

Business Better (Episode 48): A Conversation with Liz Bentley, Founder and President of Liz Bentley Associates

Speakers: Emilie Ninan and Liz Bentley

John Wright:

Welcome to Business Better, a podcast designed to help businesses navigate the new normal. I'm your host, John Wright. After serving nearly 15 years and senior vice president and general counsel at Triumph Group, Inc., a global aerospace components supplier, I'm now a member of the securities and M&A groups at Ballard Spahr, a national law firm with clients across industries and across the country. This episode is another in our women in finance series, and features an interview with Liz Bentley, founder and president of Liz Bentley Associates, a consulting firm specializing in leadership development programs.

John Wright:

Ms. Bentley discusses her own background and career path, the role and importance of outside interests, dealing with failure, developing self-discipline, courage, and confidence, how to advance in one's career, and some thoughts on the return to the workplace. Speaking with Ms. Bentley is my Ballard Spahr colleague, Emilie Ninan, a partner in our Wilmington, Delaware, and Washington DC offices, and co-chair of Ballard Spahr's finance department. So now, let's join Emilie and her guest, Liz Bentley.

Emilie Ninan:

Liz, thank you so much for joining me today. I heard you speak at an event earlier this year about confidence, and the importance of mindset, and I knew I wanted to dig into that with you a little bit more, and we are so thrilled that you've also agreed to do a webinar for us in a few months, where we will learn how to step into our power in 2022. So our conversation today will serve as a little preview for people of what to expect then as well.

Liz Bentley:

Great. Thank you for having me. I'm really excited to be here.

Emilie Ninan:

Liz, I want to start by asking you about your story. Give us a little background on where you grew up, and what you wanted to be as a little kid, and what was that path that led you to become president of Liz Bentley Associates, your consulting firm specializing in leadership development program.

Liz Bentley:

I love that you asked this question, because whenever I start working with someone as a client, I always start by saying, "Tell me your story. Where did you start?" And everybody answers that differently, and it's interesting where people start, but for me, I'm going to start really when I was very young. I am the youngest in a family of four, and I have three older brothers, and they were all really, really active and athletic. And I was younger by a lot. My oldest brother is 10 years older than me, and then the next eight, and the next one five. At that age when you're two, and the next oldest person is seven, that's pretty old, right?

Liz Bentley:

So I just wanted to always be out there with them in the game. Whatever they were doing, if they were playing football, I wanted to be out playing football. If they were playing hockey in the basement, they would put me in pads and throw me in the goal. And inevitably, every single event ended with me going in and crying, and my mother saying to me, "Do not have to

play with them," and me being like, "No, no, I have to play with them." That was really the foundation of my life. And really where the going was good was in this boys tough environment.

Liz Bentley:

What's interesting, and why I start with that story, is you said what did I want to be when I grew up, and when I was young and in elementary school, I was athletic, and I played a lot of sports. And my parents brought us to the Lake Placid Olympics when I was in fifth grade. And I could see that there were women that competed in the Olympics, there were skaters and skiers, and I decided I wanted to be a speed skater, because I really loved skating. And of course, I actually wanted to be a hockey player, but at that time there was no hockey for women in the Olympics. That was where my dream started, and it did lead me to being the president of my company now, because a lot of what I learned as an athlete is what I bring to the table as a coach, learning a lot about mindset, and grit, and things like that have really helped.

Emilie Ninan:

One of my favorite parts of resumes to ask about that when I'm interviewing someone for a position here at the firm is the interest parts. I'm always disappointed people don't have interests on their resume, and I know we're not interviewing for a position here, but you have a lot of interests outside of work, and you've talked about the sports, but I think I saw listed on your resume tennis, and platform tennis, and ice hockey, and skiing, and collectively making you this outdoor adventurer, and you've mentioned the competitive sports has given you an appreciation for mindset, and its power to transform behavior. Can you expand on that a little bit?

Liz Bentley:

Well, I'll talk about both things, having outside interests, and also how mindset impacts us as human beings. So first, just having outside interests, whatever they are, I find are really important, and interestingly enough, I was just coaching a woman today on this who's rising in her career. She's about 38 years old. She's got two younger kids, and she's got a big job. When you're rising in your career, typically, your career and your parenting, if you're a parent, is going to be your two big priorities. And I've seen a lot of women lose that third category, and that third category is so important to hold onto, because that third category is just about you, and it's where you really get to let your hair down.

