

**MASTERS by Winn Claybaugh, October 2021**  
**Dr. Patrice Buckner Jackson**  
**Addressing Compassion Fatigue with Heart Work**



**Dr. Patrice Buckner Jackson**, known in her community as Dr. PBJ, is the founder of Heart Work Academy, host of the Heart Work with PBJ podcast, and an award-winning educator and executive coach who left a position she had worked 20 years to obtain.

Interviewed by **Winn Claybaugh**, Dr. PBJ shares the intimate story of her rock-bottom burnout and specific steps for discovering the signs of burnout, disrupting the cycle, and becoming a loving, caring, compassionate human without paying the ultimate price.

WC: Hey everybody, Winn Claybaugh here and welcome to another issue of MASTERS. And starting off, I just have to thank all of you. Thank you so much for over 20 years of listening to these incredible interviews. And my good friend Tony Robbins says that we are motivated either through inspiration or desperation, and I have to tell you, when I started MASTERS over 20 years ago it was out of desperation. It was because I just needed some answers and I needed a reason to connect with whom I considered to be leaders and mentors and teachers and heroes. And those are the people that I went after. It wasn't necessarily always somebody famous or somebody well known. If somebody had a story to tell, if somebody had been through an experience where they fell down and they had to get back up and they learned something from that—because I believe that the best lessons are learned through other people's experiences. Yes, we learn through our own experiences and, boy, are all of us, this entire planet, we're on like this fast track, this download of so many important lessons right now. Which, by the way, is one of the reasons I'm excited about this interview today, but it was because of desperation that I started doing these interviews and I'm just so grateful because if I didn't have listeners such as all of you, then I wouldn't have this opportunity to connect with these brilliant, brilliant people. And today is one of those incredible days where I get to connect with a brilliant woman. Her name is Dr. Patrice Buckner Jackson, known to her friends and her community as Dr. PBJ. So, I like that: I get to call you Dr. PBJ. So, first of all, before I share more about who you are, just welcome to MASTERS.

PBJ: Oh, Winn, thank you so much for having me. It is my honor to spend this time with you today.

WC: Well, Dr. PBJ is an educator of over 20 years, an executive coach for more than 10 years. She holds a doctoral degree in education administration, served in

executive leadership at colleges and universities, and facilitates leadership training as a faculty member for the Center of Creative Leadership, which we're going to learn more about that today. Dr. PBJ has worked in higher education at the highest levels and is the recipient of several professional awards and accolades. Now, there's a point to all of this and I want to share with our listeners more about who you are but, in a minute, you're going to be blown away by the personal story that Dr. PBJ is going to share with you. In August of 2019, burnout caused Dr. PBJ to walk away from an executive position that she had worked 20 years to obtain. I hear that was a six-figure income and you walked away from that. And since that day, she has worked to understand what led her to rock bottom, what led her to burnout, and discovered a path for climbing out of it. What an important message for today. Today, she empowers others to live free of burnout, overwhelm, and compassion fatigue. And we're going to learn what that means. What is compassion fatigue? Dr. PBJ founded EduCare Training and Consulting out of a purpose for equipping and supporting heart workers. We're going to learn what that means. What is a heart worker? Which is those who do their work from a place of passion. Dr. PBJ serves as creator and host of a podcast called Heart Work with PBJ. You all got to check that out, and we'll make sure that you have all of these links and information and social media and websites so that you can find this brilliant woman. So, once again Dr. PBJ, just welcome to MASTERS and again I'm so grateful. You didn't even know who I was and you immediately said yes. Why did you say yes so easy?

PBJ: Well, first of all we have a mutual connection, Patrice Cunningham Washington. And I had the opportunity to hear your connection with her on her birthday episode and immediately felt a connection. And then you have a book called *Be Nice (Or Else!)*. You're my kind of people, Winn.

WC: [Laughs]

PBJ: So, I was so excited to join you.

WC: Yeah, more of us need to get together and I have a feeling that the people who subscribe to MASTERS and who listen to these every single month, and some for over 20 years—again, we're all part of that circle, right? We're all about spreading that word but it's exhausting sometimes and we take that on. We take on that mantle like, "Oh my gosh it's all up to me and the world would fall apart if I didn't save the world today." So, you've come up with this thing called compassion fatigue. Can you explain what does that mean: compassion fatigue?

