

EPISODE 6 – Juggling it all

Buffy Gorrilla: This is Starting Somewhere - a podcast from the University of Melbourne all about internships - finding one, landing it, and making the most of the experience.

I'm Buffy Gorrilla, I've cried at work, on more than one occasion...and now I'm host of this podcast.

Ben Pawson: And I'm Ben Pawson. My reaction to stress? Dandruff...and now I'm co-host of this podcast.

Buffy: So, we're clearly the best people to help you start somewhere.

Let's take a moment, and think how you are travelling through life - how's Uni? Are your courses going well, assignments, lectures, that group work? And now let's add in a social life because that's fun and you need to blow off some steam. Of course, you are wise beyond your years, so you are involved in a few clubs or organisations, or volunteer somewhere you care about. Also because you know it will look good on your LinkedIn profile. You also might have a part-time job because rent and flat whites don't pay for themselves. Now you want to add in an internship. How are you coping with all of this?

Ben: If I was trying to juggle all of that, I would probably drop it like it's hot, or an orange that I cannot keep in the air anymore - there's an insta story video of that - it's a must see if you like awkward.

Buffy: It's so awkward. But here's what we are going to look at in this episode: the signs you are reaching burnout, what to do when you see them coming, and how you can plot your course back to reality - or better still avoid it all together. These feelings of stress are becoming more commonplace - which might be a good podcast series on it's own. But it is probably comforting to know - you are not alone.

Ben: Here's some data that backs up Buffy's claim - and I am a huge fan of data. According to the American Psychology Association, 39 percent of millennials say their stress increased last year, 52 percent report lying awake at night from stress at some point in the past month and 44 percent report feeling irritability or anger because of their stress.

Buffy: That seems on par with my millennial feelings...

Ben: Mm-hm.

Various voices: I absolutely got burnt out in that role within 3 months of doing it...I just felt tired all the time, I wasn't really enjoying what I was doing...I just started to be really, really tired, and I started to be kind of - my anxiety started to grow...I felt by the end that although I had a great experience I was really burnt out...I actually reached a breaking point where I was just like "I can't handle this anymore", and friends helped me a lot to get through it.

Buffy: So it seems from our very small sample of four, that being tired all the time is a sign of burnout.

Ben: Are we all burnt out? There is a small window on Friday evening where I feel somewhat sprightly.

Buffy: But these are young people, Ben, not like you, and at the prime of their lives. If they are tired it's probably because they're stretched too thin.

Ben: Well we are here to help. We talked to Lynn Cazaly - her surname is a part of a famous AFL song, and later she'll give us some hacks for managing your work, and balancing your life, fun and studies.

Buffy: What are some of those hacks that can help us get back into control?

Lynne Cazaly: Some hacks for control...well, one of the things is that control is an illusion.

Buffy: Alright, interview over.

Ben: And Neil Wilson, a familiar voice from other episodes but for the few of you who might not be familiar with him yet, He's a clinical psychologist and counsellor, working at Counselling and Psychological Services at the University of Melbourne.

Buffy: Is burnout a common thing that you see across your work?

Neil Wilson: It's a common thing to see in the mirror every morning, actually. It's really common in our work and in our patients, clients and colleagues.

Buffy: Neil and Lynne offer us some advice on how to juggle it all. But if uni/life balance isn't your biggest worry, in episode eight of Starting Somewhere we'll dive into the thorny issues of exploitation and compensation, if that's what's keeping you up at night. But first, let's hear from Sarah Webster, a University of Melbourne student who didn't have the benefit of this podcast and tried to do too much.

Sarah Webster: Well, I've been playing piano all my life. I really loved maths throughout high school, and I wasn't sure exactly what I wanted to do. So, I thought that doing the Bachelor of Science would be a safe option, because I thought I'd really enjoy

maths. And because piano has always been a part of my life, I wanted to continue that. So, I decided to do the diploma on the side, in addition to the Bachelor.

Buffy: And how's that work load, is it overwhelming?

Sarah: It was pretty overwhelming, so a normal full time load is four subjects for 12.5 credit points, subjects a semester. With the diploma, there's an additional two 6.25 credit point subjects, so it's the equivalent of about 5 normal subjects. And I did that throughout all of first year and second year, but at the end of second year, I was starting to feel a bit burnt out. And I decided that the best thing for me would be to extend my third year of the two years, and that's what I'm doing. Yeah, I'm in the second half of my third year.

