

Dr. Lisa Belanger ([00:00](#)):

The way you're working is not working. The old school approach of sacrificing your personal life for professional gain has succeeded only in breeding a workplace culture of overwork, disengagement, and burnout. Welcome to the Work Less, Produce More podcast. I'm your host, Dr. Lisa Belanger, CEO of ConsciousWorks. Consulting and expert in proactive mental health and performance in the workplace. My goal is to teach leaders to consciously build their workplace culture whether you're leading five people or 500. The dynamics you said in your workplace matter. We will cover essential skills to live and lead sustainable work. Leveraging the latest research on how to work and maybe even more importantly, learning how to unwork. This podcast will help you work sustainably, lean in and enjoy it with the support of an inspired and fulfilled team.

While there's no one answer, each episode, I will explore with a guest experts, considerations, ideas, and tools you need to create work-life integration that fuels your drive instead of draining your ambition.

As we dive into the work less, produce more, I don't think there's any way to avoid the conversation about entrepreneurship. It is a unique path in one that you have to be more conscious of, but maybe I have a lot of opportunity for the work, less produce more idea. So on today's episode, we're talking to Jason Duncan. He is founder of one of the fastest growing privately held companies in America and one of the top entrepreneurial companies in the country. He is a multi-award winning entrepreneur and founder of 12 companies. Jason now runs a mastermind called the Exeter Club. He is also the host of internationally syndicated podcast, The Root of All Success. Jason lives in Nashville, Tennessee with his high school sweetheart, and loves riding motorcycles and camping in his RV. So how do we work less and produce more as entrepreneurs? First and foremost, I'd love you to introduce yourself and what you do and how you got into it?

Jason Duncan ([02:10](#)):

Well, I am the real Jason Duncan and it's a pleasure to be here. Thank you for having me on. I am a... first and foremost, I'm an entrepreneur on several different companies. The main thing that I do on a daily basis is I'm a business coach who helps entrepreneurs work less and make more by doing something I call exit without exiting. I've spent 13 years in pastoral ministry. Before that, I was four years as a school teacher before I became an accidental entrepreneur but what I do mostly now is coach other entrepreneurs how to do what I did. And I built a multimillion dollar company and then learn how to step away from it and follow some other passions and do other things.

Dr. Lisa Belanger ([02:44](#)):

Conveniently, I am an entrepreneur. I have been for about two years fully. I'm a recovering academic in academia. It's really bad, we have this thought process that in order to have a successful day, you have to hurt at the end of the day. So how do we shift? How do I? Honestly, how do I shift this mindset and what are initial things that I can be thinking through to work less and produce more?

Jason Duncan ([03:11](#)):

It starts with embracing delegation. And that's what I coach my clients on all the time. The ironic prison of entrepreneurship is a real thing. It's the thing that we wanted to set us free ends up being this chain, this shackle that holds us in. And the reason is because we practice something called the hero syndrome. And the hero syndrome is all entrepreneurs, they put on the cape, they fly in, they swoop in, they save the day and then they fly off to the next problem. And that's what entrepreneurs do at the

startup phase, which is acceptable, inappropriate, but they keep doing it and that will never let them break free. And so their time is always urgent, emergency, urgent, emergency, et cetera. So the first thing is you got to embrace delegation.

The second is eliminating stress, which is what you're talking about. How do you do that? And I think that eliminating stress is 100% possible once you understand the true causes of stress. And so part of what I coach my clients on is understanding the true causes of stress, how to manage it and then how to ultimately eliminate it, but not just for you, but for your employees and your business.

The third thing would be established the right systems and processes when the systems and processes are in place, that is predictable activity. There's less worry about what's going to happen so you can do that. And then finally, you got to invest in people. Your people are the most important part of your business. And so if you do those four things, those four core principles, you will be able to work less and make a lot more. And it's not just money, more impact, more time, more freedom, more choices.