PBJ: Yes, absolutely. So, those of us who serve from the heart, meaning we're not here for a salary, we're not here for the title or for the accolades or the pat on the back, but we are truly here because we know that we have something that will serve the world and serve other people. So, it is our love, it is our passion, it is our calling that we do whatever work we do. So, whether you are at home taking care of babies or if you are serving in our military or if you're an educator or counselor, your title doesn't matter. The discipline doesn't matter but within every

discipline there's a group of people who carry the work in their hearts. But, Winn, also on their backs. And that is what leads us to compassion fatigue, where we serve so deeply and so diligently that we take on the trouble and the struggles of other people. And the longer you do that, the longer you carry this, then you will begin to experience the consequences of somebody else's life circumstances. I remember a conversation I had with my husband years ago and he told me, he said, "You know, people come and they share with you and they leave feeling better and you're left heavy with baggage that doesn't even belong to you." That is what compassion fatigue is.

WC: Wow. So, every once in a while husbands do have good things to say, right?

PBJ: Yes, they do.

WC: I bet that rang true for you. But some people listening to this right now are thinking, *But Dr. PBJ, that is my calling. That's the law of the universe. That's the law of attraction. That is my role as a human being, as a parent, as a good person: that I have to put good things out there. And now you're telling me that that's not my role?* What do you say to those people?

PBJ: Oh, my goodness! It is your role to do the thing that you were called to do and nothing more. It is not our role to be the savior, the superhero. It is not our role to be the rescuer. It is our role to take the brilliance that has been put on the inside of every single one of us and to share that brilliance out. And any time that sharing or that work or that support becomes so heavy that we begin to experience physical consequences, emotional consequences, soul consequences, that means we have taken on more than we were called to do. So, it is definitely a line that many people struggle to find because, yes, we're called to serve. Yes, we are called to do good and to be good. But in our doing good it doesn't mean that we're doing good for everybody all the time. No one can be successful in that. It's not sustainable, it's not fair, the expectation is just unrealistic.

WC: Okay, I think that we need to hear your story. And when I heard your story, first of all, it rang true for me but what it also did was it endeared me to you. It brought tears to my eyes. It brought out emotion and it's like, oh my gosh, I know exactly what she's talking about. And so people need to hear your story because it's profound what you went through. So, tell us that story.

PBJ: Oh, my friend! Well, you know all of the things that you read in the bio. So, working in education for 20 years, I'm here to tell you that education changed my life. It changed my life to the point that I dedicated my life to it. There were people who served me and helped me through college. I didn't know what federal financial aid was. I didn't know that textbooks cost money. And there were people who surrounded me and helped me through it, and then I realized I could be that help for other people and I went all in. I went all in. I worked my way up the ladder because that's what you're told to do. I was first female Dean of Students

at a university, making history without even trying. Really giving my all, doing all the hours, serving my students, giving them everything I had, and I was rewarded. I was promoted. I got new titles. I got new accolades and new awards and, my friend, it almost took me out.

WC: Share with us more exactly what was the role that you played? How was it that you were of assistance to your students?

PBJ: Yes. So, my career has been in Student Affairs in many different capacities, from being a resident assistant in the residence halls and being on call and programming and doing different things to help students connect to the community, all the way up to Vice President for Student Affairs. So, I went from student leader to the President's Cabinet in Higher Education and my focus has always been to help students connect to each other but also connect to the university. That belonging: it actually has more of an impact on their academic success than the intellect. So, my job is to help them belong.

WC: So, I'm sure that there are people who graduated from that university over 20 years ago who are thinking, *Oh my gosh, Dr. PBJ is to thank because of my success today. Because of her I was a success in college and now I'm a success in my career and in life*, and they thank you because of that commitment and that dedication that you had. But you're also telling us that that almost did you in. I heard you say that "it was either me or everything else."

PBJ: Yeah, yeah. You know, the beautiful part of my profession is I have students now, we are a part of their weddings. We are there when their children are born. We watch them move through their careers. It is really just a beautiful, beautiful opportunity that we have to be a part of people's lives, my friend, but I'm here to tell you it's not the work, but it's the way I did my work. It is the way I did my work. I will never forget that August day in 2019. I remember driving to work in the rain and through tears. I remember pulling up in that parking space with my name on it, because as a vice president that's what you got. I walked into the building saying my good mornings, giving hugs, "How was your night?" just like I normally did, and it was everything I could do to get into that office, shut the door, and I crumbled. I remember holding on to the side of that wooden desk so that I could hold my weight up. I didn't even feel like I had enough to hold myself up. All I wanted to do was crawl under that desk in the fetal position, and the only reason I didn't do that was because I was concerned that I wouldn't be able to pull myself back out and that somebody would find me there. I felt trapped but I knew if I opened that door, there would be a student who needed me, a staff member with a question, or a colleague who needed to have a conversation. See, Winn, I taught everybody in my life that I could be all things to all people and they believed me. They believed me. And on that day, all of that pressure came to bear at the same time. Friend, I thought I was losing my mind.

WC: Wow. Wow.

PBJ: When I got to a point that I could leave, I left and I never went back to that job. It took me 20 years to work to that position, doing all the things that I thought I was supposed to do, and in a moment I left it all behind.