Buffy: And how did that burn out manifest itself for you, Sarah?

Sarah: I just felt tired all the time, I wasn't really enjoying what I was doing. I felt like, I wasn't really learning stuff, I was kind of just learning how to do the exam instead of really absorbing content. And I felt like I wasn't really making the most of my time at university, and sort of going through the motions instead of really enjoying things.

Buffy: Even professionals experience burnout, so Neil Wilson knows of what he speaks.

Neil Wilson: There's a story I tend to tell from when I used to work with young people with cancer and I absolutely got burnt out in that role within three months of doing it, because I just kept sacrificing and staying late and blah, blah, blah and "of course you can have a friend over, of course I'll come in early", blah, blah, blah. What I noted towards the end of that spell of sort of reaching a more burnt out phase was that the quality of my work was coming down. If you are actually stopping every now and again the quality of your work gets better rather than the opposite, but interns often don't have the experience or the objectivity to go, "no, I should actually just fight and work smart at the moment". What interns typically want to do is work hard. Companies also like people who work smart. They love them actually. So it's about stopping to speed up. I need some time.

Buffy: This tip is just so good. I have a confession, I say yes to everything...and at the moment I have around 5 jobs, and have tried Neil's trick of stopping to speed up and it's been a lifesaver.

Ben: A day off, doing nothing but "treat yo'self" activities can really help.

Grace Chen: Hi, I'm Grace Chen. I'm studying the Bachelor of Commerce, majoring in economics and finance, currently in third year.

Ben: Remember Grace Chen from episode 2, where she talked about securing an internship at EY? Well, to be the best of the best takes an effort and that took it's toll on Grace and she reached a point where she just couldn't handle it all.

Grace: Especially when exams were going on. At first, I kind of just kept it to myself. I was just, like, "I need to continue on." It actually reached a breaking point where I was just, like, "I can't handle this anymore," and my friends helped me a lot to get through it. Oh, I still have a lot of club events as well. They said that "you need to drop something, you can't do basically everything. You're putting way too much pressure on yourself". Through talking with a lot, even with my managers at the university, it lessened a lot of the pressure, and I managed to deal with it a lot easier.

Ben: There's that pressure again - we looked at where the pressure comes from in episode one and Grace confirms what we found, that it often comes from within.

Grace: It's just that high expectations from everything. I'm someone that if I'm involved with something, I'll put absolutely everything I have, and I think I spread myself a bit too thin last year. So I didn't even have much time for myself even, and that's very important to balance it all out.

Ben: But how did Grace's stress manifest itself?

Grace: I stopped talking to a lot of my friends because I was so focused on getting all my work done that the time that I would usually spend with my friends, that kind of disappeared. It wasn't until a lot of my close friends said, "Hey, I haven't really heard from you in like a month or two," that I realised how badly I had gotten.

Ben: And for Grace that was a sign that it was time to sit back and reevaluate.

Caleb Triscari: My name is Caleb Triscari, I was a University of Melbourne student and graduated in July last year. And right now, I am a producer for ABC Radio National and I'm also a freelance journalist. I studied a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in media and politics and I also did a diploma in music on the side. The thing is that in my first three years of my degree, well I came from Perth initially. So I came to the University of Melbourne not really having any friends. Not knowing kind of the tips and the tools of the trade, and how to kind of get around campus and things like that. So I had to very much learn that myself. And the way that I did that was by joining clubs and committees, and really really getting myself involved in those societies - especially through Farrago and the Media Department at the Union.

Buff: Caleb's story is so relatable especially for interstate and international students. Immersing yourself in Uni life helps with assimilation and maybe even warding off some of that homesickness. But can you do too much?

Caleb: I honestly did not find a balance. But I think what it came down to in the end, and I think it really kind of had to, like, I was forced to make a nice balance in 2016 when I became the editor of Farrago

Buff: For those of your who don't know, Farrago is the University of Melbourne's student magazine, and it's the oldest in Australia - first published in 1925.