Dr. Lisa Belanger ([04:32](#)):

For somebody that's just going from that startup phase to getting into more routine, more systems, more delegation, all of those great things, is there things I should be thinking through a mindset that I should be approaching this with as I make key decisions? And as I let go of both the thinking, I need to work long, hard hours, and also this hero complex you were talking about.

Jason Duncan ([04:55](#)):

Yeah. I think the main thing you need to be thinking about is how do I delegate this stuff to other people? I really think that's where it starts is understanding a true delegation is not just assigning a task to someone else, but it's entrusting it and empowering that person to do it. And then when you do that, then you actually practice true delegation. You tell them what they're doing, why they're doing it, how they're doing it. And when it's due, that mindset on a constant and continual basis, not only will set you free, but it sets your company free because once your employees learn how this works, your top level managers will delegate to lower level people and so forth on the thing. That way, everybody's doing in their right lane.

As the CEO and entrepreneur of a... the owner and founder of a multimillion dollar company, you shouldn't be taking out the trash. You shouldn't be making sales calls. You shouldn't be doing the books. That doesn't mean you can't or you won't help in any of those areas, but that's not your lane. Your lane should be building the asset, setting a vision, communicating that vision and building the asset for the company. And if you're busy running reports and looking at financials that a CFO or a controller should be doing, you can't build the asset. And you're certainly not communicating the vision. That's what your job as the founder really is.

Dr. Lisa Belanger ([06:08](#)):

I like that idea of empowering other people to do those tasks because we know even from a burnout perspective, that's actually going to protect them from burnout is knowing that they have the ability to do the task, the confidence to do it, and they know the success marker to your point about having like that due date or something that they're then crossing off. But when you have that ambiguity, that's what can be really stressful for your employees. Not only for you, but certainly, for your employees as well. So I think, I like that from multiple different perspectives. For you, is there something that you do

during the day routines habits that help energize and help keep you on track motivated for the day? However, you want to look at that.

Jason Duncan ([06:49](#)):

I have this hobby horse or soapbox as they call it on routine versus rhythm. And I actually have a PDF document. I created better for my clients because they kept asking every time I'd mention, "That's interesting, let's talk about that." And so, most people are routine people and they think everybody's routine people. So you got the 5:00 AM club. Everybody talk about like, "You don't get in for 5:00 AM and take a cold shower and work out first before you have coffee and you have to drink this type of coffee." And you got these routine people and that works for a lot of folks. But for people like me who aren't routine people, I feel guilty because I'm not living up to the standard that another person set. And then it's just this failure cycle. I say, "Okay, I'm going to commit to this routine and then I don't wake up at 5:00." And I'm like, "Ah, I'm off my routine so I feel guilty."

And the reason that I don't like that is because I've discovered that I'm a rhythm person. And I think a lot of us are rhythm people. And if you've ever felt guilty about not keeping a routine, you're probably a rhythm person like me and rhythms are the natural beat to which your life operates. It can go up and it could go down, it could change. But generally speaking, there's some predictable activities that happen, but not on a routine ritualized basis. So for me, I have one day a week, I set an alarm and that's because I have coffee with a friend. And while I would normally wake up in enough time to do it, I don't want to oversleep and miss that.

But I don't set an alarm. I generally wake up around 6:00 anyway, every day, just my body wakes me up. I have coffee. I go through my prayers. I think about what I'm going to be doing for the day, couple days a week. I walk or ride my bike or go out and do something like that. But if I don't do any of that, I don't feel guilty for not having accomplished it.

But there's this four-day work week, I found an idea that I love, by the way. But I'm of the opinion that if I'm going to work later in the day, I've got this call, which is later in the day than normal, and I've got another call after this, which is later in the day than I normally do, so that means I took the morning and was more leisurely about it. I went to lunch with my wife. I rode my motorcycle into one of my sales training sessions with one of my clients. Took a little bit more leisurely time than I would if I'm just working a normal day. So I try to keep a really good balance of time and I don't feel like I'm overworked.

Dr. Lisa Belanger ([08:55](#)):

Exactly. Should be able to just go with the ebb and flow. And I think we do get bogged down by I shoulds.