WC: So, you left that day and you sent a letter of resignation? You called someone and said, "I quit"? I mean, how did that go?

PBJ: I tracked down my supervisor, who was the president, and said, "I need to speak to you," and I had to wait until that person was available. And as soon as they had a moment, I walked in and said, "This is my last day," and I never returned to that place.

WC: What was their response?

PBJ: Oh, I don't think they believed me because it's not in my character. It's not like me to give up. It's not like me to walk away. Always very dependable. I'm always showing up when nobody else will, working long hours. I honestly don't think they believed me. And I know they didn't because for days and weeks after that, there were phone calls and questions. And there were students I loved there, a staff that I loved there. It was not out of any animosity. I literally knew that it was me or the job. I was afraid that if I came back the next day, I would end up hospitalized because I literally could not even think straight anymore.

WC: Right now, as you're sharing this story, I'm thinking of people who have worked with me for 20 years, who I rely on heavily, who are incredible to this organization that I get to lead, and I'm trying to imagine them coming into my office and saying, "Winn, today is my last day." I would be shellshocked. And you said something along the lines of giving up. Tell us about the guilt that was associated with that. That, *Oh my gosh, they're thinking that I'm giving up on them, that I no longer love them*. Tell me about the guilt associated with that.

PBJ: Oh, my goodness, it was incredible. It was incredible for several reasons. One, because at that moment, in those few days, I didn't even know how to explain it. I did not have the words at the point. I do now but I did not have the words at that point to even say why. When I attempted to and when I tried to say why, it was just a puddle of tears and disconnected thoughts, so the guilt but also the grief. The grief because I was losing them. I knew I was losing them. And as a matter of fact, I thought I was losing my entire career because that is not something that you do. In my profession, you give 30 days, at least, if you're going to transition but I gave no notice. I had no next step. I had no other new job. I had no other income. It was, *In this moment, it is me or this*. And I know that my daughter, my husband—a school can replace me but my family gets one me.

Winn: Wow.

PBJ: And I get one me. And in that moment, I chose that I have to preserve me.

Winn: So, again, when I heard you say that for the first time, “It was either me or everything else,” I wrote that down. “It was either me or everything else.” And I know that there are people listening to this right now and they might be thinking that or feeling that. And they might be a young student, they might be a parent, they might be brand-new at a job and they’re thinking, *It’s me or everything else*, but their thought is, *Well, I don’t have 20 years invested in this and so I don’t qualify to be feeling the same way that Dr. PBJ was feeling in August of 2019*. But they’re thinking that: but it’s their story. And if it’s their story, maybe it’s not 20 years’ investment into a career but it’s still a story that is impacting their lives. What is your advice for people who are feeling that way? And I know that’s a big, loaded question and I’m going to break down this question throughout the rest of our interview, but just straight up what do you have to say to those wonderful people?

PBJ: It’s a great question and what I would say is that comparison is unfair because it didn’t take 20 years for me to feel this overwhelmed. It took 20 years for me to get to a breaking point that I had no other choice. The feeling didn’t just pop up. It didn’t just happen after all of that time, but the truth is, I had experienced that throughout my life and not just at work but in different arenas of my life because that is the way I approached work and life. When I first left and I was going through trying to understand everything, I had blame for everybody. It was the colleagues, it was this, it was that. But I’ve learned and I’ve come to understand that I could go to a different place, I could go to a different job—and I did throughout those 20 years—but I took me with me. So, it’s not the amount of time. It’s not even fully the environment, even if the environment is not perfect. But it comes down to how do we approach and carry our work and our life.

WC: Okay. So, I think you need to give some advice to me because I’m the type of leader that when people come to me and they’re experiencing that type of being overwhelmed, and I don’t know that they’re using the word *burnout*, maybe that would catch my attention. I feel like I’m a real in-tune, sensitive guy but when they come to me and say, “Oh my gosh, I’m overwhelmed, Winn,” then I start asking them the question, “Well, what would you like me to pull off your plate? Do you want me to pull this off of your plate?” “Oh, no, no I need that, I love that.” “Okay. Well, how about this? Do you want me to take that task, that responsibility away from you?” They’re like, “No, no, no, I want that as well.” And I’m thinking, okay, this is a good thing because they really want all of this responsibility. They thrive with this responsibility. I even said, “I’m going to make up a T-shirt that says, *I’d Rather Be Stressed Than Bored*.”

PBJ: Mm.

WC: Because I know lot of people who are really, really bored but, you know, I can figure out stress. I can figure out, okay, I need to go to the gym today, I need to take a day off, I need to go be with my daughter, I need to go get a facial, I need to get a massage, I need to do something to rejuvenate myself. But I’m not sure what my question is but maybe the advice—because your boss was probably

blindsided by this. Like, “How did this happen?” So, what’s the advice that you give to us who are on the receiving end of hearing this? We hear it from a spouse, we hear it from a colleague, we hear it from an employee: “I’m burned out.” What’s the advice that you have for us on the receiving end of this?