Caleb: Which was effectively in a sense like a full-time job alongside my degree, alongside my other job at the University of Melbourne. So I had to find ... Yeah, I really did have to find that line. So I left the office at a certain time. I went home, started studying for a certain amount of time in the evenings, on the weekends. I found it through forcing myself to do it, which probably isn't a really good answer honestly. But yeah, I worked under pressure basically. And that's how I really found my fine line between kind of volunteering and studying, and working.

Buff: Self-imposed time management is one solution, but did it work for Caleb?

Caleb: I realised that I was kind of very much burning out. And a lot of it was happening in roughly mid 2017 as well. I can remember the time, 'cause I was doing so many things. I just started to be really really tired. And I started to kind of ... My anxiety started to grow, especially around high periods of stress, and when the workload was getting quite significant. So yeah, that's when I realised that I was starting to burn out and I really needed to just take a step back, maybe just take a week off or something to kinda just breathe and relax, and find my ground again.

Buff: Breathe and relax - those are useful activities to remember to do in lots of situations. And check in with your support network, it can do wonders.

Caleb: I reached out to my friends. I just said like, "Hey, do you wanna just grab a coffee and chat on the weekend, and just kind of relax and chill out?" That's the thing as well, I was also neglecting my social circles as well, because I was taking on so much work, and it was quite exhausting. And a lot of these were volunteer roles as well. I think that my friends were very much like my support network

Buff: And you may burn out just hearing about Caleb's extra-curriculars.

Caleb: The main time when I was really really burning out was roughly around July to September of 2017. During that time I was just finishing up my degree. I was also working at the library at the university. I had a role in two arts festivals. One of

them was Mudfest at the University of Melbourne at the Student Arts Festival, I was doing their marketing. And then I think the fourth one that comes to mind is I was also a creative producer at the National Writers Festival as well. Which is a position that I have continued on with, because I really really enjoyed it. Those were my kind of main four things. And two of those things, that the two festivals, they were ... They weren't really paid. They were very much volunteer roles. So yeah, those were really the things that kind of added onto the stress and added onto the workload. And eventually I kind of just went, "Oh my God, what is happening to me? I'm burning out here. I'm going home exhausted, and I really don't wanna get up in the morning". And it was just yeah, a lot. I have survived.

Buffy: Another tale of burnout survival - Tess's. Unpaid internships can put a financial strain on an already low-budget lifestyle.

Tess: This can be a tricky issue. For the first internship for me it was really quite an exhausting experience because I was working five days a week at the community legal centre and I was also working Saturdays and Sundays in my part-time job to earn enough income to make it work. That was very much a challenge, a financial challenge - however the caveat being for me for both of those two internships I got course credit for those. So although I wasn't being paid it counted as class time as well so there was that trade off which made it much more manageable. But it is a really, a financial reality for a lot of people deciding to intern when a lot of internships are unpaid. I think that goes back to speaking to the point about "well what's the organisation you're choosing?". I recognise that with community legal centres they really do rely on volunteers to get their work done and serve the community, so I know what I'm contributing there is something really valuable even if I'm not being paid as well. There were opportunities and I would advise future interns to look for scholarships as well especially if it's a university related internship, do your research. I know of somebody who had quite an inventive approach to an internship that was unpaid, he went out and did an internship and actually pitched an article and that article based on his internship and that article funded his internship. So get a bit creative - if you really want to do something that's unpaid do your research prior to getting in.

Buffy: Working seven days a week is exhausting, even if you feel you have all the energy in the world. With a creative approach like Tess' friend took, you may be able to carve out a bit of 'me time'. But Tess? Tess didn't.

Tess : Yes, it was exhausting and I wouldn't advise anyone to do the same. I felt definitely by the end, although I had a great experience, I was really burnt out. I think what it takes is a negotiation with your employer if you're working part-time early on and setting your boundaries. I think if I had worked one day a week as opposed, at my part-time job, as opposed to both Saturday and Sunday it would

have been much more manageable but I didn't set those boundaries early, and my boss knew that I was not available Monday to Fridays so therefore I was rostered on Saturday and Sunday. I think communicating really clearly as early as you can is a really important thing to do and it can be tricky and especially if you are doing shift work it can be an uncomfortable conversation because you don't want to miss out on your shifts but you also don't want to be in a position where it's too late to make changes and no-one can cover you if you want the day off.

