

Transcript | Building Habits to Reduce Work Stress

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00:00:11.380 --> 00:00:19.710

Joel Smith: Hello, everybody! Hello and welcome to today's panel event, Building Habits to Reduce Work Stress.

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00:00:19.750 --> 00:00:33.730

Joel Smith: My name is Joel Smith, and I am the Events Manager here at Apolitical. It would be great to hear from you all too, so please do post in the chat where you're joining us from, and what organization you work for.

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00:00:33.840 --> 00:00:51.009

Joel Smith: Today is all about the small shifts you can make every day to become more calm, focused at work. You'll hear from experts and experienced civil servants on how to better understand work stress, and which tactics you can implement right now to reduce it.

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00:00:51.050 --> 00:01:05.909

Joel Smith: For those of you who may be joining us for the first time, first of all, welcome. Apolitical is the world's largest online network of public servants, used by over half a million public servants and policymakers from across 170 countries.

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00:01:05.910 --> 00:01:26.320

Joel Smith: We are a strategic partner to government, helping them prepare their workforces for the future. We achieve this by upskilling government workforces through short online courses focused on government priorities, enabling them to find and share best practice through peer communities, and by building innovative tools designed for and with governments.

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00:01:26.320 --> 00:01:33.159

Joel Smith: So, I will just hop into the chat. I can see it is already popping off. We have,

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00:01:33.160 --> 00:01:56.540

Joel Smith: Oh, the first, first comment I can see, was invaded by a cat on the keyboard, so, welcome, we love to see it. We've got people dialing in from Ottawa, Canada, we've got people from Department of Education, Montreal, Canada, Alberta, Scotland, Barbados, always lovely to see.

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00:01:56.540 --> 00:02:20.139

Joel Smith: Yeah, they're coming in thick and fast, people from all over, so welcome. It's a pleasure to have you all here with us today. Before we get started, I also want to introduce you to our Life in Government community on Apolitical. This is a space to ask the questions we're not always able to ask at work, such as, how can I work with my line manager to make my workload more sustainable?

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00:02:20.240 --> 00:02:38.130

Joel Smith: If you've ever wondered about this, you're definitely not alone, and this community is a great place to connect with and learn from your peers in the public sector. My colleague Callie is just going to post that link to the community in the chat. Oh, I can see it's already there, so do click on that and join that community if you've not already.

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00:02:38.130 --> 00:02:49.839

Joel Smith: I'll get a few technical notes out the way before we dive into today's session. So, this event is recorded for on-demand viewing on the apolitical website. Please do not record it yourself.

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00:02:49.840 --> 00:03:04.769

Joel Smith: Contact details for any privacy concerns are in the apolitical homepage footer. Closed captions are available in your own language, and they can be toggled on or off in your screen settings, so my colleague will also post the instructions to follow in the chat.

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00:03:05.100 --> 00:03:21.140

Joel Smith: Okay, before we introduce our wonderful speakers, we're just going to run a few quick polls to get a sense of where you're coming from into today's conversation. So, let's have a look at the first poll. It should just pop up on your page now.

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00:03:21.290 --> 00:03:38.320

Joel Smith: So what is the main driver of stress in your working week right now? So the options are volume, there's simply too much to do, pace, things move faster than ever, uncertainty, unclear expectations, unshifting, or shifting priorities.

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00:03:38.580 --> 00:03:55.910

Joel Smith: people, difficult relationships or dynamics at work, or always on pressure, finding it hard to switch off. It may be all of the above, so if there is anything we've not mentioned here, do pop that in the chat as well, and we'll... we'll see where you're all... where you're all thinking.

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00:03:56.110 --> 00:03:58.670

Joel Smith: I'll give you a moment to get those votes in.

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00:04:09.160 --> 00:04:11.770

Joel Smith: Okay, yeah, we're seeing a nice mix.

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00:04:12.090 --> 00:04:17.680

Joel Smith: Already, a couple of leading ones, so let's maybe pull up the results.

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00:04:20.610 --> 00:04:38.730

Joel Smith: Okay, so in the lead, just by quite a small margin, is uncertainty, so having unclear expectations or shifting priorities, closely followed by volume, there just being simply too much work to do, and then kind of coming fairly close behind our people.

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00:04:38.730 --> 00:04:56.090

Joel Smith: So difficult relationships or dynamics at work. So thank you so much for taking part in that. It's always really interesting to kind of get these insights before we dive in. So now, on to the second poll question, which is a more general question, but will help us to shape some future content.

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00:04:56.090 --> 00:05:06.319

Joel Smith: This question is, is how often do you use AI tools to support your own learning? So, if you can just pop in, is it daily, weekly, monthly, rarely, or never?

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00:05:06.700 --> 00:05:10.940

Joel Smith: We'll just give you a moment to... to vote on that.

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00:05:20.140 --> 00:05:21.220

Joel Smith: Wonderful.

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00:05:21.960 --> 00:05:26.499

Joel Smith: Okay, thank you for your responses there.

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00:05:26.710 --> 00:05:36.089

Joel Smith: Yeah, that is great. So, thank you so much for taking part in those polls. Now, on to introduce our speakers.

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00:05:36.260 --> 00:05:46.490

Joel Smith: We're fortunate to have 3 brilliant guests joining us today. We have Maura Ahrens-Mele, Fiona Jensen, and Denley McIntosh.

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00:05:46.520 --> 00:06:04.330

Joel Smith: So, Maura helps leaders build strength by turning into their inner lives. She teaches executive education at Harvard, and advises global organizations. Recognized as a LinkedIn Top 10 Voice in Mental Health, and honoured with the Mental Health America Media Award.

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00:06:04.330 --> 00:06:10.939

Joel Smith: Maura hosts the Anxious Achiever podcast, and is the author of The Anxious Achiever and Hiding in the Bathroom.

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00:06:11.310 --> 00:06:23.200

Joel Smith: Fiona Jensen is a transformative facilitator, mentor, and public speaker, with over 30 years of experience across diverse sectors, including two decades with the UK Home Office.

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00:06:23.200 --> 00:06:33.930

Joel Smith: She specializes in helping individuals and organizations build practical, sustainable habits that reduce work-related stress, strengthen resilience, and enable healthier, high-performing cultures.

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00:06:33.950 --> 00:06:45.709

Joel Smith: And Denley McIntosh is an author, podcaster, and keynote speaker. His innovative ideas on workplace culture change and leadership have been widely recognized and adopted.

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00:06:45.710 --> 00:06:55.710

Joel Smith: As the founder and executive director of Connect Ontario Professional Development Group, Denley has created a workplace community for public sector professionals in Canada.

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00:06:55.710 --> 00:07:01.899

Joel Smith: You can read the full bios of our brilliant speakers by visiting the resources tab at the bottom of your Zoom screen.

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00:07:01.900 --> 00:07:18.039

Joel Smith: So yes, welcome, the three of you. It is so lovely to have you all here. We're gonna kick off straight away with just a quick icebreaker, so I'll give you each 30 seconds to share your responses, and also to everyone else watching, we'd love to see your responses in the chat as well.

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00:07:18.040 --> 00:07:30.520

Joel Smith: So today's icebreaker is what is a non-negotiable in your workday, even on busy days. So, just while you think on your answers, I'll also just encourage everyone to get posting in the chat.

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00:07:30.640 --> 00:07:36.730

Joel Smith: But, I will come to you first, Maura. What is your non-negotiable in the workday?

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00:07:37.100 --> 00:07:39.790

Morra Aarons-Mele: My non-negotiable is alone time.

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00:07:40.090 --> 00:07:50.049

Morra Aarons-Mele: I find, I'm an introvert, and if I spend all my day, like, with people non-stop, it's... it's fun, and I love my work.

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00:07:50.050 --> 00:08:01.240

Morra Aarons-Mele: But sometimes I... I wrote a book called Hiding in the Bathroom. I sometimes just need a few minutes in a place that isn't sensory overload, so calm, quiet.

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00:08:01.350 --> 00:08:03.539

Morra Aarons-Mele: To just... be by myself.

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00:08:04.080 --> 00:08:14.449

Joel Smith: Yeah, yeah, I really relate to that, and I imagine a lot of our audience will as well. Thank you. Denley, what is your non-negotiable in your workday?

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00:08:16.110 --> 00:08:23.130

Denley McIntosh: Yeah, my non-negotiable is... Knowing that my work doesn't define me.

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00:08:23.590 --> 00:08:38.889

Denley McIntosh: There's life bigger than work, and so all the time I've been at work, I always found extracurricular things to do, because I know everyone's busy, and it seems like no one makes space for themselves at work.

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00:08:39.020 --> 00:08:47.889

Denley McIntosh: It's always there's something to do, and I'm saying, you have to be intentional, and plan out your day. Yeah, everyone's busy, but for me.