PBJ: Mm. I would say make room for them to discover what their solution is. So, what I heard you say is when you hear this you make an offer: “Can I take this, can I take that?” You offer a solution because you are a leader and we’ve been taught as leaders that it is our responsibility to bring a solution. But my challenge to you and other leaders is, can you make the room for the individual to discover what is leading them to the overwhelm or the burnout? So, is it the project? If it’s not the project, then they won’t know what will fix it until they know what the root of it is. And my friend, as the leader, you won’t know. You won’t know that. The individual is responsible. And I talk to our heart work community about this all the time. I always say, “Start with you.” No superhero is coming, no person is going to swoop into your life and just wipe all your stress away and say, “Hey listen, I’m going to help you get out of this burnout.” We are responsible because nobody knows that root but us. So, as the leader, what I do for my team is I make room. In our one-on-one’s I make time to hear about all of it. Not just the work project but the home and whatever else they want me to know. But I am learning—and it takes some repetition to learn this—I am learning that when they bring me the challenge, I step back and I ask open questions to help them explore what the solution would be for them and not the quick solution that I can think of so that I can help them get through it.

WC: Oh, see? Oh my gosh that’s what we do, right? They start talking and it’s like, “Oh, I’ve got the solution. You need to do this.” Like we immediately want to fix it. We want to save everybody. We have the answers because I’ve been doing research for a very long time. I’m paid to give my advice. And I loved the conversation, the banter between you and Patrice Washington when you were talking about this, and just that—you know what? We need to stop trying to fix it. We need to sit back and listen more. Quit trying to jump in with the solution or actually jump in to save it. “Oh, I got you covered. I will take this on.”

PBJ: Friend, here’s what I tell myself: that’s not my baggage. That’s not my baggage and moving to that place where I can say it’s not my baggage is a transition for me because I have to help myself understand. That doesn’t mean I don’t care. I will always care because that is who I am but I have learned the hard way that I cannot take responsibility for making somebody else feel better or to adjusting their life in a way that would help them operate better. Every individual not only has the responsibility, but they have the right. It is their right to make those decisions about their life and their plan and their path. So, friend, that’s not your baggage. You can support, you can sit by, you can listen and challenge, but that is not your baggage.

WC: Okay, I know you’re upsetting a lot of people right now. “How dare she say that that’s not my responsibility, that that’s not the role that I need to play in the lives

of those people? I'm here to make a difference, I'm here to—" Oh my gosh, the guilt that I'm sure that people are feeling right now as you talk about this. But you and Patrice—and I keep on referring back to that interview because it was wonderful—you and Patrice gave this analogy of walking through the airport and looking at other people's bags. Can you share that with us? Because it was—

PBJ: Absolutely.

WC: —pretty good.

PBJ: Yeah, absolutely. This is the scenario that Patrice's therapist shared with her and she shared with me. Her therapist said, "When you walk through the airport, do you touch a bag that is not yours? As a matter of fact, the announcements over and over say if there is any unattended bag, do not touch that bag. Walk away.

WC: [Laughs]

PBJ: So, we have to learn to do that.

WC: Oh my gosh!

PBJ: If it is not your baggage then don't manipulate, open, go through, touch that bag or take it home with you.

WC: Oh my gosh. We all need a loud PA system as it follows us around through life, right?

PBJ: Absolutely.

WC: Don't touch that bag, it's not yours!

PBJ: [Laughs] Yes.

WC: Okay. Now everybody, don't stress out here because we're going to jump into some answers here and you already said that that doesn't mean that you don't care. That doesn't mean that you're not a go-to person and that you can't be there to help and to assist, but there's a better way. Now, you call yourself a disrupter of burnout and when we talk about fatigue, it's not just compassion fatigue. Right now, there's Covid fatigue, there's Black Lives Matter fatigue, there's social unrest fatigue, there's just life fatigue. So, I'm sure that the list of this fatigue is quite long in your world, correct?

PBJ: Absolutely. I have clients and community members and colleagues all over the world who are just in the midst of the struggle right now.

WC: Okay so, what do you mean when you say you disrupt cycles of burnout?



PBJ: Yes. So, I have noticed in myself and in others that I worked with that burnout moves in a cycle. So, we may be in a place in life right now where we feel pretty good, we feel like we've got a handle on things, things are going well. But if we are a person prone to burnout, if we're not careful, we will find ourselves right back in that pit again. So, we go from being in the pit, climbing out, feeling a little bit better, getting better, and then all of a sudden in the pit again. My purpose, my goal, my mission is to disrupt that cycle so that we can understand what takes us into the pit and then we can prevent getting into that burnout pit again. Instead of living that cycle, we want to disrupt and demolish that cycle of burnout.

