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HAVING FUN AT WORK

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Hey there, my friends. It's great to have you here today. Thank you so much for joining me. We are talking about fun. Fun is one of my values and I always try to bring it to what I'm doing. If you're someone who values fun or talks about your need for fun at work, and you want to enjoy yourself, I think this podcast is going to give you some tools and ideas that can help you do that more often and really take control of that. So I'm excited to be sharing these ideas with you today.

Before I start, if you are someone who listens to this podcast, and really enjoys it, I would really appreciate it if you would go over to your podcast player, wherever that is, and just rate the podcast. All you need to do is scroll down to the bottom of the page and you can rate it there. You can write a review, which would be very helpful to me. If you are enjoying this podcast, if it is helping you, that will be something that would really help me back. I would appreciate that if you have the time.

Let's get into the nitty-gritty of what we are talking about – the importance of fun at work. I think I just want to start off by talking about why I even think this is something we should be talking about. I was talking to someone yesterday. She was talking about fun at work. And it just occurred to me how often I hear people talking about the fact that they're not having fun doing what they're doing anymore. So I thought it might be a good idea to talk about this a little bit.

Because I think that, first of all, people confuse the idea of fun and work. In one instance, people don't think work is supposed to be fun. Work is work, work is miserable, and all this kind of stuff. However, we also want it to be fun. We say things like work isn't fun anymore. So which is it? Sometimes we talk on both sides of our mouths. So that's one reason I want to talk about.

Another one is, that I think people often confuse fun with the need for pleasure and with things being easy. So this is an opportunity to really define what fun means to you, and how you can bring it into your job. The other thing is, when work is fun and when we enjoy work, it can be a bit lighter. And more importantly, we're more successful.

The results come easier when you are enjoying it and when you're not investing your energy in toleration and coping, and you're investing your energy in focusing on fun, focusing on enjoyment, focusing your thoughts around why you're doing what you're doing, then it's easier to actually do your job. You're not wasting all of that

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headspace on stuff that's not productive to you. Don't get me wrong, sometimes there is frustration at work. Sometimes there's anxiety, sometimes there's fear. Those are all things that you can feel.

But indulging in those emotions and exacerbating them isn't helpful to you, and it just sucks up your energy. I think that's really the fourth reason I want to talk about this today is that we also need to learn that not every moment of every day needs to be fun. In fact, that's probably impossible to do. And it's learning to understand that and accept that and lean into all the different kinds of moments that we have at work. Just so that we have some perspective on it. I want to talk about that as well.

So I think the whole idea of fun, particularly right now, and I think people are thinking this isn't fun, working from home, although I got to tell you, I love working from home. I am a social animal and I do get energy. I'm sort of 50/50. According to Myers Briggs, I'm both introverted and extroverted. But I have found a way to fulfill my needs by working at home. It's incumbent on all of us to do the same, whether we're working from home or when we're back at the office, we are in control of how we show up. And I'm always talking about that.

So if you're here with me, this isn't going to be any different. I'm always going to be talking about how managing your mindset is going to be the key to success in your career. It's the key to enjoyment, it's the key to growth, it's the key to productivity, it's the key to being a fantastic leader. Everything starts with how you think about the situation about what you're about to be doing.

This podcast is not going to be different. We're going to talk about it in the context of how to bring fun into your job. Everything is about mental health. And when I talk about mental health, I'm talking about your ability to be actively aware of how you're thinking, and how what you're thinking is driving your feelings, your behaviors, and your actions. So let's start with why we even separate work from fun. Why are they two separate things? Why do we think of them as two separate things? We don't generally put those words together. They live in their own universe.

Sometimes, I think it's because when people approach their career, they think they go to work to work hard. And work is often miserable. It's a chore. It's something that we don't necessarily want to do and something we have to do. I've talked about this earlier on my podcast, that language around *want-to* and *have-to*. People think of their careers as have-to careers, not want-to careers. That's really just about your mindset, as a starting place.

So people think of work as somewhere where they have to work hard and push themselves and do things that they have to do. They think that they have to do that. They have to think that way in order to take work seriously. If you're going to take something seriously, it means it can't be fun. So that's something that we learn. If we're going to take something seriously, it can't be fun. We learned from our teachers to quiet down, stop having fun, and let's get focused right now. We're here. There's a time for fun and there's a time for getting things done.

