

# RYBPod\_Ep116

**claire roth:** [00:00:00] Welcome to Rock Your Brain. Rock Your Life. The only podcast hosted by a high achieving tech entrepreneur and certified coach that teaches you how to use proven cognitive tools to rewire your brain and break through the second pandemic, burnout. If you lead a company or badass team and need a proven, evidence based cognitive course to retain and develop them, this podcast is for you.

Sarah helps humans break through burnout, have insane work life balance, and feel magical at work and in their lives again. Here's your host, certified coach and tech industry entrepreneur, Sarah Moody.

**Sarah Moody:** All right, listeners, I have a very special guest for you this week. Her name is Christina Maslach- and yes, she's also here in San Francisco- and I cannot wait to dive into this week's episode because Christina is the professor of psychology emerita at the University of California in Berkeley- so just a few miles away from where we're located right now- and she's the co-creator of the Maslach Burnout Inventory. She's appeared in the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, the Atlantic, NPR, and BBC. She is a researcher in burnout and she's been doing this for four decades. Christina, welcome.

**Christina Maslach:** Thank you so much.

**Sarah Moody:** So guess what, listeners, Next week she is publishing a brand new book called The Burnout Challenge, all around managing people's relationships with their jobs. So, it's coming out next week, which actually means it came out this week because Christina and I are coming to you the week before this actually gets published. So, look for the Burnout Challenge. It's been published by Harvard, it's coming out on November 15th, and you're gonna hear super high level how all of the research Christina has been doing over the last 40 years can help you in your career. All right Christina, I, and I'm sure our listeners, are dying to know, when you're not researching burnout, what would our listeners find you doing?

**Christina Maslach:** Oh my gosh. Uh, depends on the day and the time of day and so forth, but, I love to go out hiking. I adore museums and the theater and dance. In fact, as a child, I dreamed of being a ballerina and spent a long time doing that, and then deciding, nope, that actually wasn't the right thing. But I ended up as a professor of psychology and I do get my onstage time, I guess, but doing it, not dancing, talking about the things I've learned or teaching psychology to big classes in the university. The other thing I would say you

would find is me with somebody in the family- husband, children, grandchildren. My third grandchild was just born this year; on Thursdays right now I am babysitting while my daughter is back from maternity leave at her museum job. So, we do a lot of stuff together, so that's fun.

**Sarah Moody:** And your family's nearby as well?

**Christina Maslach:** Yes, yes. Some nearer, some a little further away, but here in the bigger bay area of San Francisco. So, some I get to see often, others a little bit more of a drive but you know, we do it.

**Sarah Moody:** Absolutely. Well, I love the fact that you and I are probably like a mile and a half away from each other, and we're on Zoom having a good time.

**Christina Maslach:** Yay.

**Sarah Moody:** Thank God for Zoom. Okay, so as many of my listeners know, employee stress is at an all time high, burnout is at an all time high. I love the recent Gallup poll that you and I have both read in 2022, where, you know about 44% of the humans in corporate America are stressed out, burned out. It's in many ways what I'm seeing as the second pandemic.

**Christina Maslach:** Okay, interesting. Yeah.

**Sarah Moody:** So I would love to know, you're a researcher on probably one of the hottest topics right now, how did you decide to become a research expert in burnout?

**Christina Maslach:** Well, the story is that I didn't set out to look for burnout. It actually kind of found me. And what happened was, back in 71 when I got my PhD and I started my new job at UC Berkeley, I had been trained as a laboratory experimental psychologist in social psychology, and I was doing a lot of work on emotion, how we know what we feel, how we cope, these kind of things.

But my laboratory at Berkeley wasn't ready, and so I needed to get going on my brand new academic path and start some research. So not having the lab, I just thought, well, you know what? I will go out and talk to people who I think actually deal with some issues that I was really concerned with.

Like, what happens when you are in the midst of incredible turmoil or emergency or whatever, and you have to become cool and collected while everything is just falling apart around you and so forth? How do you deal with

that kind of emotional stress, you know, or those kinds of issues about it? How do you manage the emotions you feel?