WC: And you're going to give us those steps but what do you mean by prone to burnout? What makes somebody prone to burnout?

PBJ: Yeah, so I would look at your path and look at the steps in your life. In those places, have you found yourself in overwhelm and in burnout? And if you know you've found yourself there, more than once, then you are probably prone to burnout. I'll give you the opposite and then I'll give you the example.

WC: Okay.

PBJ: There are some people who just live life and not much bothers them. It doesn't mean that they don't care or they're not caring people but they just don't get too high, don't get too low, they can just hold it in the road and they won't be moved, per se, too far, no matter what's going on. And then there are others of us who carry more weight, take on more responsibilities, have trouble saying no. We are the dependable ones, the folks that get called on, the folks who raise our hands first because we don't think anybody else is going to raise their hand, the people who take on the extra projects, or the people who get the calls when life is falling apart. All of those folks are prone to burnout because of our nature and the way that we are available and willing all of the time.

WC: Wow, okay. Of course, you're a *Golden Girls* fan, right?

PBJ: Ah yes, love them.

WC: Last night there was this episode about Dorothy needing help with a charity fundraiser that she was working on. She didn't want to ask Blanche because she says Blanche is always working on Blanche. So, she asks the Betty White person, Rose, "Hey Rose, can you help out?" And Rose is like, "No, I have charity burnout." She's like, "What do you mean? You always say yes to everything. You donated to save the rich." [Laughs]

PBJ: [Laughs] Exactly, exactly that is—

WC: That would be me. That's you. We sign up for everything. Somebody asks, "Of course, yes." In fact, I always tell people, that's my mantra: just say yes to everything. So—

PBJ: Oh, my friend. [Laughs]

WC: So, what are the signs of burnout and then we're going to get into how we start disrupting these cycles of burnout?

PBJ: Yeah, so, what I would say and what I always say is every individual needs to know what their tell is: T-E-L-L. Every one of us, we have our own tell or our own symptoms and it's important to recognize these symptoms because that will help you change behavior or create more boundaries before you get to the pit. So, for me, Winn, one of my most prominent tells, and probably the scariest one, when I was really in the midst of it, I would go to work, do the things, always wake up early. So, I would wake up super early, work late, come home, do the things for my household. If I ever allowed myself to sit on the bed or on the chair, if I allowed myself to sit, my friend, I was asleep. Gone in no time. Mid-sentence, mid-thought.

WC: Oh my gosh!

PBJ: My body literally shut down every night. Every night and I ignored it. So, that was one of the scariest ones but others include, for me, my space. I love order, I love organization but I know that I am headed towards overwhelm when my space is in disorder, when things are not in the places that I've assigned them to be. For me, that is a sign that I'm headed towards overwhelm. Also, for me because I'm a music lover, there's always a soundtrack in my head. There's always music playing in my head. If I have lost my song, then that is a sign for me that I am overwhelmed. So, these may not be the same symptoms or the tell that every person experiences, but all of us have a tell and I always encourage folks: you need to know your tell because that tell will give you a sign to do something different before it goes in the wrong direction.

WC: How do you help people understand what those signals are, those symptoms, those tell? And after that, I want to ask the question, did your husband and your daughter know what these symptoms were? So, did they walk in and see clutter on your desk in your home office and think, *Uh oh, Mom is on her way to burnout?* Did they acknowledge that? Did they understand that?

PBJ: You know, so, I'm going to answer your second question first. My family knew something was out of order but they didn't have a label for it.

WC: Okay.

PBJ: They didn't have a descriptor for it. As a matter of fact, they tried to bring it to my attention in many ways but I would say, "Oh, you all just don't understand. You just don't understand, everybody needs me. These people depend on me." And I still believe this. I believe that parents bring to college what is most precious to them in the whole wide world and I carried that pressure with me on a daily basis, that they left their most precious with me in my care.

WC: Wow.

PBJ: And that is the way that I carried and did my work. But my family, my child, Winn, felt like she needed to make an appointment to see me while I was out taking care of everybody else's child.

WC: Wow.

PBJ: Yeah.

WC: And how long did she feel that way? Was it a week? Was it years? Was it the first half of her life?

PBJ: There is still shame attached to this; I will be honest.

WC: Right.

PBJ: For our entire relationship. So, my baby girl, I met her when I met my husband. She's his daughter but we don't do the step thing. She's my baby girl. I met her when she was 12. And I believe for our entire relationship—again in cycles, I would do really good and then I would get deep again—she had this struggle until I really understood what I was going through and what I was putting them through.

