

Work Matters Podcast! Episode 25

Layoffs Matter with Andrew Shatte

[00:00:00] **Robert Richardson:** Hello and welcome to the Work Matters podcast, miniseries on layoffs. Normally, as you may have heard from other episodes, we talk about what matters at work and how to make it better, but in this case, we're working to help people prepare for what happens when you may no longer have a job to go back to. So, slightly different question today, Steve. What matters with regards to people making an exit?

[00:00:26] **Steve Hunt:** Today we're gonna talk about mental resilience matters. You know, we've done this as a series of three things. We've talked about financial resilience, we've talked about career resilience. And, tied into that which both affects and is affected by those of the two is mental resilience you know, people often say, and you always hear, well, you know, view it as an opportunity. And people talking about, well, the layoff actually went, found a better career activity well, that's true for some people, but it's not true for everyone. And the question is, how can we approach things like layoffs, which are very disruptive to our lives?

[00:01:00] You know, we can try to trivialize it, but it's not, and we know they're more frequent in a way that they do become positive things, or at least do not, if not positive, do not completely derail our life, because they can. , I've known people Robert, that , never recovered from a layoff, really.

[00:01:17] And it's sad. And I'm also known people, you know, we talked about it myself, We're better off as a result of it. So, what we're gonna say, what can you do to kind of make, end up in the form positive side of that. And with this, we are super excited actually to invite back to the show Andrew Shatte, who's been on before, who is a resilient expert. he is also, I believe Andrew you're the Chief Science Officer from Equilibrium. I don't remember his, your official title is,

[00:01:41] **Andrew Shatte:** Chief Knowledge Officer.

[00:01:43] **Steve Hunt:** Chief Knowledge Officer. Okay. And a professor of psychology, a author of several books on resilience Andrew, it was interesting, this topic of layouts, I'll just get started from, you were telling that you got into this field because you worked with people that are laid out. So, you can tell us a little bit that background about your own experience here.

[00:02:01] **Andrew Shatte:** Yeah, exactly. So, you know, graduated with a degree in philosophy, which rented me completely useless. And I, myself was unemployed for six months, Robert and Steve, until I finally, found a job in the only organization that would have me, which was the Australian Federal Government, and ironically the Social Security Unemployment Office.

[00:02:21] So, it was my job to interview people who'd just been fired or downsized from their jobs to assess their eligibility for unemployment benefits. So day in and day out, I was encountering these people and the stories were sad it was real, a really tough economic time. So, it was a real test.

[00:02:37] Of people's resilience. And that sort of began to see that they divided into two, those who tended to get up and dust themselves off and go out there to try to find another job, versus those who tended to languish and become helpless and hopeless. I was obsessed with what the differentiator was, and this was back when dinosaurs were on the earth, by the way.

[00:02:58] And, um, I, and I've been obsessed with this concept of resilience, which is the differentiator ever since. so yeah, it's kind of fascinating that we've gone full circle. This is my origin story, but right now, in the beginning of 2023, those of us who are interested in the concept of resilience of, heavy duty, applying that concept right now to the layoffs we're observing out there in the world Steve.

[00:03:20] **Steve Hunt:** So how, how has layoffs changed? I mean, is the process of layoffs like now different than it was? I mean, they're definitely more frequent. We've talked about that, that, you know, there's an interesting study that currently in the United States, probably it's estimated around 45% of people will experience a layoff in their career.

[00:03:37] This is probably going higher, but other than layoffs becoming more frequent, do you think the nature of layoffs has changed since you first started studying this?

[00:03:46] **Andrew Shatte:** Really do, I think certainly more frequent. I think usually the downsizing is deeper now than it used to be. I think they go big on downsizing and I think there's a, a tendency for organizations to downsize in the face of potential economic downturn faster than they used to. I think there'd be more of a prolonged period where they decided what they were going to do.

[00:04:10] But now I think, shareholders, etcetera, are calling on leaders to make decisions very quickly. and I know if you think about it, back in my dad's

time, my dad, he was in the same job from the time he graduated to the time he retired, not the same job at the same organization. And that was really the norm.