So I thought, okay, I'll go out, I'll talk to people, and I started with people that we now call first responders. So it would be people working in medical, healthcare, ER, police officers, social workers, and then everybody would say, 'Oh, you've gotta go over and talk to this person' - it just kind of snowballed, you know, it brought in teachers, brought in all kinds of people, I mean, you know, it was just a lot. And, what would happen is I would set it up saying, I'm interested in your answers to my questions and it's confidential, I'm not gonna publish it, I just want to understand.

So they would answer my questions, and then after a while I noticed that everybody would be sort of asking, 'Could we talk a little bit more? Could I tell you some more about what I'm going through and how I'm experiencing my job? It is confidential, right?' and then they would start telling me other things and it was a little different than what I had been going for.

They were saying, 'Go over here. This is what actually I'm dealing with.' And after a while I was noticing that there was a similar story line coming out from a lot of different people and very different kind of things. I mean, you could hear the same rhythm coming and, so I was kind of intrigued and I was trying to get them to say something about like, 'Well, do you talk about this with other people?'

Usually not. It was stigma. I'm trying to find a way to say what this is that you're telling me, this kind of story. So I gave them some words from the academic literature, you know, like dehumanization in self defense; to deal with the trauma of the work and how difficult it is, you treat people more like objects rather than people. You know, The infarction in room 402, not Mrs. Smith, or the family,

No, no, no, no, no. That's not right. Okay. So medical sociology, detached, concerned. Does that capture it? You know, you, you're concerned, but you have to be detached ? Uh, well, no, no, no, no, no.

And then the second serendipitous point here was that I was at a dinner at the university for new people who were joining the campus, and sitting and chatting with my table mates, and I mentioned some of the things I was hearing in the interview I had done that day and the woman sitting next to me said, "Oh my God, I don't know what you call it, but in poverty law, legal services that I just came from, we call it burnout".

I thought, Hmm, interesting. So then I would end the interview with, you know, The dehumanization? No, no. The detached concern. No, No. How about burnout? Yes. Yes. That's it. That's it.

**Sarah Moody:** And it was back in the seventies. Right?

**Christina Maslach:** In the seventies. And people just resonated with that term and I was like, Whoa, okay. So, as a researcher, you're not trying to put words in people's mouths. You say, What about this? What about that? How do you think about this? And the reaction just became so consistent that somehow that captured what they were experiencing, so I went on to use that term because that was the way they talked about it.

Which is a positive kind of thing, in some ways. But the negative side is that it's such an evocative image and term that people use it for everything. And that means that sometimes we're not on the same page when we're talking about burnout.

**Sarah Moody:** How do you define burnout? This is a good question actually.

**Christina Maslach:** Yeah. Well, how we arrived at a definition was, again, based on the empirical research. I was thinking of it as a stress response, which it is. And so there is the kind of exhaustion that you get, which is the high stress response, you know, trying to deal with all these stressors and cope with them.

But what I was hearing in the stories, were two other things, and it turned out that those two other things didn't all just gel into one. They actually are a little bit separate, but related. And so that gives us more than just the burnout experience; it gives us four other main experiences or work profiles, that are, the opposite of burnout, engagement, but also some things in between.

So the two things that are, also part of the burnout experience, one is very negative, hostile, cynical, 'take this job and shove it', as the country Western singers talk about. And it's a response that means that you are really unhappy, discouraged, resentful, whatever, about the place where you're doing this work—the organization, the colleagues, the patients, clients, students, your boss, the whole thing.

And for me, it's that cynicism that is really more the hallmark of burnout than just the stress response of exhaustion. A lot of people think that's all it is, is exhaustion. Well, why would you rename it burnout if it's just exhaustion?

But the important thing that we see happening is that when people begin to develop that negative cynicism, they switch from trying to do their very best to doing the bare minimum. What do I have to do to get through, get out, finish the week, still get a paycheck?

But what it means is you're not doing the extra work of, giving somebody a more comprehensive explanation. It's just like, a check mark. Yeah, it's okay. You know, you're doing fine, nice job. Or you're not taking the time to make sure everything is correct, so you're gonna make more errors or you leave things undone so the quality of the work that you do is not what the rest of us would hope to get from our nurse, our teacher, our whatever. So for me that is a more important signal of burnout than simply the exhaustion of stress response.

And then the third thing that happens is people begin to not only be negative about the job and where they're doing this, they begin to be negative about themselves.