We, in our language, and in our society, see them as two separate things. So, in order to have fun at work, the first thing we need to think about is how we can bring those things together. We can be serious about our jobs, we can be serious about our livelihoods, we can be serious about reaching our goals, and still make it fun along the way. I think that's a paradigm shift that a lot of people need to think about. How can work be fun? And we're going to talk about that.

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Because I think when I go there, people auto all of a sudden think about making menial tasks more enjoyable. But that's not really it. I mean, that is part of it but that's not really what I'm talking about here. It's about how you think about your work and it being fun. Because often we think of work as painful and fun as pleasurable. So we need to think about how can work give us pleasure. I think words are really important here. The things that we say are coming from our thoughts.

So a lot of the time we'll say things like, *I'm tired of working. I want to go have some fun*. Or something like that. What you're really saying is that you want to let loose a little bit. You want to have a different kind of fun. Maybe you want to let off some steam. What I mean by letting off steam, generally speaking, is that some people spend the whole day in this have-to mindset, and they white knuckle it through the whole day.

They have all these pent-up feelings of pain and anxiety or stress and frustration that they felt throughout the day as they've been powering through and white-knuckling through their day. So now they need that sense of pleasure. Their brain is like, *Okay, enough.* Enough pain, time for pleasure.

Because that's how our brains are wired. We're wired back to the caveman days to avoid pain and seek pleasure. So we want to let off steam and go have some fun, go have a few drinks with friends after work, and go socialize. Maybe it's about going to do fitness, like whatever it is for you. That's about finding a way to release these pent-up feelings from the day. And it is a form of buffering.

If you've heard me talk about buffering before, buffering is when we seek out temporary pleasure to avoid feeling certain emotions that cause us pain. Usually with buffering, the net effect of buffering is negative. So if we're going to go eat and drink with friends, it's awesome. We totally enjoy it in that moment, and maybe even have some great memories after the fact. But maybe we feel a bit hungover the next morning, or we eat too much, we feel bloated or we've gained weight. And we then have these other guilty feelings around that, that just exacerbate the negative emotions that you felt in the first place.

So sometimes when we are in this have-to mindset when it comes to work, and we think work is miserable, hard work and something we just have to be there to do and we separate the pain of work from the pleasure of non-work; then we can use this pleasurable fun non-work moments to buffer away the pain of work versus not white-knuckling it, showing up at work with the mindset of if this can be pleasurable, and not using your personal time as a way to buffer away the work time.

So it's really about changing your mindset as you go into your day. Because fun and work don't really have to be two different things. If fun is really a value to you and if fun is important to you, then you can make your whole life fun. It's not about work time and fun time, it's about fun at work, and fun at my personal time. Make the whole thing fun. If you're a fun person, you can do that. If fun is important to you and if fun is a value for you, then that might be something that you want to consider.

The challenge is how we currently think about fun at work is one thing. So the idea of work is supposed to be non-pleasurable, and non-work things are supposed to be pleasurable like separating those two things. But the other challenge for how fun at work currently works is that they expect their job, their boss, their project, or their company to bring the fun. So they're waiting for them to be entertained, so to speak. Somehow, it's your boss's or

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your company's job to entertain you or to bring the fun to make it fun for you. We seem to have this entitlement mindset around it. There are still a lot of people out there who feel like it's the company's job to make work fun.

I was talking to somebody yesterday, who is working from home. She was telling me that she is finding it hard to have fun and be inspired to be creative. Over Zoom, we have these meetings and the dynamic is different, the inspiration is different, and the social interaction is different. And she's finding it hard to be inspired or find her energy. She was, in some ways, blaming the situation on the company, not having figured it out. The company, of course, had some team meetings, and some team fun meetings that went over video.

But what ends up happening when you try to have organized fun moments is that it feels like a bit of forced fun. Not everybody has fun the same way. And I think it's always great. I think it's always wonderful when companies try to create opportunities for fun specifically for fun-off sites, whatever. But inevitably, there are people who are just showing up and they're not having fun, or they're complaining about it because it's not the kind of fun that they want to have. That's what I was saying to the woman I was talking to the other day as well.

