

EXPERT INSIGHT: Five ways to avoid burnout and recharging on the fly | Transcript

Intro:

Right now, one of the biggest concerns for leaders in the social sector is the wellbeing of their staff. From Pro Bono News and Top Five Movement, this is the Leading Generous Teams podcast, and I'm Clare Desira.

As the founder of the Top Five Movement, I've worked with thousands of leaders across 40 countries, and I've seen how challenging it is to lead teams at the best of times, let alone right now. COVID-19 has had a seismic impact on the social sector, and this is taking its toll on the people working in it. So this show is dedicated to you, generous leaders who recognise that the resilience, mindset and mental health of your teams has never been more important.

Hit subscribe now to never miss an episode. And if you can't wait to start building your team's resilience with our free tools, head on over to topfivemovement.com/tools to get started. And of course, for all of your social sector news, head on over to probonoaustralia.com.au.

Clare Desira:

Hello, and welcome to another bonus episode of Leading Generous Teams. These episodes are designed to bring you some expert insights and expand on the conversations we've been having with our generous leaders around mindset, resilience, and wellbeing, to give you some extra tips as well that you can of course try with yourself and your teams.

Today I really want to talk about holidays. Now, I don't know about you, but in the past, when I've started holidays, I've been so overdue for them that often the first few days are a bit of a write off. That chance of that adrenaline come down as the perceived urgency of those 24-7 communications and that constant searching for your phone, picking it up slowly wears off. You experienced that too?

Now, in my reflections on an earlier interview with Ronni Kahn, we spoke about and touched on the positive model for wellbeing called PERMA. Now in her week off, Ronni lived out a PERMA kind of week. It was filled with positive emotions, losing herself in hobbies, spending time connecting with her loved ones. She may not have realised it, but as she described how she spent that week off, it's no wonder that she was recharged and ready to continue being that wonderful force that she is.

Being able to include all of these things in your life is great when you're on holidays. It's so easy to include our favourite things in and find time for those when you've got all the time in the world, right? But for most of us that four weeks of annual leave is only 8 per cent of our year. So what about the other 92 per cent of the year? What happens when you're faced through that daily grind or on the days when you finish work and you're too tired to remember your name, let alone what you need to do to look after yourself.

It's just not going to cut it. And so I wonder what if we didn't use our holidays as a cure for near burnout? What if we didn't use them for recovery, but we actually were able to fully enjoy all of them.

What if we could bring some elements of sustainable wellbeing models into our work so that no one gets burnt out in the first place or that we are less close to burnout by the time we finally need a break? I think it's a really important question to think about.

What I really wonder is as a leader, how do you not cure burnout by supporting your teams to take time off when they need it - I think that's a wonderful thing for leaders to be able to do is to recognise that in their teams and support their teams and they're asking for it - but how can we, of course prevent it from happening in the first place for you and your teams?

So we've touched on PERMA and using it in life and how Ronni drew on this consciously or unconsciously during her leave. But let's talk about how we can actually bring some of those holiday vibes more often into the workplace and talk about PERMA at work. So PERMA it's a positive psychology model for wellbeing. It includes five elements and each one of those elements begins with one of those letters in the acronym PERMA, P-E-R-M-A. Let's run through each of them.

So the first one is positive emotion. This is about feeling happiness or comfort or peace or joy or contentment. And it's really about how do we build them. This is the ability to actually experience positive emotion as often as we can and have a really kind of helpful and encouraging perspective when we look at our life, whether it be now or the past or the future.

In our experience from working with thousands across the world, training your brain to have a helpful, encouraging and productive lens actually changes everything. It changes the way that we see other people and relate to other people. It can reduce negative thoughts and stress and doubt. And it can also of course, lead us to focus, not on what's out of our control and what we're worrying about, but more on where we can make a difference and where we can actually add an impact, which of course allows us to make a better use of our time.

We can be experiencing these positive emotions now in our day-to-day lives, but often we're all so busy that we can easily miss them, or we can notice them for a millisecond and then move on to the next thing. And so we know it takes habits to form the ability to see and soak up these positive emotions. And an easy one here to try is one of our favourites, which was spoken about many times before, and that is writing a top five list each day. It's about actually training your brain to notice and expect five good things in every day.

And so some of our clients choose to make sure that two of those things on their list perhaps, or three things on their list are things from their workday as well. And neuroscience has shown that being able to recognise these positive emotions and sink into them for as little as 20 seconds can change your brain.

Now, 20 seconds doesn't sound that long, but when we're caught up on that, busy-ness treadmill, it can feel like a lifetime and it can be the difference between us actually trying something and rewiring our brain or dismissing it as something that we don't have time for. But as I said in as little as 20 seconds, being able to soak up and recognise happiness or joy, or perhaps it's even relief when you get something finished, noticing those positive emotions is not fluffy, it's really powerful.

The second letter in the PERMA acronym is E, and this stands for engagement or flow. And this is about being to lose yourself in the moment, do one thing at a time, being able to lose track of time.

And we're so busy multitasking these days, we can often miss the chance to be present and mindful and focus on one thing at a time because we can have a hundred tabs open on a computer, right? At any one time. And so we don't necessarily give ourselves that chance and that opportunity to be present.

One really simple way we love to lose ourselves in time is to use the Pomodoro Technique. This is simply setting a timer for 25 minutes and working on one thing for that 25 minutes, then you have a break for five minutes, and if you've got the chance, you can go again for another 25 minutes. This technique helps you really practise focus, which is one of the most important skills we need these days in our heavily distraction filled world. And you might find that that thing you've been putting off either gets done in the 25 minutes or you've actually got started and so you're invested in it and it's easy, much easier to keep going as well. It might mean that you stopped procrastinating on something.