Liz Bentley:

Because at work, that's about you too, and it's great. You get all these accolades for working hard, and being good at what you do, and you get paid money, but it's still work. And home is the most important place in the world, because you're raising your kids, and building a family, and starting traditions, and having fun, but it's still like that third category is really where you get to go relax. And for me, it's definitely in the outdoors. I love to be outside. I love to hike, and I love to play sports, and play tennis, and play games, and be on teams with other people, but I also like to have a fun social life, and have friends, and just really have a robust third category that's robust enough. At points in your life it narrows, because you're so busy with categories one and two, but you always want to keep that third category alive, because it really keeps you vivacious, and keeps you interested in life.

Liz Bentley:

Ultimately, my grandparents always called it recreation, and recreation is not watching Netflix. I mean, don't get me wrong, I like Netflix. That's good too, and it's also not drinking wine, and that's also good. I love drinking wine and watching Netflix, sometimes together, sometimes apart, but it's good to have other things you're doing that develop other skill sets, and other relationships, and other friendships in your life. And I think that's really important to being a whole person, and I especially push that out there for women.

Liz Bentley:

To the second category you mentioned, mindset is for certain what I love about athletics, and using athletics as a model for building mindset is that when you play sports, there's a winner and a loser, and it's very cut and dry. It's very clear, and that gives you a point of reference on how you're doing. And sometimes in work, there's also clear winners and losers, but it can be vague, and then we can start to confuse ourselves around our results. So in sports, when you're losing, you know you're losing, and you know you need to work on it, and you really get to push yourself, and evaluate how to get better. And I try to bring that model to the workplace, so that people can get clarity on what the win looks like for them, and how to get there.

Emilie Ninan:

Yeah, it seems like it would build resilience, right? Because you don't win every game, and you still go out there again, and give it your best effort, and maybe you're not used to that, getting used to failing, as we would say, and knowing you can succeed later. Maybe it's a little harder to do.

Liz Bentley:

I think failing is probably the most important thing you learn in life. And the good news is if you play sports, you get to fail a lot. And here's the irony, the better you are, the more you fail. And that's interesting, because most people think it's the opposite, but the reason why you have a tendency to fail a lot when you're good is because you keep getting promoted to the next level. You keep moving up the teams, and then you have to practice to succeed again, because now you're with a better group. You're with a better dynamic. Maybe they're pushed up another level, so you have to constantly grow and get yourself ready. And you're going to be on teams that lose, and so you're going to have to practice how to win.

Liz Bentley:

I say there are three ways that people learn how to fail, and they're learned in your youth. And if you go back, and you think about your life, and you look at what we call your imprinting years, between ages zero and 10, look at how failure was handled during that time in your family, in your environment, and that was a lot of where you learned how to fail. So here are the three ways I see people for help. The first is that they fail, and they address it. They look at what went wrong. They try to figure it out. They try to grow from it, and they go out and try to succeed. That's the ideal way.

Liz Bentley:

The second way people fail is they have shame. They feel badly. It makes them feel bad about their confidence. It makes them feel bad about who they are. They see it as a reflection of who they are as a person, and they go into what I call blame, blaming other people, because they felt so bad, they don't want it to be their fault. They'd rather have it be someone else's fault than feel like it was out of their control, and they also come up with excuses, and they shut down around the failure instead of learn from it and get better.

Liz Bentley:

And the third way that I see people fail is that they don't take risk. They don't go out and play a game, and if they're playing a game, they say, "Let's just make this friendly. Let's not keep score." They do things to neutralize the playing field, so there is no winner or loser, because they're afraid if they lose, they're going to feel badly about themselves. And so they try to neutralize scenarios, and they don't take risk in their own life. They'll only take a promotion when they're 100% sure that they can do the job.