[00:04:27] And there was a social contract that if you did the right thing by us, we would keep you on. Now that all changed, that social contract changed. I think it was a game of chicken between employee and employer, and I'm not sure who blinked first. Maybe it was our greatest social and geographic mobility, that led people to start moving from where they were born and grew up into, other opportunities.

[00:04:50] Further, a field, maybe it was that the social contract broke down on the side of the employer and they became more willing to let people go, but certainly more frequent, deeper, and earlier in the cycle. There's no doubt and that's gonna have really big mental impact on people because the anxiety right, is always gonna be there.

[00:05:12] That the other shoe could.

[00:05:14] **Steve Hunt:** So, what do you think kind of is this key of living in a world where there is more employment and security? Because the thing about being laid off is it has a big impact on not just, I'm not working anymore but it also affects, you know, your financial wellbeing.

[00:05:29] It affects your relationships. It affects so many different things. What is it that people need to change living in a world of just greater employment insecurity in general?

[00:05:41] **Andrew Shatte:** It's really important for us to map out what this looks like psychologically, emotionally, and mentally. So, we really understand it that that to me is always the first step. Let's get a really good handle on what's going on and then we can think about ways to help people get out and over these sorts of humps.

[00:05:58] And I think we are in a really unique time in human history, Steve and Robert. I think that we are looking at really interesting times, and I use that term advisedly. Over the last, you know, three years, we have been through what I consider to be trauma. We have been through an event even if you just considered the global pandemic, which is a traumatic event, and the hallmark features of traumatic events, uh, that they are chronic.

[00:06:25] And we certainly didn't think we'd be where we are now in March of 2020 in terms of the longevity of this thing. In addition, really pervasive. So, it

didn't just impact a single aspect of our life. It impacted everything even greater than the Great Recession, right? We weren't even living the same way that we had been prior to the pandemic.

[00:06:45] It was global in that, you know, you couldn't get on a plane and escape it for a couple of weeks and have a vacation, then come back to it. And I think in addition, it really was uncontrollable. There wasn't a lot that we could do. We could mask up and quarantine, but by and large as individuals, it was not possible for us to control this pandemic.

[00:07:05] And then I think the final Hallmark feature that really created trauma in people was that the goal post kept shifting. You know, in March of 2020 we're like, by the end of the year, we'll have a vaccine and then we'll move on. And then that didn't happen. And then we got the vaccine, but it didn't work for everybody.

[00:07:21] And then there were variants and so on. So, when the goalposts keep shifting like that, it really messes with our heads. So, we've been through trauma. And thank you for indulging me on that spiel. But the net effect is we are ill-prepared now. We're exhausted, we're burned out, we're stressed, we're anxious and depressed in record levels, and yet we're being asked to find, to look down a period of uncertainty in the road ahead, unlike anything we've seen before.

[00:07:50] So I think it boils down to our ability to recover quickly from the trauma that we have experienced. So, we need a set of skills to do that, and this has to be two step and then another set of skills to completely overhaul the way we think about change, because it's a steady constant. It's gonna be VUCA-like change, not just sort of linear change. It's gonna be exponential and hard, and until we really reinvent the concept of change in our heads, we're gonna be in trouble.

[00:08:21] **Robert Richardson:** What's really interesting is you're tying together. You know, multiple aspects of history in a way, right? We just went through all of this, it was a traumatic experience for many, if not all, in some way, shape, or form. And now I think what I hear you saying is, in part, we are starting from a deficit. So, if you are, in addition to all of those events now experiencing a layoff, you may really need to focus on your mental resilience. So, I'm curious, what sort of actions would you recommend?

[00:08:52] What is a person who is looking, into the crystal ball and, and worried about a layoff or someone who just got notified that they are in fact being laid off to do?

[00:09:02] **Andrew Shatte:** I think that all of us, whether we're at risk of layoff or not, we really need to make sure that we have fully recovered from the trauma. And I think there are a few things that we can start to do about that. We need to regain our sense of calm and focus. Now, we know that there are big thinking styles that we develop, that we call emotion radars that really blow our emotions up much more than what the reality warrants.