“What's wrong with me? Why can't I handle this? What is the problem? I made a mistake. Why am I here? I should have gone into another career. I should have taken up my uncle's suggestion to run the pet store”, or whatever. And that negative self-evaluation of you down the road could lead to health consequences as well, like depression or anxiety. So to be clear, burnout is not itself a health issue. It's not a health illness it's not a disease; people talk about its symptoms and getting therapy or cures or something, but it's stress phenomena and stress is not, again, a disease or an illness , but it does have health consequences.

**Sarah Moody:** Absolutely.

**Christina Maslach:** Whether it's cardiovascular problems and heart attacks, or not doing your job well, not being able to sleep, all of those kind of things.

**Sarah Moody:** And, so back to that doing the bare minimum and negative self-talk, this is what I love about how we're such a great fit as a team.

How what we've researched and what we teach as thought leaders is so complimentary because my work's approach is to help the human look at the fact that they do have a bunch of negative self-talk. I mean, I'm trained in cognitive tools and rewiring your brain and looking at your mindset, and helping you process emotions because you're right, all that negative self-talk is gonna create all the stress, all the illnesses, and all the things. And then you

don't show up as your authentic, magical, amazing, self, thriving at work and in all parts of your life because you have this inner negative talk track.

**Christina Maslach:** Right. Right. Yeah.

**Sarah Moody:** A lot of self doubt, a lot of anxiety, a lot of overwhelm.

I love how the two pieces of the puzzle are fitting together.

**Christina Maslach:** Yeah.

**Sarah Moody:** I'm the inside job. Right. And even like I was thinking about, one of the areas that you're gonna go into is work overload. And you know, my clients are high performing, a lot of them work in the tech industry because I'm a tech entrepreneur and they talk about work overload, but they're so afraid to say something like, 'Hey, it's too much work' because they're afraid of being perceived as not a team player. They're afraid of losing their job. So it's all about helping them kind of build up that belief in themselves, right? That they can have the conversations that they need to, that you are advocating corporate America address as a part of culture, so your thesis is four decades of research and there's a mismatch between workers and their jobs that predict burnout risk in six different areas.

I'd love it if you could just talk a little bit more about the challenge in these areas.

**Christina Maslach:** Yeah, these are six areas that we have been able to identify. Maybe in the future there's more, but this is what we know certainly at this point. And when mismatches are a real problem in any one or more of these six areas, the risk of burnout down the road, is it going up?

The more you can get to a better fit, a better match. I mean, it doesn't have to be perfect. We're not aiming for that kind of thing, but the more that things work well in terms of that relationship, the greater the possibility of being engaged with work and thriving, rather than getting beaten down. So, we're really looking for how do we sort of get a better thing going so that we've got the right conditions under which people really thrive and blossom and do good stuff and feel proud of the work they're doing and the contribution they're making.

So the six areas I will list not necessarily in terms of any importance, but certainly in a list of what people know about most, and workload is certainly on the top of that list.

And the mismatch that we're talking about there is that there are very high demands but low resources in terms of time, other people, needed equipment, information, all of those kind of things.

How do you meet those demands in a timely way and do it well given that you don't actually have access to what you need to do that? And so, that certainly is, a main causal factor; that mismatch of the exhaustion of the basic stress response. You can still feel good about your job and you can still feel good about yourself, but the exhaustion component might be the real problem there.

Often though, when people talk about workload problems, they're actually, it turns out, talking about the second area of control; and they're talking about, not that I have so much work, but I have no control over the job that I'm doing.

I can't make the decisions or the choices or, ad lib when it turns out we've got a different situation than we thought. How do I innovate? How do I, et cetera. And these six areas, by the way, aren't independent. They can overlap. So this uncontrollable workload is probably even more the kind of issue that people are talking about because they have no say, you gotta do it the way they tell you to and that's it.