Liz Bentley:

That means they don't get promoted on potential, because when you only have potential that you can do the job, part of the job you can't do yet. And so if you're waiting to get promoted on being 100% ready, you're getting promoted very slowly in your career. Now, let me tell you, most of us vacillate between those three positions, embracing failure, rejecting failure,

avoiding failure. That's what it would come down to. But what we want to do is learn to always lean towards embracing it, and we want to look at our childhood and say, "What did we learn then," because that's our default position.

Emilie Ninan:

So if you didn't learn to embrace failure in those imprint years, the first 10 years you're talking about, is there a way to change what you have learned?

Liz Bentley:

Yes. And it's funny, because when you started this question, you said, "Maybe it gets too late." It's never too late. That's the best part about it. I coach people in their seventies, and I promise you, it is never too late. And all you have to do is reframe your perspective. It takes some effort, because your natural default is to go to what you learned when you were young, but you can rework that wiring in your brain by changing your storyline.

Emilie Ninan:

Can you talk a little bit about how you first got into coaching?

Liz Bentley:

I started my career in media, and worked at CBS television, and then went over and ended up working at Condé Nast in magazines, and then I shifted after I had my first child, and I decided to stay home, and I was home for six years. And previous to all of that, I was a psych major in college, and I loved the study of people, but I did not want to be a therapist. I like business. I like strategy. I liked all of that, which is why I went into the media. And then I was home for a couple of years, had three children, and my kids were little, but I was ready to start getting back to something.

Liz Bentley:

And so I heard about coaching, and the way I heard about it is I was actually at a dinner party, and I was sitting next to a guy who was the number three guy at Morgan Stanley. And he said, "I got a coach, and she's changed my life." And I said, "Wow, there's coaching for high performers?" I've had amazing coaches my whole life as an athlete, and I can't even believe they're doing this in business, but this is brilliant. This is what I've probably been waiting for my whole life. So I found out that NYU had a program. I went back to NYU, got certified in executive coaching and organizational behavior, and really kind of the rest is history, started the business.

Emilie Ninan:

Well, thank you for sharing that. And I think it's always great to hear about women who've taken a break to raise kids, or have kids, and be able to get back in to the career they want to. So that's encouraging as well. Before we leave this third category you raised a little bit earlier, how do you know how much is enough? Is it when you feel depleted, and then you feel refueled by making time for what you call self and third category, or do you have sort of a rule of thumb that you're going to spend X amount of time per week, or day, or something just...

Liz Bentley:

So let's just clarify, the third category, you mean your recreation category?

Emilie Ninan:

Right.

Liz Bentley:

The category that's just all about your fun?

Emilie Ninan:

Yes.

Liz Bentley:

So I think first of all, I think you know when you're not having enough of it.

Emilie Ninan:

Yeah.

Liz Bentley:

And I'm going to tell you what the number one indicator is that you're getting bored with your life. Your life is like work, family, work, family, work, family, and that gets boring, and you start feeling yourself becoming boring. That's a red flag of danger, and that's when you need to get out with your girlfriends, and pick up a new skill or something, and get involved in pickleball.

Emilie Ninan:

That's a good idea.

Liz Bentley:

Yeah, find something that's fun. I mean, it doesn't have to be athletic. Athletics is an easy adult thing to get involved with, but there's lots of stuff out there, but make sure you like it. Make sure it pleases you intrinsically. You're not doing it for someone else. Sometimes you might have to push yourself to get started, and some of it could even be things you do alone, just word games, or puzzles, or cooking, or creativity. It's for you. It fuels you. So the way you know you're not getting it is you can feel your depleted inside. You'll start to feel like you're only giving to everybody else, your business, your family, and your tank is emptying, and that's when you need to leave for a number of days.

Emilie Ninan:

Yeah. For sure..

Liz Bentley:

Don't tell anyone where you're going, key.

Emilie Ninan:

Oh, that's the hard part, right? Actually disconnecting the electronics. I'm always worried about all the emails waiting for me to get through if I don't do it on a daily basis, even when I'm away. You've also described yourself as a human behavior enthusiastic. What does that mean to you, and how does that influence your work and research?

