

EP118

Elaine Lou Cartas: I feel like the past maybe two years I've been having such deep conversations with so many women clients, friends. I feel like a lot of us are having clarity, we're being awakened, understanding that our identity is not just work. Even for me, it's been liberating when I realize. Hold on. As an first gen Asian American immigrant, I don't need to be the best.

And trust me, my child of immigrant voice is like, what you saying? What do you mean you don't have to be the best? And I learned to embrace enough, not just in my business, but in my life. And even for my own clients, whether they're a business owner or executive, they're embracing, unlearning, relearning the power of pause to learn how to be content and at peace so they can truly enjoy their full life.

And like I said, as a coach, I am having this conversation often, but for you, the listener who you might be walking right now driving, doing some errands, and you are feeling alone and you saw this podcast title and I was like, I wanna know what's up. I just wanna let you know you are not alone because so many feel this way to produce, and I wanna talk about the why, the science, and more importantly how and why it's important to break that cycle of rest.

All right. Grab your coffee, tea or boba and let's drop the beat.

I am not sure if y'all know this about me, but I am a cognitive science nerd. I got my bachelor's in cognitive sciences, and if you don't know what that is, it is the study of how we think, feel, and make decisions, the study of the brain. So let's talk about the science of why. It's hard for us to stop working and how rest can help.

first off, ORC gives us a dopamine hit, which is our brains reward chemical. You know that feeling when you check off your list and you're like, yes, girl, you deserve that matcha break. I'm not gonna lie, that's usually me like at two 3:00 PM and when we want more of those dopamine hits, we want more of it.

But here's the catch. It becomes a cycle. A cycle where you get caught up on, and I was caught up on that. I was caught up on the next big. Project hitting a number, a title, a salary, and not because it was always meaningful, but because my brain got used to that hardwired addiction. Oh my gosh. Elaine, you're so good.

Good job, Elaine. Ugh. And as the oldest daughter first born in this country, I'll admit it, I was chasing it. That good job, Elaine. The straight A's in grade school, the Elaine. I could always depend on you, but that also meant working late hours, having a lack of boundaries. And I'm sharing this 'cause I know you relate.

I know that because I have this conversation all the time with clients and people I speak to, even friends. And second, this leads to. Maybe. Maybe I'm gonna warn you, maybe you're like me. And I also wanna remind you, you have agency and choice, so if you're not feeling all this, you're like, Ugh, no, Elaine, I, don't relate.

Then you can stop listening to this episode. Okay. So I just share this because I work with a lot of. Overachievers, recovering overachievers. I realize, oh, I'm addicted to chronic stress. Like your body is

used to a deadline, a conflict, using pressure to just keep it together. And what that means is your body goes into fight, flight, freeze, fa mode, this survival response.

this can happen when you are dead focused on a project at work. Like a few weeks ago, I was so focused on a pitch. To 50 doctors, dentists, and I made sure to take that week really light. I didn't realize, oh my gosh. After that pitch, I crashed like for four days. What? crash, like I just, I was so tired.

I will also say I was on my period when that happened, so hormones kicked in too. It's similar to, in college or high school, how you would crash after finals. And I know I'm using work and school as an example. But I have also caught this in non-work related situations. Like I'm boiling water and I have to wait 10 minutes.

Oh, that means I have time to put the dishes away to do this, and this, and I'm not completely present. And then the water spills over in the pot. And yes, this has happened to me, but I'm just sharing 'cause it might relate to you. And I've had to remind myself to slow down. So how do you know if this might be you?

you might notice that you're feeling wired, but tired, snapping at people you love, even though you don't mean to. And always wanting to be busy because you really don't wanna feel that real anxiety, and this is not your fault. A lot of us grew up in environments where rest was not modeled because our parents, our family had to survive.

And for me, as the oldest, as a first gen immigrant, my parents were always working. So I saw survival meant producing, not pausing, and. Maybe you're like me, you're just overstimulated wired for survival, but it's also possible to unlearn it. I also wanna share, I am not blaming our parents. I'm not blaming our family.