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00:08:48.240 --> 00:09:01.699

Denley McIntosh: for doing what I do for how many years? Running a community for over 13 years is required because that's a non-negotiable. I find time to serve, I find time to get outside my work, and make it happen to deliver at the same time.

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00:09:02.460 --> 00:09:09.689

Joel Smith: Yeah, so important to take that step back. Fiona, on to you. What's your non-negotiable in your workday?

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00:09:09.910 --> 00:09:25.859

Fiona Yensen: Yeah, for me, it's got to be the lunch break. One, I'm a foodie, absolutely love food, but it isn't even that, the change of scene. So whether I'm working at home, just to go outside, feel, hopefully, the sun on my face.

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00:09:26.130 --> 00:09:31.009

Fiona Yensen: walk the dog, I won't say that too loud, otherwise they'll be getting a bit excited.

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00:09:31.010 --> 00:09:31.530

Joel Smith: stupid.

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00:09:31.530 --> 00:09:43.790

Fiona Yensen: catch up with colleagues, you know, at the water cooler or in the corridor. I find it just re-energizes me for the afternoon, so yeah, a lunch break and whatever that might look like.

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00:09:44.280 --> 00:10:05.810

Joel Smith: Yeah, absolutely, and you're not alone. We've got loads of people in the comments saying lunch break, or even just a tea break, just stepping away and just having a moment to yourself. So, that's a first learning we can already take away, but that is a very, very important thing. And thank you, everyone, for all of your brilliant comments and, and sharing all of your.

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00:10:05.810 --> 00:10:06.450

Denley McIntosh: I need to incorporate.

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00:10:06.450 --> 00:10:06.880

Joel Smith: MTV.

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00:10:06.880 --> 00:10:07.530

Denley McIntosh: Makes me awful.

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00:10:07.530 --> 00:10:08.840

Joel Smith: Yeah.

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00:10:08.840 --> 00:10:11.739

Denley McIntosh: Absolutely, my friend. I gotta get Fiona's tea break.

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00:10:11.740 --> 00:10:12.280

Joel Smith: Yeah.

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00:10:12.280 --> 00:10:13.290

Denley McIntosh: Oh, that's like...

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00:10:14.070 --> 00:10:21.759

Joel Smith: For sure. Okay, great. Well, thank you all. So, let's dive into this panel.

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00:10:21.760 --> 00:10:45.029

Joel Smith: So we're going to start by understanding what stress at work really means. So, Maura, I'm going to come to you first with the first question. So stress and anxiety get a bad reputation, but you often talk about developing a healthier relationship with them. Can you explain what stress and anxiety are actually doing to us at work, and where that starts to tip from useful into harmful?

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00:10:45.340 --> 00:11:03.970

Morra Aarons-Mele: Absolutely. Well, super quick definition that's useful when you think about stress and anxiety at work. Stress is, there's too many resources being put on me. I don't have the capacity to meet the resources. So those resources could be your boss says, I want this memo by 5, and you're booked in meetings all day.

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00:11:03.970 --> 00:11:19.270

Morra Aarons-Mele: Or it could be just the mental load, right, of feeling like you have a million things to do, and then you have to deal with your kids, and you have to deal with this and that, and you just don't have the resources. So that's stress. Anxiety is actually...

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00:11:19.590 --> 00:11:21.659

Morra Aarons-Mele: Looking into the future.

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00:11:21.910 --> 00:11:29.430

Morra Aarons-Mele: And feeling... uncertainty was the number one thing that's stressing people out at work, and the poll that was interesting, is thinking.

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00:11:30.440 --> 00:11:32.000

Morra Aarons-Mele: This is gonna go bad.

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00:11:32.680 --> 00:11:48.869

Morra Aarons-Mele: Am I going to be able to meet this moment, right? It's looking into the future, and that future could be 2 seconds away, it could be 5 minutes away, it could be 20 years away, right? But it's that sense of anticipating. And what's really, really important, and this changed my life, y'all.

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00:11:49.080 --> 00:11:49.940

Morra Aarons-Mele: Is that...

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00:11:50.090 --> 00:12:00.770

Morra Aarons-Mele: If we didn't have stress and anxiety, we wouldn't do anything. Like, the world would not have progressed. We'd all be, like, sitting around. We need

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00:12:00.830 --> 00:12:14.859

Morra Aarons-Mele: stress and anxiety as humans. They are essential. They were essential to our survival as a species, and now, really, they're essential to innovation and getting things done and growing, even though they rarely feel good.

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00:12:15.100 --> 00:12:17.430

Morra Aarons-Mele: So stress and anxiety aren't bad.

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00:12:17.720 --> 00:12:21.200

Morra Aarons-Mele: The key is frequency and chronicity.

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00:12:21.680 --> 00:12:37.939

Morra Aarons-Mele: You all know the feeling of you've got a big day tomorrow, or maybe your kid has a swim meet. They're super anxious, they're super stressed, because they care! But hopefully, they do great in the swim meet, and it goes away, right? Same with us. Like, we have a big day tomorrow, we ace the presentation, or we don't, it passes.

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00:12:38.080 --> 00:12:38.890

Morra Aarons-Mele: Great.

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00:12:39.240 --> 00:12:44.930

Morra Aarons-Mele: The problem that a lot of us face is it never passes, and our brain is constantly in a threat state.

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00:12:45.070 --> 00:12:53.669

Morra Aarons-Mele: Feeling stressed, under-resourced, and anticipating uncertainty that is bad. And that's the difference, and that's what we need to work on.

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00:12:55.570 --> 00:13:12.619

Joel Smith: Brilliant, thank you so much. You're welcome. Fiona, I'm going to come to you next. So, we all know that government workplaces are under a lot of pressure right now. From your

experience, what are the early signs that someone is moving from stretched to overloaded, and how do we get better at noticing them?

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00:13:13.490 --> 00:13:29.840

Fiona Yensen: Great question, and I love what Moira was saying. It links really nicely into this. So there is a real difference between someone being stretched, challenged, but coping, and overloaded, so they're losing capacity, and the shift isn't dramatic.

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00:13:29.920 --> 00:13:41.010

Fiona Yensen: It's subtle, and it's easy to miss. So if you're not looking for those patterns, that's where it can be missed. So being stretched is where people are under pressure.

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00:13:41.010 --> 00:13:52.890

Fiona Yensen: They're still functioning well. Their focus is mostly intact, energy comes in waves, but they recover, and they ask for help or prioritize when they're needed.

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00:13:53.100 --> 00:14:02.239

Fiona Yensen: output quality is still solid, so that's the healthy strain that Moya was talking about. That's where growth and invention can come from.

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00:14:02.350 --> 00:14:18.340

Fiona Yensen: But there are often early signs or patterns someone's tipping into overloaded, and this is where things start to quietly unravel. So it's important that managers, especially, look for those small, consistent changes.

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00:14:18.340 --> 00:14:24.259

Fiona Yensen: Not the one-off bad days. We all have one-off bad days. We're a bit grumpy, we're a bit overtired.

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00:14:24.670 --> 00:14:37.730

Fiona Yensen: But it's important that managers are spotting small, consistent changes, so the person starts forgetting things they wouldn't normally forget more often, they're struggling to prioritize the simple tasks.

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00:14:38.150 --> 00:14:41.070

Fiona Yensen: They're taking longer to make decisions.

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00:14:41.280 --> 00:14:52.859

Fiona Yensen: They can be more reactive than thoughtful, so that can present itself like being snappy, defensive, or even withdrawing. They start to contribute less in meetings.

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00:14:53.080 --> 00:14:56.880

Fiona Yensen: Working longer hours, but producing less.

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00:14:57.490 --> 00:15:14.120

Fiona Yensen: And they start to look more tired, so regular breaks, annual leave, just start cutting it anymore. It's not doing the job to recharge them. And there's a real key shift here to understand. So when somebody moves from stretched to overloaded.

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00:15:14.120 --> 00:15:22.220

Fiona Yensen: The core change is this. Effort keeps increasing, but effectiveness starts to decrease.

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00:15:22.270 --> 00:15:27.429

Fiona Yensen: And that's your signal. So most people I've worked with.

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00:15:27.590 --> 00:15:30.960

Fiona Yensen: And they won't say, I'm overloaded.

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00:15:31.320 --> 00:15:44.950

Fiona Yensen: And they'll hint at it, sort of indirectly. And it's important that people are given the space to speak, and managers are asking those open questions in those regular one-to-ones.

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00:15:45.080 --> 00:15:55.850

Fiona Yensen: And really listening, giving the other person the opportunity to speak in a very safe space, and that's where it becomes very powerful to pick up on these subtle changes.

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00:15:56.120 --> 00:15:57.979

Fiona Yensen: Finally, I just wanted to add.

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00:15:58.440 --> 00:16:13.040

Fiona Yensen: It is really important to normalize early intervention, and not to praise that overextension. I've worked in so many organizations where it's not... it's frowned upon to say.