Liz Bentley:

Essentially, my whole business is studying human beings. I coach people, and even just what I told you about my findings in the category of failure, that's something I learned from studying people, and watching how they handle failure. And then I realized, "Oh, yeah. It kind of falls in these three categories." And so human behavior, I mean, I study it all day long by coaching all different types of people, and I just see the trends come organically. So for example, during COVID, I started to notice that people were manifesting a lot of fear. So in 2020, one of the main things we studied was fear. I kind of study kind of whatever the market is giving me. So I've talked to so many people of so many different generations in mindset, and people start to say this new thing.

Emilie Ninan:

So if you study fear, I'm curious, do you have anything to share with us from what you found?

Liz Bentley:

Well, fear is a huge human driver, and fear is actually good. I think fear is a really positive emotion, but because it's uncomfortable, and people have a tendency to not like to be uncomfortable, it can also turn into a really negative emotion. So we start to feel fear when we sense danger, and danger comes at us in a lot of different ways. So if we lean into our fear, we can avoid danger, but if we hide from our fear, the danger gets worse. And if we over manifest the fear, worry about something that's not out of scope with reality, then we create anxiety.

Liz Bentley:

So let me give you an example, and let's say I'm in my job, and I'm getting a little bit older, and I'm noticing the younger people are moving faster, and they're more tech savvy, and they're figuring things out, and I'm noticing some of my style is a little outdated, and I start to get that tickle in my body. You know when you're getting scared, and you kind of get that tickle in your body? So I always ask people, "Where do you feel fear?" And everyone feels it different, stomach, chest, neck, you can feel it anywhere.

Liz Bentley:

So you could get that fear, and you can say, "Okay. I need to speed my work up. I need to get more tech savvy. I need to develop a different type of competitive edge, lean into that fear, and I can make things better," or I could say, "No. No. They don't have the wisdom that I have, and they don't have this, and they don't have that," which is all true, but I can stick my head in the sand, and pretend my skills are more valuable than they are. Maybe they are more valuable right now, but if I keep going at this pace, they won't be in two years.

Liz Bentley:

So I either lean into the fear, and I make the adjustments, or I stick my head in the sand, or I can go into a panic attack, and I can overthink it, and be up all night, and talking it, but not really doing anything, just over manifesting fear around something that I'm really not shifting. So what we learned in watching, because fear was just so prevalent during COVID, was teaching people how to work on what they can control, and not on what they can't.

Emilie Ninan:

Yeah. That's actually a good segue into what I was going to ask you about, self-discipline, because it sounds like that's part of what you're talking about in how you address fear, but I know you advise people to do the hardest things first. And frankly, I like to do the easy stuff, because it makes me feel like I'm getting a lot accomplished, but I'm really procrastinating and avoiding what needs to be done.

Liz Bentley:

Right. Right. A lot of us fall in that category.

Emilie Ninan:

So why is it so important to first do what's difficult?

Liz Bentley:

First of all, it gets our excuses out of the way, because we all have a tendency to want to do the easy stuff first, because it's easy, and who doesn't want to do easy stuff? And when we do easy stuff, whenever we do stuff, it makes us feel like we're getting something accomplished. The problem is we don't start to really move the needle until we do the hard stuff. Now, let

me tell you something about self-discipline. I don't believe that anyone lacks in self-discipline. I think we all have self-discipline, and in fact, I think we all have equal amounts of self-discipline, but what we don't have equal amounts of is courage. And self-discipline to the hard things means we have to have courage, because we've got to do the things we're afraid of.

Liz Bentley:

Because if you look at anything that's really hard, which we all have, and we all hide from, myself included. I'm more than happy to stick my head under the pillow when I'm afraid of something. We're all afraid of doing the hard things, and what's hard for you, and what's hard for me are totally different. And what we do is because we're afraid of it, we put it at the end of our list, and then we start coming up with excuses. I ran out of time. I don't have the resources. It's not really my responsibility anyway. Whatever. I don't have the self-discipline. You name it. I have ADD. We come up with whatever we can. We just grab at straws if we need to, but really what we want to do is look at why. Why is this so hard for me, and what's it going to take to tackle it?