Ben: It may be depressing to hear, but 80% of internships were still unpaid in 2015 so plan ahead for your internship, like Tess suggests. Those coffees and travel are not free. This will help avoid additional financial worries during your internship which is something Matthew Blundell cautions us to be aware of, but you can work around...

Matt Blundell: None of my internships were paid; however, that is one consideration as an intern, is to make sure that you have the financial backups, sort of looking one or two months ahead in how you can balance that. You're usually giving up two, three days a week where you are working for free, essentially. However, I saw the benefits of gaining experience and new knowledge over the financial motivations. I was quite poor during these internships; however, I was supplementing that by working in restaurants at nighttime. And another aspect that I guess everyone should take into consideration is also looking after your mental health while you're in an internship. Those pressures of finances, trying to compete with yourself to keep up, working too hard. It's important to sometimes take a step back and ask for a day off if you need it.

Ben: Although turning up to an internship implicitly means that you are ready and able to work, the schedule of a student does mean that employers need to be flexible. But do they understand what their student interns are going through?

Dan Silver: What we've found is that the guys who really respond to what we're looking for as a business, and you know about providing that excellent customer service and wanting to change the way that Australians invest, that they're the ones that generally are pretty good about balancing their university studies with their Stake work, with their life outside of both. We want to make sure that they've got a good level of balance, and they're not over committing themselves in any one area. But generally they're generally pretty strong at balancing it. We do make a point that when it comes to exams and stuff, that we give sufficient time off and we know that ultimately they've got to go and get their studies, and that's super important.

Ben: That's Dan Silver, who is the Chief Operating Officer for Stake, a startup that uses a lot of student interns in their customer onboarding, but they involve them in improving their real customer systems and they pay them.

Buff: No matter how supportive the company or how much you look for the brightside, sometimes you just want to have a good ol' whinge...

But don't feel bad about a bit of moaning about all this learning, and figuring life out stress. Little complaints creep in and it's normal there's even research from the University of Melbourne that backs it up, no seriously, it's true. It says that a low level gripe among colleagues can serve as a bonding function, and also an energising one, by helping staff and teams move through their negative feelings.

Ben: Unless it becomes a three day vitriolic rant, then you've probably got real issues. But what else can we do to help us get through our negative feelings?

Lynne Cazaly: My name's Lynne Cazaly, and you can probably think of me as a speaker, author, facilitator.

Buff: What are some of those hacks that can help us get back into control?

Lynne: Some hacks for control...well, one of the things is that control is an illusion.

Buff: Alright, interview over.

Lynne: It is an illusion. And I think one of the ways that we try and control control, or get more control, is by things like perfectionism or procrastination, or tinkering with things that don't really matter. I was just talking to a leadership team this morning in a Webinar, and I called out the fact that many of them spend a lot of time, and I call it tinkering, and this is what we can tend to do, is tinker around the edges, making little changes to things that actually don't make a big difference. So, we've kind of got to work on the bigger things. Work on the bigger things that are going to make a bigger difference. And that's one of the first hacks. I look at myself and go, "Am I tinkering, or am I transforming?" And so, I really want to go for something that's got a bigger return, bigger leverage, so I need to do a bigger action. Taking massive action, and that's the complete opposite to tinkering; doing little things.

Buff: So what would be a massive action a young person who's trying to balance it all could take? How could they attack that?

Lynne: Well I take great advice from a colleague of mine, Dermot Crowley. He's written a couple of books. One's called "Smart Work", and his new book coming out soon is called "Smart Teams". His first book is about categorising and prioritising what it is you need to do in your life, and I follow his advice that it has to get into a diary. Because if it's not in your diary or schedule or organiser, it doesn't get done. It remains on a to-do list. So I love scheduling in, not out of fun, but out of

necessity. This is a hack; scheduling in stuff, like the time that I had to leave home to come to this conversation today. So that was in my diary: Leave now.

Buffy: And did you leave at that time?

Lynne: I left six minutes later, but it gave me an hour to get here, and I had 15, 20 minutes up my sleeve. So I proofread a white paper I've got in my bag, and I got a banana, and I took some photos around campus, so I'm having this really lovely time, and getting some work done, not rushing. And I think that's part of this diarizing and scheduling in. So when you've got the internship time, great! Get those dates into the diary. Family time; always prioritise putting everybody's birthdays, and whenever anybody's going on holidays and when they're coming back, or if they need to be picked up at the airport. Your work, make sure that sort of stuff is blocked in, and some buffer time around that. That's absolutely not just a hack. I think it's a way of living, a way of working, a way of being.

