

FULL EPISODE Devon Grilly FRIED.mp3

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SPEAKERS

Caitlin Donovan, Devon Grilly



Caitlin Donovan 00:03

Alright everybody Today I am talking to Devon Grilly who is a career coach for women in STEM, which is science and tech, and has a master's in bioengineering. She is currently researching and interviewing women in the tech industry to create more ways for women to thrive in a field that is still just as male dominated and burnout filled as it was 20 years ago, Devon went through multiple burnout recovery loops before ending the cycle using techniques that she now shares with her clients. She writes regularly about career development, sexism and burnout on thrive global medium, LinkedIn and her own blog. Devon is also a huge sci fi fan and a Gamer Girl. Devon, thank you so much for being on the show.



Devon Grilly 00:46

Thanks, Caitlin. I'm glad to be here.



Caitlin Donovan 00:48

So what I want to start out with and what I've been starting everyone out with is what what happen to you? Basically. What is what is your burnout story? What did you go through? How did you get here?



Devon Grilly 01:00

I think the biggest one was when I made the switch from teaching to coaching. And it was one of those like the universe is sending you messages and you're ignoring them stories where I injured myself, not just once but multiple times. And as the workout or workaholic and workoutaholic as I was back then, that I was I didn't take any time off of work, I had fallen down some stairs, totally busted up my ankle, and went to work. Almost every day I think I missed like one day, in a boot or on crutches, the whole nine yards, which created back problems and all these things until I finally was gasping for pain in the middle of class and had to take a few months of just bed rest to recover from surgery.



Caitlin Donovan 02:00

At that time you were a teacher, Correct?



Devon Grilly 02:01

yeah. And with all of that time, when I had nothing to do but think about my life and the direction it was going. And I realized finally that this wasn't working for me. And I was burnt out, not just physically, like, it wasn't just the injury, it was just not feeling good about the work that I was doing anymore, which was really hard because I had really loved it. You know, it was hard to choose to go into teaching and coming to a point where I wasn't loving it anymore to the point where it was hurting me, mentally, emotionally, physically, was really hard to admit and say, Okay, what am I going to do now?



Caitlin Donovan 02:50

Yeah, I think this is such a common common thing to feel. But if I'm not this, then then what and I chose this for good reasons. And I like this. Am I wrong? Is it wrong?



Devon Grilly 03:05

Right?



Caitlin Donovan 03:06

What's going on, and you have a blog post about this story, not a blog post an article on LinkedIn, which I will share in the show notes, which is an incredibly, like kind of vulnerable and strong. Article, I just really loved it. And you were talking about chronic having pain

from your hips all the way to your toes that was so intense that you were sweating. And this was after you had ruptured a tendon in your ankle and after other stuff. And you said: "no, I would power through this, just like I did when I ruptured the tendon in my ankle. At least this time I wasn't on crutches, the pain wasn't so bad. I just couldn't sit for too long, or stand or breathe the wrong way or laugh." And I read that and I my whole body went into chills because not only have I been that person, I have a also talked to so many of those people.



Devon Grilly 04:06

Yeah, the denial can be super strong. And we almost culturally wear it as a badge of honor. You know, like the ability to just power through knuckle through and people are like, Wow, I can't believe how amazing you are for, for doing that thing when you were in pain. But it's it's a hollow victory. It has super huge consequences. If you do that frequently.



Caitlin Donovan 04:30

Yeah. And like you said, You missed only one day of work. And as soon as you said it, I thought that's something that we're usually so proud of.



Devon Grilly 04:44

Right. I remember way earlier in my career, I gotten in a car accident. And on my way driving to work. I don't remember anything about like most of that day because I had a head injury. But apparently I told the fireman to call the school and I told her I was just going to be a little late.



Caitlin Donovan 05:07

Yeah, right. I mean, I just recently, it was funny when I read your story. I've read this article before, but I reread it today to prepare for our interview. And when I read the part where you ruptured your tendon, I am literally sitting here nursing surgery post rupturing my Achilles tendon a couple of weeks ago. And on that day, I had just the day before going for an interview to start a new acupuncture position. As soon as my New York license comes through. And the first thing I was thinking of was like, well, I wonder when I'm going to be able to start working now. Like, I hope this doesn't push it back.



Devon Grilly 05:45

Right?