WC: Wow. Okay. So, how do you help people acknowledge these symptoms? Because I'm thinking that they have to acknowledge them first, right? Like one of my really good mentors, Dr. Amen, who scans brains and he determines all kinds of things by doing that, but he says the solution, "What I'm going to tell you to do, whatever we find in the brain, we're going to tell you to start removing certain triggers. So, we're going to tell you to clean up the clutter. We're going to tell you to divorce yourself from toxic friendships. We're going to tell you to cut back on caffeine and to eliminate alcohol." So, why not just do those things now? I think for all of us in general, there are triggers that produce this type of burnout. But how do you help individuals identify what those symptoms are because, again, I'm sure that it's important that they know what the symptoms are, correct?

PBJ: Absolutely. Yes, and if it's okay with you I'm going to get into the heart work journey because this is where it happens. So, the first step of the heart work journey is called baggage and that's where we learn to tell our burnout story. So, every individual again, the experience is different. So, a lot of the consequences can be very similar but the experience is different for every individual. So, we must explore—I call it our invisible backpack. Everybody has one. I'm wearing mine today, you are wearing yours today. We don't realize it, we don't understand it sometimes, but every day we put on our invisible backpack. And in that backpack is every experience, every memory, everything that we have learned, we carry in that invisible backpack. And that backpack determines how we serve. It also determines how we engage, how we interact with other people. So, if you've ever encountered someone who is sharp and bitter and just cutting,

it normally has nothing to do with you but it has everything to do with what's in that person's backpack. And what we do in the baggage step is we open those invisible backpacks and we look inside to determine what is in there. What are the experiences, what are the lessons, what have you been taught, what have you heard, what were you told about yourself and others that lead you to burnout and overwhelm? So, we unpack those stories for every individual and as we bring those stories out on the table—and this is the hard part, my friend, because many people want to go straight to the second step, which is creating boundaries. But if you create a boundary without going through your baggage, you won't have the fortitude to keep the boundary. So, it's one thing to create it but it's another thing to honor the boundary. So, we have to start by going through the backpack, pulling out those stories, pulling out those examples, and we find what is in common. What is in common between these experiences in your life? And as we walk through those experiences, as we walk through those stories, we're able to connect the dots and find the symptoms but also find the root.

WC: This is awesome. I like the analogy of these backpacks because you just see some people and it's like, wow, they are just so overloaded.

PBJ: Yeah.

WC: The burden that they are carrying around is just so heavy and it's profound. And some people, they want to hold onto that, right? I'm sure you find that. It's like, "Oh my God, you have no idea what I've been through."

PBJ: Yes.

WC: "I deserve to be this bitter and how dare you try to talk me out of this stuff that's in my backpack?" Do you go through that with people?

PBJ: Oh my gosh, yes. Oh my gosh, yes, because think about it. Physically our bodies adapt to our situation. So, if a person was injured and instead of going to get help to mend that injury, they decide to live with it, the body will adapt. The body will change the way it moves and the way it acts in order to take care of or to cover that injury. It's the same thing with our backpack. Sometimes we are so familiar and so comfortable with our dysfunction, that it is difficult, one, to look at it, and then two, to even think about letting it go. Change is a scary thing but here's the thing. Do we want the pain of recovery or do we want the pain of holding onto that weight? And it literally comes down to a decision. We have to decide if we're willing to do the hard thing and face it and work through it or if we just want to stay in our comfort zone, although painful and disruptive to our lives.

WC: Oh my gosh, the work you do at Heart Work Academy is just incredible. So, again you said that first step is that backpack: identify the baggage that's in there. And then you said the second step—boundaries? So, talk to us about that.

PBJ: Yes, absolutely. So, I look at boundaries like the walls of a fortified city. So, if you consider an ancient city, you did not just pack your bags and show up and say, “Hey, I came to spend the weekend with my best friend.” That is not how it worked. These cities had fortified walls that were several feet high and also several feet thick and there was always a watchman on the wall and you did not get into that city unless the watchman allowed you in or if you came for war. Those were the only two ways that you were going to get into an ancient city. Our boundaries are like the walls of an ancient city. They protect us, not isolate us. Good boundaries are not created to isolate us from meaningful connections, from sacred connections, those that we’re called to be connected to, but they are created to protect us and they’re based on our values. It comes down to what’s most important to you. I always say this: burnout is a thief. It will always come for what means most to you. So, when I was in burnout —

WC: Okay, whoa, whoa, whoa, you need to say that again.

PBJ: Yeah. Burnout is a thief. It will always come for what is most important to you.

WC: Can you put that into context? So, if what’s most important to you is your career, that’s where you’re going to experience burnout? Or if what’s most important to you are your children, that’s the thief that’s going to come and create burnout as a parent? Is that what you’re saying?

