

WOCAndAllies_EP97

Keely Antonio: Welcome back to the Feel Swell Cultures podcast. I have a special guest here today. Alayne Lou Cardus with the same middle name, which I love so much. And I'm so excited that you're here because we met in person. What was it? About six months ago now. It feels like time is flying. Six months ago. Time's always flying.

Yes. I know. And we met and then I came on your podcast and we've just stayed connected ever since. This is a very special human that's helped Thousands of individuals around the world and 58 countries, maybe more now. Now that we're talking at this point in time but I'm really excited to just bring her expertise and bring her to you today as a busy CEO that wants to just understand a little bit more how they prioritize.

This thing we call work life balance. Is that even a thing? Elaine's going to get into all of it and really break it down for us today. So Elaine, thank you so much for being here. Can you just tell everyone, where are you in the world right now? And what have you been up to over the last, let's say, six months?

I'm in a small town called Los Angeles. I think you've heard of it. Small. It's so small. It's right there on the map. I think I

Elaine Lou Cartas: know it. So I'm in LA. The past six months, I'm sad thinking about him like I didn't go in as much vacation, but that was intentional. It's interesting because we're talking about work life balance.

It's because my dad had two knee surgeries, so I chose to want to be there for him. If anything, all my vacations gonna happen at the end of the year. Thank goodness. I'm going to Australia and New Zealand. And I'm a human. I don't know. I, it's important to talk about all this because we live in a capitalistic world where it's like your identity is tied to what you do, the work, but just

Keely Antonio: a reminder, we're a human being.

And I think that CEOs can get really caught up in that, right? Whether you're an executive, you're a leader, you are leading an entire company. You get so connected to what it is that you do, and I think that's why I want to bring this conversation to light even more about how we actually manage when everybody's saying, you need work life balance, can you break that down for us?

What does that even mean? And how do we operate when you're hearing that with so much stress and so many things on our to do list?

Elaine Lou Cartas: work life balance is a lie. I'm just gonna say it straight up. I think people think, okay, here is a pie and here's a different pies of my life. That is really important.

All of it needs to be equal. The reality is No, it doesn't. we are humans, we're not machines. And being cognizant of what stage you are in your life or what may be happening. So I have my own podcast, I'm actually gonna be recording about it, but I'll talk about it here. For example, I had a concussion a couple months ago back in June.

I'm completely fine. I do Muay Thai, which is Thai kickboxing. So it's a contact to martial art. And I was sparring. I didn't even know I had a concussion when it happened. I found out the day after it called, it's called like second hit syndrome. So I was punching and kicking a bag and then I was like, wait, I feel so lightheaded.

I, I want to vomit. And my partner, he was like, you should, you probably have a concussion. You should probably go to the ER. And very typical as a woman, no, I don't need to. Oh, I'm driving my parents. In two days. Okay, I need to go because I'm scared what happens if I drive and then, I doze off or something.

So I was thinking about my parents and not myself. Typical woman thing, right? Like we always are a supporting role. But that week of my concussion, I had a list of things to do. I just did not have the capacity. what are your realistic expectations of what you can do? So I had to focus on healing myself, arresting, not doing, like I had to be completely honest.

And so I know that is an external event, but. Maybe, be mindful what stage you are in your life. Maybe you are a parent and you have young kids and you want to be present for those small little moments. I know it's hard to be present for all of it. So what does that mean? And an example is I have a friend, she's a VP for a finance company and really good deal to do an MBA at USC paid for with a partnership with Stanford.

She has two kids under the age of two. And one of her friends was direct with her and told her the people that didn't pass or didn't go on doing their MBA were mothers. That was just the reality of it. So she made a conscious decision, I'm not going for my MBA right now because I have two little ones, I'm going to wait in five years when they're a little older.

Keely Antonio: Yeah, and it loops back into what you were saying in the beginning with, you didn't do as much travel, but that was the season that you prioritize, that it wasn't going to be happening during that time, right? Same thing with the, your friend, that's the VP, deciding that I want to be really present with my kids and probably while I'm doing the MBA, And learning and being able to soak in this information.

So it's prioritizing, but how do you actually align with those priorities? How do you get yourself? Because it's easy to be like, okay, I'm just going to rest, right? And to say it, but to actually rest when you had to sit there with your concussion and not do anything else, how do you align yourself with that priority?

Elaine Lou Cartas: first, a concussion is different, right? Like I literally can't think. Let me just let my clients know and we're going to move calls around. So that was a different situation, but it's like even taking a step and pausing what's important right now in my life and right now what's important is I want to focus on my family.