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00:16:13.250 --> 00:16:21.700

Fiona Yensen: I'm at capacity, or this timeline, it's just not realistic. You're expected to sort of just suck it up.

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00:16:21.990 --> 00:16:30.810

Fiona Yensen: And on my personal favourite, so when an enthusiastic manager will come to me and say, okay, we want you to take this on, on top of that.

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00:16:31.450 --> 00:16:45.070

Fiona Yensen: One thing I'll now say without any doubt, and is, okay, that's fine, what would you like me to deprioritize on my to-do list? And it is amazing how shocked they can look. What do you mean?

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00:16:45.480 --> 00:16:49.100

Fiona Yensen: But if you've not given any thought to my to-do list.

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00:16:49.790 --> 00:17:08.450

Fiona Yensen: then it's really demonstrating there that there is a real lack of thought. So sometimes it's us that needs to take the responsibility to gently push back, and this approach helps to prevent that overload instead of managing the damage afterwards. I also talked about not praising.

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00:17:09.890 --> 00:17:26.050

Fiona Yensen: I've worked in organizations where the high performers will be those ones that are working all the hours outside of office hours, always making themselves available. When you're doing that, an organization, you're encouraging people to ignore their own limits.

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00:17:27.910 --> 00:17:45.410

Joel Smith: Absolutely, thank you. Denley, continuing with the idea of having, kind of, limited control in government specifically, how do those structural realities shape the kind of stress people experience, and does it require a different response than stress in other sectors?

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00:17:45.980 --> 00:18:03.140

Denley McIntosh: Yeah, it's a good question. So, let me just say, from a logistics standpoint, my internet's a little wonky, so if I pause, you're gonna have to just shake me, wake me up, and see what I can do. Now, to your question, it is. It is absolutely different.

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00:18:03.380 --> 00:18:11.460

Denley McIntosh: I know people want to say it's not different, but it is different, because in government,

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00:18:11.950 --> 00:18:16.090

Denley McIntosh: In the private sector, it's about the productivity. That's the P word.

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00:18:16.530 --> 00:18:21.910

Denley McIntosh: In government, it is about the perception.

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00:18:22.430 --> 00:18:28.140

Denley McIntosh: It is about the... the messaging.

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00:18:28.890 --> 00:18:33.779

Denley McIntosh: It is about how does the citizens see us?

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00:18:34.360 --> 00:18:37.130

Denley McIntosh: Versus what we actually do.

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00:18:44.800 --> 00:18:48.179

Denley McIntosh: And you say, well, aren't the two ones the same deduct?

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00:18:48.370 --> 00:18:49.909

Denley McIntosh: Or amazing service.

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00:18:50.260 --> 00:18:57.720

Denley McIntosh: But if you do it the wrong way in terms of how you engage with other people internally, or at the wrong time in terms of the public.

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00:18:57.920 --> 00:19:03.530

Denley McIntosh: It's a disaster. And so, what people have to know in terms of coming from the outside of the government.

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00:19:03.910 --> 00:19:06.900

Denley McIntosh: the messaging... is important.

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00:19:07.030 --> 00:19:11.330

Denley McIntosh: And mastering the messaging is just as important as mastering what you actually deliver.

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00:19:12.290 --> 00:19:21.299

Denley McIntosh: And if no one taught you that, I'm just letting you know that is the fact. I've seen things where things should have been whirled out, because certain people weren't engaged.

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00:19:21.490 --> 00:19:24.130

Denley McIntosh: Didn't get the message.

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00:19:24.310 --> 00:19:25.660

Denley McIntosh: It kaiwashed.

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00:19:26.360 --> 00:19:29.109

Denley McIntosh: The whole... the whole product.

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00:19:29.290 --> 00:19:34.989

Denley McIntosh: And so, the expectation when people come in together in terms of stress is like, I want to get this thing done, I want to get...

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00:19:35.190 --> 00:19:36.650

Denley McIntosh: The messaging matters.

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00:19:36.870 --> 00:19:39.049

Denley McIntosh: Who you talk to matters.

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00:19:39.150 --> 00:19:40.799

Denley McIntosh: That informs the messaging.

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00:19:42.520 --> 00:19:46.510

Denley McIntosh: And so you have this two-parallel product, and you say, I don't believe in that. Well.

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00:19:46.600 --> 00:19:52.570

Denley McIntosh: What is the biggest department in government? One of the biggest departments is your comms department, your communications.

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00:19:52.590 --> 00:20:06.750

Denley McIntosh: You don't have that in the private sector. You have... yes, you have communications, but not to the size and government. Why? Because the messaging matters. And so, if you go in, in terms of, I'm gonna go, like, gangbusters, and we're gonna deliver and forget about the messaging.

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00:20:07.200 --> 00:20:21.519

Denley McIntosh: you're gonna have a rude awakening. And that's where a lot of the stress comes in, because people have an expectation that it's about delivering the product, and forget about the message. And to get the right message, you have to bring a whole bunch of people along. And if you are an introvert.

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00:20:21.880 --> 00:20:27.170

Denley McIntosh: That's gonna be tough, because there's a lot of conversations you're gonna have to have, and that's gonna drain you.

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00:20:27.770 --> 00:20:37.530

Denley McIntosh: All right? And so, the expectation has higher up you go into government as an introvert, and you take on... you're gonna be engaging a whole lot of people, so be prepared.

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00:20:37.680 --> 00:20:49.580

Denley McIntosh: That that's going to be part of your task, to get the message right. And if you go in thinking as an extrovert, or someone who's a deep personality, is about delivering, and you forget about the message, you'd be quickly on the street.

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00:20:50.090 --> 00:20:58.420

Denley McIntosh: And so, that's what I've learned over the years, in terms of minimizing some of the stress, is the expectation, what does government

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00:20:59.600 --> 00:21:06.330

Denley McIntosh: do differently than the private sector. And what we do deliver... do differently is deliver the message along with the service.

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00:21:08.900 --> 00:21:21.210

Joel Smith: Nice, brilliant. Thank you so much. We also had a comment in there which kind of would very much fit with what you were saying, and, where they said, I would say in government, it's not just what we do, but also how we do it.

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00:21:21.210 --> 00:21:21.700

Denley McIntosh: Absolutely.

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00:21:21.700 --> 00:21:22.810

Joel Smith: Yeah.

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00:21:22.940 --> 00:21:36.440

Joel Smith: So actually, staying with you then, Lee, what tools have you, or civil servants that you've worked with, or what tools have you used to manage pressure within these kind of constraints of government work?

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00:21:37.510 --> 00:21:50.380

Denley McIntosh: Yeah, that's a good question. When I was thinking about this, there's a thing that people talk about, thinking outside the box. You gotta think outside the box. We gotta be creative, and that's what that metaphor is. He's thinking beyond the parameters.

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00:21:50.880 --> 00:21:53.359

Denley McIntosh: I think in government, it's the other way around.

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00:21:53.590 --> 00:21:56.299

Denley McIntosh: You have to think creatively in the box.

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00:21:57.060 --> 00:22:04.410

Denley McIntosh: Because you have no liberty to change the box, and goodness knows if you think outside the box, remember I said you're gonna be in a world of trouble.

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00:22:05.100 --> 00:22:11.320

Denley McIntosh: Because we live with laws, we live with rules, regulations, we have to learn to think creatively in

140

00:22:11.470 --> 00:22:20.980

Denley McIntosh: the box. We're not entrepreneurs. We can't break. We cannot do what some of our friends on... in Silicon Valley do. We can't do that in government.

141

00:22:21.370 --> 00:22:39.960

Denley McIntosh: We have to learn to think creatively in the box, and that's another level of stress, but it should take some stress off, because you're not... you're learning to work within the confines. So that's the first thing. That's the first tool. What is the box that you're dealing with? What are the rules, the regulations, what have you, the policies?

142

00:22:40.660 --> 00:22:44.079

Denley McIntosh: You have to do that environmental scanning. That's the other piece.

143

00:22:44.490 --> 00:22:50.960

Denley McIntosh: What is the environmental scan that says, what are the... what are the confines in place? And learn to work with them.

144

00:22:51.200 --> 00:22:56.320

Denley McIntosh: Now, who are the gatekeepers of all of those particular policies?

145

00:22:57.020 --> 00:22:58.329

Denley McIntosh: Be friends with them.

146

00:22:59.030 --> 00:23:01.220

Denley McIntosh: sit down, Meet them.

147

00:23:02.230 --> 00:23:06.599

Denley McIntosh: It's not a tool, but it's... it's engagement.

148

00:23:06.990 --> 00:23:14.470

Denley McIntosh: And the less stress, You'll have when you know the expectation of those partners who are the gatekeepers.

149

00:23:14.950 --> 00:23:21.710

Denley McIntosh: A lot of people are frustrated because they never took the time to sit with the person who operates the gate.