PBJ: No, I look at it a little differently than that. If what is most important to you is your family, that is what burnout is coming to steal away from you. When I was in the throws of burnout, Winn, my marriage was on the rocks—

WC: Wow.

PBJ: —my relationship with my child was in jeopardy. My health. My friend, I am still working to regain my health from the damage that I allowed over all these years. My faith is so important and it was the area in my life that I felt like I was lacking most. Burnout will always come to steal what means most to you. So, when we create our boundaries, our fortified walls, we start with, what are my values? What is important to me? I have found with folks who are prone to burnout, we can get to the point that we forget what’s important because we are so busy trying to please other people that our own personal desires and needs and values get mixed up with what people expect and want out of us. So, it may seem simple—just tell me your values, let’s identify your values—but what I’ve found is it is not as simple as it seems because we’ve worked so long and so hard to please so many people that we lose what’s important to us.

WC: I love that. We have done that in my company. It’s an ongoing process to identify what our values are and to make sure that our behavior is aligned with our value. Because if we say that we value our family but our behavior is such that we’re not investing the time, there’s no quality there, we’re on our phones the whole time. Let me tell you something, this is something that I still struggle with and

something happened a couple of weeks ago that was like a major, major wakeup call for me. Like, Winn, get off your phone when you're in the presence of your daughter.

PBJ: Yeah.

WC: And I could explain to her, "Well, sweetheart, since Covid, you know, Daddy works from home and how he works from home is on his phone. And you know, we gotta live in this big house and that costs money and so Daddy's got to work to earn the money." Like I could give her all of that explanation. Guess what? She's nine years old, do you think she cares?

PBJ: Right.

WC: All she cares is, "Get off your phone, Daddy. Pay attention to me." And it was—wow, I'm emotional as I'm even talking about it. And of course there's some guilt and some shame attached to that and I'm certainly not there. I still have a long ways to go. I looked at my scheduled report that my phone sends to me and I'm proud to say that I'm down 53% usage, you know, time on my phone this week compared to the week before, so I'm making progress. But if what I value are my relationships first and foremost, my spouse and my daughter, then is my behavior aligned with that?

PBJ: Yes, my friend. You hit the nail on the head. Identifying that value, that core value. And I ask this question: what are you unwilling to lose?

WC: What do you mean by that?

PBJ: In your life, with everything that you're responsible for, with every hat that you wear, with everything that is important to you, in order to get down to the foundation of what really matters, I ask the question, what are you unwilling to lose? When I had to really face that question, I decided that if it was a conflict between my work and my family, I choose family. If it's a conflict between my health and my work, I choose health. So, what are you unwilling to lose? When you can identify what you're unwilling to lose, then you can know what your values are and you build boundaries upon your values.

WC: Okay, so walk us through these steps again. So, number one was identifying that baggage: what's in that backpack? What are we carrying around with us?

PBJ: Yes.

WC: Number two: boundaries and how understanding our values, know what we value and what's important to us, helps us identify those boundaries. What's next?

PBJ: The last one is brilliance, and this is the sweet spot. This is the place that we determine the value that you bring to the table and to the world. And here is the beauty of this brilliance. First of all, everybody has it, everybody has brilliance.

There is light in you. You may have a hard time identifying it, you may have a hard time connecting with it, but there is light in you. There is brilliance in you, and that brilliance is what separates you from everybody else. So, sometimes we think it's our hustle, we think it's our grind, we think it's the hours we put in, we think it's taking the jobs that nobody else wants, and that's what leads us to burnout because we think we have to do all of those things. We have to give so much. We have to sacrifice what matters to us in order to be appreciated, in order to be validated, in order to be relevant. And what I'm here to say is you can let all of that go, once you know what your brilliance is because people around you, they want you because of that brilliance. They want to be around you because of that brilliance. They want to be connected to you because of that brilliance. It is not because of your hustle. It is not because of your grind. It is not because of long hours. It's because they see something in you that you don't yet see in yourself. So, in brilliance, we identify what that light is and then we work together to empower you to articulate that value for yourself and for others. There is some confidence and power that comes when you know who you are and what you were created to do, not in a prideful way, not in pompous way, but a confident way. When you recognize that you have the responsibility to bring your brilliance to the world, that all of us need it. That every person that you're connected to, we don't need you to carry us on your back. We don't need you to carry every assignment on your back. What we need you to do is bring that brilliance that is already easy for you, that already flows freely from you, but is so easy for you that you discount it and you don't know the value of it.

WC: Wow. One of my wonderful mentors for many, many years, Gerald Jampolsky [?], I got to meet him. Of course, I stalked him for years until I finally actually got to meet him and spend time and went to his home and had dinner with him and his beautiful wife and he was so lovely. I was just there to be a stalker; I was there just to be in his presence. And he was, "How can I help you, Winn? What are you struggling with? Who are you struggling with?" And there was a struggle with somebody right there at that moment. And he said to me, he said, "Winn, that person is the light of the world and so is everyone else."