Caitlin Donovan 05:46

I'm a burnout coach, you're a burnout coach Like, we know these things. And it's still, what I want people to take from that is the fact that you know, we're all human. And we all get caught in these cycles. One of the things that that you wrote was that you were in this sort of loop, right that you that you went burnout, recovery, burnout, recovery, burnout, recovery, it wasn't just a one time thing. And that's been my experience as well, like burnout for me at this point in my life is not something that's totally disappeared. It's something that serves as my something that I used to call for patients, a red flag symptom. And it's not one symptom, it's a million symptoms. But it is the thing that when I feel it creeping in, reminds me to like, you know, stop wait minute, a little bit and pay attention to what's going on in my world. Right? So you went through this multiple times, like so can you can you talk us through that a little bit?



Devon Grilly 06:45

Yeah, and the cycle of being a public school teacher kind of lends itself to staying in that pattern longer just because of the way that you have summers off, right? So it's easy. And you can see, like, if you're in a corporate job, when you go on vacation, you can come back and be like, Oh, it's not so bad. I can keep going. Imagine having like, two months off every year. And even, no, no matter how bad it was in June, by the time September comes around, you're like, the pain is no longer in your memory, you know, like you've rationalized it away. And so if that's part of like, your skill is being able to have coping strategies, which are great. Being able to minimize the impacts of things is, is a good skill, but can also lead you to stay in a damaging situation a lot longer than you might otherwise.



Caitlin Donovan 07:45

Yeah, it feels like the line that gets crossed is the line between like coping mechanism that is successful. And then denial. Yes. Right. Does that feel true to you as well?



Devon Grilly 07:57

Absolutely. And I see that even just in stress management techniques, like I was reading an article today that was about ways to prevent burnout. And I looked at them and I thought, well, they could be, or they could just be ways to put a bandaid on it, you know, like

exercising frequently, like regularly, of course, that's important in and it's going to help you be more stress resilient. Right. However, if there's a core disconnect between you and what you're doing on a regular basis, it's just going to prolong the amount of time before you actually have to look at what's really the problem,



Caitlin Donovan 08:37

which is what you said, again, in the in that one article, I read a few of your blog posts. And I think back to this, I keep going back to this article, because it's I just think it's so powerful. And you said that, you know, multiple injuries, put me out of commission for months, and quote, with nothing to do but reflect on the Truth of My burnout.



Devon Grilly 09:00

Yeah, when you can't move, when I had spine surgery, it was like, it felt like being a puppet where they cut the strings, I couldn't do anything I couldn't even sit up, it was really hard. And so all of my coping strategies, a lot of them included exercise, exercise was always like my stress reliever. And so when I couldn't do that at all, like not even a little bit, it was almost like, you know, if you were addicted to a drug, and all of a sudden you had to go cold turkey, you'd have a lot of things to think about. And so it was like that, for me, like all of my coping strategies, whether it was exercise, or even my other hobbies, you know, like, we know how important hobbies are for stress reduction, that when you're lying in bed, you can't do anything other than maybe like watch TV or read a book. There's not a lot of hobbies, and even reading a book was challenging, because we're lifting my arms was not fun. So all of those strategies that I had been using to stay on top of things. Yeah, I couldn't do a single one of them. And so that's when I finally had to really think about this pattern. And whether it was something I wanted to go through again.



Caitlin Donovan 10:21

Yeah. And what you what you wrote, this is, I almost cried when I read this. It's like, it's such a powerful image. What I kept coming back to the notion of regret, if this was it I had suffered complications, and become paralyzed or die, this was following a spinal surgery. What would I regret most? I thought about my daughter, and how I was showing up as a mom is this even my voice is breaking now just reading it, I'd come home from work completely burned out with no energy for play, or even talking about her day. This was not the legacy I had in mind. Did I want to power through the rest of my life waiting for retirement to come? How many people do we know that that's actually their plan? Just work real real hard, so I can retire early. And then you asked, What if I didn't make it to

retirement?



Devon Grilly 11:15

Yeah. You never know. Right? It's, it's like the ultimate question. We have no idea when our time is going to be up. And if it ended tomorrow, would I be satisfied with that? And at that point, I really didn't believe that I would be. And that was a really hard truth to face. And then I start wondering, like, why didn't I ask myself these questions earlier and more often to see if I'm on track with where I really want to be?