150

00:23:21.980 --> 00:23:31.860

Denley McIntosh: So, engage stakeholders. Environmental scan of what are the confines. And the last thing I would talk... I was to say is in terms of your own expectations.

151

00:23:32.430 --> 00:23:36.990

Denley McIntosh: You have to learn to enjoy the journey.

152

00:23:37.880 --> 00:23:44.829

Denley McIntosh: What do I mean by Joy to Journey? Sometimes you need to have a meeting before the meeting, before the meeting, in government.

153

00:23:45.130 --> 00:23:49.359

Denley McIntosh: In the private sector, that's a, whoa, that's not being lean, that's a waste of time.

154

00:23:49.760 --> 00:23:55.159

Denley McIntosh: But memorizing a government, The product you deliver is not so much the service itself, but it's the message.

155

00:23:55.530 --> 00:24:00.579

Denley McIntosh: And sometimes you need dress rehearsal to the dress rehearsal to get the message right.

156

00:24:00.900 --> 00:24:07.759

Denley McIntosh: And so, I'm less giving you specific tools, but as a way of thinking, which is probably the cognitive tool that you need.

157

00:24:08.130 --> 00:24:16.440

Denley McIntosh: Calibrate your expectations, have the right kind of engagement, do your environmental scans. And those are the three E's I would offer to educate, my friends.

158

00:24:17.440 --> 00:24:31.110

Joel Smith: Awesome, some really, really useful tips in there, and I can see in the comments lots of people really resonating, so thank you. Fiona, I'm just going to come to you next. In your time as Head of Wellbeing at the UK Home Office.

159

00:24:31.110 --> 00:24:38.689

Joel Smith: What habits did you encourage civil servants to implement to reduce stress, and are they... are there any that you used yourself?

160

00:24:39.470 --> 00:24:56.050

Fiona Yensen: Yeah, so I'm gonna, highlight my top three, so much time we've done quite a lot. But the first one is ruthless prioritization. So, focusing on one, two, or three things a day, not a week.

161

00:24:56.200 --> 00:25:12.380

Fiona Yensen: What can wait, as well? So without this, everything feels urgent, and that's where the stress starts to spiral. And a useful note to remember is, if everything is a priority, then nothing is a priority.

162

00:25:12.380 --> 00:25:21.380

Fiona Yensen: Tip number two, finish before starting. So, stress explodes when people juggle too many half-done tasks.

163

00:25:21.680 --> 00:25:29.330

Fiona Yensen: And we build the habit of, what we encouraged within the self-service was

164

00:25:29.480 --> 00:25:47.059

Fiona Yensen: focusing on one thing at a time. So really assigning a chunk of time to work on one thing. So not flitting between lots of different tasks, and research shows that humans are more productive, more effective when we give

165

00:25:47.150 --> 00:25:55.889

Fiona Yensen: focus to one thing. So, look to reduce distractions, build in that dedicated focus time in your calendars.

166

00:25:56.020 --> 00:26:03.889

Fiona Yensen: Close down all other distractions, including notifications from emails and Teams, for instance.

167

00:26:04.240 --> 00:26:15.319

Fiona Yensen: That in itself can cause some people quite a bit of anxiety, and they like to stay on top of it, but being pulled in different directions actually is not good for us.

168

00:26:15.960 --> 00:26:22.560

Fiona Yensen: One thing which I did recommend, was adopted by quite a few people slowly at first.

169

00:26:22.750 --> 00:26:38.959

Fiona Yensen: Place an out-of-office message on your emails and your notifications, so that you are only looking at them certain times of the day. So, for instance, I'm going to check my emails from 9 till 11 in the morning, and from 2 till 3 in the afternoon.

170

00:26:39.510 --> 00:26:44.389

Fiona Yensen: Now, that caused an amazing amount of, oh my gosh, I don't think I could do that.

171

00:26:44.440 --> 00:27:01.230

Fiona Yensen: But the minute people started to do that, a couple of things happened. One, it gave them the focus time, and there was a feeling of productivity and progress, which enabled and supported stress and anxiety levels to really come down.

172

00:27:01.230 --> 00:27:04.960

Fiona Yensen: The other thing is, it manages expectations.

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00:27:04.960 --> 00:27:13.959

Fiona Yensen: So those people that are sending you loads and loads of emails, if they know that you'll only respond within a certain period of time.

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00:27:14.220 --> 00:27:28.459

Fiona Yensen: A lot of the time, they'll find the answers somewhere else, so it really does enable, a better way of working, and it's amazing how many people did come to me and say, oh my goodness, this worked an absolute treat!

175

00:27:28.580 --> 00:27:34.119

Fiona Yensen: And tip number 3, is for clear start and stop boundaries. So that means...

176

00:27:34.280 --> 00:27:36.290

Fiona Yensen: Turn in the laptop off.

177

00:27:36.760 --> 00:27:49.429

Fiona Yensen: when it is time to finish, even if you have not finished your day. Now, that is really, really difficult, I appreciate, but the drift and the way things move and creep

178

00:27:49.650 --> 00:27:55.529

Fiona Yensen: Can come in very, very quickly, so 10 minutes can turn to 20 minutes, can turn to an extra hour a day.

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00:27:55.710 --> 00:28:00.869

Fiona Yensen: If I'm working from home, I will always put my laptop in a drawer.

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00:28:01.270 --> 00:28:17.430

Fiona Yensen: it's not for the fact that I like things tidy, it's for the fact that it stops me being tempted to jump on and just double-check an email, or where is, you know, what's going on tomorrow? So I find that that really helps with my boundaries as well.

181

00:28:17.650 --> 00:28:33.989

Fiona Yensen: Building in regular breaks in your calendars as well, so that meetings, you know, are not on those break times. And if it's difficult to do that, even two-minute movement breaks are proven to really energize

182

00:28:33.990 --> 00:28:38.690

Fiona Yensen: So get up from your desk if you're able to, put a piece of music on.

183

00:28:38.690 --> 00:28:43.959

Fiona Yensen: Move around if you're at home. Go for a little walk if you're at the office, 2 minutes.

184

00:28:44.360 --> 00:28:50.490

Fiona Yensen: One thing to enable that, we started meetings that wouldn't start until 5 past the hour.

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00:28:50.680 --> 00:28:54.400

Fiona Yensen: And, or they started at 35 minutes past the hour.

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00:28:55.080 --> 00:29:03.170

Fiona Yensen: Some days, and this went on for a long time, I was doing 7-8 hours of meetings, back-to-back to back, to the point where

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00:29:03.740 --> 00:29:06.020

Fiona Yensen: I didn't have time to go to the bathroom.

188

00:29:06.430 --> 00:29:12.710

Fiona Yensen: Once I started scheduling meetings at 5 past the hour and 35 minutes passed.

189

00:29:13.020 --> 00:29:26.160

Fiona Yensen: I was being thanked by so many other people, because they were joining my meetings, being allowed 5 minutes to have a movement break, to go to the bathroom. So simple things like that.

190

00:29:26.160 --> 00:29:38.880

Fiona Yensen: So without boundaries, recovery never happens. And without recovery, stress really compounds. So these are small tools that can really help.

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00:29:38.920 --> 00:29:44.370

Fiona Yensen: Put into place, managing not only your stress, anxiety, and balance.

192

00:29:44.430 --> 00:29:46.469

Fiona Yensen: But for other people as well.

193

00:29:47.520 --> 00:30:06.670

Joel Smith: Amazing, thank you so much. Some fantastic tips in there around boundary setting, which, yeah, is so, so important. Maura, coming back to you, so when someone is in the thick of it, so they're overwhelmed, reactive, struggling to focus, what actually helps in that moment?

194

00:30:07.370 --> 00:30:12.170

Morra Aarons-Mele: So, I'm gonna teach you what I call my two-step

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00:30:12.460 --> 00:30:15.200

Morra Aarons-Mele: And this is proven by science.

196

00:30:15.500 --> 00:30:18.969

Morra Aarons-Mele: But the thing about it is that it's really easy.

197

00:30:19.170 --> 00:30:22.709

Morra Aarons-Mele: And... If you are feeling like.

198

00:30:22.880 --> 00:30:27.090

Morra Aarons-Mele: The only thing in the world you can change today is yourself.

199

00:30:27.190 --> 00:30:28.810

Morra Aarons-Mele: Even for a minute?

200

00:30:29.940 --> 00:30:31.539

Morra Aarons-Mele: This is really gonna help.

201

00:30:31.830 --> 00:30:36.390

Morra Aarons-Mele: And... The more you do it, The better it becomes.

202

00:30:36.970 --> 00:30:43.380

Morra Aarons-Mele: And I call it my two-step. And the two-step is simply... to pause?

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00:30:44.200 --> 00:30:46.220

Morra Aarons-Mele: And then... ask.