If you want to have fun, you need to show up with a fun mindset. You need to show up knowing what it takes for you to have fun. You need to take that responsibility if you want to be inspired creatively. If you need to socialize, to be able to be inspired, then that's something you have to take on. You have to find the solution for.

What I want to offer you is that it's nobody's responsibility for you to have fun, except you. Nobody is going to do it for you. If they try to do it for you, that's great. But they still can't control whether or not you're going to have fun in that situation. That is entirely up to you. And that's how the model works. If you haven't heard me talk about the model before, I'll put some links in the show notes.

But essentially, you are in control of how you think, and how you think drives how you feel about things, and how you feel drives your actions and your results. Those are the things you can control. What you cannot control are circumstances. Circumstances are other people. You can't control other people. You can't control these random events that are happening around us, like having to work from home and on Zoom. Those are things that are out of our control. You can't control the past because it's in the past.

If your company or your boss is creating an opportunity for people to have fun, they're just creating the opportunity. They can't force you to have fun. They can't control you. You can't control other people, so they can't control you. You have to decide what you think about that opportunity and if you're going to make it a fun opportunity, or a miserable opportunity for yourself. That's true of everything – every project, every person you work with, every situation that you're faced with.

I'm not suggesting that you make COVID-19 fun. I'm not suggesting that you make tragedy fun. What you need to understand is that it's up to you. You generate how you show up in every situation. Sometimes, it's more appropriate for yourself and how you feel to be sad, or to feel loss, or to feel fear, or whatever is going on with you. Whatever you're feeling is okay. That's not the problem. It's not about happiness and sunshine all the time. I always say life is 50/50.

But if you're someone who wants to have more fun, know that you need to generate that for yourself. A lot of the time, what prevents us from having fun are our thoughts because again, we're in control of our thoughts. What

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prevents us from having fun are all the thoughts that we have about our careers that create doubt, frustration, and insecurity. And we allow those kinds of thoughts to overtake our brains.

Instead of thoughts that could be creating fun, we're just focused on doubt, frustration, insecurity, or fear, whatever it is. It's at those moments where you need to remind yourself that whatever you're feeling right now is because you decided to feel it. Even if your boss says something that you think is unfair, crappy, or bad form, you can't control that. What you can control is what you think about it.

I was just sharing this example the other day with someone where someone's boss had said to them, *I don't want you to work on this project. You're not skilled enough to handle it.* Even you, listening to me tell you that story, every one of you is going to have a different perspective on what that boss said.

Some people might think, *Good call. Maybe that person wasn't skilled enough and they have to be aware of that.* Maybe some of you are thinking, *What a terrible boss. What kind of a leader talks like that?* Maybe some of you are thinking, *Maybe they didn't say it so great, but they're making the right decision.*There are so many different ways that you guys can think about what that boss said.

Because what that boss said is something that another person said, regardless of how dramatic or not dramatic or bad form the comment is in your own mind. You get to decide what you think about that. And whatever you think about that is going to create a feeling and a reaction. The more that you're aware of it, the more you control it, and the more that you are intentional about how you want to think about situations, the more that you're going to create your own experience, the more that you're going to be in control of your own results.

I'm not saying that you can turn that kind of situation into fun. But you don't have to turn that kind of a situation into a devastating experience either. The bottom line is if you want to have more fun at work, then you need to show up in a way that's actually fun and not expect the fun to be handed to you. I talked about how to show up in a fun way in terms of your mindset and thinking fun thoughts.

But my recommendation is to start to explore, first of all, what you currently even believe about fun in general. What is fun for you and what do you believe about fun at work? Do your thoughts right now and your beliefs around fun at work have to be true? If you're thinking, there's a time to have fun and there's a time for work and they have to be separate, does that have to be true? What would it look like if you were able to mash those two things together?

As I mentioned before, that can look like making menial tasks fun, which is one way to do it. We used to have all these product briefings for our agencies when I worked at McDonald's when we would brief on a new movie partnership we were doing. I remember when we were launching *Minions*, and we dressed the whole room in a Minions theme, and we were all wearing the Minions glasses. We made that fun, creative, and inspirational.