Be there for my dad, who's having knee surgery. So what is important? I often hear, cause I am an executive care coach myself, but for my clients, I wish I was like in my twenties when I had so much energy, I could do everything. And yes, it was such a great decade. While at the same time having that much energy.

I love becoming older. It's like fine wine I love being older because our bodies are being completely honest with us and that's what needs to happen It's like being honest with yourself. What is my priority in my life? Maybe you're in a priority I need to save money because I want to buy a house and put a 20 percent down payment and if that's the priority Maybe it's okay.

if that's the case, I'm not gonna be doing any international travel Traveling is really important to me. So how am I going to offset this? I will do local weekend trips around the state. So it's asking that and, that is hard. I will say that because I'm very much in the present. I love living in the moment. But pausing, asking what's important in my life right now, what are my short and long term goals? What does that mean for me?

Keely Antonio: What are some typical situations that you see with CEOs or leaders or executives that you work with? That when they're trying to prioritize some of their goals, because I think some of this is putting into perspective and knowing you're not alone in it when you have a lot of stress and you need to do something, but maybe you're unsure if, now's the right time or how do I really decide?

Because like you said, as women, we take a lot of this on ourselves and we go, okay, I'm just going to put this to the side for a moment and take care of everybody else. When in reality, it does affect everybody else around us. So what are some situations that you see that people can feel more normalized in it and say, this is happening around me and I'm not alone?

Elaine Lou Cartas: It's interesting because I work with a lot of VPs and up. I work with CEOs, myself, business owners. And so often they think, okay, I'm at this level. It shouldn't be stressful. Actually, there is more anxiety and stress that happens as you move up the ladder or you have more responsibility. And what I mean by that, you have everything coming at you.

So then strong boundaries need to be in place. for example, I was talking to a client, she has a business, a team of five, and she was sharing with me my husband's not doing the home stuff. Like I've told him so many times, I don't know how often I can, but when I see him at work, he's on top of it.

He's able to do it. okay, so if nothing's changing, why don't you just share with him, hey, if we can't do this, cause I can do everything. We're gonna have to do some hired help. Like having those conscious, I call it conscious conversations or hard conversations of there's so much on me. If you can't do it, and I've asked you multiple times, and not blaming you, but just coming from a place of you don't have capacity, I don't have capacity, we have to think about putting a budget line then of getting hired help.

And hired help doesn't necessarily even mean babysitters. Hired help could be, I need someone to come here and fold clothes because there's five loads. Or even if that means I'm just going to Netflix and chill and hang out. But it could be that. But seeing. Okay. Pausing. And I get it because we, unfortunately, we live in a society where our worst addiction is being busy.

Using work as an addiction or scrolling, but like pausing, ask, asking yourself the hard questions. What is important? What are the top three goals in my life? So when I work with a client, I have a life wheel balance. And there's eight portions of their life, and to self assess themselves, one to ten, ten being the highest.

The goal is not to be a 10 in all areas of the life, like it could be relationships, friendships, social, health, but the goal is being aware, seeing which ones are low, which ones are high, what are the top three you want to focus on, and what are small changes you can do, giving yourself time to pause, being aware of what you want to focus on, a really good book that I recommend all my clients, it's called Restless Resistance, and It's written by Trisha Hershey.

She's literally called the Napa Minister. She gets paid to do workshops to teach leaders to take a nap and chill. Because it's in those times where we rest, when we're like, Oh, this is a priority. These are things we need changed. think of it like when you take a shower. All those brilliant ideas come because you actually rested and chilled.

You couldn't be on your laptop or be on your phone. I know this doesn't, it's interesting. A lot of my clients are like, that's it? That's all I have to do? I was like, actually, you're paying me so we could pause for an hour and have these conversations because you're forced to pause and have these conversations of what you want.

Because, you've been in the hamster wheel of doing and working and responding to everyone else.

Keely Antonio: No, I think that's so great, Elaine. And it really makes so much sense, we need that accountability when it's so normalized in our society, to always be doing something. And that's why Feel Swell exists as well, is to get people to slow down.

To get people to go outside for a moment and breathe in the fresh air. To connect in a new way, not be in these fluorescent lights and these bright, stuffy boardrooms, but to actually get creative by resting. And that's such a foreign concept. I think something that can be helpful to talk about, while we're chatting here is how does it affect people's teams and CEOs and leaders teams when they actually don't prioritize themselves?

What do you see? What happens because this is feelswell cultures, right? We're talking about how do we take care of ourselves? How do we take care of the people around us and create these environments where people really are able to meet themselves where they are? So what are some situations or things that you've seen about how this affects the people around them?