The third area has to do with what we call reward. And it's basically positive feedback of various kinds for doing a job well. It could involve salary and it can involve benefits, but the research often pulls up social recognition that people notice you did something really good and thank you, pat you on the back or tell you how impressed they were or they wish they could learn something or how they could do that. I mean, it may take two seconds, you know, to say, Oh God, that was so great. You know, and that happens, periodically. So, the mismatch is when you're working in an environment where good work doesn't get recognized, rewarded, that kind of thing. My interviews, when I ask them about a good day as opposed to a bad day, a good day is nothing bad happened. That's about as good as it gets. Nothing bad. The presence though of positive stuff. No. So, this is why in healthcare, social services, very human service oriented, police, work, et cetera, that's a hard part of that job.

The fourth area is what we call community, meaning who are the people whose paths you tend to cross as part of your job. So it's coworkers, it's your boss, it's anybody you supervise, it's your clients. When there is a mismatch, people often talk about it as a toxic social culture, which means that there is no trust, there is no support. As you said, people are not going to self-disclose anything that might suggest that I am less than 150%, that I'm tired, it's been a bad day, I've got some other things, we got a dilemma right here. You don't know who to turn



to for advice or, help because that means disclosing something you know, a more negative kind of thing- you're gonna get thrown under the bus.

This is where harassment lives. This is where instability, bullying, you know, treating people badly- and sometimes it's colleagues who ought to be your best friends because you're doing similar work, but putting each other down and so forth. And that we were hearing about even before the pandemic, this culture of fear of, I don't dare ever say no, even if I'm called to do extra work, even if I'm not gonna get paid for it.

Don't say no. I can't. I'm just trapped. And people talk about being surrounded by all kinds of people and feeling isolated and really alone. And that's a very dangerous situation for all of us because social contacts, social relationships, are the main thing that keep us well and enjoying our lives, whether it's, you know, family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, whoever.

When that gets shredded in the workplace, that's a hard, hard place to be.

**Sarah Moody:** One of the things that I love to talk about is our primitive brain and how we are wired as humans to be a pack, right? We're wired to be together and anything that threatens us being in this pack is gonna bring up all of our fear responses.

We're gonna do anything to stay in the pack.

**Christina Maslach:** Yeah. And that means things that end up being like a code of silence.

**Sarah Moody:** Yes.

**Christina Maslach:** That means that you are not feeling psychologically safe to raise a criticism or a new idea. You get put down or harassed because of who you are, no matter, a particular ethnic group or, gender or whatever.

And that's again, not feeling safe, that I can do my job and do well. So it's, it's an important one that was going very negative even before the pandemic. And then of course with a lot of remote work that kind of changed that dynamic in a different way.

The fifth area is fairness and it turns out that all of us wanna be treated fairly. Whatever the rules, whatever the policy, whatever the practice that it gets fairly



or equitably, distributed, in terms of who gets new opportunities or, a promotion or, you know, do something special.

So when people feel they are being treated unfairly, this means they're not being treated with respect. People are cheating and lying, you know, to get ahead when they really don't deserve it. This is where discrimination lives. This is where glass ceilings live in things that are not being done fairly in terms of people developing, moving forward, taking on new roles and that kind of thing.

And when it's an unfair environment for all kinds of different reasons, this will drive the cynicism of burnout up. "Why am I here? Why am I dealing with this, I could go somewhere else and get a better place, and enjoy doing my work somewhere else."

And then the sixth area has to do with, I talk about it as values. It's about meaning- we're also hearing the word purpose a lot these days. But values are the thing that make you feel that the work you're doing is significant, important. It's making a contribution. You feel pride in it. You're glad you're doing it, and if you're in an environment where there are ethical conflicts that you are getting caught in- you're having to lie in order to get a sale, and you're just saying this is not good to do, or again, this is another area of those codes of silence not to call on when something that is clearly illegal is being done.

People talk about losing their soul. I can't keep doing this anymore. I'm having to say things or do things or not say things or not do things, that go to the heart of the meaning of the work that I'm doing. And, I just, I can't keep up with that.

And so, sometimes I'll see people who on all the other five areas are doing incredibly well. Everything is fine, but in terms of this ethical one, they just say, "this is not why I went into medicine to be a doctor, having to do this" or some other kind of thing like that. So, that turns out to be an important one.

So those are the six.

**Sarah Moody:** That's great. Yeah. Our values, and kind of what lights us up, you know, lives in, as you and I know, our prefrontal cortex.

**Christina Maslach:** Yeah.

**Sarah Moody:** So that deep down desire, logic, "I wanna feel proud and aligned from a purpose perspective with this company" is so in our psyche and in our being.

