

[00:00:31] Patrick: Happy spring everyone. Whoo. It couldn't come fast enough for me. If you've been listening to the show, you know that I'm not a cold weather person.

I'm also not a yellow, powdery pollen kind of person either. So I'm not looking forward to that season here in balmy South Carolina. But I'll take it over the cold any day of the week.

We're going to heat this episode up. This is going to be a really good one. I have on the show with us today Dr. Marie Helen Pelletier, coming to us from Vancouver, British Columbia at our neighbor to the north in Canada, MH as she goes by. So we'll call her MH today. Makes it a little bit quicker, I guess.

MH is widely known among her friends as MH, so I consider myself her friend now. I'm going to call her that. She is a psychologist with a systems mind. Wouldn't you want to know more about that? She has both a PhD and an MBA, over 20 years of experience as a practicing psychologist, which makes me a little nervous having her on the show. Quite honestly, I'm a little nervous now. And as a senior leader in the corporate, insurance, governance, healthcare sectors, she has run the gamut. Her unique talent is bringing together workplace and psychology and in her presentations, translating concepts into takeaways that individuals can put into action the minute they leave the room. Her brand new book that we're going to be talking about on the episode today is called the Resilience Plan, a strategic approach to optimizing your work performance and mental health. Please join me in welcoming Dr. Marie Helen Pelletier. MH, I'm so glad you're here. Welcome to the show, Patrick.

[00:02:18] Marie-Hélène: I'm so glad to be, you are.

[00:02:22] Patrick: I'm going to jump right into this. I'm going to have you tell us more about yourself and how you got into this work. But I'm really interested in knowing about this term workplace mental health strategy as a phrase. I've seen it a number of times. We talked about it the other day offline workplace mental health strategy. I've learned a little bit more about this recently. I work with a couple of nonprofits who are in this space of if it's trauma informed or resilient organizations. I'm working with an organization right now that considers itself to be a healing centered organization as a nonprofit. But I'm really interested in this idea of workplace mental health strategy because I'm excited to talk about the difference between us working on our individual mental health and wellness and us as leaders creating organizational mental health in the workplace. So just know that that's where I'm really interested in going. But tell us more about yourself. How did you get into this? Tell us about who you are and what you're all about and everything you.

[00:03:30] Marie-Hélène: Just said in your introduction. Yes, it is going to be exactly at the center of, I think, a really good conversation in terms of me. I started my training as a psychologist early on in my career, had the chance to work in workplaces, mostly through initially employee and family assistance programs. I also lived in northern regions, which means that when it was time for me, I was interested in doing doctoral research. I was interested, and that's now 20 plus years ago. I ended up doing research on telehealth, looking at ways we can provide services on using video conferencing. I had to explain this every single time. That was prior to FaceTime and all these things. I had to use telephone lines to transmit video data because the Internet was not fast enough. All this to say that it meant a lot of managing of money because I had to have a lot of funding for technology aspects and also managing people teams. I had to keep with me for a long time, even if I didn't have money to pay them. And all this uncovered my interest in management and leadership. So then I went on and kept going, did an MBA part time while I started in very junior roles, managing call centers and that, and then progressed in different types of leadership roles, which I loved the whole thing, the whole range of it, right up to chief officer.

Now I have my own practice where I do mostly speaking, executive coaching and still small practice as a psychologist in addition to having this new book that just came out.

[00:05:07] Patrick: Wow. How you find the focus on all that is pretty impressive.

You mentioned the other day to me some what you call junior roles in this area of workplace mental health.

Tell us what that means from your how do you define workplace mental health? What is that arena really all about?

[00:05:30] Marie-Hélène: And it's important arena. So, workplace mental health, I would say ways in which as a workplace we pay attention to the mental health of the teams we work with, the leaders, we have our entire culture so that we can support a workforce that will be as healthy as possible to bring their best to what they're here to do. And the same way that organizations have a strategy, a business strategy, usually a way in which they will meet their goals, strategic pillars, tactics, the whole thing.

We want as organizations to also have a mental health strategy. And sometimes organizations, depending on where we are in our journey, we may have an overall health strategy, which often tends to be focused on physical health. And then you add the pillars like financial health and hopefully mental health, and ideally integrate all these together and connect that with our business strategy so that everything goes in that very positive direction.

[00:06:38] Patrick: Let me jump right out with a challenge that I'm curious as to how you handle it, because I've heard this, I'm sure you've run up against it, and that is the challenge of leaders, and I would say, particularly in the corporate sector, who think this mental health work is a bunch of fluff. I don't have time for that. We've got results to produce, we've got products to produce. I don't have time to think about and care about your feelings, and I've run into it. And people who aren't trying to be mean, they don't see the connection between that work that you're doing and the productivity that they care about and things like retention and those sorts of things. How do you help them overcome? Or how often do you run into that challenge? I'm curious.