Yeah,

Elaine Lou Cartas: I really love this conversation. So where do I begin? Because I've been, playing with my own content and curriculum. That I'm coaching companies and clients. But one is being self aware of your trigger points and your trauma response. And so I share that because if you're aware, okay, someone disagrees with me or sees a different perspective, maybe you're in like a fight mode or maybe in your freeze mode or you're in a fawn mode or flight.

So fight, flight, freeze, and fawn. Those are the four trauma responses. What is it for you? And if you notice you're more agitated and you're more triggered, then what are you doing to pause and rest? Because clearly you're not being self, like you're not regulating yourself. And for those that don't know what self regulation means is like when you are calm and collective.

I'm not saying the goal is to constantly be positive. I'm not saying toxic positivity or delusional, but are you responding to people in a calm way? But if you're constantly working, you're not going to be

able to and to think. Time you're talking to a team member. Maybe there's a small little mistake like a typo in an email.

You're like, hey, what the hell? Like you put hell instead of hello a small little thing like that You could snap where maybe in conversation because miscommunication always happens. Like it's just a given. Hey clearly Both of us are not seeing eye to eye right now. So why don't we take a breather for five minutes?

Because when you're aware of how you can react, it's helpful, or even the simple thing of right now, we're recording at 2pm, so maybe like 4pm, maybe you get an email that like, you're just pissed about like, why am I receiving this email? all of a sudden, you want to jump on it and respond, but what if you just cool down, walk around, and draft an email the next day when you're more cool and collective?

So I share that because If you're constantly going and doing, you have stress and you may take it out on someone, but if you're like really self aware, give yourself breaks and breathers, then you could connect with team members even better. Another thing, too, that I tell my clients is, this sounds weird, But we do it for our own clients.

Create a spreadsheet of how your team members communicate. What ticks them off? How do they like being talked to? What's the best way to give feedback? Who do they have best, the best relationships with and why? what about them do they communicate? And not even your team members, but even when you're managing up, if you notice your boss?

First, a member in C suite, how do they communicate so you know how to talk to them?

Keely Antonio: That's great. I think one of the things that really stood out to me was in the beginning, you talking about the different triggers that really would set you off, whether that's the reaction to something. But also something that we can look at that I think often goes, missed, or we just don't, we don't even think about it because we pushed our bodies to such extremes as what are the physical body symptoms you're having leading up to this reaction?

And an example could be, I'm so stressed, my eye is twitching, and then I'm irritated and I take it out on someone, right? So we really can, just like you said, the spreadsheet, write down how other people are responding, how they're interacting with one another. We can look at that for ourselves, too, and go, What are the physical symptoms I get when I'm not regulated and I'm feeling overwhelmed?

And how do I usually respond in these different situations? And that's so powerful, Lane, because when you're aware, you notice that you can pause and take care of the people around you so much better. We really can't give what we're not giving to ourselves, and we hear that all the time, but there's a way to do it that doesn't have to be sometimes people are like, it's just self care. It's what the hell does that mean? You know what I mean? But really to write things down and, look at different patterns. So we're not just caught in the dark every single time about why we're experiencing this.

Elaine Lou Cartas: There is data. I've even been telling clients.

I've even been talking to my female clients too. What I've been doing lately. It's been tracking my period and not just tracking my period like it comes in very every 28 days But you know in your third week or fourth week I have a down and I can't, I don't want a lot of meetings. Like after my period, the first two weeks, I'm really good in having meetings and connecting with people.

Like even tracking that because the way our world, and I'm not trying to be like, Oh my God, I'm so crazy, but there is data to it. And we live in a world where like for men, it's 24 hours, how their body works for women, it's every 20 days or depending on how long your period is. So even understanding that data.

And something that I'm even working with my own therapist as well, but the simple act of breathing, we do about 15 to 30 breaths a minute. And for anyone that has had panic attacks or anxiety attacks, what happens to our breath, they're really short or when you're really stressed. So to help when you're in that anxiety or stress was breathing in 10 seconds and breathing out 10 seconds because that will just help regulate your nervous system.

And I'm not, cause I'm from LA way. I'm just saying it like, try it for yourself. When you breathe, you are calming down your blood and your nervous

Keely Antonio: system. Yeah, it's like slowing down. It's manually regulating and we can manually do that just as if you would drive, a manual car, you can take those breaths and really slow down.