It's part of, you know, half of our brain.

**Christina Maslach:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Sarah Moody:** So important too.

**Christina Maslach:** Yeah, and it's interesting because as you probably know there's been this uptick in people talking about purpose and a number of companies deciding the solution is to hire a chief purpose officer. And when I talk with people, they're saying, "you're spending money on a person who gets their own office and what are they doing that's instilling purpose?" and you know, all that kind of thing.

It's nice to have more focus on how that kind of meaning, that value is so critical. I'm not sure that's the solution. Like in healthcare for example, there's been a lot of talk about moral injury, which is saying I have to do things that are so difficult, painful, etc, to have to do.

Not because I believe that or you know, I'm that kind of person who wants to inflict that, but the system is making me do that. I am the one who has to tell a family out there that they cannot be with their loved one and dying of COVID because of the infection risk. Okay, I understand that.

But that is just so difficult to have to do. And the injury in a sense, it's a moral injury, and it's coming from the fact that I'm caught into this system; it's not necessarily that I'm the kind of person who would try to do something like that. So, there's a lot of ways that, that can come out in different kind of occupations.

**Sarah Moody:** So we've just talked about culture, companies, the mismatch between workers and their jobs. You know, these six areas to look out for. And I love the analogy that I read in your book where you talk about a bird. So if you wouldn't mind just telling listeners that awesome analogy because I think it's so perfect for how you and I are so...

**Christina Maslach:** What we're we're talking about. Yeah. Uh, basically the analogy has to do with the canary in the coal mine. And what used to happen with coal mines is that a canary in a cage would be lowered down into the mine before the miners entered to do their work. If the canary started having trouble breathing and couldn't function or even died, it was not a sign of what's wrong with the canary.

It was a sign, a signal that something is wrong with the mine and that no other living human being should go down into it until the toxic fumes were dealt with and ameliorated so it became safe enough for the miners to actually go down.

So for us, burnout is actually more of a signal that job conditions are beginning to get too toxic, too stressful for people, and some are beginning to show like the canary I can't function well in that kind of environment.

If we make the mistake of just focusing on the bird and the canary and ask, what's wrong with the canary? How do we make it more resilient? How do we make it tough enough to, it can take any fumes, you know, kind of thing, we're making a mistake because we are not taking into account the cause of the canary's distress and the cause is that the fumes are, you know, causing an unsafe environment.

So for us, burnout is really more the canary as a signal, as a red flag, because we find that if we begin to work on saying, "what is causing the problem?", not just what are the effects, we're more likely to prevent and not simply help cope. I mean, both of those are good, but coping doesn't change the stressors.

It's kind of like that saying, if you can't take the heat, get out of the kitchen. So if you can't take the job, it's your problem, your fault, you gotta do something about it. But on the other hand, we've learned, yes, you can do something about the heat in the kitchen. Yeah. You could do some things that would make it, a better environment for people to do the job.

So that's really how the analogy, I think, helps us better understand what burnout is telling us.

**Sarah Moody:** I love that. And what you're saying too is what you teach is really about culture- changing the corporate culture. Mm-hmm. Why we're seeing so many chief people officers.

**Christina Maslach:** Yeah.

**Sarah Moody:** That's a title that I can really get around because it's really about looking at what do I need to do to have this really high functioning, team of employees.

Like, what do I need to do from a culture perspective, like what you're teaching, what do I need to do to support the individual human so that they can say no, they can be the red alert around what we need to do as a company differently.

**Christina Maslach:** Yeah. Yeah, yeah. That's a really good point. And The other thing I just wanted to say is, because there's a tendency among a lot of people, when you talk about here are these two things, people and their jobs, people immediately go into an either or perspective. Is it the job or is it the person?

And the message is, And! Both, and! You know it's not...

**Sarah Moody:** It's and, it's not.

**Christina Maslach:** Yes, yes.

**Sarah Moody:** It's not black and white thinking as I teach my clients; it's "and" thinking, and- which is very hard for brains. Brains like to be easy. They wanna do either or. They don't wanna do and. So, yeah.

