



EUDAEMONIA

Energy, with Alanna Fincke

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Kim Forrester 0:00

Physically exhausted. Mentally drained. Emotionally depleted. Devoid of inspiration. We all know how a lack of energy can impact our experience of life. So how do we maintain a sense of vitality, and enhance our happiness and well-being? You're listening to the Eudaemonia podcast. I'm Kim Forrester, and today, it's time to explore the topic of energy.

Intro 0:34

Welcome to Eudaemonia, the podcast that is all about flourishing. Plug in, relax and get ready for the goodness as we explore the traits and practices that can help you thrive in life ... with your host Kim Forrester.

Kim Forrester 0:53

Alanna Fincke is an integrative health coach, resilience expert and Senior Vice President and Director of Content at meQuilibrium. Alanna is particularly focused on making the powerful sciences of resilience and cognitive behavioural therapy accessible and understandable for everyone. It's my delight to be connecting with Alanna today to explore the topic of energy, and to discuss how we can each boost our natural vitality for a truly thriving life. Alanna Fincke, thank you so much for choosing to be a part of the Eudaemonia podcast. How are things with you today?

Alanna Fincke 1:30

Thank you so much for having me. I'm really excited to be here today, and doing well.

Kim Forrester 1:35

When we talk about having enough energy, most of us are sort of referring to a single concept. You know, I either have energy today or I don't. But you teach that there are four different types of energy that play a role in our experience of life and I really want to start our conversation by exploring each of these forms of energy. First up is emotional energy. And this is something that I can totally relate to myself. There are times where I feel physically and mentally energised and full of vitality, and yet totally drained emotionally. You say that by focusing on our accomplishments and recognising the things we do well in the day that we can actually maintain or boost our emotional energy. Why is emotional energy so important?

Alanna Fincke 2:25

Yes, that's a wonderful question. And exactly to your point, when we think about energy, we tend to think about physical energy mostly, or first. Right? I didn't sleep well, I don't have a lot of energy, I'm

feeling tired. But energy is much more dynamic than that. And you're right, we and I look at it as four different types. And I love talking about emotional energy first, because it is the most foundational. And in my mind, and when I think about and use the science of resilience - which is something I'm extremely passionate about - that is really the foundation of resilience; is around our emotional energy and our ability to control our emotions, and have emotion control, and manage our stress. Now, like it or not, we are all wired to experience negative emotion more quickly and easily than positive emotion. So we're wired to feel anxiety, frustration, anger, sadness, more easily than happiness and love. It kept us alive when we were being chased by lions, and tigers, and bears and we could spot a threat and run. We don't need that capacity today but we're still wired that way, nonetheless. So that can cause us a lot of stress. And gaining the tools to manage that stress and manage that negative emotionality is really key and core to our well being. And there's another really important piece around our brains and the brain science and how they work. Now, the brain science is very clear - our thoughts drive our emotions and our behaviour. So if we want to change any of that behaviour - blowing up at our spouse, getting mad at our kids, stressing about that project, worrying about the health of our world and ourselves and our friends and our family - we've got to start with our thoughts. And resilience is really the science of helping people do that.

Kim Forrester 4:21

Well, let's go there next, Alanna, because another form of energy that you teach is mental energy. And I do really want to discuss this because I think that many of us are probably depleted in mental energy without even knowing it. What is mental energy? How does our modern life impact this facet of our well being?

Alanna Fincke 4:41

So important. Mental energy is key to our ability to be able to perform and do all the things we need to do in life. Right? You know, when we are stressed, our ability to focus - that part of our brain that is in charge of focus - is actually cut off. You know, we are in fight or flight mode, and our ability for our brain to focus, and problem solve, and do all these things we need to do is compromised. And so our ability to get us out of that zone, and be able to build our focus, and reduce our stress is absolutely critical to our health and our well-being and our ability to do what we need to do. And some of the most important things we can do, you know ... When people get stressed, I don't know if this has ever happened to you but you kind of when you're stressed out, often we're not breathing. We're either holding our breath or just breathing in a very shallow manner. And so when we're doing that, that's actually only serving to sort of amp up our stress and our physical stress in our bodies even more. So it's really important to practice, you know, simple mindfulness techniques and breathing techniques to get ourselves out of that zone, and out of fight or flight and into more of a relaxed, calm state.