Caitlin Donovan 11:46

Because you were coping?



Devon Grilly 11:47

Yeah, because I was coping. And I don't think we really do a lot to encourage that level of reflection for people. As a society,



Caitlin Donovan 11:59

I agree. And I think it's why coaching is becoming so popular, so fast over the past 20 years, it just absolutely exploded. And it's I really believe it's simply because we are asking often very pointed questions that really get to the heart of things quickly. And people are shocked, because they've never taken the time to actually think about answering things in this way.



Devon Grilly 12:25

Yeah, and it's very hard to stick with it on your own. Yeah, and not immediately find something else to distract yourself with, because it's uncomfortable. So when you have somebody who is not judging you and is just there to listen, and like a dog with a bone, like keeps coming back to the elephant in the room, you can't ignore it. And you can actually start doing something about it, which is the hopeful side of things.



Caitlin Donovan 12:53

Right? I was, you know, what they were truffle finders called those pigs that find truffles? I

don't remember right now, but one of my patients told me I was like that for people's bullshit. And so in coaching, I'm, I can be a little abrupt with people, because when I hear things in between the lines, I'm like, Hey, listen, you're saying this. But there's, there's this thing in between, like the there's a confrontational moment, sometimes to coaching that happens that that not everybody can handle and not every coach works that way I my particular style is to hold up the mirror and say, but this is what's happening right now. But like you said, doing it yourself without anybody on the other side, it's really easy to quote unquote, do the work, and feel like you're quote unquote, making progress without actually even scratching the surface, if you don't have anyone to bounce the ball back to to sort of check in with yourself. so that they can check in with you right?

 Devon Grilly 14:01
Yeah.

 Caitlin Donovan 14:03
The other thing that I loved about your story was that when you decided to go to a coaching program to learn how to be a coach, you went back to teaching but as a long term substitute at the same school that you had been, and that really gave you an opportunity to double check that you were kind of doing the right thing.

 Devon Grilly 14:22
Yeah, that was hard too because my MO in the past when I was, at least in my 20s was to be kind of like the action heroes walking out of the forest, like dropping a match behind them so the whole thing goes up in flames. This is also a chance for me to like disrupt that pattern for myself, and to go back and have closure that was very harmonious and be able to gracefully talk to people about why I was making the change, and to thank them for the years that we had worked together and all of that, which I don't know that I would have necessarily done because when I had my surgery, and I ended up taking the whole year off, it was in November. And so it was nice, because the the maternity leave I covered was like the last half of the year. So it was like I got to finish that out. And just say goodbye to the whole thing. And it did a really good job of proving to me like this is not no longer the backup plan. I was right about what I need, which for myself is creative freedom is super huge. And there's it's not about finding another coping strategy to ignore that fact.

 Caitlin Donovan 15:37

Yeah, that's exactly what you wrote, right? Like, it was important for me to know that I wasn't just running away from my burnout that I was running towards a career that would sustain me and fulfill me in the long run. Yes. And then you do give a few really great questions underneath at the bottom of this post for people to start if if people haven't started asking these questions, there are a few really great ones in this article, so I will share it in the show notes that you can get into them. And, and will and we will keep moving forward. So one of the things in your bio, you said that, you know, you became a coach, and then that changed into career coaching. And then you're specifically working as a career coach for women in STEM. So science, technology, engineering and math, Mech, what's the M?



Devon Grilly 16:22

Math, sometimes, Sometimes medicine, depending on what level of people you're talking to,



Caitlin Donovan 16:27

okay, I was I stopped for a second I was like, Oh, is that math? So what? how did how do we go from teacher to career coaching stem? I mean, you do have the degree in bioengineering amasters and bioengineering. So the there's the background is already there. But can you tell me sort of what happened? How did that happen?



Devon Grilly 16:49

Um, I started using a lot of the questioning techniques that I use with clients on myself, as I got more clear about what's my mission, who am I here to serve, so that I am creating a legacy that I'm going to be proud of. And when I thought about the aspects of my past careers, that I really enjoyed, and what the commonalities were, even in teaching, the highlight, and what kept me in it probably for a few years longer than it would have otherwise was to be a mentor for students that were working on projects. So they work creating their own research projects and doing their own science and engineering Fair program. So I was in charge of that. And that was really rewarding for me. And I thought about my favorite people that I work with in that program. Because there was a place where I had ultimate creative freedom, there was no curriculum for me to follow. My advice that I gave to the teacher took over after me who is a wonderful young teacher, I told her my secret to success of bringing this program from three students to like more than 30 students was to always say, yes.