And how do you help them overcome that and see the case for why this needs to be a focus in their organizations?

[00:07:35] Marie-Hélène: I don't run into it as often now, I would say it could be because I handle a biased sample of people who come to me because they want me to help them with it. So it's probably part of it.

But I think it's similar to when any idea that appears to be newer to a certain individual is brought forward, especially individuals who value numbers and metrics. Then often a good way to help this new information make sense to them is to bring numbers and that information. So you bring research about rates of burnout, positive impacts of decreasing rates of burnout, higher engagement, less turnover, the cost of turnover, things like that. And that usually will help them come on board. So that's one angle. Another angle that sometimes help is to target initial action. So if we're early, we'll call this early on the journey, perhaps early in this conversation, then going for items and areas of action that connect more naturally with what they tend to think about may help. So, for example, things like burnout will actually take people who are valuable out of their teams, people that they worked hard to hire and now are unable to produce those results. And so if we go straight to very established, researched research about things we can do to mitigate risk of burnout, like looking at workload, increasing sense of community, increasing influence on

decisions in the workplace, these are usually factors that make sense, are doable, and will have a positive impact. So that's a place to start. And then from there, we can eventually work at building strategies and all, but it often has to start with, actually, even though logically, you would say, do a strategy first, then implement tactics in this area very often, I found that you need to start with some actions, tactics, actually, and once you have a bit of a momentum from there, then turn and start building your first round of your first strategy.

[00:09:53] Patrick: I told you again the other day how much that resonated with me. So the people who are familiar with me, and certainly those that have worked with me, know that I use a leader plan with my coaches, and the leader plan, they look at me kind of funny and they go, what's the leader plan? And I say, well, do you have a strategic plan for your organization? Oh, yeah, I got that. Do you have a finance plan? Oh, yeah. You mean our budget? Yeah. Do you have a work plan for the month? For the year? For the week? Do your individual team members have their own work plans? Do you have a to do list on your calendar this week? Oh, yeah. And so I say, well, so we plan all those things. Why don't we plan our leadership behaviors? Why don't we plan the kinds of actions it will take to rise to the next level in our leadership? We just kind of think they're going to happen organically.

Just because we are cognitively aware of how important being a better delegator is, we think that, okay, now that I've named, it's just going to happen, but it won't because it hasn't already. And until we put together plans for exactly where we're going to start to create new habits, it's never going to work. So when I saw the title of your book, the resilience plan, Resilience, I got to say, I've heard that word more in the last couple of years than I've probably heard in all my life combined.

But so many people still hear that word, and it's just a concept, resilience. And I've even done some look into things like resilience. Is resilience the opposite of fragility? And, okay, what is antifragility. Does that go even a step further? And I want to get your take on that, by the way, in a minute. But when it comes down to a plan, it's like, what do you mean, a resilience plan? I'm either resilient or I'm not. That's in my DNA or that's in my personality or my family upbringing just made me a resilient person. But no, you're suggesting and insisting that it doesn't come automatically. It comes intentionally. So it really resonates with me that you would come to a framework that literally says the resilience plan. And it's pretty practical from what I can see. I mean, the things, if people pick up the book, and I highly recommend this, the sample plan and the worksheet that you include in there to come up with your own resilience plan, they're very simple, practical things. It's not rocket science that you're talking about here. It's just intentionality and discipline. Do I have it right?

[00:12:31] Marie-Hélène: Yes. Intentionality, discipline.

And having taken that moment, just like we do when we create strategic planning in a business, to have clarity on your current context, because sometimes we'll know the kinds of things we would want to do and be very dedicated to make them happens. We have a plan, we're intentional about them, and they still do not happen. And in my work with professionals and leaders, particularly, so highly performing people and committed to making so much happen, their life is already so full and at times overflowing, that in the absence of creating an actual plan that actually takes their context, current context into account, then nothing's going to happen. But if we do that, if we do factor in the context, and I do provide very approachable, friendly ways of doing this, then you will actually create a plan that makes sense, is actionable, you can implement, and that's what people do. That's what people tell me they do, and it works, and that's what changes everything.

[00:13:45] Patrick: Context, as I think, as you're talking about it, and you just, in 30 seconds,

cleared me up on the concept of it in the book. But yeah, I'm imagining that if I'm looking to work on a resilience plan, I'm in a very different place if I'm in crisis mode already. My organization is in crisis, I'm short staffed, I've got all the weight of the world is literally on my shoulders, and it's urgent stuff that keeps me up at night, that's one thing. And I'm burned out and I'm stressed and I'm tired. And all those things versus someone who is in a good place, maybe they're in growth mode, but things are humming smoothly, they're inspired, they're in the pocket. Life is going good, but that can create burnout too, because we can tend to just take it. It just consumes us. And so a resilience plan in that context might be a very different thing. I might be applying this wrong, but that's what comes to mind as you're talking about context. I'm almost thinking about lifecycle scenarios in your organization or your life.