Jason Duncan ([09:01](#)):

Yes. People should on us all the time. Don't they?

Dr. Lisa Belanger ([09:03](#)):

They should all over the place.

Jason Duncan ([09:04](#)):

They should. You should. You should. You should. Well, don't should on me go should on yourself. I'll do what I think I need to do.

Dr. Lisa Belanger ([09:11](#)):

And I think that as light as we're taking it, I think that's a massive lesson. I think about teaching MBA students and I wish that lesson was incorporated because the structure of that program puts so much shoulds on them. And then they take that out into the work world. And then they have all the shoulds of the new employer and trying to impress them. And then I see this burnout disengagement happen within the first two years. And nobody asked them what's their definition of success. What is your definition of success? And I mean, that more in like a micro way of daily to your point about having some ebb and flow, and taking your bike out and things like that. And then grand juror, like the bigger definition.

Jason Duncan ([09:51](#)):

This is close to home because I have a book that I wrote called The Five Keys to Entrepreneurial Success and I've got a podcast called The Root of All Success where I study how all people did it. And every time I interview someone on my show, I ask them the same question you just ask me, "What is your definition of success?" So I've heard hundreds of definitions of success. But what my definition that I keep going back to, which is actually the dictionary definition of success means achieving the desired outcome. So if I say, "Hey, today, I want to have a good day. Whatever that might mean. I want to accomplish these three tasks and I want to make sure that I can go sit out on the back porch tonight with my wife and hang out and have a glass of wine." If that's my intent for the day, as long as I accomplish that, that's a successful day.

On a grander scale, if success to me is having the Lamborghini and five beach houses, well, I'm not successful to how to reach that, but that's not everyone's version of success. For me, that isn't. The beach house is maybe, the Lamborghini I don't care about, but what do I really want? Well, I know that my mission is to help people get the results they want out of life. So, if I'm continually and constantly helping people do that, then I feel like I'm successful, I don't care what the world thinks. I don't drive an exotic car, but that doesn't make me not successful. Just like someone who drives exotic car doesn't make them successful. Success is much more subjective and not objective than I think people think.

Dr. Lisa Belanger ([11:12](#)):

And I think that we need to ask that question way more.

Jason Duncan ([11:14](#)):

Yes.

Dr. Lisa Belanger ([11:15](#)):

Is what people's version of because it helps them make decisions. It helps them keep in line their values with what they're trying to push forward. And we rewarded people for so long for working crazy. [inaudible 00:11:27] for pushing through, nobody's congratulating you after you take your coffee break. They're saying thanks for working that extra time last night on the weekend, whatever it is. So we do so many of the behaviors by what we get rewarded for. So being able to understand that intrinsic reward and what that success means can help so much even just shift mindset within a traditional nine to five and certainly as entrepreneurs.

Jason Duncan ([11:53](#)):

I had a client, I checked in with several of my coaching clients today, just send them a message on our messaging app that we've got for the clients that we use. And I said, "How's your day going?" And his response was, "Man, I'm just trying to keep my head above water today. It's one of those days." And my response to him was very much like what we're talking about. I said, "Listen, breathe, relax, and try to remember everything's in perspective. Just keep things in perspective." And he wrote back like, "You know what, thank you." That's all he needed. Just somebody [inaudible 00:12:20]. It's about the bigger picture. It's about perspective. Just take a moment. It's all good.

Dr. Lisa Belanger ([12:24](#)):

And I think that hitting that pause button, right? Essentially, you're just like, "Stop, recalibrate and then move forward."

Jason Duncan ([12:31](#)):

If you think about it, I mean, if you go back and look at how God created the world in six days, rest in the seventh, and that became the Sabbath day for the Jewish nation, whether or not you follow a certain day, which could be argued. But the principle, the Sabbath principle is so, so important for all of us. Is that the Sabbath, which is a sabbatical, it's a kind of taking a moment to breathe is really important. And if we go into this grind mode and hustle mode that Instagram and YouTube tells us that we have to do, we're not following the principle that God instituted in every human. It's like there has to be this rest. There's got to be a point where you take a breather, which is why I don't feel guilty for not setting an alarm, and I don't feel guilty for taking extended lunch breaks with my wife or going riding my motorcycle in the middle of the day because I'm practicing the Sabbath principle on a regular basis.