And I think that's one of the most beautiful gifts that we have with us. No matter where we are all the time. So if you're a CEO listening right now, Elaine, what are some questions that they can begin to ask themselves about prioritizing, what really matters in their life right now? So they can be all the things that they want to be right.

The amazing boss, the amazing maybe it's parent, maybe it's friend, maybe it's sister, maybe it's whatever it may be, How can they show up in these different spaces? And ask themselves the questions right now to start to slow down and become more self aware.

Elaine Lou Cartas: So one, breathing. Two, instead of coming from a place of judgment, because we love criticizing ourselves, why don't come from a place of curiosity?

okay, that's interesting. My son keeps telling me I'm looking at my phone and I'm not being present with him, but I am being present. Wait, okay, what does that actually mean? So that's what I mean. come from a place of curiosity of what you are noticing, and then making time for that.

can you set yourself aside time to okay, these are things that has happened. So what does that mean for me? And what are the top three things I can do to start shifting and focusing things? So we'll talk about the phone thing. Okay. Bye. My kids are complaining that I always look at my phone during dinner, so why don't I practice every day just for this week to put my phone in my room during dinner so I can be present with them?

What is like a small little thing, I think so often we get really overwhelmed because we want to like, okay, I want to be a better mom, I want to be a better boss, and then we think of all the big things, but I love giving this analogy that I got from my own mentor, UPS truck drivers when they're trained.

They get really overwhelmed because there's so much boxes, especially as the holiday season's coming back. oh my gosh, there's all these boxes. I need a, they need to go everywhere to help them alleviate the overwhelm. They get trained. Okay. So look at the whole thing. One box and just know we could

Keely Antonio: do it one box at a time.

I love that. Not looking so far ahead, but just looking at the next step that you

Elaine Lou Cartas: have. What is the, baby step

Keely Antonio: I can do

Elaine Lou Cartas: for this, right? For example, I have another client, she wanted to incorporate more exercise and working out. And she's okay, I'm going to go. she went from going to the gym zero times to, I'm going to do it five times a week.

And then I was just like, okay, what is realistic? And it's no, I could do it five times a week, no, here's the thing, I want to set you up for failure and to judge yourself if you don't hit the five a week, so can we do baby steps? I'm like, okay, I'll do 30 minutes at the gym once a week, okay, great. And then we started slowly adding up to it. It's just, we live in a society where it's always extreme high or extreme low. I'm all, either all into it or out. It just happened, there is a reason why the Olympics happens every four years. And the unfortunate thing is that we see them perform, we're not seeing them rest. they're not practicing every single day.

There's also rest days and it's not just the event they're performing. There's also days for yoga and stretching so they can stretch out their muscles or they're getting a massage or getting an ice bath. there's modalities of rest that Olympians do and I'm, I know that I'm not necessarily talking to athletes here, but it's similar to even.

Yeah,

Keely Antonio: absolutely. I love all of those things. And I think that anyone listening today can come back to this episode. you can listen to it multiple times and grab different pieces and take that in and just apply even one thing. think about it. If you're listening to this episode today, what's one thing that really resonated with me?

It doesn't have to be all the things that we said, but maybe there's just one thing that you try to implement and then you come back and then you listen to another part and you take the next thing the next week. And it's this slow build that can lead to that momentum because we're about sustainability here, right?

Not burning out and not killing ourselves because we're not doing that anymore, right? We're allowing ourselves to really just be meeting ourselves where we are and showing the people around us too, that it's okay for them to slow down and take care of themselves. Because at the end of the day, this is all we have.

Elaine, what's one piece of advice that you'd love to leave our listeners today? To really just take as they, they head out for the day.

Elaine Lou Cartas: You already know what you need to do. I know Hollywood tells us like there's this booming voice from God, universe, Beyonce, whatever higher power you believe in, that's going to tell you what to change, but it comes in whispers.

So you already know. And the hard thing to do is to listen to it. And the second hardest thing to do is what are you going to do about it?

Keely Antonio: I love it. That's it. Elaine, where can people connect with you? Where can they find you? I know that I'm going to be dropping all your links in the description, but where would you like people to connect with you?

Elaine Lou Cartas: Yeah. So I have my own podcast that you could check out and I know it's going to be in the show notes. So it's there. WC and allies, business and career talk. So check that out. And then you could find me on LinkedIn

Keely Antonio: at Elaine Lou Carthus. Awesome. I love it. Thank you so much for coming on today, sharing your wisdom with us.

Just being so present. I really appreciate it. And I feel that every time that we spend time together on and offline and thank you so much for listening to the feel swell cultures podcast today. We'll see you on the next episode, everyone.