**Christina Maslach:** I know, and that's sort of the hard part.

But actually, you know, it's interesting. So sometimes I think it's how we frame the questions that actually gives us different insights into what the answers, might be, and sort of what the problem is. I mean, people have contacted me saying, "Oh my gosh, okay, so what should I do?"

"Should I go to my boss and say, I'm experiencing burnout, Can you please accommodate me because I have burnout? Is that a good way, is that what I have to do?" And I'm saying, I don't think that's the way to go, because you're putting yourself into the blame, the victim box.

You're sort of self-identifying as that. And it turns out that, if you work with others, make it from less of a me to more of a we thing. We're all kind of struggling with some of these issues. How could we say, "is there some way to make some improvements so that we get rid of some of the pebbles in our shoe, those daily stressors, those chronic job stressors that aren't well managed?"

And, you know, rising tide will lift a lot of boats. So it's not just about fixing this person or fixing that person. It's actually the fact that we're seeing it more widely or more broadly says we need to sort of think about the things because we're interrelated in terms of the work we do.

We have to talk and work together, let's figure out what would actually make this, can we take stuff off our plate and not take stuff on, you know, whatever. I'm sure you've got a lot of examples of that.

**Sarah Moody:** Yes, yes, yes, absolutely. So, I wanna dive into a couple things. So I love a part of your thesis too- how do we make the workplace somewhere where humans can thrive instead of suffering?

And I'm a huge fan of two of your book reviewers.

**Christina Maslach:** Oh, okay.

**Sarah Moody:** Adam Plant.

**Christina Maslach:** Yeah.

**Sarah Moody:** Arianna Huffington both reviewed your book and Adam talks about how you've discovered some of the solutions or cures.

**Christina Maslach:** Yeah.

**Sarah Moody:** And we have a bunch of, you know, high performers listening to us right now.

**Christina Maslach:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Sarah Moody:** What's the cure? What's the solution? Where do we go from here?

**Christina Maslach:** Basically what we are saying is that those six areas that can help identify some of the mismatches, also serve as guides to how you could improve things.

So if you kind of pivot on those, if you look through the six areas, and particularly if people get together and maybe chat with colleagues as well and see, you know, how these perspectives are going.

Some of those things might be fine. I mean, you might say, Gee, we don't really have any problem with the positive feedback. That's good. You know, but the fairness issue, oh my gosh. People are beginning to say the wrong people are getting the awards and, how do we, deal with those kind of things?

So the pivot then says, Okay, what would a more fair or maybe a less toxic social environment look like? What would be some of the things we would like to have or to get rid of or moderate in some way?

Thinking of it as pebbles in the shoe, I think often gets people a little bit more focused on doable things as opposed to some vague thing like, redefine education for the 21st century, which is like, ah, where do we start to do, I mean, and we have to think about that because it, it really got, you know, teachers I think really got thrown in the deep end of the pool during the pandemic.

So, you know, we've got a lot of work to do there, but, the chronic job stressors that have not been successfully managed are often what we think of as these pebbles in the shoe. So is there some particular thing that is unfair in terms of how it's set up or implemented, that we could change, we could do it differently? I mean, we did it this way in the past, but we don't have to keep doing it. You know, like a reward thing. I mean, I remember once, I'll give personal example in my own department. There was a tradition for I don't know how long, of having a picnic in the park in May, sort of towards the end of the school year.

And this was a way to thank the staff for all the work that they did in the department and give any out little 10 year awards or 5 year awards or something like that. And, one of my colleagues who became the chair of the department, which is a circulating position, you know, for five years somebody takes on being a chair.

She talked to the staff and said, you know, spring is coming up and time for the picnic. And I just wanted to check, you know, how do people feel about it? Is this a good way to celebrate, what you've done? And she'd already, by talking with them, set up enough of a trust that they were willing to say, no we really don't like that picnic, you know. But they had never kind of complained about it before for a number of reasons, it wasn't no longer a great kind of way to say thank you.

And so she then said, Well, so what could we do better? And they thought about it and they said, Well, instead of spending money on big vats of potato salad or whatever, how about money to fix up the staff lounge? And next year the money could be spent on something else that would benefit the staff. And how about instead having just a potluck thing where everybody brings something and we have more of a party where we just get together as adults and talk with each other and have a good time rather than, The faculty flipping the hamburgers to serve for one day only out of 365.