Kim Forrester 6:00

I'm loving how these energies seem to be interconnected, because we started with emotional energy, and then that sort of connected and with the thoughts and our mental energy. Now you're saying that a physical exercise like breathing deeply can actually boost our mental energy and our mental well-being? So let's go to physical energy. I imagine that we all understand what this is. And, quite rightly, I think you were saying that it's the it's the energy form that most people assume is the only energy form. Is it as simple as eating well, exercising getting enough rest? Or are there other factors, Alanna, that impact our physical energy that we ought to be aware of?

Alanna Fincke 6:43

So that's a great question. I mean, it is all that. I think that, though, what you said is very hard for people to do. Right? So it's really comes down ... physical energy comes down to practising self care. And, you know, we all like to think of self care as a luxury. It's a, you know, a bubble bath I'll give myself, or something I'll practice after I finished everything else on my to-do list, and then we never finish that list. But self care is not a luxury, it is a necessity that we need to practice every day, in small ways. And when we think about self care, most of us think like, "Well, I've got to makeover my fridge and my diet, I've got to do meal planning, I have to get my meditation practice going. You know, it just becomes overwhelming, and people don't start and don't do it. So it's about a mental shift to understand that self care is practice in small ways across our days and our hours in our lives. And it's about those small steps as micro-steps that really matter. And there's one technique I love to share with my clients and I call it, sort of, the energy jar. And you can make a physical jar and keep it on your desk to remind you. And you put about 60 pieces in it, whether it's beads, or paperclips, or what have you. And it's just a reminder that that is the energy that you have for today. And when you're doing something that's draining your tank - back-to-back zoom calls, you know, skipping lunch, and working through lunch, grabbing that phone first thing in the morning, you know, having a disagreement with a spouse, partner, child, co worker, whatever, you know - that's energy out. Grab five beads, energy out, every time. And keeping an eye if you're just, you know, draining that tank all day long; to make sure you're doing practices that are refilling the tank. So can you take some breaks between meetings? Can you eat a healthy breakfast and have a zoom call with mom or a best friend or take a walk? You know, making sure you're balancing energy out, with energy in.

Kim Forrester 8:49

Let's talk about motivational energy. This is the fourth form of energy that you share. What is motivational energy? Look, is it just a combination of the other various forms of energy? Or is this something else at play, Alanna? Is there something in our psyche that we ought to be aware of that taps directly into our motivational energy?

Alanna Fincke 9:11

Yeah, so we all know when we're low on motivational energy. You know, that feeling where you just don't feel like you can get up and go and get done what you need to get done. You're not motivated.

Kim Forrester 9:23

The 'can't be bothereds', as I call them.

Alanna Fincke 9:25

That's right. Yes, very well said. And one of the ways that we can replenish and, kind of, tap that motivational energy is by practising, sort of, simple positivity techniques. So as I sort of mentioned before, we are wired for the negative; we're wired to feel negative emotions more quickly and easily than positive emotions. But we can actually rewire our brains to experience positive emotion more quickly and easily by practising simple positivity techniques. And that serves to shift our mindset into the positive, which boosts our motivation. So there's a simple practice that I share a lot with my clients called the win list. And it's just a simple list that you keep where you track your wins. Now, so much of the time we're going to skip over the good stuff and the stuff we accomplished and everything we got done, and default to what didn't get done, what still needs to get done, and what

you didn't do well. And keeping a win list as a simple way of making sure you're tracking those wins, and recognising them. And we can do that as a team - you can do that within your teams - you can do that on your own. But it's a simple way to recognise those wins. And that's going to boost your motivation.

Kim Forrester 10:46

I can see that also ties back into your emotional energy. Because if you're focusing more on the wins, then you're going to be feeling a lot happier about yourself and what you're achieving. You say that our motivational energy can actually be undermined by our beliefs and expectations, and particularly the beliefs and expectations that are ingrained that are largely unconscious. How do these ingrained beliefs impact our motivational energy, Alanna? And are there signs that we can look for that will help us recognise these unconscious limitations?