[00:14:54] Marie-Hélène: Yes, it could be life cycles in organization or in life. It could be even within a cycle. How we are today versus three months from now may actually have different elements of the context for us personally.

And so all of these factors will be coming in to influence what our plan looks like.

One interesting perspective that I know you and I were talking about earlier in another conversation is how as an organization, it's one thing to move gradually towards at some point having a mental health strategy for the organization. And what we want is the same way we here as individuals need to have our own strategy. We cannot just say, oh, my organization is fantastic. They have all this plan for us, all these resources. They're there for me if I need them. And then we're secretly thinking, but I don't because I'm so naturally resilient as a person.

Not true. We need to invest in it, like you said. And so that's the importance. And yes, sometimes our current context will be one of crisis. Everything is overflowing. We're missing deadlines, things are falling through the cracks at a rate that is more than our usual in an uncomfortable way. And even in that context, there is an opportunity to create a plan for right now, to change the course of how we're tracking and then move into a different place.

[00:16:30] Patrick: Lately on the show, this has become more and more of a topic. It's become more and more of an issue in my executive coaching world and experience.

And we're doing a lot of talking about this dynamic of, well, tangent areas, things like everything from stress to burnout to loneliness. We have Nick Johnson on the show here in a little while, the author of executive Loneliness I've had Dr. Kim hires on, who is another specialist in burnout and research around that. And the reason that I'm including more and more of these kinds of content areas on the show is because this is what leaders, particularly in the sector that I normally deal with, which is social sector, leaders. This is a big deal right now. And something struck me.

I might be all over the place in this conversation, because as I was going through your book, man, I was just writing note after note. It struck me that in your book, you highlight research that says that the average utilization of a company's employee assistance program is about 8%.

And that's shocking, but not surprising.

And at first I thought, boy, that's too bad. I mean, as much as mental health is an issue and people are dealing with all the things that we're dealing with, certainly since the pandemic, certainly since 2020, mental health issues have become even more amplified. And yet, only 8% of people are using the employee assistance program, if their company has one, and that's to help provide counseling or therapy, these kinds of things, to help you through these things. And then it hit me about creating a resilience plan for the workplace.

Tell me if this analogy is way off. This is what hit me. I work with organizations, for example, who are trying to get more of their employees to utilize their project management software, right? Maybe it's Asana or Trello or whatever the program is they're using, and they're trying to get more of their employees to use it.

And so they put a strategy together to get more employees to use their project management software. Because we want people to use it. It's helpful. It creates productivity and efficiency and effectiveness. And so they create strategies like training, putting it into incentive plans, sending people to conferences, putting together joint team project boards, and getting people to experiment with it. Why wouldn't we do the same? If we looked at our company and said, man, only 8% of our people are utilizing our EaP, do they forget that it's there? Is there a stigma behind it? Like, why is that the case? And how might we plan to inspire employees to utilize such resources more effectively? It's the same kind of strategic thinking, and I could imagine there's just a huge gap in that.

[00:19:40] Marie-Hélène: It is something, exactly what you're describing is something some organizations are doing. I would say that when we're looking at having a mental health strategy from an organization perspective, that journey will look different for different organizations. Often at the beginning, they will start with identifying what they already have and what's the lowest hanging fruit? What could we do even more of? Or what's the most obvious gap? That kind of thing. And usually, as any good strategy will have, it will have a measurement component. So how are we doing here in this organization with usage of these resources? So at some point, the organization will look at in their particular case, what are people using? Are they using their employee and family assistance program? What is it here? Is it 20%? Is it 8%? Is it 2%? What is our utilization rate? I worked with an organization before who, in their overall process, they had these resources. People were not using them. They got surveys, and they learned that one of the things that was going on is people were aware that these resources existed. They just didn't feel comfortable connecting with them. So sometimes, in this particular case, the organization decided to create an internal peer support program, which requires lots of structure. It's not just about, oh, let's support each other as peers. It is a thing that would have, as part of its focus, a way to support people in making these resources feel like this is something they can use. And that's what they did. And it did lead to a much different utilization rate for them. But they could not have started with this. They had to start somewhere, see how it works in their organization and what's needed here. And for them, that was the right next step. So it was very aligned with their particular context.

[00:21:44] Patrick: You mentioned metrics of usage of such tools. It just may have prompted this question, how does an organization measure its mental health to begin with?