You know, you know what I'm saying? It's, getting the feedback that turned it into a very different occasion that really had ripple effects throughout the department of making much better relations, I think, between staff and faculty.

**Sarah Moody:** I love the fact that your six areas are a framework to identify the gap.

**Christina Maslach:** Yeah.

**Sarah Moody:** In culture, in corporate America or in the police department; within a team.

**Christina Maslach:** Yeah, exactly. Yeah.

**Sarah Moody:** Then also use it as the guide, like the framework, as the guide for “Where's the gap?” Get together as a team, and then where do we need to go- if we think big- and where do we wanna be in the next six months or 12 months in terms of shifting insufficient rewards to you know, positive feedback? A lot of what we do in the technology industry is like leaderboards, how people are kind of showing up in sales or showing up in other ways that, you know, Humans in tech seem to love it.

**Christina Maslach:** Yeah

**Sarah Moody:** They did a great job. Look at me. I'm on the leaderboard.

**Christina Maslach:** Yeah.

**Sarah Moody:** So what are all the ways that you can reward people if it's, you know, looking at the area of insufficient rewards, for example.

**Christina Maslach:** Yeah, and I often get from leadership, What is the one best practice?

What is the one? There is no one size best practice fits all across all occupations, and even within one organization. I mean, if you think about a hospital, there are the lab techs, there's the pediatrics, and you probably wanna find out what's their issue? Where are their mismatches and what could we do there? And that might be something quite different than what you would do over here, rather than, one thing for everybody. The thing is, the solutions, there could be multiple different ways of doing it. And then what is the next step- and we talk a lot about that in the book and also examples- consider what are the doable things?

What are the things that are maybe more important for people? Maybe there's 10 different ways we could go. What are the pros and cons of doing this or



doing that and making sure that there's communication and feedback among the people who have to live with whatever you do. You know that they're saying, Yes, we're on board with this one.

**Sarah Moody:** Exactly! All bought in. Let's go.

**Christina Maslach:** Yeah. Yeah. As opposed to being surprised by, Oh, they're doing this. Oh my God, why? You know, what did it, what did it solve? You know, kind of looks nice. Oh, it's healthier food in the vending machines, and it's like, You know what? We could live without the machine. Could you have spent the money on this other thing over here?

So there are ways, it's kind of a continual improvement process, which ought to be just a normal thing because, we went through a big change when the pandemic hit the globe but we always, I mean, How people teach at the university now is way different than when I first started 50 years ago.

We always have to evolve and change and we learn more about how people learn. So we change how we teach. We have new technology, so there's a sense where this should be just an normal ongoing, let's check in, see how we do. So now sort of coming out of the pandemic where we learned the job can change- what can we learn from the things that worked well? What can we learn from the things that were atrocious and it just worked badly? Because we learn from both, and as we now think about where we are and where we might be headed, what are some things that we could do that match that relationship that people have with their jobs a little bit better? I often ask people, if you were to redesign your job or your organization or your team right now today, would it look anything like what you actually are doing?

And most of the time they think about it and say, no , I would do it different.

Well, why not take that thinking and say, Okay, are we doing stuff that is really low priority, unnecessary? Can we subtract, not just add, could we redesign some of the things that we deal with in a way so that it's a better process and is not dragging people down to get it done, you know, all kinds of things. As you know, it's, it involves a lot of breaking set. Thinking about it differently.

So the six areas give you six different perspectives on things. It may not just be workload, it may not just be, you know, control. It might be something else, but I'm often reminded of the breaking set by the thing that they always say on the airlines when you board and getting ready to go- look for the nearest exit, it may be behind you and that's a brilliant example of a pebble kind in the shoe level

thing of think differently. Don't just look forward. It might actually be right there and how do we get people to kind of break set in thinking about just because we've been doing this in this job for a long time, is it really important? Is it necessary? Can it be transformed? Can it be taken away? Can it be redesigned? Given what we wanna accomplish in this work, what might be the best kind of things to really have that environment that allows people to thrive?

A plant is not gonna thrive if you don't give it good soil and sun and some water and whatever. You're not gonna get a great return on that investment you've made in buying the best set of tulips from Holland, or whatever.