204

00:30:46.370 --> 00:30:49.150

Morra Aarons-Mele: Okay? So we're gonna do it right now.

205

00:30:49.630 --> 00:30:56.690

Morra Aarons-Mele: Because what we find is that, as Fiona said, we are always running at an
11

206

00:30:56.800 --> 00:31:02.299

Morra Aarons-Mele: And our brain and our nervous system gets really overwhelmed. Stress,
anxiety.

207

00:31:02.430 --> 00:31:11.960

Morra Aarons-Mele: are actually whole body reactions. Physical, our nervous system, right? It
all gets a little bit too hyped up.

208

00:31:12.240 --> 00:31:15.540

Morra Aarons-Mele: And what you can do with the two-step is you can actually

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00:31:16.760 --> 00:31:20.869

Morra Aarons-Mele: Calm your nervous system, refocus, and give yourself a little reset.

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00:31:22.540 --> 00:31:30.190

Morra Aarons-Mele: And I think it's... Really interesting how just a brief minute of coming back
to the present moment

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00:31:30.870 --> 00:31:33.050

Morra Aarons-Mele: Can give us a little bit of that.

212

00:31:34.410 --> 00:31:36.119

Morra Aarons-Mele: Now I know what I need to do.

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00:31:36.370 --> 00:31:37.140

Morra Aarons-Mele: Okay.

214

00:31:37.370 --> 00:31:47.070

Morra Aarons-Mele: So, grab a prop, If you have, like, a pen, a water bottle, a mug of coffee.

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00:31:47.210 --> 00:31:54.210

Morra Aarons-Mele: Maybe not your phone, because that's stressful. Just grab something on your desk, and if you prefer to turn off your camera, feel free.

216

00:31:54.440 --> 00:32:04.660

Morra Aarons-Mele: And I want you, and this is a great tactic to do if you're coming into a meeting, right, and you're just like, your mind's still in the last meeting, but you gotta start the new meeting.

217

00:32:04.800 --> 00:32:05.859

Morra Aarons-Mele: Take a sec.

218

00:32:06.870 --> 00:32:07.960

Morra Aarons-Mele: Grab your prop.

219

00:32:09.620 --> 00:32:12.900

Morra Aarons-Mele: And just... Pause.

220

00:32:15.400 --> 00:32:17.760

Morra Aarons-Mele: feel... your prop.

221

00:32:17.970 --> 00:32:19.320

Morra Aarons-Mele: In your hands.

222

00:32:21.980 --> 00:32:23.010

Morra Aarons-Mele: Focus.

223

00:32:23.320 --> 00:32:24.249

Morra Aarons-Mele: On the prop.

224

00:32:26.050 --> 00:32:27.230

Morra Aarons-Mele: How does it feel?

225

00:32:28.890 --> 00:32:30.129

Morra Aarons-Mele: I have a pen.

226

00:32:31.790 --> 00:32:34.220

Morra Aarons-Mele: It clicks, I can hear the clicking.

227

00:32:36.180 --> 00:32:37.420

Morra Aarons-Mele: It's plastic.

228

00:32:37.690 --> 00:32:39.450

Morra Aarons-Mele: It's firm in my hand.

229

00:32:43.960 --> 00:32:46.710

Morra Aarons-Mele: Just bring your mind to feeling the prop.

230

00:32:49.620 --> 00:32:52.600

Morra Aarons-Mele: Now I hear birds chirping, actually, that's cool, too.

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00:32:56.300 --> 00:33:00.370

Morra Aarons-Mele: Just maybe relax your shoulders, try to let your belly out a little bit.

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00:33:04.040 --> 00:33:04.939

Morra Aarons-Mele: Just feel your breath.

233

00:33:15.270 --> 00:33:16.070

Morra Aarons-Mele: No.

234

00:33:17.040 --> 00:33:18.340

Morra Aarons-Mele: Open your eyes.

235

00:33:20.690 --> 00:33:24.950

Morra Aarons-Mele: And ask yourself, What do I need in this moment?

236

00:33:27.430 --> 00:33:31.439

Morra Aarons-Mele: Do I need to go stretch my legs? Do I need to go to the bathroom?

237

00:33:31.790 --> 00:33:35.429

Morra Aarons-Mele: Do I need to eat? Am I hungry? Am I thirsty?

238

00:33:36.970 --> 00:33:41.750

Morra Aarons-Mele: Do I need... To focus entirely on this meeting?

239

00:33:44.810 --> 00:33:51.689

Morra Aarons-Mele: That simple two-step of pausing, And then asking yourself what you need in the moment.

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00:33:52.570 --> 00:33:57.499

Morra Aarons-Mele: is an incredible tool, and we just kind of did it in a little bit... we probably took 2 minutes to do it.

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00:33:57.870 --> 00:34:02.779

Morra Aarons-Mele: When you practice it, you'll get it down to 15 seconds. You'll be able to fill your prop.

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00:34:04.230 --> 00:34:07.299

Morra Aarons-Mele: Bring your body in, drop the shoulders.

243

00:34:07.480 --> 00:34:08.639

Morra Aarons-Mele: Pause.

244

00:34:09.679 --> 00:34:11.130

Morra Aarons-Mele: And then ask yourself.

245

00:34:11.449 --> 00:34:14.530

Morra Aarons-Mele: What would help me in this moment?

246

00:34:15.020 --> 00:34:27.640

Morra Aarons-Mele: Sometimes our body feels stressed and anxious because we haven't eaten, because we need some fresh air, because we need to move. I'm a very wriggly, fidgety person, and so sometimes I just need to move.

247

00:34:28.920 --> 00:34:35.189

Morra Aarons-Mele: Practice it. I promise you, it will change your life, and it's a discipline called Mindful Leadership.

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00:34:35.540 --> 00:34:43.379

Morra Aarons-Mele: I'll leave you with this. You know, we as leaders think that our job is to be in the present... I'm sorry, in the future, often.

249

00:34:43.570 --> 00:34:49.650

Morra Aarons-Mele: Planning for our team, figuring out the what-ifs, making sure everything's gonna be okay for the board meeting next week.

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00:34:50.030 --> 00:34:54.480

Morra Aarons-Mele: But data shows that when things are stressful and uncertain.

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00:34:55.090 --> 00:34:58.719

Morra Aarons-Mele: Coming back to the present moment, like, with the two-step.

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00:34:59.480 --> 00:35:04.740

Morra Aarons-Mele: Actually, the key to aligning yourself and your team around a challenge.

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00:35:04.970 --> 00:35:08.600

Morra Aarons-Mele: So, simply just coming into the present. Thanks.

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00:35:09.620 --> 00:35:27.020

Joel Smith: Amazing. That was fantastic. I mean, I felt it then, and I can see people's comments in the chat, just, yeah, that was... that was really good, and so important, just bringing yourself back to the present in... in... in moments of, kind of, high stress, or even just generally, day-to-day, regulate your system.

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00:35:27.220 --> 00:35:37.929

Joel Smith: Great. So, a couple more questions that we've got, more sort of focused around recoveries, boundaries, and sustainable habits. So, Fiona, I'm just going to come back to you.

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00:35:37.930 --> 00:35:58.550

Joel Smith: You've seen how, over time, line managers can play a significant role in stress reduction for their direct reports. You've mentioned some bits already. When someone notices they're struggling, what does a good conversation between a civil servant and their manager actually look like? And how could someone take that first step? Because it can be scary.

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00:35:59.020 --> 00:36:11.689

Fiona Yensen: Yeah, absolutely. First of all, I am a massive advocate of regular quality one-to-ones, and it is surprising

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00:36:12.370 --> 00:36:22.309

Fiona Yensen: how often these don't happen. So, for whatever reason, I've spoken to hundreds and hundreds of line managers and hundreds and hundreds of staff.

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00:36:22.440 --> 00:36:35.449

Fiona Yensen: And heard both sides of it, really. Managers will often say, I intended to, but other things shouted louder, and I got pulled over into this direction, and staff will say.

260

00:36:35.830 --> 00:36:44.229

Fiona Yensen: what's the point? You know, they'll cancel at the last minute, or... what they do is talk about themselves for the whole hour.

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00:36:44.380 --> 00:36:55.870

Fiona Yensen: So, the importance of a one-to-one cannot be underestimated, and it needs to be protected. So that is a priority for a line manager.

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00:36:56.150 --> 00:37:00.119

Fiona Yensen: And during the one-to-one, there are some simple tips here.

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00:37:00.580 --> 00:37:04.480

Fiona Yensen: The member of staff does most of the talking.

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00:37:05.420 --> 00:37:13.809

Fiona Yensen: It's as simple as that. And this is an opportunity for the line manager to be genuinely curious.

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00:37:13.930 --> 00:37:21.450

Fiona Yensen: So, asking open questions, and really protecting the space for that person to speak.

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00:37:21.850 --> 00:37:25.179

Fiona Yensen: actively listening. What are they saying?