Liz Bentley:

On a tactical front, I always say, "Do the hard things first in the morning, because you're the bravest." It's because your brain is alert. Your courage is high. You're emotionally more courageous in the morning. You're ready. You feel like every morning you're starting a new day, and you're ready to tackle the world. And at the end of the day, you've had a couple of failures. I'm just kidding. It's harder. You're tired. You're not sure, then your courage is down. Your energy is down, but always remember that whatever you're afraid of, it's okay, because we're all scared, but getting over every one of those hurdles is what gives you confidence. So we get confidence from doing the hard things, not the easy, and we get confidence from staring our fears down and working through them.

Emilie Ninan:

Wow, that's a good motivation to become more confident. And we knew a lack of confidence holds a lot of people back, and how can we learn confidence from past experiences, and conversely, how do we shake off past comments, memories, or experiences that may be holding us back?

Liz Bentley:

Okay. So two things, those are two really good perspectives on it. The first one is what we call historical wins, so that's looking back. When we're on shaky ground, when we're anxious, we're in a position in our career, and we're getting worried, we're feeling all stressed, we've lost our confidence, it's always good to go back to historical wins, the things that make us feel really good about our life, that we feel like, "Okay. I did a good job there. If I could do that, I can do anything." And doesn't matter, it could have been winning the bubble gum blowing contest. I don't care what it is, because as long as you feel good about it, it's what matters. So historical wins we always want to have I would say pocket. You want to pocket them, because you know they're going to give you confidence later.

Liz Bentley:

The second thing is you said those voices that plague you, right? Really, it's not just voices. It's those moments in time that we didn't get the result we wanted, and not only did we fail, probably, or it didn't go well, we also got negative feedback, or something went really poorly, and it hurts. And so that's when we go to that category two, a failure, where we go to shame, and we want to bury it and hide it. So the first thing is you can not continue to use that as your excuse. You have to go in to whatever happened there, and you have to heal, because everything is forgivable, but it will not be forgivable in yourself, because the only person who has to forgive you is you. That's the only person you have to show up to. Okay?

Liz Bentley:

And that's the only person who knows the truth, so you have to go to the mirror and forgive that person, and the only way you're going to forgive yourself is if you correct the problem. If you keep repeating the problem, it will become unforgivable,

because you haven't fixed it, and you haven't healed. So going back to those voices is about healing whatever happened in that time, and what I have found in coaching people through some of that healing is when they start with me, they'll tell me, "I'm never forgiving myself for this." And when they finally do, they think, "It wasn't really that bad," but at the time it's monstrous, because to you it's so painful.

Emilie Ninan:

So is the healing that's needed always something that you can control yourself and forgive yourself for? Is it really addressing maybe someone who you've been hurt by, or who said the hurtful thing to you which you've held on to?

Liz Bentley:

It's 100% about the other person. No, I'm only kidding.

Emilie Ninan:

I was like, "That wasn't what I thought."

Liz Bentley:

Phew, isn't that lucky. It's not about me. Thank God. I've been wanting to blame them my whole life. I'm so glad it's not about me. No, of course, it is 100% about you. Whoever said it was just pointing out the facts of their version of the facts. So it's never, ever, ever about anyone else. They're not in charge of your life, and they're not in charge of your emotions, and they're not in charge of your thinking, and they are not in charge of your destiny. When I was a young athlete, when I was I think around eighth or ninth grade, I went to this specialized Olympic camp for soccer, and with top athletes in the country.

Liz Bentley:

One of the top coaches in the country, I overheard him say I was not a good enough athlete, and I was never going to make it. I was devastated, devastated. I mean, I was just... Talk about failure. Really he's like the king of soccer, and I went home that year, and I told my coach. My coach was so mad. He was blaming him. That's awful. And I was devastated the whole year, and I played all year, and I worked really hard, and I worked really, really hard. I was picked to go to the camp again the next year, and that exact same coach said, "She's one of the best athletes I've ever seen." And my takeaway was no one will decide your worth. No one decides your destiny. You do, and you got a shot at it every single day.

Emilie Ninan:

Yeah. That's a great reminder, because I always say, "You can't let other people define you, or limit what you can do." And so I think that's similar to what you're saying, and so important to be reminded of that. You touched on women not taking chances or promotions, because they're not confident about their potential. I think I saw an article over the weekend where it found that women weren't getting promotions, because other people didn't really judge their potential the same way as they do for men.