They did what they had to, and now this is just a new generation of, okay, what can we unlearn, relearn, and give gratitude to that? So how can we unlearn how to not be codependent on working? a book I consistently RA on in this podcast is Rest Is Resistance by Trisha Hershey, the Nap Minister. Yes, she's the nap minister and she teaches people how to take a nap, how to rest, because when you do that, you actually give yourself space and time to listen to what you need.

And the reason why we don't do that. So often that means realizing we're unhappy at a job, realizing a certain relationship is not healthy for us. That's why we get scared and we use work to just not feel all that or to, create that change. And when you pause and breathe for a few breaths, you activate, here's the science behind it, your free prefrontal cortex to help you with one self-awareness.

Two. Emotional regulation and three meaning making, and that's when you're default mode network. The DMN kicks in when you're not doing anything productive and your brain starts creating new ideas, making deep connections and processing who you really are. I CEED for HR retail a couple of months ago, and I made sure for those for that week.

I rested and oh my gosh, because I rested and I was so present. I was cracking jokes. Your girl was funny. Like I had to think of songs before coffee breaks. One of them I was like, okay, I'm sorry. We did not have the budget for espresso. But we're gonna drop the beat with Espresso by Sabrina Carpenter. Or I even started, I did.

I started the mc gig because. I believe it was like that weekend, it was gonna be the Beyonce concert in la. So I had one of the Beyonce songs Go, out and then I came in, I was like, I know you're all disappointed. Beyonce isn't here. We just didn't have the budget. So you have me, I'm sorry, but it's not like I even scripted that perfectly.

I was just completely present and I made sure to give myself spaciousness and rest and just the amount of. Opportunities that has happened since then has been incredible, and I've been more mindful of this unlearning and relearning the past two years. I'm committed to doing Muay Thai, kickboxing taking, I know this is crazy, a busy time, but 9:30 AM to 12:00 PM off at least three to four times a week to work out, have lunch, take a shower, and it's just allowed me to be.

So present, I realize my best leadership ideas and connections happen when I'm resting. Even today, I'm, recording this podcast. I just had lunch with a friend. the most stressful thing today was LA traffic, which, you know what? I have learned to embrace LA traffic driving down the 405 because I'm like, Ooh, what podcast am I listening to or music?

And I'm, right now, I'm currently listening to the new Justin Bieber album. Amazing. I actually recommend 10, 10. I am, I'm not a huge fan, but I'm Filipino and it like has this r and b soul like into it. But anyways, let's go back. Let's.

I know this episode is so good and you're like, how can I get more of this? I have a newsletter that comes out every Thursday that's free. Fun and full of real talk. It's a live journal LGA on Leadership and Life with actual scripts behind the scenes stories and lessons from mistakes I've made so you don't have to for work and life.

Just go to elaine l.com, join. That's

aecom. Join back to the. But when you rest, realizing that you have an identity beyond work and I've just learned to live life deliciously. Now, I'm just gonna warn you. Let's talk about the pressure to prove, and I had this since I was born, this pressure to prove, the first house I lived in, I was born into was my grandmother's home with my dad, mom, uncle, and aunt.

I felt that I was. Their American dream after they left Philippines from poverty. So maybe you've heard things like I've heard. Elaine, you need to study. Work hard, don't be lazy. And then when they got really upset with me, in the Philippines we didn't have all this food, you have this ability to have an education.

And they weren't wrong. And like I said, I'm not blaming my parents. They did their best. But also there's always like a light and shadow side. The shadow side of this it, it created a loop where I equated worth to output. And we think if I'm not doing something, I'm falling behind. If I rest, I let my people down the generations before me.

Ooh, that was a lot of pressure I put on myself, and if I stop, I'll lose momentum. But here's the truth, you are not successful depending on how fast you delete and respond in your inbox. yeah. You know what? I'm just gonna say I am ashamed of how many unread. Emails I haven't gone through and deleted.