Alanna Fincke 11:20

Yes, that's a great question. So we all have what we call iceberg beliefs, which are also known as self-limiting beliefs. We all have these big, bold beliefs about the world, and how we should work in the world, and why things happen. And they're called iceberg beliefs. And by the time we're eight or nine, they're starting to be formed, and they're largely influenced by our parents or caregivers. And by the time we're 18, or 19, they get kind of set in stone. And they're called iceberg beliefs because 99% of them are, like, hidden below the surface of our consciousness. But they kind of run the show. Nonetheless, like, you know you've hit on an iceberg belief when, you know, something small happens, like, you know, your partner asked you to take out the trash and you just fly off the handle. "Why did you ask me to do that? You know I'm on deadline." You know, you're having a 10 reaction to something that probably deserves a two or three. You know you've hit on one of these beliefs. And these beliefs drive a lot of stress and, to your point, can sap a lot of our emotional energy. For example, so many of us have sort of perfectionist iceberg beliefs around, you know, I should get everything right. I know. I am a card carrying perfectionist myself and I will default to that 'I should get everything right' all the time, and I should be able to do it all. And when we have those beliefs, they really put up very large and powerful boundaries for us to access our motivation, and get done what we need to get done. So bringing those beliefs to the surface and recognising those, and then getting tools to kind of steer around those iceberg beliefs can be really powerful to unlock motivational energy, emotional energy, and honestly, probably all of the energy types.

Kim Forrester 13:16

Alanna, we all function from these four types of energy, even though most of us didn't realise it. But do we all share the same potential for vitality in these four areas? And the reason I ask that is because, comparison to others is rife in the way that we approach life, for many of us. Is it wise for us to compare ourselves to others who seem to have more or less physical energy than us, or more or less motivational energy than us? Do our energy thresholds differ from person to person and are we doing ourselves a disservice, therefore, if we think, "Well, I want to attain that level of energy"?

Alanna Fincke 13:58

It's a really good question. Yes, our energy can vary person to person and there's really important reasons why. And some of the biggest reasons are around, you know, if you're burned out, if you have burnout ... And you know, this was pre COVID data, you know, 67% of us - this is from Gallup

- are feeling burned out either some or most of the time. And that was pre-COVID. You know, burnout is epidemic in levels. And even more so now since COVID. So, you know, if you're experiencing burnout, if you're depressed - you know, depression has been skyrocketing since the pandemic has begun. - this is going to directly affect your energy. So you're going to feel a lot less ... You know, if you're actually feeling one of those issues, and plus, you know, we all have sort of day to day energy shifts. You didn't sleep well, you're gonna have a little less. So our energies, depending on what we're dealing with, will be at different levels. But we all have the potential to boost our energy in these four key areas by practising some of these simple techniques that I've shared today. They kind of address right the heart of unlocking those key energies.

Kim Forrester 15:12

My concern is that one might push themselves to the absolute limits because they're trying to emulate someone else in the office who seems to have a constant supply of physical or motivational energy, or a family member who seems to have all the emotional energy that they ever need. Are we doing ourselves a disservice if we try to emulate others levels? Or is it the point for us to boost our energy to the levels that we are capable of attaining?

Alanna Fincke 15:42

Right, that's it right there. Is really boosting your own levels to where you feel good in your life that, you know, that is the key. Like getting to that place where you're feeling good. And what we call when you're feeling resilient. And resilient isn't just being able to get through the hard stuff; it's not just getting to zero. It's getting to the good stuff, too, and thriving. And so getting to that energy space in your life where you feel like you can do what you need to do, you can feel joy and some ease in your life, you're managing your stress. And when we've got those things under control, we do have the energy that we need to feel good and do what we need to do in our lives.

Kim Forrester 16:25

I love that. So feeling good, and feeling like you're thriving in life is the outcome for all of this.

Alanna Fincke 16:32

That's right. Absolutely. And that looks - to your point of your question and statement earlier - that looks a little different for everybody. Right? You know what combination of energies that is.

Kim Forrester 16:44

I've always wanted to learn more about this concept of creating or finding more energy. It seems to me that our bodies and our minds are designed to thrive. Right? We come into this world with an inherent well of energy and vitality, and it flows naturally through us. But we often allow that energy to be drained, as far as I can see. In your view, and in your experience, should our focus be on finding or creating or boosting energy? Or is it more about preventing our natural well of energy from being depleted?

Alanna Fincke 17:22

It's really a combination of both. So let's be honest, life can deplete our energy. So we, you know, we need to make sure we're protecting it. And that's where we need to set boundaries for ourselves; we need to practice that self care. You know, that's refilling our tank, but it's also about boosting and making sure we're not depleting. So I think it's sort of a balance about this protecting our energy, and doing practices that boost our energy. So we want to, like, practice the self care and protect and refill our tank. And then we want to boost our energy by practising things like those positivity techniques that kind of access that energy that's kind of latent within us, because it gets bogged down by habits in the way we think and feel, and habits in the way that kind of just shut down that those positive vibes.

