



## **Well@Work Podcast Season 2, Episode 26: Reset and Rediscover Your Passion for Your Work**

Welcome to the Well@Work podcast from the University of Kentucky Center on Trauma and Children. This podcast is brought to you by grant from SAMHSA. On this episode, Emily Smith discusses strategies to regain and rebuild your faith as you recover from the ongoing impact of the pandemic and social changes. On this episode, Emily Smith offers strategies to help health and behavioral health care workers feel re-inspired to reset and rediscover the passion that can sustain them during challenging times.

Hi, I'm Emily Smith with the UK Center on Trauma and Children. For many of us, the past few years have been among the most difficult we've ever been through. That's particularly true for health and behavioral health care workers, we are just beginning to learn how much the COVID pandemic has impacted them. These workers are subject to the added stress of providing care during a pandemic, often working extra hours. Many continue to be concerned for their own safety and worry that they may bring COVID home to loved ones. Stress caused by watching the virus impact their colleagues and their community. The result is that many are exhausted, asking themselves "Do I want to do this work anymore?" A survey of health care workers in 2020 found that 63% reported symptoms of burnout. Of the more than 20,000 workers surveyed, one in five physicians and two in five nurses intended to leave the health care field entirely. Pandemic challenges weren't just limited to direct care providers, clinical support staff are also grappling with the mental and physical exhaustion of burnout. A 2021 survey of support staff found that 88% reported symptoms of burnout.

As the surges of COVID related illness have slowed, many are still overwhelmed. Organizations are still struggling to catch up with client or patient needs, some scheduling months out for needed care. Staffing levels at many organizations are lower than ever perpetuating pre-pandemic problems and giving workers less time to rest and recover. Those who continue to work may feel disconnected with the work they once enjoyed, propelled by momentum because they feel they have to, but unsure that they want to. To borrow from poet Robert Frost, some may be thinking "I can see no way out but through." But I think there's a better way. In this podcast, I'll share some ways to mitigate the impact of the stress of recent years and help you feel re-inspired to do the work you do so well, so that you can begin to recover.

David has been thinking a lot about recovery lately. He's a physician at a hospital and now that the most recent COVID surge is over, he realizes he doesn't experience the same satisfaction practicing medicine, and he has been thinking of ways to feel re-energized by his work. David remembered how hard his early years were and how he almost gave up his dream of becoming a physician, but he was able to refocus and regain some of the satisfaction he once felt. But this time it feels worse and he's not sure where to start. Here are some tips that might be helpful if you're feeling like David.

**Tip 1: state your intentions.** To have a more positive work experience, state your intentions and actively work to make them happen. Remember those parts of the job that bring you the most joy and lean into those intentionally. Savor them, share them with others, journal about them, so you can look back over these experiences when you need to. On difficult days, think about the moments that make your job rewarding. When that seems challenging, start by naming three things that you love about your job, or others you have helped or influenced, or remember compliments you receive from colleagues or patients. Doing this can help you remember why you do the job you do, boost your mood, and even re-energize you during the toughest days.

**Tip 2: reset and recharge.** Rest and recuperation are necessary for us to be able to recharge before returning to work. Use your time away from work to do things that decrease the mental and physical exhaustion that can lead to burnout. Exercise, spend time with friends and family, anything that brings you joy can help you to relax. The goal is to avoid thinking about work, allowing you to disconnect, refuel, and recharge.

**Tip 3: mentor others.** Mentoring the next generation of workers is more than a necessity, it's a way to re-engage and re-inspire experienced workers. Teaching newer colleagues' protocol is necessary work, but it also increases care capacity and quality of care and it helps reduce the workload, which reduces work stress. Mentoring can also help you rediscover your passion for the work, helping you reconnect with your purpose. Mentorship offers needed social support, building a meaningful relationship with a colleague can boost job satisfaction. Plus, you may learn something from those you mentor who may share current best practices or new techniques.

**Tip 4: lead with kindness.** Even if you aren't the most senior person in your department, your leadership skills are something you use every time you go to work. Leading with kindness means that you recognize the efforts of others, support your colleagues, and treat others with respect. Being kind offers many benefits. It boosts oxytocin and serotonin two feel-good hormones that boost well-being and your mood.

As we work to recover from the impacts of the COVID pandemic, it can be challenging to feel the same passion you once felt for the work you do. The exhaustion and stress can lead to burnout, leaving you wondering if you want to keep doing the work you're doing. State your intentions to rediscover the joy in your work and then set about making that happen. Make time to rest and reflect to mitigate the stress of the recent past. Re-inspire your passion for the work you do by mentoring others. These strategies can help sustain you during tough days and keep you Well@Work.

Thank you for listening to this episode of the podcast. Follow the link in the video description for more resources on our Well@Work website. And of course, stay tuned for more episodes on topics that will keep you well at work, home, and school.