In our programmes we also cover procrastination and how the brain works with that, which is a fun one too. And we can so easily shift to that and understand our thoughts and feelings around procrastination too, so that we can get on with getting lost in the work and finding that engagement and that flow. And of course, getting more things done, having a bigger impact.

Moving onto the next part of PERMA, the R stands for relationships. So can you really have better relationships at work or is it just what it is? Is that those relationships where people grind your gears are the ones that go well, are they set in stone as they are? Well, of course they're not. We really love working with teams to help them understand how to better navigate and connect with other people, particularly those tricky stakeholders, because often when we have to pick up the phone or meet with regularly, or when a crisis has happened, deal with someone that grinds our gears, or maybe we have a values conflict with or someone that just really, we don't find easy to work with, often that can take a lot of mental energy.

Even if the interactions are quick, we can have really long mental run-ups, we like to call, to those interactions. Perhaps we start thinking about it the night before, perhaps you lose sleep over it. Perhaps you get a bit nervous before making that phone call or meeting with that person. And we really love to support teams to understand how they can shift the parts of that relationship without even needing to talk or work with that other person to do so.

And that's about supporting them to understand what does it take, what are the tools and what do you need to do in the lead-up to be able to turn up to those interactions, not in a defensive closed and already defeated way or exhausted because you've already dress-rehearse that interaction many times, but how do you actually put things in place so you can turn up and feel more like yourself, more at ease, more open and ready to focus on that opportunity or the challenge at hand so you can problem solve and move forward.

Moving onto the next part of PERMA we reach M, which stands for meaning, and this is simply believing in something bigger than we are. For some people that might be a faith or religion, or for many people listening, it could be a cause that we really believe in or a cause that when we think about it, it makes us mad or angry or stir inside because we know that we have some passion ready to actually direct to and support those causes.

I won't talk much here, but I will refer back to a couple of our bonus episodes on purpose and goals and the idea of actually purpose not being something we need to actually go out and find or discover, but how do we actually practically bring more purpose into our life? Because we feel like bringing more purpose fuels more purpose. That is our belief at Top Five Movement.

The last part of PERMA is the A, and this stands for accomplishment. This is about the satisfaction that achieving something contributes to your wellbeing. We've talked about goals in a previous episode, I think that's episode four or the bonus episode, but one thing I will say here that in a world that's designed for us to feel often like we haven't got enough done or that there's always more, it's so important to create space for you and your teams to celebrate and recognise what you have accomplished.

And I'm not just talking about that once a year head out for lunch type celebration. I'm talking about regular space to reflect and recognise the small wins. Regular space to reflect on and recognise where you're building confidence, where you're learning, where things are becoming easier and doing this not just once a year or once a quarter or once a month, but actually doing it as regularly as once a day or through the weeks, reflecting on what went well and what you've made progress on.

It might sound fluffy, but it's actually so strategic and allows you to slow down so you can go faster. Allows you to connect into the parts of your work that are actually going to fuel your purpose and your energy and your wellbeing for you to be able to have a bigger ripple effect as you continue your work. So just to recap, PERMA stands for positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment.

Hopefully, you've found some tips amongst this to help you bring in measurable and teachable ideas to bring more wellbeing and resilience into your work, particularly through change and uncertainty. Now, this is something that we talk about with teams all day, change mindset and resilience and measurable and practical ways that we can actually make shifts in our days without needing to completely transform them, but almost like the easy hacks that can bring the most value.

We talk about this all day and I'd be so happy if this is something you want to explore around what it could look like for your team, for you to book some time in my diary. So, I'll include a link in the show notes that you can click on and actually book time straight in my diary for a chat. Let's do this if this is of interest.

To bring this whole conversation back to holidays and burnout, this is about how do we bring more of those wellbeing pieces of the puzzle and holiday type moods into our work so that we don't have to take a week off every time that burnout approaches. Also, we reach that point far less. Just lastly, before we wrap up today, I just wanted to mention that when you look at the tips from Beyond Blue and the World Health Organisation, for us to be able to support ourselves during this time, during the pandemic, when it comes to our mental health and our wellbeing, they actually line up pretty closely with this PERMA model.

There's ideas there around having a routine and looking after yourself and eating and exercising and looking after your wellbeing in that way. There are also tips on there around focusing on the positive and what's within your control and being able to lose yourself in hobbies and really being able to have meaning and perspective and connect with other people as well. It is just incredible how

the same simple tips that can support you through a crisis are the same ones that can support us to actually not burn out and actually enjoy our lives more proactively.

These things can seem really simple and something we've become really fascinated about exploring and sharing at Top Five is how we close the gap between knowing about these ideas that seem simple and actually applying them. What does it take to actually close that gap and have people putting the simplest and most practical hacks in place that are enjoyable and bring us more energy and more confidence and more meaning, and of course, more generous impact for those closest to us, but also our communities. It's pretty fascinating work. And we really encourage you to never overlook the simple stuff, actually start there because that can be where some of the magic and the power is.

We'll include some links to those tips in the show notes as well. So head over and find out some more. That's all from us this week. I will see you next week for another interview with a generous leader. Can't wait to share another one. As we wrap, I want to say a big thank you to all of the generous leaders and their teams out there making a difference in our world, especially right now.

I'd like to say thank you to the people of the Kulin nation from the country where this podcast is produced. And of course, I want to say thank you to you, our listeners. Be sure to subscribe to the podcast and never miss an episode. And if you're looking for some tools to get started with straight away, we've got some for you, head over to topfivemovement.com/tools. For the latest social sector news, head over to probonoaustralia.com.au. And for now we're wishing you the strongest mental health, mindset and resilience as you head into the rest of your day. Have a good one.