So just entering into conversation sometimes with people can be helpful. Yeah, yeah.

Kate Hammer 12:27

Yeah, I love that approach to the individual. And I think that's just such terrific advice, to be considerate of what is the relationship at all times. So that when things are difficult for any number of reasons that you can address them definitively that you can actually have those conversations with some chance of, you know, people opening up on both ends. Outside of the individual, as we think about it more as about the culture of the office space, how can an employer make that sort of conversation more tenable, make it feel like it's something that's approachable? How can an employer talk about mental wellness and burnout in that space? Or not necessarily even talk about it? But like, what are what even can be done to just normalize that this is something that people are going to be dealing with that they're going to be issues that come up, so that when they do it doesn't feel like the first time?

Colleen Blake Miller 13:25

Well I mean, it's, it doesn't have to happen, we all we don't have to have burnout. I know some industries are prone for that. But I think not waiting to see the building on fire before offering solutions. It's sort of like okay, well, we know that we're working with people, we're not working with robots. People are like holistic beings, and they need to have all aspects of their person considered even in a work environment. And so what are we doing to really promote wellness? What are we doing to promote healthy balance, like work life balance within our organization, having a lot of conversation about that? What are we doing within our company to really promote and support the mental health of our employees, you don't want to wait to see your employees struggling and suffering to then say, hey, try this try that. People are not going to respond as well to that because if they see work as a source of their of their burnout, maybe in a lack of support at work, then sometimes they become resentful and feel kind of like oh, you're just trying to put a BandAid on a much bigger issue. So I think considering a whole person, it within you know, sort of the the fabric of your of your organization and promoting and thinking about their wellness and providing, making it easily accessible for for your for your staff or your employees, and then talking about it openly. I think you can sort you can go a long way, in terms of normalizing people's experiences with burnout when you as a leader start talking about how you maybe have navigated burnout, how you have maybe navigated having like mental or emotional depletion, and what are the things that you've done to kind of come back from that? What are the things you're currently doing to to help to support that not happening again? I think those are some examples of things that would be really helpful for your organization.

Kate Hammer 15:29

Absolutely. So yeah, I mean, being mindful of being transparent, I think, you know, that's a great point that it can be as simple as sometimes just sharing your own story and your own history, to help to normalize that they make it feel like an approachable subject. Colleen, thank you so much for being here today. And for sharing your expertise on dealing with burnout, how to recognize when you are faced with it, what to do to get yourself out of it,

and also how to support others in your work environment, who might be dealing with burnout as well.

Colleen Blake Miller 16:16

Thanks for having me, Kate. This is great.

Kate Hammer 16:18

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