[00:21:54] Marie-Hélène: Yeah, I know you'll have different types of measures that may be considered. So the organization, usually at a basic level, they will have some information about proportion of individuals going on leave for mental health reasons versus physical health reasons. So we don't know who or what specifically for, but that may be one of the indicators. Sometimes they'll have other either direct indicators or just indicators that are correlated, like levels of engagement. For example, some organizations will do surveys specific to burnout. Some of them will be looking at the overall mental health of their employees through different workplace based tools, so different ways.

Sometimes it will also be based on conversations that leaders are having with their team members, knowing what kinds of things tend to generate more stress, and then being prepared to take action to optimize parts of the process, increase resources, increase supports to decrease sources of stress and tension.

[00:23:10] Patrick: Good. A bunch of great examples you had in your book.

This was so interesting, and it was challenging to me as a coach to ask myself, am I getting to the heart of some issues? You had a finance client who was struggling with procrastination, sort of self reported, I procrastinate. And you decided in helping him that I think you said it was a hymn, that we're not going to start with procrastination. We're not going to start by creating tips and tools for how to not procrastinate. We're going to start with what's at the source of this issue, which is your energy.

I found that so fascinating. And so what were some of the, first of all, I'm curious to know, I think you're going to context there, right. So here's someone who had to think about, okay, what's my context for procrastination? Well, my context is my energy is I got low supply, high demand, low supply, as you put it. And so that was the context. But I'm curious as to when you work then on an energy plan, what are some of the practical changes that people might make in their energy? And you might start by explaining this supply and demand ratio that you talk about in your book.

So explain that first, I guess, for our listeners. And then what are some of the practical kinds of things you might see a leader work on to work on their energy supply?

[00:24:38] Marie-Hélène: Yes.

Well, in this particular example that you were giving. So I have a practice as a psychologist, and this particular individual came to my psychology practice. And part of what you would do is not so much that I decided to go there. It's because I did an assessment and the person was actually depressed. And so therefore, there is no amount of working on procrastination habits. If the person's going through a depression, this has to receive attention first. So that's sort of how that happened and the ways for all of us, the thing is even that, right, getting into a depressed state does not happen instantly. We gradually sink towards it. And so that's useful for all of us to keep in mind to your question, because that's the reality that for all of us, there will be times where our mood is a bit lower, our energy level is lower, our concentration may not be as good. And if we pay attention early to these signs and do things to change the course of where things are going, we may well be mitigating our risk. Sometimes it's not possible, sometimes it is. But why not do everything we can to do as much as we can in the direction of health? Right. So kinds of things that would bring energy, and in this case, I'm talking about bringing energy as in increasing the protective factors that will nourish our resilience and make it even stronger and in doing so will increase energy as well. So things like anything on the exercise front. So cardio strength training, meditative type activity. And I'll tell you, most of the high performing people I work with, they have some form of exercise in their life with two problems with it. Number one, they do more in their head than their actual schedule. So they'll say, oh, yes, I do very fast walks three times a week. And I say, okay, how was last week? Well, last week was an exception. I was particularly busy. Doesn't work like this. You want to maintain it. And the second thing I see often is people do recognize it'd be great if they did meditation. They trust the research on that area, but they have not incorporated it yet. They tend to focus on what they see as more active recovery, like their sport, for example. But that's also an opportunity. Other ways, looking at our nutrition, looking at the amount of sleep we're protecting for ourselves, and getting time in interactions with people we enjoy interacting with. So it could be good friends, best friends, family member, just people we end up. Not we end up, but that we enjoy spending time with. These are some examples, top four from research that we have. There are others. Time in nature doing volunteer work, getting involved with your religion or spiritual beliefs, if you have one. So artistic endeavors for some people. So there are many. But you do need to invest in this. That's what's going to constitute your supply. That's where you're rebuilding. You're recovering, you're building what's in the tank. And then, of course, we have all the demands we're facing as

well that we need to pay attention to.

[00:28:12] Patrick: Okay, here's what I love, and I was expecting those to be the kinds of things that you brought up. And it's encouraging because those are not in and of themselves overwhelming things to employ, getting a little more exercise, spending some time in meditation. Yeah, we're not doing it, and there's reasons that are keeping us from it, but it's not hard to do those things from a competency standpoint. So to me, that provides hope. The idea is that if I'm in burnout or heading toward burnout or trying to avoid burnout, there are some very practical, not crazy hard things to do to mitigate it. That's how I read that. I don't know if that's the right way to look at it, but to me, it makes things know.

[00:29:05] Marie-Hélène: It does. But sometimes the human mind is funny. Sometimes it almost feels to me, Patrick, like if the thing to do to increase your resilience was something hard, like do head stands for five minutes every day or something, then maybe people would actually work really hard to actually do this. I actually think that because it looks so simple, it actually isn't right. The reality of in a very busy, overflowing life. Implementing five times half an hour of cardio exercise, sleeping well most nights, eating well most of the time, keeping your lunch with a friend harder than it looks, but it looks simple.