You are more than your title, and your calendar does not define you. So who are you in between those white spaces and between those meetings? And like I said, because I've given myself more spaciousness in the past years, I realize, oh my gosh, I am funny. And I remember years ago it was. Actually 2020. So five years ago when I'm recording this podcast, I was working with a coach and I told them I'm working so much all the time, but I'm not funny anymore.

I'm not having fun. And I know when I have a life beyond work is when I'm, just cracking jokes. So this all leads to the solution that REST is a leadership strategy. Rest is not a privilege. It is right. Rest is not rewarded. After finishing something in your to-do list, rest allows you to gain more clarity, direction, and aligned action.

And what happens when you rest? I'll give myself as a case study, I'm more present, oh, sorry, that was my phone. You know what? It just alerted because it's telling you that you should listen. I'm more present. I want first place in a pitch competition. 'cause I basically took that week or two weeks down, slow down.

I'm making better decisions. when I do Muay Thai, I always think about each week, what's the one thing I need to work on. Like I keep having my hand. Someone called me out last week, which I appreciate. I keep having my hand down before I do a jab, so it gives away I'm about to do a jab when in reality I just need to punch forward for a jab.

And that has translated to my personal life and work, like what is one thing I need to do better? And in my work I was like, oh, I need. I need to mobilize my, I need to optimize my mobile part of my website, and I've been getting. More sales calls scheduled. And then in my personal life I'm like, oh, I've been reading more.

It's been fabulous. Like just having more intention to do that and take the time to journal. And what else happens when you rest? You lead with fullness and not. Depletion. My energy just feels amazing. Lately. I find myself attracting more opportunities as opposed to feeling so worn out. I don't even know how the hell I did it.

Eight years ago, I was hustling. mind you, in the beginning, no one really talks about this, but in the beginning you do need to, I'm gonna air quote, hustle to figure it out. But then I realized how I scaled was when I rest and paused more looking. Things, asking myself hard questions like, does this business, does this life align with me?

And asking myself that. Two years ago, I was able to be really intentional, but that was hard conversations I had to have with myself. So I have hard questions to ask you, do you wanna be a leader who performs or who is present? Do you wanna be a friend or a loved one who is consistently tired? Or is present.

So before we end here, a few questions to journal and reflect on. You're probably gonna wanna see the timestamp right now because you're probably gonna wanna play it back 'cause these are five powerful questions you could ask. Number one, when do I feel most like myself without needing to perform? Number two, what am I afraid I'll feel or notice if I stop working?

Ooh, that one's so good. Number three, whose voice is in my head when I feel guilty for resting. And hey, it's if it's your parents or family. Like I said, it's not blaming them. They worked really hard so

that we could have the life we have. Fourth, what did rest look like in my home or culture growing up?

And fifth, what version of me is emerging when I slow down? I, love that last question because I feel like I'm really living it. The merg, when I slow down. So for example. This is such a very simple example. On Saturday, we had plans to hang out with friends and I was like, oh, in between like working out in Muay Hai, I could clean the restroom and then go there.

I'm like, wait. I was having a, conversation with myself. Why am I doing that? That's tiring. Why can't I just wait until the next day? Why am I trying to add more to my plate even? That has been so great and I also wanna shout out, this is, this was not like a self-made experience and transformation.

Just grateful for my therapist. My mentors that have helped me, my partner who has called me in, asked me like, why are you trying to do the most? And I'm like, you're right. And the question I ask myself is, how can I do the least? What can I do to honor me?

You are taught to survive, but you are allowed to live and thrive and you don't have to earn your worth. You are already worthy. And leadership, real leadership. It's presence, not just performance. And if this episode spoke to you, share it with someone. Send 'em a little message on why this resonated with you and how it may resonate with them.

And if you loved this episode, leave a five star rating and review. So other recovering overachievers like you can find this podcast episode so we can remind everyone to take a breath and slow down so we could all just be, and if you're ready to break the cycle. To lead, live and rest differently, I'd love to support you.

You can schedule a call with me to see if it's good fit to work together@elainelu.com slash call. That's el ai EL u.com or slash call or just click on the link in the show notes and remember, you are not behind. You are becoming. I'll talk to you soon.