PBJ: Mm hm.

WC: And that, oh my gosh, that stuck with me because, first of all, I was having a difficult time seeing that this person is the light of the world. They are not the light of the world, they are a pain in the—they don't get it, they're wrong, they're inappropriate. "Winn, they are the light of the world and so is everyone else," and that stuck with me. Now you're saying it's our responsibility to figure that out. What is our brilliance? What is that sweet spot? I love that message.

PBJ: Absolutely, absolutely. And that's where the freedom comes. So, we started this conversation by saying, "But I'm called to help, but I'm called to give, but I'm called to do good." Yes, you are, through your brilliance. Yes, you are called to give, you are called to serve but through the brilliance that was placed inside of

you when you were created. And if we would all do that, oh my friend, what a beautiful world this would be.

WC: Wow, that's the gift that we have for the world. It's our strength, it's that light that you talked about, it's our brilliance, it's our self-love. That's the gift that we give to the planet.

PBJ: Absolutely.

WC: Okay, so we need to start wrapping this up so a couple of things. First of all, provide for our listeners some resources because they're thinking, *Okay, Winn, you're just scratching the surface right now. I need more from this woman.* So, share with our listeners how they can learn more about you, how they can subscribe, how they can get involved, how they can sign up to take this to a whole 'nother level.

PBJ: Absolutely, absolutely. So, first I'll say join us at the Heart Work with PBJ podcast. There's a new episode every Wednesday. You can find it on all podcast platforms so, join us there. I would also say, if you like Instagram, follow me at [drpatricebucknerjackson](https://www.instagram.com/drpatricebucknerjackson). I give a spoonful of PBJ every Monday and it is just one minute of encouragement and empowerment and just something to help you get your week going. And if you want to get deep in this work, and if you know that you are battling burnout and you could use a partner to help you work through it, then go to my website, [patricebucknerjackson.com](https://www.patricebucknerjackson.com) and reach out to me there. Let me know you're interested in the Heart Work Academy. My friend, I'm here to tell you we can help you get through this and you can still serve. You can do the work you were called to do without losing the life you deserve and you desire. And I would love to help you do that.

WC: And I'll make sure that all of this information that you just shared is in your bio, so if you go to [winnclaybaugh.com](https://www.winnclaybaugh.com), under this MASTERS segment of that website, all of this information will be in there but a couple of things before we wrap up. First of all, I've heard you say that as you were going through all of this, what was maybe surprising to you or maybe upsetting for you, I don't think I'm using the right word, but what you discovered was that as you pulled yourself out of the minutia, as you pulled yourself out of the role that you were playing to save everybody, life went on for these people. Everybody just somehow continued to move forward without you playing that role with them. Can you talk about that a little bit?

PBJ: Oh, my goodness, friend. It really rocked my socks off. So, when I walked away and I literally walked away, school was still going on, everything was still happening. I was shocked when students kept learning, the staff kept working, the university stayed open. It didn't stop because I wasn't there. And I had told myself this story, that if I don't do it, no one will. And what I learned, the truth is that it will continue. It may not be done the way that I would do it but it would get done. I had told myself that everybody needed me and what I learned, the truth



is, it was more about my need to be needed than them needing me. So, I learned a hard lesson but it humbled me. Yes, I bring value to the world, yes I brought value to that place and I'm so grateful that I still have great relationships with some students and folks who are still there. But I also learned that this world does not fall on my back. That if I make room, if I make room for others to step up, they will step up and they will do the job. So, sometimes we have to step back and make room for somebody else to step up.

WC: Wow, oh my gosh. I'm exhausted.

PBJ: Oh, friend.

WC: You are amazing. So, Dr. PBJ do you have a final message for our listeners.

PBJ: Yes. Yes, what I would say, friends, is I want you to know how valuable you are to this world and to those that you love. And in your jobs, places—we may hire other people, we may do whatever, but we can't ever replace a person. So, it is worth it for you to stop and to work through what you need to work through so that you can serve in freedom. Living in your calling should not cost you an ultimate sacrifice. So, let's work through this so that you can serve in freedom and be more impactful and share that brilliance all over this world.

WC: Wow, you have just lightened my load today. Thank you so much. Thank you so, so much and thank you for the work that you are doing and thanks for having the courage to go through what you went through and to get back up and share it with other people and then to come up with solutions on top of it. "This is how you can get there, too." Wow, just brilliant.

PBJ: Thank you for having me, my friend. It is my honor to share. I know the freedom now. I've tasted it and I want every other heart worker out there to have it as well, so, thank you for allowing me to share. Thank you for having me.

WC: Beautiful. Thanks for listening, everybody.