Buffy: And are there any other Lynne Cazaly hacks that you live by? That you think, "If more people did this, the world would be more of a smoother running place".

Lynne: Yeah, I love to use Rev.com, that transcription service. And then, a new app they've brought out recently, Otter, which does live, in the moment, transcription

Ben: Thanks Lynne, we could certainly use that. Here's a flurry of other tools people we found are actually using to help them juggle it all. Links in the show notes, as usual.

Ruby: When I'm feeling particularly stressed and I've got a million things on, I sometimes use this app called the Wunderlist, which is essentially a fancy to-do list. You can put in calendar alerts, and it will remind you when you have certain things to do, you can put it in categories, and it allows you to tick things off your list as well which is for me, the most satisfying thing I can do when I'm feeling super stressed.

Claudia Hooper: I don't really use very many apps, well not exactly for work. The only app that I currently use is an app called Clue and it's a period tracking app.

Speaker 1: Hi I'm a theatre and event producer, I use a lot of different apps to keep on top of all of the bits and pieces I'm organising. Things like LastPass, to keep track of the many, many logins and passwords you need for different accounts. CamScanner, to try and get rid of bits of paper I have and turn them into PDFs easily, and also Google Keep for all sorts of lists and notes and snippets of thoughts. Yeah.

Charles: I used Duolingo for a while. I'm trying to brush up my language skills and if you're not gonna be motivated enough to learn languages without the app, then having

an app is not really that much more use. It's just another way of not learning a language, which we do anyway I think.

Speaker 2: I used the calendars on my phones religiously, Outlook for work, and Google Calendar for home, and if I only put it in my phone it just doesn't happen. And I also use a period tracker app and I love that.

Silvi: I think I overuse the calendar. I put every little thing in my calendar to make sure I don't forget. My whole day is pretty much planned out.

Speaker 3: I use OneNote for everything - so my minutes in meetings, my shopping list, stuff I'm gonna do on the weekend and the best part is I can use it on any one of my devices. I can access it from my phone, my tablet, and then if I log back onto my computer it's on there as well. It's awesome.

Buffy: If you are beyond the help of an app, here's more advice from Neil Wilson. I asked him if burnout is something he comes across regularly.

Neil Wilson: It's a common thing to see in the mirror every morning, actually. It's really common in our work and in our patients, clients and colleagues. Again and that's when up scaling other people is incredibly important to noticing when you're just ranting, 'cause ranting - and the term for when a relationship is going bad is called if it's vitriolic, it's probably something needs to be done here. Letting people know, looking for, "I just hate winging about my internship, if I keep ranting about how difficult is it, can you just pull me up on it and let me know for the last three days, you've just been ranting?". If it stems for more than a week, you need to sit down and have a good think. Not about leaving the internship, but about "how's my mental health? How's my physical health? Is something else wrong?" Because I think interns should be allowed to rant about their internship sometimes because it's difficult and you're not getting paid. That's sort of a form of slavery in a way, so I think slaves are allowed to rant, but, if we're doing it for more than a week, we're starting to get into some vitriolic territory, so we need to stop and reassess. "What was my initial motivation? What would I say to someone I love who was ranting this much about this?" Stopping to reevaluate often with the help of other people 'cause they have a more objective viewpoint. If you've got the opportunity to interact with people who have worked in that particular environment previously, that's a really important step if it's possible. There's usually an outgoing intern or an intern that's been there for a couple of weeks that you can touch base with, say is this normal? Is this how it works around here? Stopping to reevaluate if you're really ranting and becoming vitriolic because that's a sign that something else is wrong. If you get to the point where you're like, "no, I have been ranting. It is vitriolic, I feel like I'm approaching the end of my tether", what do you do then?