Caitlin Donovan 18:18

and explore,



Devon Grilly 18:20

to always say yes, even if it sounds like a terrible idea, like, and let them figure it out. So having that experience, and thinking about the students I really liked working with, there were some really incredible young women who are just so inquisitive and so passionate, and they really create a projects that would help other people. And I remember it being that girl. And how sort of crushing it was, when I got into the working world, it was partly a culture shock, because it really hasn't changed. So I did all these interviews, like, certainly something must have changed in 20 years, and it hasn't, it's still very predominantly older white men that you find yourselves working with, if you're a female engineer. And it's just weird to go from a school environment that's very, like gender balanced. And we make a lot of accommodations. And I see even in schools now with STEM programs and stuff, all the work that we're doing to encourage women to go into these fields. And then I thought about my students as I was interviewing these women, and I thought about what's going to happen to them, when I've encouraged them to go into these fields, and then they graduate. And all the support just evaporates for them. Right. And that really broke my heart. And so I said, like, if I can coach, anyone, there's plenty of coaches out there. Who can I serve, that's going to be fulfilling to me in who I understand what their story is? And for me, that's women that are really into science and engineering technology. And like, because I get it, like, I get like, you went into this field to make a difference to cure cancer to save the planet. And then you get there. And it doesn't always feel like that every day.



Caitlin Donovan 20:22

Yeah, I actually had a patient in STEM. And when I was still in Europe, and she said that, because she was one of the only women in the lab, she was often sort of voted to go do all the presentations, even for things that her research had already proven incorrect.



Devon Grilly 20:42

My God, yeah, and I wish I could say that I was shocked by that. But



Caitlin Donovan 20:46

But you're not all Yeah. And she said to me, you know, like I I always my job is to is to

double the research is to triple the research is to quadruple the research. And this major finding happened a year ago, and I I've done this study three times now. And my results don't match the results of the original study, that people were so excited about the original study, that they put us on a panel, in you know, some foreign country, and now I have to go and present this material that I do not believe in, because no one else will do it. Because I'm the woman like they put it on my plate. It wasn't saying it wasn't an option, like can you do this? Can you not do this? It was like you do the presentations because you look prettiest.



Devon Grilly 21:30

That's so frustrating.



Caitlin Donovan 21:31

It's so frustrating. If I myself really frustrated for her in that I mean, STEM is not something that I particularly know a ton about. But I when she was telling me that I was just like, you know, how do you? How do you help people deal with that? And that's a that's a hypothetical question at the moment, because I know, you could probably talk on that topic for quite a few minutes, quite a few hours. But um, one of the other blog posts that I found on your website, I think it might be fairly old. I don't know exactly what the date was. But I think that it's a great post. And there's another one that I will share, because I think it's really powerful. Oh, it says September 2018. three reasons why boundaries are the foundation for a happy life. Yes. And, and boundary building, I feel like is such a huge part of avoiding burnout, and is such a huge part of creating space for yourself as a woman in a male dominated place.



Devon Grilly 22:36

Absolutely, I think that's one of the three keys for being successful.



Caitlin Donovan 22:42

What are the other 2?



Devon Grilly 22:44

Having connection. So important, whether even if you're like the only women in your office, finding a way to connect with other women, whether it's networking events, or

professional organization, or just your girlfriends on a Friday night, connection is so important. And then boundaries of Of course, of course, and being able to communicate, even when it's challenging, you know, being able to speak up about micro aggressions or egregious offenses of all skills and feel comfortable doing that or even just saying like, I have this great idea. We should do it.



Caitlin Donovan 23:30

Yeah, feeling feeling comfortable doing it or being okay with the fact that it's uncomfortable and doing it anyway.



Devon Grilly 23:35

Yes.



Caitlin Donovan 23:36

Right. And which is a similar thing with boundaries like those are having good boundaries allows you to have those conversations. And I think, you know, you wrote the three reason why boundaries are the foundation for a happier life, the first thing you wrote was they prevented resentment.