[00:29:57] Patrick: Anyone would say to any of those things if you ask them, hey, could you do this? Yeah, I could do that.

I don't come across many people go, no, there's really no way I could do that. So that's what I mean by it is like our mind tells us, yes, these are things I should be able to do, but I want to come back to this. You're really spurring my thought here when you say that actually we're more likely. Did I hear this? We're more likely to actually do something that might be a little harder to do.

[00:30:32] Marie-Hélène: That we see as harder, that we see as harder, because again, the actual reality is harder than it looks, but that we see as harder. And I think it's in part, could be a number of things, like the beliefs we've developed through our training or in the field we work in. Like many of us, we've developed an expertise, we've studied, we're continuing to develop our learning in our very complex areas of work. We go to conferences, all these things, and it almost looks too simple.

What, is that going to actually make a difference? Actually, yes, it will. Some clinics in the US particularly, and in other countries as well, medical clinics are exclusively focused on lifestyle changes and are bringing the results. So, no, it is actually very significant. It is much harder than we think and it will have the impact that we're looking for. We know this from body of research. So it's the implementation. And back to looking realistically at your context, because I was speaking to an entrepreneur just yesterday who finally had figured out a way to do a yoga class twice a week. Feeling fabulous about this. That's great. If we were, and we sort of were just high level exploring what her particular strategic resilience plan might include, given this. And we said, well, maybe there is a four minute yoga practice you could do at home a third time in your week to bring even more of this source of supply in a way that's doable given your life. We were not sending her to a third class of yoga outside of home, which is wonderful, but requires at least a two and a half hour commitment, which she didn't have. But could we download an app and do a four minute? Yes, we could. So that was realistic based on her context, on her particular values and her needs. And that is doable.

[00:32:45] Patrick: Yeah. And the other thing is it has to go beyond what you and I are doing right now, which is calling it out. It has to get put in a plan. So you can't just say, okay, I'm going to do more yoga.

It has to be in a plan. You ask people, does your to do list get done?

Most the important ones do.

And so until we put this into action, and again, this is very related to the work we do in coaching. If I don't have a leader plan that's giving me some specific action, getting the concepts and talking about the concepts are not going to get me there. So I really appreciate that.

[00:33:27] Marie-Hélène: Agreed? Yes. No need to have a plan.

[00:33:30] Patrick: Yeah. Something on this energy supply and demand thing. When I heard it, I thought of this cup half empty, half full thing that we use to describe pessimism and optimism. And I had a guest on the show a number of weeks ago. I've talked about this a lot now. I guess it really must have resonated with me. Talking about the answer to that question, is the glass half full or half empty? Depends on which direction is the pour. If you're pouring out of the cup, you're pouring from the cup out, then the cup is half empty.

If you're pouring into the cup and you're at that halfway mark and you're pouring into it, the cup is half full because that's the direction it's moving. And I kind of tend to think of this supply and demand thing that way. If our energy, we have to make sure we're pouring into our cups, at least as we're pouring out of it, or as much as, if not more than we're pouring out of it.

I don't know. Does that make sense?

[00:34:39] Marie-Hélène: Yeah.

So, yes, I agree with this. And I think most people would probably nod and say, well, yeah, that sounds very good. I wish I could do that.

Or they are saying they're thinking they're trying to do that, but not really. Part of what I'm hearing often happens is especially the high performing individuals will tend to think until they do a very formal, it doesn't take a long time, but formal as in putting it in writing, assessment of their sources of supply and demand. They tend to think they have more supply than they actually do, and they tend to think they have less demand than they actually do in terms of amount and size.

[00:35:27] Patrick: I believe that.

[00:35:31] Marie-Hélène: For good reasons, part of getting to where we are has required that optimistic bias of saying, oh, that's not too big. I can keep going, that's fine. Don't care about that barrier going. And so it has many advantages. Wonderful. And there are times where we really actually want to be realistic about them. And it's only after we've been that realistic, seeing that list, that long list of demands that we have that includes some positive and negative ones, but all the things that demand from us and then seeing that one item source of supply, that it already starts shifting where I may need to shift, where I'm investing my time. The same way that in our work roles, right. At some point, if the kinds of deliverables we have on our list is just too big for a normal day for us and our teams, it's part of our roles as leaders to reprioritize, shift where we're putting attention first, all that we do it at work, and it just needs to be done in a similar way for our resilience so that we can build it, ideally, proactively, but shift where things are going if we're right now in a slide down towards much less of it.