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00:37:25.490 --> 00:37:30.640

Fiona Yensen: I saw one of the comments about working in a virtual world as well.

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00:37:30.810 --> 00:37:41.000

Fiona Yensen: So, a lot of one-to-ones are still completed over virtual platforms. We work in a virtual space now, But...

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00:37:41.340 --> 00:37:51.370

Fiona Yensen: 70% of the communication comes from body language, and if you are having regular one-to-ones with your people with cameras off.

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00:37:51.450 --> 00:38:02.809

Fiona Yensen: you are missing a huge opportunity to pick up on a lot more than what they're saying. So really encouraging cameras to be on, again, is another basic.

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00:38:03.430 --> 00:38:11.089

Fiona Yensen: Sadly, many managers also feel... don't feel capable or confident sometimes

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00:38:11.300 --> 00:38:22.470

Fiona Yensen: To support somebody with increased stress, anxiety, which can lead to mental health problems, And as such, questions like.

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00:38:22.700 --> 00:38:24.250

Fiona Yensen: How are you?

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00:38:24.380 --> 00:38:25.830

Fiona Yensen: are avoided.

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00:38:26.050 --> 00:38:33.840

Fiona Yensen: What if they actually say, I'm not okay? How do I deal with that? Where do I signpost them? How do I support that?

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00:38:34.210 --> 00:38:44.970

Fiona Yensen: But if regular one-to-ones are held, managers are genuinely curious to explore how their people are feeling, what is

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00:38:45.620 --> 00:38:51.680

Fiona Yensen: a heavy weight for them at that point in time. It offers an opportunity to be proactive.

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00:38:51.800 --> 00:39:06.669

Fiona Yensen: Put those solutions and interventions in place, rather than being reactive when the member of staff is really struggling, and maybe even absent for a long time, which takes a lot longer to resolve

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00:39:06.700 --> 00:39:11.809

Fiona Yensen: So, like I said, I'm a massive supporter. If I manage to do nothing else.

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00:39:12.040 --> 00:39:16.859

Fiona Yensen: Have regular quality one-to-ones make a massive difference.

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00:39:18.320 --> 00:39:32.359

Joel Smith: Brilliant, thank you so much. Denny, I'm going to come straight on to you. So, looking back, what's one thing you wish you had started doing earlier to manage stress, and what are you still working on?

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00:39:34.890 --> 00:39:40.110

Denley McIntosh: Yeah, yeah, so I want to say to my fellow panelists with,

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00:39:40.510 --> 00:39:57.060

Denley McIntosh: and Fiona, techniques like that, what Mara shared, is definitely what you would want to do, something I probably would like to do. And as men, I think we're now catching up to some of our female counterparts in terms of doing what it needs to be more

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00:39:57.230 --> 00:39:58.760

Denley McIntosh: Aware of our bodies.

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00:39:59.080 --> 00:40:06.989

Denley McIntosh: this idea of somatic. Like, somatic, right? Soma, meaning your body, being more aware of our bodies. And, of course, with Fiona.

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00:40:07.810 --> 00:40:10.300

Denley McIntosh: Having the courage and the bravery to

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00:40:10.570 --> 00:40:13.819

Denley McIntosh: Have conversations with your... your leaders.

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00:40:14.120 --> 00:40:20.720

Denley McIntosh: Again, men tend not to want to have those conversations as such. You know, we'll shoot debris, we'll do all these things.

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00:40:20.720 --> 00:40:35.099

Denley McIntosh: So there is a gender piece that I want to be quite candid on, because that's something that we're not necessarily socialized, right? And now we're appreciating these conversations about accommodation and family support and all that.

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00:40:35.130 --> 00:40:38.059

Denley McIntosh: So those are some things that I would probably say I wish I knew.

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00:40:38.790 --> 00:40:41.080

Denley McIntosh: Or maybe better, no, have the...

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00:40:41.350 --> 00:40:44.180

Denley McIntosh: The courage to have those conversations.

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00:40:44.330 --> 00:40:54.399

Denley McIntosh: And when my dad passed, I was shared numerous times when I talk and in my podcast about when my dad passed away, it was challenging having a conversation with my

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00:40:54.600 --> 00:40:58.150

Denley McIntosh: My boss about my dad passing away, and he's like.

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00:40:58.370 --> 00:41:06.289

Denley McIntosh: If that's passing away, why wouldn't you want to have it? You just don't want to talk about your personal business. Some of it's cultural, right? Being Caribbean background.

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00:41:06.410 --> 00:41:11.349

Denley McIntosh: West Indians, sometimes we're taught to keep your business to yourself, keep the personal awake.

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00:41:11.560 --> 00:41:15.039

Denley McIntosh: Other cultures may have that... that may be ahead of us in that way.

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00:41:15.240 --> 00:41:16.110

Denley McIntosh: So...

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00:41:16.230 --> 00:41:23.530

Denley McIntosh: That's the other piece. You got the gender piece, you got the cultural piece, you got the age piece, you just didn't know better. You know, you can only expect so much

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00:41:24.370 --> 00:41:29.679

Denley McIntosh: a 20-year-old to kind of know these things versus when you're in your 30s and 40s and 50s, what have you.

301

00:41:30.720 --> 00:41:33.349

Denley McIntosh: So, give yourself some grace. There are some pieces there.

302

00:41:33.740 --> 00:41:37.610

Denley McIntosh: I, I think that, let me just kind of say 3...

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00:41:38.100 --> 00:41:40.140

Denley McIntosh: Concrete things you need to pay attention to.

304

00:41:41.210 --> 00:41:45.200

Denley McIntosh: 1... What is your lived experience in understanding

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00:41:45.570 --> 00:41:47.100

Denley McIntosh: The things that stress you out.

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00:41:47.280 --> 00:41:52.489

Denley McIntosh: Because chances are, the things that get you angry and upset, it probably becomes from your childhood.

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00:41:53.190 --> 00:41:58.129

Denley McIntosh: The things that you saw your parents get angry about, you take that in and bring it to the workplace.

308

00:41:58.360 --> 00:42:07.109

Denley McIntosh: And now you're angry at a colleague because they're acting like the way your brother acted, the way your sister acted, the way your mom acted, the way your dad acted. So you're playing out your childhood trauma.

309

00:42:07.280 --> 00:42:13.999

Denley McIntosh: That's probably one thing that you want to keep in mind. And I just have to be self-aware. Is this something that I'm taking from home and projecting on the people at work?

310

00:42:14.660 --> 00:42:17.269

Denley McIntosh: The other piece is, Are you an empath?

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00:42:18.270 --> 00:42:22.259

Denley McIntosh: Meaning that, do you internalize the stresses of others?

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00:42:23.200 --> 00:42:27.450

Denley McIntosh: Some people have this innate, wonderful ability to...

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00:42:27.710 --> 00:42:33.160

Denley McIntosh: empathize, and sympathize. I use sympathy not in terms of pity, but feel the energy in the room.

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00:42:33.360 --> 00:42:37.480

Denley McIntosh: That's great in terms of you sharing, but it can be so draining.

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00:42:37.860 --> 00:42:44.089

Denley McIntosh: And if your body is one that is very much an empath, meaning that you're just wired to...

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00:42:44.480 --> 00:42:50.949

Denley McIntosh: take in what's around you, you're gonna feel so drained, and you're gonna be more stressed because you're feeling like, I need to fix everyone's problems.

317

00:42:51.050 --> 00:42:52.310

Denley McIntosh: Subconsciously.

318

00:42:52.800 --> 00:42:55.599

Denley McIntosh: The other piece is, I talk about somatic and subconscious.

319

00:42:55.820 --> 00:43:00.180

Denley McIntosh: sometimes you gotta pay attention to your body, so I take stress in my back.

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00:43:00.510 --> 00:43:04.930

Denley McIntosh: And I don't necessarily feel stressed or anxious, but then I'm like, my...

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00:43:05.310 --> 00:43:13.360

Denley McIntosh: my back feels tense. Then I have to ask myself subconsciously, what am I afraid of here? What's going on? What's the insecurity? Because I feel good.

322

00:43:13.480 --> 00:43:14.330

Denley McIntosh: Awesome.

323

00:43:15.180 --> 00:43:21.139

Denley McIntosh: Sometimes your subconscious Scanning around you, the field of fear.

324

00:43:21.190 --> 00:43:38.190

Denley McIntosh: what's around me? Because it wants to be safe, right? That's your amygdala that's happening, right? The part of your brain that's kind of responding to fight or flight. And if you can't respond to that, if you're not addressing that piece, what's happening at that level, the cortisol, the adrenaline strikes, and then you're absorbing all that energy.

325

00:43:38.750 --> 00:43:41.239

Denley McIntosh: And guess what? That starts to wear your body down.