Dr. Lisa Belanger ([13:17](#)):

And I love that in concept, in regards to... and for me, it has to be more frequent. Even in your examples, it's more frequent than once a week. Even if you think of athletes, they need rest days. We can't keep pushing through and we know those rest days are just as important as the training days. It's basically effectively learning how to work into unwork. And I think that idea of unwork is not taught. So we have so much formal education, and thought process around how do we work, and how do we be productive and how do we perform? And then not a lot of information about how do we breathe, how do we stop, how do we pause and do it in a way that's meaningful.

Jason Duncan ([13:56](#)):

That's why I like the rhythm concept because rhythms go up and down like your heartbeat. It's a cardiac rhythm. When I'm working out, I'm working hard, it's really high and moving fast. But if I'm relaxed and chilling, it's going to be done low. That's the way your life should be in your work, your business should be. There are times when you're working hard, times when working slow, times are not working at all, just enjoy the ride. That's good. Now lazy people will take that to say, "Okay, I can take time off when I want." That's not what we're talking about here.

Dr. Lisa Belanger ([14:24](#)):

And I find that intense people type a workaholic type. They feel guilty when they're not working. There's a guilt that comes in with that on work. Have you experienced that? Or how do you coach through that guilt?

Jason Duncan ([14:38](#)):

I don't experience that because I have a different makeup and I've built safeguards around me to not be the workaholic that I am. I had a life coach once diagnosed me as a workaholic. And I'm like, "No, I'm not, actually." And I went through my days and how I handle my days and what I do with myself on home and what I don't do to watch television and all this stuff. And he goes, "Yeah, I see you're a workaholic." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "You have developed systems and hedges around your life so that you won't work all the time, which indicates that you're a workaholic. You just put the right systems in place."

And that was very enlightening to me. So I, now, with my clients, I'll talk about that they need to do the same thing. They need to put hedges around and make sure that from a mindset you're paying attention what's most important at all times and you don't get yourself overloaded. And you're taking time to breathe, taking time to relax. That's I think the most important part of what we've got to do day to day. And the mindset is I feel guilty because I don't work. Well, that's because you're listening to the routine people tell you got to keep working.

Dr. Lisa Belanger ([15:33](#)):

The routine people and pretty much damn near everybody in the world has the same message as work harder, harder, harder, longer, which I think is burning us out. You can see it everywhere. So for somebody that came to you and said that they were burnt out, what was your suggestion? And assuming that they didn't have the same ability to delegate into work through in the same process as a business owner or an entrepreneur.

Jason Duncan ([15:57](#)):

That's a great question. The first thing I would do is I would probably sit them down and explain to them something called the law of open cycles. The law of open cycles states that the cause of stress in the human condition is not the endurance of stressful situations, but rather too many open cycles in any one time. And an open cycle is any task, a relationship event that has a start, a change and a stop, which is an unread email, an unread text, a build that's due a project that has to be pushed out. Could be your a relationship with a loved one, a friendship, et cetera. Some open cycles you don't ever want to close like my relationship with my wife or my parents, everyone to close, but they're going to close at some point due to death or whatever.

But if you have too many open cycles at one time, you're going to feel entirely stressed out. You're going to feel overloaded and to use your term, you're going to feel burnt out. So what we would do is we talk through what that means. And then I train my clients on an exercise called an open cycle's inventory, which takes about three hours to do the right way where you whiteboard out every single open cycle in your life. And then you divide that into three categories. A category that's, "Okay. I can close these open cycles today." Boom, they're done. Like the not answering emails. You can get your email inbox to zero. You'll feel amazing.