Kim Forrester 18:16

Are we really like batteries, Alanna, in that when it comes to recharging our energy, is it simply a matter of rest - resting your emotional activity, resting your mental activity - or does it require us to sort of get stuck in and engage in some practices that will boost energy in those areas?

Alanna Fincke 18:36

We definitely need to make, you know, self care a practice. You know, all these techniques that I've shared with you today centre around self care and protecting our well-being, and boosting our well-being and resilience. And, you know, that's not going to happen by chance. We have to be deliberate about it. And it's about a practice. And it's really about finding the things that work for you and creating a practice around that. And to do that it's really key to test and try out different things. I think a lot of times, when people are looking for personal growth and to increase their health and well-being, you know, it's like, "Well, I've got to do this, this and that". Kind of what I was mentioning before - it becomes overwhelming. And then people get a little rigid; that, like, "Well, I've got to do the meditation and I've also got to eat well". You know, it's about being self compassionate and trying different things, and adjusting as you go, and finding those things that work for you and sticking with them. Because when you find the things that work for you, it becomes much easier to create a new habit and stick with it.

Kim Forrester 19:40

Ultimately, your work centres around resilience and particularly around avoiding burnout. If we focus really intently, Alanna, on one or two of our energy sources - so let's say that we absolutely boost our physical and emotional vitality; they're our top priority, we feel great in those two areas - is that going to be enough for us to sustain health and well-being?

Alanna Fincke 20:04

It's absolutely enough to get going because we've got to start somewhere. And we've got to start implementing practices that boost our well-being. And once you start doing it, that's when you can start to build from there. Right? You do one practice and you get that going. You know, you're doing yourself caring, you're balancing your energy in with your energy out. Okay, got that. And then you start to build on to that. "Well, I'm going to do my windlass, I'm going to practice gratitude. Okay, I've got that going", then you could start building in a meditation practice, if that's what works for you. And so it's about building and starting from one spot. And then just building and continuing to build your practice as you go, and then adjusting as you go on. So the key is to not focus so much on

doing one practice from each type of energy, but choosing a place to start and then building from there.

Kim Forrester 20:55

How can we tell which energy source is the best place to start for us as an individual? Is there a sign where we know, "Oh, I really need to work on my physical energy first", or "What would be best for me is to work on my motivational energy"?

Alanna Fincke 21:09

I always counsel people to begin with their emotional energy, because we need to start at the foundation; we need to gain tools to manage our stress before we can do anything else. And one key technique I love to share with our clients - and with meQuilibrium, it's one of our signature techniques - is called the 'trap, map and zap it' technique. And it's just this really wonderful and powerful tool to manage our stress where you want to trap that emotion. So, much of the time we're stressed and we don't even know what we're feeling. Like, are we feeling that tightness of anxiety, that heavy weight of sadness, that heat of anger? You know, trapping that emotion, pausing, and trying to say, "Okay, I'm feeling stressed. Now, what, what's underneath?" Mapping that to a thought, because every emotion is driven by a thought. "Okay, I'm really stressed about this project at work", or "I'm really stressed about my daughter right now". And then zapping that thought; reframing it to be more realistic to serve us better. So often, we go from A to Z or zero to 100. You know, "I'm never going to get through this", or "I'm never going to be able to finish this project", or "my daughter's never going to finish school". We'll tend to go there with our thoughts. So then, just reframing that thought to be like, "Okay, well, it's hard right now, but I can get through." So trap it, map it, zap it. This is a technique that you can practice multiple times a day and just bring every time you feel "Oh, here's my anxiety. What am I thinking? How can I reframe that?" A very foundational technique to help us manage our stress and our emotional energy.

Kim Forrester 22:47

That is so cool, and so powerful, Alanna. Now, here on the Eudaemonia podcast it's not just about helping individuals flourish. I really want to help people create a community that flourishes. You hold workshops for business leaders, right, that help them enhance the energy of their employees. Are there things that we can do as individuals, and in our families, and in our homes, and in our communities that can help enhance the energy of those around us? Or, at the very least, are there things that we can do that stop us from draining others' energy?

Alanna Fincke 23:24

Yeah, that's a great question. I mean, one of the biggest things that, as managers, we can do, is to practice what we like to call a growth mindset. I'm sure you know that term. You know, it's such a powerful tool, particularly when you start to implement it within managers and within teams, even within our families. You know, that ability for us to feel like - and particularly now, going through the pandemic and living through this - the ability to feel that we can get through; that we can do this, that we've got this, that we can grow and change and get better and smarter and stronger over time, is one of the most powerful tools, I think, that we can harness as teams, in our communities, and in our families. And reminding ourselves of that, and giving people the tools to be able to harness that.