Devon Grilly 23:52

Absolutely, because there's clarity there. If you're not communicating what your expectations are, we tend to carry around a lot of resentment for other people not magically knowing what we want. Yeah.



Caitlin Donovan 24:07

Yes, absolutely. And then you wrote that they eliminate loneliness.



Devon Grilly 24:11

Mm hmm. When when you have good boundaries, then you're going to feel more able to connect in authentic ways. without feeling tapped out, you know, so like, if you know where your line is, and how to walk up to it, then it's going to lend itself to having more genuine interactions with other human beings without being defensive all the time. Yeah,



Caitlin Donovan 24:35

yeah. And then the last thing that you wrote, The third thing was to boldly go, which I loved I loved boundaries are the foundation for a happy life, because they allow you to boldly go, what does that mean to you?



Devon Grilly 24:49

So this came from, I was reading, Braving The Wilderness. I think that was when I wrote that series of posts. And she has a great quote from Maya Angelou, I'm probably gonna butcher it. And she talks about how she belongs everywhere and nowhere only to myself, it's a when you belong fully to yourself, then you can go wherever you want and feel totally comfortable. Yes. And I don't think I would have ever been able to work in this business, right? Where it's really necessary to build a network, you know, if you're going to be a solo entrepreneur, in a service based business, you need to go out and actually meet people that you've never met before.



Caitlin Donovan 25:36

Right, which is how we met, which is, which is a good story.



Devon Grilly 25:40

And so I don't think I would have ever been at that event that I met you, Caitlin if I hadn't worked on knowing my boundaries and feeling comfortable with myself, so that I can walk into a room of people that I don't know, and what if they're way more successful than I am at speaking, or they have these six figure businesses, and I'm just starting out, or whatever the story is, if I know who I am, and I have good boundaries around that. I can walk into any room with confidence,



Caitlin Donovan 26:13

and you know where your limits are and how to protect yourself.



Devon Grilly 26:18

Exactly. So there's, it takes away a lot of the anxiety that would keep me locked in my house otherwise,



Caitlin Donovan 26:24

right? Yeah, the first sentence in this part of the blog is important, I think it says, decades of parenting research have demonstrated that when limits are clear, and consistent, children feel more empowered to explore and take healthy risks that helped them grow. There is freedom in knowing exactly where the lines of the sandbox are.



Devon Grilly 26:47

Yeah, and my daughter is proof. She has no fear about anything. And we always really mindfully raised her to, to embrace that, you know, she knew when we would step in, and that we weren't going to let her do anything that would harm herself. And yet, we allowed her a lot of latitude otherwise, like, she climbs things all the time, but we never helped her, climb them, you know, as we had fade, like, if you can climb up, then you can climb down and you need to prove that to yourself,



Caitlin Donovan 27:34

which is not a common parenting skill at the moment, right?



Devon Grilly 27:38

No, I mean, I've we're so afraid of something happening, that I think we tend to hover and the same thing happens like for our own lives, like we're so worried about the thing that might happen, that we don't think about all the good things that could happen also.



Caitlin Donovan 27:55

Yeah. So this is actually a really interesting exercise. That's, that is something that I think my mother made up on the fly one day, because I asked her about it last week, and she has no recollection of telling me this. But I wanted to do something I was maybe 14. And she said, Well, what are the possible consequences of this? Like, what are the good outcomes? What are the bad outcomes, I want you to list I think she asked me that day to list A through E or A through D. So I had to give her, you know, three to five options of what the possible outcomes were of the thing I wanted to do it was probably go to a party and sleep at somebody's house, you know, like it was something wasn't anything majorly life changing. But it was something that she kind of wanted me to make my own decision about. And I said, Well, this could happen, this could happen, this could happen, or this could happen. And she looked at me and she said, Can you accept all of those options?

And when I said yes, she said, Well, okay, just be aware that the good thing could happen, or the bad thing could happen. Right. And if there's a there's a risk inherent in the things that you do, and you have to be prepared for the fact that sometimes it's going to end up the way that you want it to and sometimes it's going to end up not the way you want it to but if you can handle that, you'll be okay.



Devon Grilly 29:16

I think you had a great mom.