The second part of that list would be things that's going to take a couple of weeks, little planning and forethought, and then you start working towards getting those closed. And then the third part of the list are things that's going to take a lot of effort to do. Maybe even an outside force, an outside person that's got to help you with that. And so once you see your inventory into these three categories, you're like, "Oh, okay." So I will feel amazing when I get this first list checked off, because that's how we all feel. And then you start working through the second one. And then the third one's hanging out there on the end. And that's what I do with burnout people because burnout is really just the end of what stress looks like. I can help them through that with a lot of open cycles and eliminating stress in their life.

Dr. Lisa Belanger ([17:51](#)):

The other question I have, do you have any parents that you coach?

Jason Duncan ([17:54](#)):

I don't coach parents specifically, but most of the people that I coach are parents. Yes.

Dr. Lisa Belanger ([18:00](#)):

But they're also parents. So I have two little ones under the age of five and I find that so difficult to manage. All the business to do with the ever-flowing argument about putting on pants or feeding and watering that they want to do every day. Is there any advice that you can talk about because of course, there's this great idea of rhythm. My rhythm's taken over by other little humans that look like me on a regular basis. I know there's an element of letting go, but I mean, we've talked for only a couple minutes. I'm a control enthusiast and a type A personality so that's difficult for me. But any thoughts in regards to how to manage outside forces? I'm going to use kids as an example, but really, it could be elderly care. It could be just simply something that you just don't have control over.

Jason Duncan ([18:50](#)):

I think what I would probably do in that instance would be to-

Dr. Lisa Belanger ([18:56](#)):

And I have [inaudible 00:18:57] so I can't get rid of them. They're still mine.

Jason Duncan ([18:58](#)):

So adoption's not an option? That's where you-

Dr. Lisa Belanger ([19:00](#)):

It's not. I've committed to them. The return policy is terrible so just keep that in mind.

Jason Duncan ([19:05](#)):

Parenting is a whole another animal. My kids are much older now, so I don't have that issue. My daughter, she still lives with us, but I don't ever see her because she's working three jobs and she has friends and all that kind of stuff. The tool that I train my clients to use to offset that maybe not the parenting thing as much as everything else is called the 10 block weekly schedule. And it's about focus management rather than time management. It's like when do I give my focus to these different things. And kids, your focus on them depends on what the moment is. But they're old enough to start understanding, scheduling. Somewhere between three and five, you can start talking to them about, "Okay, this is when we do this," and they can start learning to read a clock. Maybe they don't can't tell time but I know that our kids, we told them they couldn't get up until the first number was an eight and they knew that.

Dr. Lisa Belanger ([19:51](#)):

So I use timers because he doesn't understand time, but he can see it's like color. And he can see it depleting and then he knows that he can't come get me and tell it dings or like, "What happened?" And

then I've started creating... this is my type A personality. Even like systems where they can see and it's icons to tell them what the routine or rhythm is-

Jason Duncan ([20:13](#)):

[inaudible 00:20:14] this. You got this.

Dr. Lisa Belanger ([20:15](#)):

The two year old's not there yet. But the five year old is very [inaudible 00:20:20].

Jason Duncan ([20:19](#)):

The two's a little hard right now. He just wants to bounce on the bed or whatever, just have fun. But the 10 block weekly schedule is a focus management tool that I started using years ago as an entrepreneur. And it works so well for me. I started training my clients and they're like blown way by to have like, "This is a cool thing ever." I'm like, "Well, it's just focus management. It's what you put your focus into where your focus goes, energy flows. And that's what you got to do. You got to manage your focus, not your time."

Dr. Lisa Belanger ([20:42](#)):

I call it attention management, but same type of principle where it's like where is your attention going right now and then being able to bounce that off. Well, thank you so, so much, right on the dot. I really appreciate this conversation. I hope you have a wonderful rest of day. Thanks so much.

Jason Duncan ([20:56](#)):

Well, thank you Lisa. It's been a pleasure.

Dr. Lisa Belanger ([20:58](#)):

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