Liz Bentley:

It's been proven years ago. They proved this studies that they promote men on potential and women on performance. But women also do the same thing to themselves, and some men do that too. Risk-adverse men do the same thing, but in general, the workplace promotes women once they've proven themselves 17 times over, but you don't have to fall in that model. I mean, I didn't fall in that model. If you believe in yourself, and you start pushing, and knocking on the door, and telling people you're ready, they're going to go, "Okay. You're ready. I mean, I guess if you think you're ready."

Liz Bentley:

If you're holding back, and you're waiting to be asked, and you're not showing that you're ready, you're showing that you have potential, because you think you have to do it on performance. So it is a catch-22. Definitely the workplace looks for male potential more than female potential, but you can reverse that. I mean, and you have to think of yourself.

Emilie Ninan:

I've also heard you talk about the importance of understanding your own story, and maybe we've covered this with some of the other things you've talked about, but if there's something more to that?

Liz Bentley:

Well, I say that people really they get their storylines... So we have storylines that play in our head, that tell us who we are. I'm good at this. I'm bad at that. I'm tall. I'm short. I'm fat. I'm skinny. I'm pretty. I'm ugly. I'm smart. I'm intuitive. I'm kind. I'm thoughtful. I'm aggressive. I'm difficult. And these storylines have typically come from our childhood, and what we were told in those imprinting years, which is age, again, zero to 10, and then they're formed more throughout our teenage years and into our young adulthood. And what we find when we're formed adults functioning in the world is that often there are parts of those storylines that we have really leaned into to be successful, but there are parts of that storyline that are not working for us anymore.

Liz Bentley:

And so we have to modify our storyline, or even change our storyline if it stops working for us. And so I find a lot in coaching I'll talk to people about their storyline to understand how they got to where they are today, and what part is not working, and they need to shift, and what part they can continue to lean into. But I have found that our storylines actually start to really limit who we are, and we want to expand our storyline to also recognize the times, and everything that's more relevant today.

Emilie Ninan:

I think I saw somewhere that you had a half a dozen steps for personal growth, and I think we've covered probably half of them, like see your truth, do the hard stuff first, know you have to fail to succeed, which you talked about. I think a couple of them have to do with saying, "Yes," and saying, "No," and when to discern which one, whether you should say, "Yes," or, "No." And I think you've said say, "Yes," to the things that scare you, say, "No," to the things that don't advance you.

Liz Bentley:

Yeah. I'm glad you picked those two out, because those are the ones I see people confuse the most. So it goes back to what we talked about earlier, doing the easy things first. We have a tendency to say, "Yes," to the things that are easy, because they're easy, but they might not be good for us. And so we might end up spending a lot of time doing things that aren't helping us grow, and aren't really adding value to our life, like building that third category of recreation, or you name it, whatever, or in jobs.

Liz Bentley:

I'll say to people, "Say, 'Yes,' to things that are advancing your intelligence, advancing your responsibility, advancing your skills. Always say, 'Yes,' to those things, but say, 'No,' to the things that are not pushing you forward." So you need to say, "No," to the things that are really not helping you evolve. Before we say, "Yes," or, "No," really step back and say, "My time is so important. What do I need to say, 'Yes,' to, and what do I need to say, 'No,' to?"

Emilie Ninan:

Yeah. It's so important, because time is such a scarce resource and precious resource, I feel so.

Liz Bentley:

Yeah, and our energy is too, because if we put a whole lot of energy into things that aren't advancing us, we will be certain not to advance. There's no one I've met who's stuck in their career, who's not stuck because of their own devices. I always say, "The only person who stands in the way of you and your greatest self is you."

Emilie Ninan:

Wow, that's a lot to take in, but, no, it's truth. I think the last one you've talked about is lean into the feedback and grow, and I don't know if the feedback has to do with formal evaluations you get at work, or something you get informally, but any advice how to know when to accept feedback, when to maybe reject it, because you know it's not true, or just how do you use it to advance yourself in your career?