[00:36:55] Patrick: Boy, well said. This is powerful stuff. And you've led me now into another place in your book where you talk about the dangers of being dubbed the rock, right? Being

someone's rock. Have you ever had someone, you asked this in the book. Have you ever had someone say, oh, you're my rock? You're just like a rock in this organization?

And we all love hearing that. All right? Makes us feel really good, really special, really contributing, really important to people. We're heroes. But you talk about the dangers of it, and I see it in spades. In the nonprofit sector, we do an assessment on our coaches. In the nonprofit sector, well, we do this on everybody, but we do a motivators assessment to find out on the seven dimensions of motivation.

Where do I get most of my energy and fulfillment? And it wouldn't surprise you or anyone on this, listening to this show, it wouldn't surprise anybody to know that among the social sector leaders, altruism is often the top motivator for them. They're in it to make a difference for someone else. These are people who would consider themselves to be servant leaders or mission driven leaders or purpose driven leaders to add value to the world and improve the lives of other people. That's where they get their significance. That's where their motivation comes from. What the assessment will often reveal to them are the blind spots of where that motivation can get them into even personal trouble. Because if my altruism motivator is so high that it's all I pay attention to and I don't pay attention to the aesthetics of an organization, the economics of an organization or myself.

Individualism, autonomy, self care, all those things. Then what happens is I become subservient to the point of self sacrifice, to the point of I diminish my own ability and energy to actually do what I'm purporting to do, which is help people. So it's this put the oxygen mask on yourself before you help others kind of thing. But we see it in data, when we see it show up that way, that often leaders are burning out because they're not taking time for themselves, because they think that's counter mission instead of thinking that's critical to the mission.

[00:39:25] Marie-Hélène: Yes, and it's such an important reframe. Right? Because I think sometimes when you take a moment to realize this, it can shift how you're thinking. I've seen this a lot.

When you're looking at things very much from a psychologist only perspective, then what you're trying to do is convince people, help them see and convince them that it's critical that they pay attention to their own psychological health and their resilience first, so that they can do all these wonderful things, that without it, none of that is going to happen or not as great all this. And that's true. That's very true. If we could just bring this way of thinking to as many people as possible, that it would be wonderful. Sometimes that's not the door, because they're so far on that continuum of being turned towards others that trying to share this perspective here just does not gel. And many times now that I'm not exclusively in the psychologist bubble, I'm more at that intersection of psychology and business bubble. I usually will tell them, look, from a pure psychology perspective, you'd have all the reasons in the world to do this. The logic is there, the research is there, the whole thing, it's not going to stick with you. So let's leave that alone for right now. You're going to need it to help others. Your sole perspective, your sole focus is serving your team, serving others. Do you see all the ways in which right now, this is starting to fail? And if you want to bring this back, we need to do this here. I, as a psychologist, would love for you to do it for yourself, as a valid, exclusively good reasons. But if right now your mind's not there, then do it for your team, because that's the only way you're going to be able to bring your best. And then I get them to action and down the road, yes, they may come back and see the other part of the picture, but initially, in some ways, I don't care how you get there, but you need to make these choices.

[00:41:39] Patrick: I love that. Wow. What a gift you are to your clients. That's incredible, because you're taking them places they couldn't go on their own, literally. Some of this, I don't

know, we use the word denial a lot, right? I mean, are people in denial that they're burned out?

Is that the right word or are they just not aware of it? They're like ignorant.

[00:42:01] Marie-Hélène: Yes.

Maybe it's both. So either you've never learned to pay attention to the early signs. Sometimes you've learned not to. Literally, right. You may have had individuals in your life earlier, parents, coaches, others around you, that when you've expressed that you were starting to feel too tired or whatever, do you say, oh, come on, keep going. You still have it. And you go, persist. Where's your grit? Whatever. Like, go. And it has shaped a bit how you do things. So sometimes you've actually learned not to pay attention. So there's that. Sometimes you've learned also through these comments that if you were to pay attention, you would not be appreciated as much. We would not think as highly of you. That would be a weakness. So sometimes that's that that makes you not listen.

Sometimes it feels like there is so much to do here and you so don't know what you would do with this increased awareness that it just feels too big. I can't possibly. It's like a protection almost.

I can't possibly pay attention to how I'm feeling because if I do, it's going to be even more and I won't know what to do with it. So it could be a number of reasons that make us not pay attention, but the reality is that this is similar to in business. If we were to look, you and I, to solve a work related issue here, we would unlikely say, well, there are early signs, but we don't want to hear them. Let's wait until it's an actual problem.

We would say, no, we want data. We want all the numbers now.

[00:43:54] Patrick: We want to get ahead of it.