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00:43:41.420 --> 00:43:47.459

Denley McIntosh: So you gotta pay attention to your body. As men, we have to do that a lot better. That will keep us a lot more...

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00:43:47.750 --> 00:43:54.870

Denley McIntosh: healthy, or healthier. And the final thing I probably want to say to all that is change your expectations.

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00:43:55.070 --> 00:43:58.749

Denley McIntosh: Sometimes we go into the workplace thinking that we can change the world.

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00:43:58.970 --> 00:44:01.649

Denley McIntosh: And really, it may be just changing.

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00:44:03.780 --> 00:44:17.030

Denley McIntosh: the desk space. And it may not say a lot, but sometimes we have to calibrate our expectation, because what you expect things to happen is part of the stress issue. But if you lower your expectation, not your performance.

331

00:44:17.460 --> 00:44:21.530

Denley McIntosh: But what you expect from people. We have two... Much...

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00:44:21.770 --> 00:44:38.309

Denley McIntosh: of an expectation for people to get it right the first time, or get it what we want, my way or the highway. This is not Burger King, you can't always get it through your way, as a comedian would say, and I think those are things that I wish I learned. And that's, I think, that last part is what I'm now keeping more.

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00:44:38.600 --> 00:44:42.680

Denley McIntosh: My expectation is not your expectation. My urgency

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00:44:43.680 --> 00:44:48.920

Denley McIntosh: Emergency is not your urgency, as my wife would say, and so keep that in mind, and that'll lower your stress.

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00:44:49.970 --> 00:45:02.779

Joel Smith: Fantastic, some really useful tips and things to kind of just be aware of in there.

Maura, I'm going to come to you for the final kind of official question before we go into the Q&A.

So, we'll end by, talking about resilience.

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00:45:02.780 --> 00:45:10.309

Joel Smith: So, what weekly habits or practices do you find most effective for sustaining well-being over time?

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00:45:11.160 --> 00:45:14.890

Morra Aarons-Mele: You know, everything Denley said, 100%,

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00:45:15.040 --> 00:45:25.770

Morra Aarons-Mele: I'm very big on not giving people sweeping advice. We are all so different. I work with a lot of leaders, for example, who are neurodivergent.

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00:45:25.990 --> 00:45:45.290

Morra Aarons-Mele: And they love having a million tabs open. That's how they roll. They need to move. I work with people who really struggle to have Zoom on all day. I think that the key is really, back to what Denley said, understanding yourself.

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00:45:45.480 --> 00:45:48.140

Morra Aarons-Mele: Self-understanding.

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00:45:48.300 --> 00:45:50.959

Morra Aarons-Mele: He talked about knowing your triggers.

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00:45:51.470 --> 00:45:52.750

Morra Aarons-Mele: We...

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00:45:52.950 --> 00:46:01.430

Morra Aarons-Mele: create systems at work. We live in systems at work that are family systems, just like the families we grew up in.

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00:46:01.560 --> 00:46:10.480

Morra Aarons-Mele: And the same thing that may have triggered you as a kid might trigger you as a grown-up. That first boss that you hated.

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00:46:11.130 --> 00:46:18.450

Morra Aarons-Mele: Your current boss might remind you of them, and you might feel nauseous before your weekly meeting with them.

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00:46:18.930 --> 00:46:37.230

Morra Aarons-Mele: That's okay, this is all part of leadership. What are my triggers? What are my tells, like Denley said? Does my jaw get tense? Does my shoulder... I have worked with CEOs of large organizations who say, before my standing meeting with so-and-so every week, I have a migraine and I'm nauseous. Great. That's data.

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00:46:37.720 --> 00:46:48.920

Morra Aarons-Mele: And then knowing your neuro type, right? Again, someone who has an ADHD profile is going to be very different with what they need to manage their stress.

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00:46:49.130 --> 00:46:55.480

Morra Aarons-Mele: And someone who doesn't. Like, know your neurotype. Love it. Know your personality. Am I introverted? Am I extroverted?

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00:46:56.100 --> 00:47:01.039

Morra Aarons-Mele: This is all the information, the self-understanding that is going to make you resilient.

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00:47:01.210 --> 00:47:14.420

Morra Aarons-Mele: and happy, and do your best. And I just want people to really have total respect for who they are and what they need, right? You think of pro athletes.

351

00:47:14.950 --> 00:47:29.399

Morra Aarons-Mele: They're my heroes. And Denley, male pro athletes are really cool, because they take all of this extremely seriously, because they are performance machines. They go to therapy, they meditate, they eat well, they sleep well, they recover, like it's a religion.

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00:47:29.790 --> 00:47:34.280

Morra Aarons-Mele: Because they know they need to perform, and they know specifically what works for them.

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00:47:34.480 --> 00:47:43.889

Morra Aarons-Mele: So I guess, to get off my soapbox, all I would say is whatever keeps you resilient is the right recipe for you.

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00:47:44.050 --> 00:47:47.369

Morra Aarons-Mele: And investigating what that is?

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00:47:47.820 --> 00:47:51.829

Morra Aarons-Mele: Is gonna be the best investment you will ever make in your life.

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00:47:53.840 --> 00:48:00.660

Joel Smith: 100%. And I think bringing your... taking those moments, as you mentioned earlier, to bring yourself back to the present will allow those moments of interest.

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00:48:00.660 --> 00:48:09.240

Morra Aarons-Mele: If all else fails, literally, if all else fails, Grab a pen, pause, Try to breathe. Like, seriously.

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00:48:10.070 --> 00:48:24.590

Joel Smith: Fantastic. Well, thank you so much, all of you, for these such insightful answers. I can see in the comments and all the emoji reactions that people are getting a lot out of all of your responses to the questions, so it's been...

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00:48:24.590 --> 00:48:46.649

Joel Smith: Fantastic. Audience, please do remember to keep submitting any questions you have. We've got limited time, but we'll try and get through some of the questions for a Q&A. And just want to mention before we dive in that we have also created a great follow-on resource for today's topic, which we think you'll find useful, which is the teaser lesson on building a resilient mindset from one of our most popular courses.

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00:48:46.650 --> 00:49:02.100

Joel Smith: So, to receive your link to the course, if you go to the Life in Government community after the event and leave a comment on the post that I've put in there, that should be pinned to the top of the page, we'll send you the resource by email after the event, so just pop your... pop your comment on there.

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00:49:02.130 --> 00:49:18.510

Joel Smith: Okay, on to the Q&A. So, we've probably just got time for maybe one each, and if we can try and make them fairly quick, that would be great, just to make sure we finish on time. So, first question, I'm just going to fire at, you, Fiona.

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00:49:18.510 --> 00:49:23.789

Joel Smith: So, how do you get managers to buy into the habits that you spoke about?

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00:49:23.790 --> 00:49:40.729

Joel Smith: They may come from reactive firefighting backgrounds and may misjudge what time is needed to complete tasks, etc. They may be inclined to have 100 miles per hour meeting in 5 minutes, then a two-way engagement, so how do you get your manager to kind of buy into this?

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00:49:40.730 --> 00:49:49.440

Fiona Yensen: Yeah, that's a really great question. It's a big challenge as well, especially if they run at 100 miles an hour, and

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00:49:49.700 --> 00:50:06.559

Fiona Yensen: They're not seeing the impact of their own behaviours. For me, it's starting off small. Don't go all in with all of the things that we've covered on this session, that they're likely just to completely resist you. Start with something small.

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00:50:06.560 --> 00:50:14.009

Fiona Yensen: And it is incredible how quickly the benefit can be felt. Ask for the feedback from the staff as well.

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00:50:14.340 --> 00:50:18.079

Fiona Yensen: At the end of the day, your people are your biggest assets.

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00:50:18.280 --> 00:50:29.260

Fiona Yensen: And if they're starting to fall over, something's very wrong. So the smallest of interventions can make a really big difference, and you can start to build on that.

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00:50:29.260 --> 00:50:44.240

Fiona Yensen: Ultimately, though, you're wanting to get to a place where your leadership and senior leadership team are the ones that are, championing and showcasing these ways of working. It can take a little bit of time. Start small.

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00:50:44.960 --> 00:50:45.560

Joel Smith: Yeah.

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00:50:45.760 --> 00:50:47.600

Joel Smith: Perfect, thank you.

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00:50:47.600 --> 00:51:10.209

Joel Smith: Denley, a question here for you. So, virtual meetings are obviously a common daily practice. Do you have any top tips to avoid getting kind of pulled into side tasks during these meetings? This person, finds it hard to focus on and kind of be in the room when there's all these other things firing at you, so how do you kind of stay grounded and

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00:51:10.210 --> 00:51:14.219

Joel Smith: Stay focused in these kind of stressful moments.

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00:51:16.340 --> 00:51:25.989

Denley McIntosh: Just make sure I understand the question. So, is it that they're in a virtual meeting at their desk, or they're in an in-person meetings, hybrid? I just want to make sure.