Caitlin Donovan 29:18

I did. I do. I do she was really powerful. So you said for women to be successful in STEM and feel not only be successful, but feel good in it. They need boundaries, connection and proper communication. And you said connection you said with other women. So how do you suggest to clients that they meet other women in STEM to create this sort of connection? Are there groups out there that people should know about? Are there particular methods that you teach people to find their you know, their people? How do they do that? If they feel like they're sort of lone wolves like floating around, you know, this it room with a bunch of men?



Devon Grilly 30:00

Yeah, a lot of this came from asking women that, in my survey, they were kind of two camps, right? There were people who were having a really hard time with things and feeling super frustrated. And then there were people who felt really supported. And were excited about the next thing or the work that they're doing. And so I reached out to them also and said, How are you doing that? and I met some really amazing women. And what I noticed was they all had this common story about feeling really connected and supported. And it changed like, it wasn't always in the same way, which was interesting, but just finding a way to be supported. And for some people lucked into it. Like they happen to be at a company that had a women's Council, for example, where they pulled together, women from all over the company, because there were very few of them. And they all had lunch with the CEO who happened to be a woman, and and would talk about, you know, what was going on? And what were their plans and, like thinking about the future and ideas. So it gave them that kind of a



Caitlin Donovan 31:12

springboard into my brain just went, Oh, what do they call this, I'm here to catch you
Devon



Devon Grilly 31:21

So their examples like that, like maybe it was an internal thing. Another person who I talked to she, on her own decided after her first position was not very supportive or inclusive. And she wanted to make sure that her next job, she didn't fall into that same category. And she was a little bit higher up. So she moved into a manager role. And she thought about how can I bring other people up who are in those entry level positions, like I was feeling like they didn't have a voice, and give them away to be heard. And so she started these lunch sessions, which are super informal, it started out just being one on ones. And then it turned into like, the whole team. And everyone would take turns just sharing cool ideas that they had, maybe they didn't merit like a full formal meeting but just you know, this was something that was on my mind, I just wanted to bounce it off of you. And so creating community that way. For others, it could be finding a mentor or sponsor within the company who, you know, has your back and helps you along the way. For others, there wasn't anything internal. So it could be a professional organization like the Society of Women Engineers, it's really great.



Caitlin Donovan 32:46

I'm going to write that down. So that it's in the show notes,



Devon Grilly 32:51

Society of Women Engineers. There's local groups, like one of my favorite networking events to go to in Boston. Is She Geeks Out? Yeah, you're super awesome organization. But they're also in New York City and San Francisco, I believe. So if you look like the way if I'm this is just Eventbrite, and I just search for women in tech, our women in science, and things will come up, especially if you're in like a city area, it might be a little bit harder if you're more rural, although often, companies will sponsor employees to go to the big conferences. So I talked to young, young, one young women in the middle of Illinois, and an agricultural company, she's like the only woman in the whole building. She stays on top of her connections by going to the annual Society of Women Engineers conference. And so she goes there, and she walks into this giant conference. And she's like, Oh, my God, I'm not the only woman in the America that was doing this job. And there are other people like me, and they're going through the same things. And this is what's working for them.



Caitlin Donovan 34:07

Right? Those those are amazing examples. And I will put the She Geeks Out and the Society of Women Engineers in the show notes for everybody I love She Geeks Out, I think they're an amazing company, amazing networking place, and they put on really great events. So So I will definitely shout out those things in the show notes. And it's interesting, what you just said is that sometimes the companies will, if you know, she's the only woman, maybe she'll get some support to go to some of these yearly events. And that ties into exactly the third thing that you mentioned, clear communication, because you're not going to get sent to an event, if you don't ask your HR person to send you.



Devon Grilly 34:42

Exactly. So being able to advocate for the things that you really want is so important.



Caitlin Donovan 34:49

How do you do that?



Devon Grilly 34:50

First, you have to know what it is you really want? Yeah, so that is a question in itself. So taking time to reflect on what are the things that actually motivate you and help sustain you, and looking for opportunities to increase more of that. So if there's a project going on, that's maybe not your project right now, but is so exciting to you. Ask, what would I need to do in order to get on that project? Is there a way I could contribute? Right? Those are the things that are going to protect you from burnout? Yeah, being really excited about the things that you're you're working on, and the things you're currently working on aren't exciting to you look around you, you know, look over the cubicle walls and see who is excited and what's happening over there. And is there a way for you to get involved? But certainly, don't wait for somebody to come and hand you a golden invitation to them, because that's probably going to be very disappointing. Not to mention, you're going to be waiting a long time.