[00:43:55] Marie-Hélène: Right? We want to get ahead of it. And if we don't know what to do, oh, we're going to get a resource. We're going to connect with a peer, with a mentor, with an advisor, with a consultant, with an executive coach, whatever. That's what we do. If we don't know how to deal with something, that's what we do. Here. So same thing here. If we think we have early signs, we don't know what to do with them. I mean, there are still early answers, like some of what we were talking about earlier. Bring back the exercise, bring back things that have helped me before. But if I'm beyond this, or I don't even know how I would right now. Get your resource. That's the next step.

[00:44:34] Patrick: Would you be willing to tell the story of your experience at the river with your husband? Because I think that's a perfect example of what you're talking about in terms. Know, we wear these capes, we got to be heroes. We tell ourselves, oh, come on. Your story in your book is very profound. I'd love to hear it if you're willing to share.

[00:44:58] Marie-Hélène: Yeah. Patrick, in the book, we each have really our own stories, our own experiences that sometimes will serve as lessons, and that's one of mine for resilience. What had happened is Nick, my husband, and I, were doing a lot of mountaineering, and we had decided to go do an eight day traverse. So you go in somewhere and eight days later come out somewhere else in this traverse, we had come across a river on day one that we ended up crossing again on day eight. Only on day eight, that river was made much bigger because of snow melting. And so husband crossed a river. We looked at each other to plan how I was going to cross it, too. And he gestured he would come back and get me because he had felt the current, but we could not even hear each other on the side of the river because it was now so

loud and everything. And I'm on my side thinking, well, one of us has crossed it. So I'm gesturing, stay there, I will come to you.

And so then I go in the river to cross it. And the river took me away, basically, right? The current just grabbed me by my legs the second I got in there. I'm going down the river head first. The water is coming, the whole thing. And then in the midst of me thinking, oh, my God, I'm actually possibly going to draw on here, I felt this force grabbing me by the backpack and throwing me on the second side of the river. And Nick, of course, had been able to get.

And of course, that was a moment right there. But the point that I'm talking about in the book with this is this realization after this story, this situation, how it was a really useful analogy for what happens to me and many other people I work with in our work life, in that when we are at the beginning of this trek, the first time we crossed that river, things were like, pretty good. Good weather, good energy, good everything. And we used all the resources that we usually use. We talked, we crossed it in a very systematic way. We had done a plan A, a plan B, we had done the whole thing and all went really well. But when we got to there, that same river again, what looked like the same, it was the same, but much bigger river, we came there in a different context. We now were exhausted. We were at the end of that trek, there were now new demands because, yeah, same river, but looks different, cannot hear each other, cannot talk, not planning together, not many things. And that's, in the end, what put in this case both of our safety at risk. And so that was just that good analogy for, yeah, when demands are normal, we're pretty good, like many years ago, perhaps, or in phases, but when we're most at risk is when we let go of all these protective factors and that's where we need them the most. And so let's make sure we create this plan that takes into account the context such that we will keep these actions and maintain our resilience.

[00:48:23] Patrick: That's so good.

What a great, harrowing experience, to be sure, but what a great story to be able to apply to this in such an authentic way. It really hits home.

I use this a lot on this show. Now, the greek philosopher, I think, Heraclitus, if that's how you say his name, said, the man cannot step in the same river twice because he's not the same man, and it's not the same river.

[00:48:51] Marie-Hélène: Right.

[00:48:53] Patrick: And what an actual literal example of that. It was a different river by the time you got to it. The second time, with the snow melting and all that, and the current, and you were a different person because you were a different place in the journey. The energy and the strength wasn't what it was before.

What an amazing, literal truth to that statement.

I want to cover one more thing with you, at least. I loved the illustration in your book, man. This made me almost jump up and shout.

I hear the term work life balance, and I just go, I just don't like that term. And I don't like it because that implies that work and life are two different things.

And I don't think they are. I think work is a part of our life. It's not something other than our life. So I don't get the work life balance. I mean, I get it, but I don't like the term.

I never seen an illustration like yours that made it so clear to me. And it was the double helix. Can you explain what that model is? I know it's hard for people to see, but if you picture this DNA strand, but if you can help people sort of understand that model visually and what it really means, I think it would be worth talking about quickly.

[00:50:16] Marie-Hélène: Oh, thank you. Thank you for saying this. Yes. So if you picture DNA strand. So two lines going down, right, in a bit of a slowly shaped movement and then having rungs, like four rungs, for example.