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00:51:25.990 --> 00:51:39.909

Joel Smith: Yeah, I think it's kind of when you're in a virtual meeting, it might be hybrid, but, when you're kind of... your meeting is on screen, and you've got other things kind of pinging up, your other notifications, and you're getting pulled all around.

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00:51:40.070 --> 00:51:41.020

Denley McIntosh: Yeah.

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00:51:41.920 --> 00:51:46.359

Denley McIntosh: Yeah, it's tricky. I mean, I think that, there's been the conversation of

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00:51:46.480 --> 00:51:51.149

Denley McIntosh: Why people come back to the office, because some people say at home they're so distracted.

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00:51:51.450 --> 00:52:08.179

Denley McIntosh: So, it could be that going to a different physical space in itself could be helpful for you, if it's not the office, but some different space that... that is quite very much neutral, that you don't have the distractions.

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00:52:08.710 --> 00:52:12.570

Denley McIntosh: You want to put your phone probably not too close to you.

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00:52:12.670 --> 00:52:17.069

Denley McIntosh: Even though sometimes you do get bored in a meeting, but that may not also help as well.

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00:52:17.110 --> 00:52:24.150

Denley McIntosh: Of course, there's a Do Not Disturb feature on those particular, in your meetings, right?

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00:52:24.170 --> 00:52:38.389

Denley McIntosh: But I do think that if you find yourself, like, a squirrel, or a hamster on that wheel, and you're thinking about other things, I would say that that probably is a symptom that your day is really disorganized, and there's a lot happening.

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00:52:38.540 --> 00:52:42.420

Denley McIntosh: And so maybe you want to get into work.

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00:52:42.560 --> 00:52:43.640

Denley McIntosh: earlier.

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00:52:43.810 --> 00:52:46.750

Denley McIntosh: Right? I like to get into work really early, like this.

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00:52:47.010 --> 00:52:50.619

Denley McIntosh: Preferably 7, 7.30 in the morning, so I get up around...

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00:52:50.870 --> 00:53:05.300

Denley McIntosh: 4ish, 5 in the morning, and I like that. I think it's calmer. I don't like to be in the thick of traffic and things. I just feel like the day's got ahead of me, and everyone else is catching up to me. So I think getting... really setting your day

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00:53:05.500 --> 00:53:06.420

Denley McIntosh: And no...

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00:53:06.560 --> 00:53:25.530

Denley McIntosh: knowing what you want to accomplish is important, because I think sometimes you're distracted because you're thinking about the chores, what you're going to do after this meeting, and who you're going to talk to, and what you're gonna do when you get home, right? There's a series of that that happens. So I think, being able to plan your day.

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00:53:25.940 --> 00:53:34.349

Denley McIntosh: before you get in is going to be very helpful to kind of calm you, so you can really focus. And then if I can say one last thing.

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00:53:36.470 --> 00:53:50.450

Denley McIntosh: if you are continuing just to be distracted, get a buddy, just to say... and just to check in and say, how are you doing? And at least maybe that buddy who you have some trust and confidence, if you want to talk about those... maybe those leaders.

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00:53:50.450 --> 00:54:05.789

Denley McIntosh: It doesn't have to be a leader, it can be a colleague, just to say, I need a little bit of accountability. I like to fidget. Can you just nudge me when I'm kind of going off the track? And maybe that'd be helpful as well. So, I do hope that's helpful for that person who was asked a question.

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00:54:06.690 --> 00:54:17.019

Joel Smith: Yeah, brilliant. Yeah, I think accountability especially is, is important, and having, whether it's your line manager or, as you said, a colleague, very helpful.

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00:54:17.210 --> 00:54:31.820

Joel Smith: Maura, this next one I'm gonna... I'm gonna direct to you. So, this person has said, what if you have developed anxiety-driven behaviors that kind of become ingrained in you, and they're hard to break? Is there... what can you do to kind of

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00:54:31.820 --> 00:54:39.020

Joel Smith: Reset and take a step away from those kind of harmful habits, if that is just part of your sort of day-to-day operation.

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00:54:39.290 --> 00:54:42.800

Morra Aarons-Mele: Well, it's funny, because I wrote a book called The Anxious Achiever.

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00:54:45.090 --> 00:54:56.869

Morra Aarons-Mele: And you... you sound like one of my people. I mean, listen, a lot of us are just wired that way. We have been

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00:54:57.400 --> 00:55:14.099

Morra Aarons-Mele: hard-charging, and always on to the next, and a little bit fretful, and always thinking ahead, and maybe a little hypervigilant, right? Fiona mentioned that, like, we're scan... or I think it was Denley, scanning the environment for the what-ifs, and oh my gosh, I better do this, since we were kids.

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00:55:14.280 --> 00:55:18.169

Morra Aarons-Mele: Whether that's in our wiring, whether that's in our family history.

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00:55:18.560 --> 00:55:27.129

Morra Aarons-Mele: Could be a combination of both, and a lot of us learned that by achieving, by getting good grades, by getting the gold stars.

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00:55:27.490 --> 00:55:34.780

Morra Aarons-Mele: We felt better about ourselves, and by trying to control things, We felt better and safer.

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00:55:34.970 --> 00:55:38.559

Morra Aarons-Mele: Because it can feel really good when you're in control.

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00:55:38.950 --> 00:55:44.719

Morra Aarons-Mele: And so, these behaviors become habits over time. And the challenge is, is that they kind of work.

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00:55:44.840 --> 00:55:49.260

Morra Aarons-Mele: Like, you kinda get rewarded for them, you can go really far.

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00:55:49.560 --> 00:55:57.300

Morra Aarons-Mele: Until you stop. Because often you burn out, you have mental health challenges, you're just tired of living that way.

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00:55:57.560 --> 00:56:15.009

Morra Aarons-Mele: And I really... if you want to talk more about this, please reach out to me. Again, this is what I do, it's the story of my life. I recommend therapy. I recommend therapy, because I think that the process, again, of self-understanding... you may be anxious because you have ADHD,

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00:56:15.250 --> 00:56:17.499

Morra Aarons-Mele: And you've been compensating your whole life?

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00:56:17.650 --> 00:56:23.900

Morra Aarons-Mele: You may be anxious because that's your chemistry. You may be anxious because of your money history in your family.

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00:56:24.500 --> 00:56:25.589

Morra Aarons-Mele: You don't know.

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00:56:25.850 --> 00:56:29.280

Morra Aarons-Mele: So I encourage you, again, invest in yourself.

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00:56:29.700 --> 00:56:38.319

Morra Aarons-Mele: And do the work and the self-understanding, because it really will pay off, and you can break those habits and live and lead with more ease.

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00:56:40.360 --> 00:56:55.659

Joel Smith: Brilliant. Well, that's a beautiful note that I think we will have to kind of wrap up on. So, thank you so much. I think we've had some absolutely incredible wisdom here from all three of you, and the comments and the emojis and things reflect that.

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00:56:55.660 --> 00:57:16.669

Joel Smith: So I'd like to... I'd like to... well, everyone at home to... to join me in giving, Maura, Fiona and Denley a large virtual round of applause, and most importantly, thank you to the audience at home for being so invested in this topic. It's so brilliant to kind of see us having... having these conversations is just fantastic in itself.

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00:57:16.800 --> 00:57:28.850

Joel Smith: The team is going to pull up a quick poll to find out how you felt about today's event, so if you can please just vote on that. It's a scale of 1 to 10 on the event being a valuable use of your time.

416

00:57:28.850 --> 00:57:49.979

Joel Smith: Before you go, and while you're responding to that poll, I just want to share a few more events that you can register for. To join us again soon, if you're not able to be there live, just a reminder that you can register, and we will send you the recording. So, coming up on Tuesday, you can join us for How to Interview Excellently, part of our Career Move series, created to help you level up in your career.

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00:57:49.980 --> 00:58:13.769

Joel Smith: In two weeks, related to today's topic, we have how to prioritize when everything feels urgent, something I think, yeah, a lot of people might find quite interesting. You'll learn tactics to protect your time and determine what's actually crucial work. And then, at the end of the month, we'll be exploring AI for project management, so using some AI tools to kind of help you manage your day-to-day projects.

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00:58:13.770 --> 00:58:16.340

Joel Smith: part of our AI Skills Lab series.

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00:58:16.610 --> 00:58:41.159

Joel Smith: Okay, that is really all we have time for today, so we hope you found it useful, and we want to say a huge thank you again to our brilliant speakers, and to everyone who made today happen, and to you for taking the time out of your busy days. Do keep an eye out for the email coming your way with today's recording and resources, and don't forget to find my post in the Life in Government community, and to claim that follow-on resource.

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00:58:41.400 --> 00:58:49.840

Joel Smith: We hope to see you all at another apolitical event very soon, so have a great day, everyone. Thank you very much. Goodbye.

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