The really simple but, frustratingly obvious response that I'm going to give is slow down. You have to slow down because most interns have what's called unrelenting standards, the standards just keep increasing because they're trying to impress people. They're trying to get better at this, but often their standards exceed their functional capacity, so they get to 100 and they go all right, let's go to 120. Often when we're becoming a bit burnt out it's because we're trying to function at an increasingly high level, but we keep getting it wrong. So, actual mood and physical health starts to drop. There is a saying called stop to speed up and it's 100% accurate with burnout. If there's an opportunity to take a day off, do that. Then often interns will say, look I wanna show people that I'm dedicated, my response is "you also wanna show them that you don't understand your body and how your brain works, right"?

Buffy: Slowing down is what Sarah Webster did, extending the third year of her studies, and it seemed like it helped her manage. And your outlook seems quite positive, considering you've had some setbacks. How have you maintained your enthusiasm for keeping going?

Sarah Webster: The internship that I did has helped with my enthusiasm, because before that, I was feeling quite down about it. I was, very low self esteem about the whole thing and I just was a bit stuck. So, the internship really helped, and I was really, really lucky to have that experience. If I didn't have that experience, I'm not sure what I would have done, and how I would have kept that motivation going.

Buffy: Taking the time to find an internship that, as well as giving Sarah room to breath has given her some very valuable skills. So what was it that gave her all this enthusiasm?

Sarah: My job involved a lot of cold calling, well not exactly cold calling, they called it lukewarm calling.

Buffy: That's a very nice way to look at it.

Sarah: Yeah, it was with companies that had previously hosted students in fully internship subject. I had to chat with them over the phone, and at first it was a really daunting experience. But I overcame that hurdle, and it gave me a lot of confidence in talking to people, and I sorta feel like now, if I did find someone that I was interested in talking to I would have the confidence to call them up. I might not have their direct number, but just call the company and ask, "Can I speak to so and so."

Ben: And as we heard in episode two of Starting Somewhere, if you find a company you want to intern for and there's no structured internship listed anywhere just calling them up and asking if you can be the first is a great way of blazing a trail.

Buffy: Here's Lynne Cazaly again with tips on keeping your priorities straight.

Lynne Cazaly: A mentor and advisor of mine talks about fighting for three. Fighting for three things a day. So I use a visual management tool, Kanban, K-A-N-B-A-N, which is a lean manufacturing tool. I've got a flip chart on my cupboard doors in my office with three columns. To-do, Doing, and Done, are the three columns in that. To-do is like all of the things that I want to do. It's my backlog of all of the stuff, and that's where you put all of your stuff. Then, the middle column. So we've got To-do, then Doing, is to limit what things I'm working on. Limit that to three. So I'm fighting just to get three things done a day, and that's called your working progress, or working process. So I try and just have three things that I'm working on at any one time. And then once I finish a task, and I usually write them on a post-it note, I can pull that across into that final column, Done! And it's so exciting to give yourself, and I do, I give myself a high-five. Actually, I give myself two claps. In the kitchen at Rockpool, Neil Perry, the chef, when you see him in the kitchen and he's trying to get the energy going in the team, he'll do two claps, like that. He won't say, "Yay team! C'mon, let's get pumped up"; he's quiet. It's all very cool and classy, and just two claps. The team knows. It's either a bit of a celebration, or "c'mon, let's go". When I move that Kanban board post-it note from To-do, and I'm working on it in Doing, and when it finally gets into Done, Woo hoo!

Buffy: If you can find a good opportunity and you can manage to juggle it all, internships can be hugely beneficial. Here's Mary Trumble, a client services manager at LinkedIn Australia.

Mary Trumble: For me, I actually just loved the routine - so being able to catch a train into the city that was really exciting. Yeah, having the purpose during the week to sort of balance the studies and then seeing my studies actually come into life. So I think at the time I was learning consumer marketing and I was working on a marketing campaign for yoghurt, which was very exciting. And so, just being able to see that in play and come together was great.

Ben: If this episode has raised any issues that you need help with, we urge you to reach out, get in touch with someone, on campus, or in Australia, call Lifeline on 13 11 14. There is help out there.

Buffy: In the next episode of Starting Somewhere we look at companies who are doing internships right. If you are enjoying starting somewhere - think about writing us a review on iTunes. It will help other people who are Starting Somewhere.

Starting somewhere is brought to you by the University of Melbourne External relations team. The producers and editors are Buffy Gorrilla and Ben Pawson. Our supervising producer and original concept is from Dr Andi Horvath.

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