Liz Bentley:

Okay. So here's my take on feedback, all of it has some truth in it. Your job in feedback is to have the confidence to hear it and grow. So the biggest mistake I see people have is that because they're uncomfortable with failure, they're uncomfortable with being uncomfortable. They're uncomfortable with seeing where they actually need to grow. They look to debunk the feedback. So what happens? They look for the parts that are wrong, and then when they find something that's not true about the feedback, they decide all of the feedback is not good. So I always say to my clients, "Even if 80% of the feedback is not true, did you hear the 20% that was? Because that's going to move the needle." See, feedback is what's going to change you.

Liz Bentley:

So let's even go back to my soccer story, overhearing that I was never going to make it. Maybe he was right. Maybe I wasn't good enough then. I mean, I can remember. I just remember that it was painful, but I can tell you, I spent a year working really, really, really hard, and then I was suddenly good enough. Was it because he changed his mind, or was it because I changed? I don't really know, because I was too young, but the point is a lot of times the feedback is true. And by the way, if it's not, you don't have to worry about it. I tell my clients all the time, "We're not going to worry about what's going well, because that's going well. We don't have to worry about that."

Liz Bentley:

So if the feedback is wrong, and you're 100% sure, well then there's nothing to worry about here. Don't lose a wink of sleep. But here's the truth, we lose sleep at night when it's true, and we're not willing to look at it, and we're spending all of our energy trying to prove it wrong than just see the truth. So all feedback is valuable. Never consider the source, always consider the feedback. If it hurts when you hear it, it's because there's something true in it that you need to shift. Maybe not all of it. Maybe even not the way the person presented it, but something in there is true.

Emilie Ninan:

It is a gift to get feedback and candid feedback.

Liz Bentley:

Especially because most people won't give it.

Emilie Ninan:

Right.

Liz Bentley:

Most people don't want to give you candid feedback. You have to figure it out.

Emilie Ninan:

I want to shift a little bit to return to work. Now that we're still in COVID, but like many people, I've been working from home for the last 18 months. Our offices are reopening the first week of October under a hybrid model. Any advice as we return to work and return to more in-person interactions?

Liz Bentley:

It's so tricky, because people are going back, and then they're not going back, and they're a little all over. I mean the biggest thing that people have to adjust to is socializing again, and most people have gotten so used to uninterrupted work. The same time, some of my clients are saying, "It's great, because I'm less tired at the end of the day, because I've actually talked to other people besides looking at my computer screen all day." So most of it is just around embracing humanity again, being able to talk with other humans in person, relaxing a little bit around efficiency.

Liz Bentley:

Of course, we all want to be efficient. Like I said, we've gotten so used to that, we've almost become robotic. The danger of a total virtual environment, like I said, is we lose a sense of humanity, being fun, being funny, having a good time, using our brains and personalities in different ways.

Emilie Ninan:

Yeah. I'm looking forward to seeing how it works out, but it is going to be an adjustment again, but I'm looking forward to seeing people. Well, Liz, I want to be respectful of your time, so I'll end with this. Knowing what you know now, what advice would you give your younger self?

Liz Bentley:

That is such a great, great question. I was thinking about it earlier. I think the thing I've learned the most as an adult is that forgiveness piece, and how important it is to not bury the things you're ashamed of, because we all have mistakes we've made that we feel pain about. And when I've forgiven myself of those things, it's really moved the needle in my happiness and my ability to show up as a whole person. I would say learning that as early as you can is it allows you to take more risk, it allows you to see yourself warts and all, and it really opens you to everything, not just your career, but your relationships, everything, because if you're more forgiving of yourself, then you're more forgiving of everyone.

Emilie Ninan:

Well, Liz, that's a great point to end with. I want to thank you again for joining me today, and I look forward to chatting with you again in January 2022 in connection with our New Year program on stepping into your power. I think that's going to be about how we bridge that gap of where we are, and where we want to be, so looking forward to that.

Liz Bentley:

Yeah. Good. Me too.

John Wright:

Thanks again to Emilie Ninan and Liz Bentley. Make sure to visit our website, www.ballardspahr.com, where you can find the latest news and guidance from our attorneys. Subscribe to the show in Apple Podcasts, Google Play, Spotify, or your favorite podcast platform. If you have any questions or suggestions for the show, please email podcast@ballardspahr.com. Stay tuned for a new episode coming soon. Thank you for listening.