So getting people to understand what makes people blossom, what makes them grow and get better at what they're doing and watching out for other people and helping out and, looking for other people that can, you know, support what we're doing and that kind of thing.

And these are not all, simple solutions and they often take time to take root, you know?

**Sarah Moody:** Changing culture.

**Christina Maslach:** Yeah. Yeah. Because you kind of have to undo what you're familiar with, even if you don't like it. And then start something a little different and there will be glitches, there will be, course corrections, you know, but you keep at it until you get it into a place where people saying, Thank you, we're in a better place now and this is helping.

Um, so flexibility in the workplace. What are all the ways you could be flexible that will help get the work done, but also are helping people manage their lives? You know, I've always thought, for example, that, the workplace becomes the sort of the, the baseline and everybody has to adjust to it.

So why are schools getting out at different times than people get off work, for people with families? What do we do to handle that? But, you know, at some point that's a larger design issue that we just haven't, you know, kind of addressed and, and taken into account. So what can happen at a lot of levels?

**Sarah Moody:** Absolutely. And back to where we started, it's gonna start with each individual human. Start with, “where do we wanna go as a team, as a company, blue sky thinking around these six areas?” right? Yeah. Around overload or wherever the stressors are. So equipping the human to be able to have belief, a voice.

You know, have the skills to be calm and confident, I think you've said cool and collected in the midst of everything.

**Christina Maslach:** Yeah.

**Sarah Moody:** To believe that they can have a voice and they can accompany and they can identify these areas and the gaps- and back to your point, be open to growing and iterating and evolving as a human, as a company, and really getting to a place where the human and the company are thriving because research also tells us that humans and growth mindset companies will have greater returns in corporate America (as well as at hospitals or across all industries).

**Christina Maslach:** Yeah.

**Sarah Moody:** Christina, it's been such a pleasure. Seriously, I'm like, my podcasts are usually 20 minutes and you and I like, I could keep going!

**Christina Maslach:** Hahaha okay.

**Sarah Moody:** Anything you wanna just say as we wrap up? It's been such an honor for me. I encourage everyone to go out and buy her book, "The Burnout Challenge: managing people's relationships with their jobs" and then start getting into some work groups in the office and dive into these six areas she's identified. Christina, now, anything else you wanna kind of share with our audience as we wrap up?

**Christina Maslach:** Oh, well, no, this has been such a great conversation. I think we've gotten into a lot of great, great things, but I think ultimately what we're trying to do is, figure out ways as we move forward, in the future how do we create the kind of environments where all of us, you know, can thrive, can grow, and have a meaningful life. I think that's one of the things that happened during the pandemic, is that people then realize there are ways that affect my life with [00:42:00] family or friends or, you know, other kind of things that can be different than what I had before.

And how do I find a place where I can make the contributions, I can to the world, the workplace, society, whatever. And at the same time, you enjoy doing that, but also enjoy a full life for the time that I'm here on this planet. So that's what this is ultimately kind of all aiming for.

**Sarah Moody:** I love that. And you know what? Everyone listening, we as humans crave a meaningful life. We are wired for this to thrive and to have a meaningful life, of passion and purpose and all the things. So just know that this is where you all can be living a meaningful life, thriving in work, thriving at home, thriving in society, all parts of your life.

**Christina Maslach:** Well said.

**Sarah Moody:** Christina thank you so much. Have a...

**Christina Maslach:** Thank you.

**Sarah Moody:** ...beautiful rest of your evening, and I look forward to seeing the results of all of your amazing research out there in our world; thank you so much for all you do.

**Christina Maslach:** Thank you for that. And, it was an honor to be here, so I, really appreciate the chance that we had to get to know each other this way.

**Sarah Moody:** You too. Take care.

**Christina Maslach:** Okay, you too. Bye.

**Sarah Moody:** If you're loving what you're learning in the podcast, you have to come and check out the Rockstar Program. It's my coaching program where we take these neuroscience based cognitive tools and we use them daily to break through burnout so you can fall passionately in love with your life and your career again.

So join me over at [SarahMoody.com/rockstarprogram](https://SarahMoody.com/rockstarprogram) I would love to have you join me. You can also follow me @sarahmoody on LinkedIn, Twitter, and Instagram. I can't wait to see you.