As I was researching some visual to represent how I see the importance of resilience and the various parts of it, I came across looking. I mean, I had seen it before, like all of us, but I looked at it this time thinking, oh, look, it works. So if you think of it as the two sides of the strand, one being your professional, one being your personal life. So, to your point, Patrick, and that's exactly the idea. Here they are together, linked together intrinsically, always. And then the four rungs. And that's part of what I explore in the book. What do we need to look into more, in a bit more detail, to have the information we need to create the plan. So our values is one, our sources of supply and demand, our context, and then we create our strategy. And so I thought this was a nice visual. And of course, the other nice angle to this is that in the nature, plants do this, they will take the shape of DNA, like this twisting piece, to protect themselves from the environment, from winds, from challenges in their growth. And so the image just seemed to work in a number of ways. And, yeah, because we've all seen it, it connects relatively quickly with how integrated all this needs to be.

[00:51:55] Patrick: Yeah, very cool.

I absolutely want to encourage people to get this book.

This isn't just a book plug. I mean, we do this, we have guests on, they have books. Obviously, we want to let people know about it, but I want our leaders to read this book.

I don't know of another source that, to me, is more relevant for our work and for our listeners than this actual body of work that you've got here, the resilience plan.

And so I want to encourage people to get.

Have.

If you're listening to this on Spotify or whatever this will be in our show notes, we'll put the link to the book, we'll put the link to the site, everywhere you need to go to get it. But it's just really a great body of work. We've only touched on a few of the just gold nuggets that are in there. And I really appreciate the work that you've done on this, because this is meaningful. This is something we need, and the world, I think, desperately needs it right now.

Thank you. Yeah, thank you. I want to wrap this up with a couple of questions I like to ask all my guests. And it starts with a leader in your life that comes to mind as someone who's had profound impact on you, your view of leadership, your success in life, positive or negative, someone who's had great impact on who you are today as a leader. I just love those stories. They're so diverse and help us learn a little bit more about each other and where we come from in our minds. Who comes to mind for you and why?

[00:53:30] Marie-Hélène: So I'm going to go with Dean Connor. Dean Connor was the president and CEO of Sunlife Financial Global for the years where I worked at Sunlife Financial.

Now he was the global CEO high up over here. So this is not like a one level up or like, I don't know how many levels there were between me and Dean Connor or anyone and Dean Connor, because the reality is that he had such a style of leadership that was inclusive of everyone that it probably felt to most of us that we knew him, even if most of us did not have opportunities to talk to him individually.

But given the role that I was hired, recruited to take there, I was asked to create their first mental health strategy for all their group benefits, clients, and then other roles there.

It was very important for me that I have his support for it. And through my usual asking for forgiveness, not permission, I found my way in a conversation with Dean Connor. I got to this conversation. He knew what the kinds of things I was working on provided his perspective. Very informed, very human on it. And I knew from that moment that that mission that I was given was truly, actually supported from the absolute top. And that was immensely inspiring to see because in all the organizations I've had the chance to work with then and since then, when the commitment is through the organization and we want it to come from everyone in the organization and everyone leading the organization, then magnificent things can happen. So. And I happen to have Dean Connor as one of the endorsers for my book also. But, yeah, what an inspiring leader to have the chance to have spoken to.

[00:55:45] Patrick: Wow. High praise.

It's interesting that the influences that people have and people like Dean often don't know when they've made that kind of impact on somebody. This is just part of their makeup, part of their personhood. And so they don't always even realize the impact that they've had. So I love it that you've called it out. Last question. Marie Helen, you are on the top of a mountain and below are all the leaders of the world, people who consider themselves to be in some leadership role and they're wanting to hear from you what the number one tenet of leadership is in your view. And you've got a 15 2nd microphone to tell the leaders of the world one thing. What would you share?

[00:56:33] Marie-Hélène: Strategic resilience.

[00:56:35] Patrick: Well, there's a surprise.

[00:56:37] Marie-Hélène: Yeah. No, I need you to think more strategically about your resilience. Talk more strategically about it so you're thinking for yourself, but you're talking so that others also do the same and taking your actions in a strategic way.

[00:56:52] Patrick: Boy, I love it. Thank you so much. I am very big into be intentional and that's what strategy is. It's intentionality. That's what planning is. It's intentionality. And one of the things I find myself doing is trying to help people understand that's not a luxury that you do. If you have time, that's part of the job.

Planning for that resilience should be part of the job, not something.

If I can get to that on the weekends, maybe I will. If you consider it as a critical element, put it on your job description if you have to. I think it's that critical. I think you do too. Thank you for what you're doing. I really appreciate it.

[00:57:32] Marie-Hélène: Well said. Thank you. Patrick.

[00:57:34] Patrick: Yeah. I want to direct people to the [resilienceplan.com](https://www.resilienceplan.com).

Thereesillienceplan.com that will take you to everything you need to know about Dr. Marie Helene Pelletier and the book the Resilience Plan, a strategic approach to optimizing your work performance and mental health. Don't ignore it. It's important. It'll catch you. Lead dawn folks.