Caitlin Donovan 35:53

Yes, I absolutely agree. And it's not because people are trying to ignore you, it's that people don't think about the things that you need, you have to think about the things that you need.



Devon Grilly 36:01

Right, I think that's part of the boundaries, ironically, is understanding that everyone is in their own head. Nobody is looking at you or thinking about what you want, or the mistakes that you've made, because they're too busy worrying about their own mistakes they've made and their own goals and motivations, which is what we should do. Absolutely. So we can let go. The fear that everyone is going to remember that mistake that you made in a presentation one year ago, nobody remembers that except for you. I promise you.



Caitlin Donovan 36:36

Yeah, yeah. And I think so for me, when I've talked to a lot of corporate people. In my work over the years as an acupuncturist. I've had a lot of patients, stress based patients from the corporate world and mostly women. And we often had this discussion about communication and how to get your thoughts across without, you know, being labeled a bitch, or, I'm being told that you're being too emotional or kind of whatever it happens to be. And what I see happening often is, we're waiting too long to ask for the things we want. So by the time we asked, we are frustrated, when we are frustrated, we don't think about what we're going to say. And then we do say it in a way that kind of is like an outburst instead of a planned normal adult discussion. So I tell patients that for me, this is this, I call this the art of having a difficult conversation. And if there is something that you know, that you want, and you're afraid to ask for it, and you're a little bit annoyed, that nobody noticed that you want it or need it, what I want you to do is write down what you would say to someone, what you're going to say to your HR person with all your attitude in it. I mean, bring out the three snaps. Just say everything that you need to say on paper, then take that and write the total, like void of emotion version of it. And then find the middle ground, where you're telling people what you need, being clear that it's important to you, but not basically being a dick about it.



Devon Grilly 38:20

Yes. And earlier, rather than later, for sure earlier,



Caitlin Donovan 38:24

rather than later. Yeah, the later you go, the more frustrated you're going to feel and the more difficult it's going to be to have that conversation without having resentment toward the person that you're having the conversation with. And it's not technically their fault.



Devon Grilly 38:38

Right, that's the definition of our buttons, right is when our buttons get pushed, it's not just that person who happens to be there at that. Second, it's the whole stack of things that you've been ignoring and pretending aren't a problem for however long, it took you to finally reach your boiling point. And they're just going to get all of it.



Caitlin Donovan 38:57

Right and this story that you've been telling yourself the whole time about why you're not getting it, right. All the stories that you've told yourself over time, you know, the stories that you're having while you're washing your hair in the morning, and you're like, well, if I would have sent this, you know, if all these really great conversations when no one's actually standing across from you. Right? Yeah, I think those are, I think those are three really great things. So to if you are a woman and you are in STEM and you are feeling a little frustrated or alone, focusing on boundaries, connection, and communication might just free you from the burnout cycle that you are on I Devon, this has been a really great conversation. And before we sort of finish up, I would like to know if there's anything bouncing around your brain that you would like to share with people before we finish up.



Devon Grilly 39:45

Um, what came up for me just then was a nugget of wisdom that I received at a workshop recently about micro aggressions, which is a whole topic into itself. But what's they said was, it's so much easier to have a conversation about the thing that seems like it's not a big deal than waiting for it to become a big deal. So it seems like oh, this is bothering me. But it's not it was just whatever, like it was something small. That's the time to start practicing. Having those difficult conversations, because that's going to be a lot easier than waiting for it to snowball into something that is a huge problem.



Caitlin Donovan 40:33

And as an excellent series of parting words. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, Devin, so much for talking to me today. I think that the thing that you're talking about, and the group of women that you're speaking to, not a lot of people are speaking to them right now. And so I find the work that you're doing extremely important and very, very powerful. So I'm really glad that you took the time to talk to me today. And I'm really grateful for your energy and your knowledge and everything that you shared with us. And thank you so much.



Devon Grilly 41:03

Thank you, Caitlin.



Caitlin Donovan 41:05

All right, you guys, this was my conversation with Devon really, and I really hope you enjoyed it. And there's some really actionable tools that we talked about today. So please do a listen if you need them. And I will also include everything that we talked about in the show notes so that you have direct access to the the tools that we talked about today. Thanks so much for listening, and I'll talk to you next time.