You could do those kinds of things. That's a more obvious and direct way of creating a fun experience for the group and creating something inspirational. But if you want to integrate fun on an ongoing basis, the very first thing that you need to do is define what fun means to you. A lot of people think of fun as pleasure, or they think of it as easy. When something is easy, it's fun. When something is pleasurable, it's fun like candy or Netflix, or socializing. But the fun comes in many forms.

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Fun can also be the satisfaction of doing something. It comes from fulfillment, it comes from pushing yourself to grow. People take the idea of work, for instance, so seriously, or setting a goal so seriously. It can be serious, but it can also be light. It doesn't have to be one or the other, it can be both. You can have fun on the journey to reach your goal. You do that all the time. So think of it like baking a cake. The process of putting all the ingredients together and actually making the cake is as fun as eating it.

We think about a road trip to a holiday destination. The road trip can be as much fun as the actual destination itself. Or we think about putting a puzzle together, which I know a lot of people are doing right now at their homes, self-isolating. If you think about putting a puzzle together, it's way more fun and sometimes frustrating, but way more fun to actually put the puzzle together than the final puzzle image, and you can enjoy it.

It's like, if you want to be promoted, if that's your goal, whatever your goal is to be promoted, enjoy the journey to the promotion. When you have any goal, the fun is not at the end of the goal. The fun is the journey to get to the goal. If you want it to be depending on how you look at it, you can think about it as fun along the way. If you look at it that way, you can define what fun looks like for you along the journey to a specific goal.

I have three big goals this year that I've set for myself. One is a business goal. Two are about fitness and health. One is a weight loss goal, and one is running a half marathon. I want to lose 50 pounds. I want to run a half marathon this year. And I have an income and growth goal for my business. So I'll just talk about the weight loss school. I'm really focused on having fun on this journey, and for the first time have a weight loss goal. I'm having fun learning new recipes.

Those are the things I know that are fun for me – pushing myself to run further every day. I know it's part of the marathon goal, but it's also part of my weight loss goal. I have fun stepping on the scale. And then there's the fun that I have around my mindset. Meaning, there are a lot of mindset challenges for me on my weight loss goal. If I don't lose weight, I beat myself up. So I find fun in catching myself, beating myself up, and changing the narrative in my brain around that whole thing. I had fun catching myself with those urges.

It's like a game. I could have gamified it. How many times can I catch myself feeling the urge to eat pizza or chocolate or whatever, and then not do it? So these are like little games that I play with my own head. Or if people ask me about my weight loss and what I'm doing, I have fun sharing my story with people and what I'm doing with it and then socializing. I still go out and socialize. I still find ways to eat what I want to eat. Socializing with fitness is great, too. Running with friends was great before COVID-19. But now, I just saw that people are doing virtual runs.

There's a run in Toronto that I used to do called the *Sporting Life 10k*. But since I've moved up north, I haven't been able to do it. Now, the Sporting Life 10k is a virtual run. They give you a window to do the run. In terms of days, you have to do it before the middle of May or whatever, and you do it. Yes, I'm not running with thousands of people down Yonge Street anymore but I'm feeling like I'm still part of it. I can still socialize about it online, I can still register, and I can still donate to the same charity. So there's still an opportunity to change how I'm socializing, even in this environment. And I can change what I think about it.

For instance, I actually had signed up for a couple of runs here, where I live now, but those have been canceled. So I can complain about that. Or I can complain about the fact that even though the Sporting Life 10k is doing a virtual, I don't get to run with everyone. I can complain about that. Or I can say, this is a really cool way of doing it.

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How much fun is this? Now I can socialize with people online, I can talk about it, I can still participate and feel part of a community. I've chosen my mindset around how I want to think about this. And it's the same at work.

I understand that with work. Sometimes, people take things a lot more seriously. There's a lot more tension around these situations. Because what your boss says to you, or what your peer says to you, or if you don't perform as well as someone expected, there's all this other stuff around work that's different than just going for a run. But really, is it?

It's kind of the same, we just think about it differently. Because I can beat myself up as hard for eating a cookie, as I would if my boss said something mean to me. It's just that I'm thinking about the impact of that differently. But I do a pretty good job on myself when I want to beat myself up. I am brutal. So I can apply that. I can apply that to work and this can be part of the fun.