I do a lot of this work with my kids and it's really powerful. We do this within our teams at meQuilibrium and they're really powerful techniques with great outcomes.

Kim Forrester 24:24

So let's take that to a personal level, Alanna. How has your life flourished personally - how has your life been enhanced - since you learned this concept of energy in all of its forms? Have you changed the way that you deplete and recharge your personal energy levels?

Alanna Fincke 24:45

Yes, I was actually diagnosed with breast cancer 18 months ago, and it was the most challenging time of my life and the scariest time. So much uncertainty about my treatment and my diagnosis and going through treatment. And at that time, I had to put my skills, everything I had learned, to the test and they served me incredibly well. I would never have gotten through the treatment and the diagnosis had I not had the skills. And everything that I shared with you today are practices that I did then, that I do every day, to support my energy and my well-being. You know, I probably practiced trap it, map it, zap it, you know, 100 times a day when I was going through treatment. You know, particularly during those uncertain times, and I use this technique so much this year now, every day, going through the pandemic, with so much uncertainty with our kids and their schooling. And when is this going to end? And, you know, that just brings me back, every single time. I practice positivity techniques. When I was going through treatment, we used the positivity techniques as a family so much, practising, like, three great things. It's a simple technique where you just think of three good things happening, even within the challenge. And that was so powerful. We would do it, and we still do it every night at dinner. And it helps just shift your thinking from the negative and what's not working, to seeing the positive. You know, I created a very powerful self care routine for me when going through treatment that I am been very committed to. And it's been, to be honest, been life changing. I've created boundaries for myself I didn't have before, enabling me to say 'no' and protect my energy. So yeah, it's been a journey, a really powerful one.

Kim Forrester 26:42

Well, that's a truly powerful personal testimony. And congratulations on your recovery as well.

Alanna Fincke 26:49

Thank you so much.

Kim Forrester 26:50

My final question is one that I asked every guest on the Eudaemonia podcast. Can you offer my listeners a morning reminder - so from your toolbox of practices, is there a practice a mantra or an affirmation - something that can help my listeners recognise and nurture their energy every day?

Alanna Fincke 27:09

I was so excited to see this question because I'm very dedicated to my morning routine. And I was very excited to share it. So affirmations are a big part of my morning routine. And I have one that's my current favourite. I am a type-A, very driven perfectionist. So I repeat, and I share this one with

my clients as well, "I'm only human, and I'm doing the best I can. I'm only human. And I'm doing the best I can." And I think that's really important for us to set an intention for the day. So I like to wake up and practice an affirmation - I often choose that one - and then I'll journal on that. That kind of sets my intention for the day. And then I'll practice, you know, a little meditation and do some yoga and stretching. And for me, if I can do those things, I've set myself up for a really great intentional and grounded day.

Kim Forrester 28:04

Well, you're an inspiring and delightful human and I'm so grateful that you brought your best to the Eudaemonia podcast today. Alanna Fincke, if people want to learn more about you, the work you do at meQuilibrium, where can they find out more?

Alanna Fincke 28:18

Great, thank you so much for having me. I really enjoyed the conversation and you can find me - I love connecting with people - on Instagram. If you're on Instagram, I'm at @wellbeingwithallana. I would love to connect with you there. I'm obviously on LinkedIn. The meQuilibrium website is just www.mequilibrium.com. So that's equilibrium with an M. And we'd love to see you there. We've got tonnes of great content on there - blog posts, lots about resilience, health and well-being, and you can learn more about the meQuilibrium programme. And I have my own website www.allanafincke.com. You can check it out.

Kim Forrester 28:56

So incredibly grateful for your time and your wisdom today, Alanna. Do take care and thanks for being a part of the podcast.

Alanna Fincke 29:02

Thanks so much for having me. Take care, stay resilient.

Kim Forrester 29:05

The incomparable Oprah Winfrey once said, "You are responsible for the energy that you create for yourself, and you're responsible for the energy that you bring to others." You have been listening to the Eudaemonia podcast. If you'd like to learn more about how to live a truly flourishing life, please subscribe and check out www.eudaemoniapod.com for more inspiring episodes. I'm Kim Forrester. Until next time, be well, be kind to yourself, and nurture your energy.