



## DISCUSSION GUIDE: **WOMEN AT WORK**

# Managing Burnout

Season 3, Episode 1

### HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM BURNOUT

*Mandy O'Neill, an associate professor at the George Mason University School of Business and a senior scientist at the university's Center for the Advancement of Well-Being, explains the causes, symptoms, and repercussions of burnout, and offers ways to protect yourself from experiencing it in the first place.*

1. Before listening to this episode, what was your understanding of burnout? How did you define it? Did you consider burnout and stress to be the same thing?
2. Mandy explains that burnout has three components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a decline in personal accomplishment. She describes when she experienced burnout herself:

*I didn't feel anything. It's like my compassion valve had shut down. And my heart felt like coal. And I thought, this is not good. I'm a naturally warm, compassionate person, and something's wrong here.*

Not feeling like herself was a telltale sign for Mandy. Have you felt burned out before? What were your telltale signs, and what were the symptoms you experienced? What stressors led you to feel this way?

3. Women have always had a second shift. "They've gone home to more work," Mandy explains. "They're often the people who are responsible for the household finances and the child care." Women are also more likely to be asked to do office chores. All of these additional responsibilities can contribute to burnout. What extra responsibilities have you had to deal with at work or at home?
4. Mandy offers a number of antidotes to burnout, including getting more sleep, avoiding toxic colleagues, and having a board of advisers to help you "see outside of the fishbowl." She also emphasizes the importance of having close friendships at work:

*It is not an exaggeration to say that I have spent the past 10 years of my life coming to the conclusion that having affectionate, caring, close relationships at work makes almost everything better, including burnout.*

Do you have colleagues you can confide in? How did you build these friendships?

5. Another antidote to burnout is gratitude. Mandy recommends reframing negative situations by finding something in them to feel grateful for. Has something been bothering you that you could reframe in a positive light?
6. Mandy cites research in which people's well-being was measured with the question, "When was the last time you had a belly laugh?" When was the last time you had a good laugh at work?
7. Of all the advice in the episode, what resonated the most with you? And what advice would you give on this topic, based on your experience?