Yesterday, I did a presentation. It's hard when you're doing a virtual presentation because you don't always get to see everybody's impact in the face and you're like, Oh, did they really like it? I've had some great comments on the feed and all that kind of stuff. But that's it. And I said to myself before, the fun today is going to be about bringing the value and bringing the energy. I had so much fun giving that presentation that I already felt like a success.

I know it's natural in my own mind, like for me personally, to also want to feel valued based on what other people think. I want to know if people liked the presentation or didn't like it so I can value myself. That happens to all of us. But the fun of it was no, I'm just going to value myself based on the presentation I give. And if people like it, that's a bonus.

If I'm honest with you, I'm still working through that in my own mind. I'm working through the idea that I don't need other people to tell me the presentation was good for me to think it was good. But that's part of the game as far as I'm concerned. Working through that mindset shift is part of the game for me. Because the game in this case is personal growth and working through the struggle. I'm teaching myself that I can change my thoughts about what I think about struggle. And I'm teaching myself that every time I feel resistance like I was feeling about needing people to value me yesterday.

Every time I feel that, it's like a game. It's like a video game. You know when you're playing a video game and you see a flashing door? And you know that you need to go through that door to get to the goal or get to the end of the level or whatever it is. But you also know that going through that door, there's definitely going to be some scary monster or gang with guns or whatever it is on the other side, like some big dudes. And you have to get through them. And that's for me the kind of game of personal growth that I play with myself.

The game in this case is letting go of the need to be valued by others when it comes to this presentation. And I know that when I get to the other side of all the big dudes, which are the bad thoughts in my head or the need to be valued by others. When I get through that, I'm going to reach my goal of personal growth. So what I'm really saying is to define your goals at work. And then figure out how to have fun on the journey. And the fun on the journey is going to be defined by what you think is fun. So what is fun for you? Reaching your goals, socializing, helping others, feeling useful? Define what those fun points look like for you, and then set your mind towards them.

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For me, I have that combined goal around fitness and weight loss, and fun for me right now is socializing, helping others, pushing myself to grow, and getting closer to my goals every day. I think those are the things that I find fun in general. When it comes to my weight loss fitness goal, I embed those aspects of fun into how I reach that goal. It's the same thing for my business. How can I use my mind to push through the struggles so I can get closer to my goal every day?

I love socializing, so how can I socialize with what I do at work? How can I help other people? Those are all the things that I tried to work into the journey to all my revenue goals at work because I find that fine. And are there menial tasks that I don't love doing? Yeah, for sure.

I'm not saying that, again, everything has to be happiness and sunshine. Sometimes I can delegate those things. Sometimes I just need to fixate my mindset or choose a thought just to get through the thing I need to do. But on the whole, I can embed my definition of fun into my job every day and every part of the journey. And I get to choose that. No one does it for me. Because honestly, they can't. I get to choose what's fun and what's not fun.

So, in summary. One, fun and work don't have to be separate things. They can be the same thing if you want it to be. And if you don't want it to be, you can't have it both ways. You can't say, *work is supposed to be where I'm miserable. Why isn't it more fun?* You have to decide what you want the role that you want work to play in your life. Number two, if you want to have fun at work, you're in control of it. You're in control of the level of fun you have in your career. No one else can bring it for you. And number three, define what fun looks like for you. Define what it looks like for you. Then look for ways to generate it in as many ways as you can on the journey to your goal.

Here's a challenge for you this week, decide what fun looks like for you and define what it means. Then for one project every day this week, for a different thing every day, try to inject some fun into it, and how you think about it and how you look at that project and try to find the fun in it. Because that's how we do it. We don't just turn on and off. We're not a switch. It's practice, practice, practice.

So the very first thing you need to do is figure out what success looks like. In this case, it's defining what fun is. The next thing you need to do is practice moving towards that success. And if that means just trying to change your thought process around one thing a day, then just start with one thing a day. That's how it works. That's how we change our mindset. Small moves are made consistently.

That's all I have for you today, my friends. Have a great week. I'll talk to you next time. Bye for now.

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