[00:09:26] For example, I'm an anger guy. That's my pet emotion. and I'm an anger guy because in my family of origin, everyone, were anger people and I picked up on this. and it was because, my dad, my older brother, they spent their days scanning for when the next violation of their rights was gonna pop up on the horizon.

[00:09:47] So I learned to scan as well. And if you scan long and hard enough, you're gonna find some things, you are gonna find a violation, even if there's nothing there. Now, the three big emotions that we saw balloon throughout the pandemic and also the three big emotions that tend to come as we look at the road ahead, are anger, anxiety, and frustration.

[00:10:09] Anger because of violation of rights, anxiety, because of future threat and let's face it, most of us are having that 3:00 AM thing where we're sitting there worrying about the future. And then frustration is when we believe we don't have the resources we need to get a job done to solve a problem. So, we've got all of that stuff in spades.

[00:10:28] So what, we need to differentiate is what is real future threat from imagined? I mean, if you think about this scenario, Robert, so many of us have had that experience of three in the morning of imagining the worst possible things that could happen

[00:10:42] happen in the future.

[00:10:44] **Robert Richardson:** I think that's called doom scrolling.

[00:10:45] **Andrew Shatte:** Yes. There you go. There you go. It produces this big anxiety right now for, for people that do that I have a suggestion. I always say to them, look, don't have the device next to your bed, but have pen and paper, and at three in the morning when you've got this stuff going through your

head, write down that chain of horrible things that you're imagining happening now at seven in the morning. Take another glance at it.

[00:11:08] What most people say to me is, yeah, when I looked at it at seven, I thought some crazy person has been scribbling catastrophic messages on my bedside. And of course, it just doesn't feel as real. So, we need to differentiate what is the imagine violation, the imagine future threat, the imagine lack of resources so that we can get to greater calm and focus.

[00:11:29] I also think that one of the things we need to work on in terms of recovery, and this works into the future as well, we have negatively wired brains, Robert. This is why at three in the morning we're thinking about all the terrible stuff and everyone's had that experience, but I often ask, In a group of 300, Hey, how many of you have had that experience?

[00:11:47] Every hand is raised. How many of you have had the experience at three in the morning of thinking about unicorns and rainbow waterfalls and sugar plum fairies? And very few people do, and that's because our brain is hardwired to be negative. There's much more survival value in scanning for bad stuff than scanning, scanning for good.

[00:12:06] Now, when we go through trauma, that already negative brain goes hyper negative. So, to counterbalance, we need to start refocusing on the positive, some wins that we have in at work, some wins that we have in our team, some gratitude exercises that we can do at the end of each day.

[00:12:22] And I also think we need to reconnect to a value system. We need to realign our values like we did out of the great recession, and we need to connect to a sense of meaning, mission, and purpose again, these are the sorts of things that we're gonna need to deal with the volatility and uncertainty moving forward.

[00:12:41] **Steve Hunt:** Yeah. it's interesting in this, in Talent Tectonics, the book that I recently wrote, one of the big themes I make is that the world has become physically much easier, but psychologically much more difficult. And I think as you're talking, part of it is realizing when you look at things like layoffs, you know, as soon as the company announces a layoff, it doesn't matter where it is.

[00:12:59] It's shared everywhere. You know? and this, oh my gosh, it's gonna happen here and what could happen to me next? And if I'm understanding what we really need to do is we need to ground ourselves in just our own world a

little more and stop looking at the world more broadly, cuz that's what triggers anxiety and frustration about why is this happening and all those evil companies and all that other stuff. So if, if you look at this, what is a healthy way to mentally go through a world where you know, you don't wanna be pollyannish, you could get laid off. It is happening a lot more than it used to, but you don't want to be constantly anxious about it either because one, that's not an healthy way to live in general.

[00:13:43] But two, when we get anxious, we kind of close down our looking. We might miss opportunities and be more worried about threats. So how would you say people should recalibrate? Just the way they're working in general and thinking about life in general in this world where there really is a threat of being laid off at any moment.

[00:14:03] But at the same time, we can also get jobs faster than we've ever been able to get them too. It's kind of gone both ways. Companies can get rid of you, but you can get rid of companies too.

[00:14:13] **Andrew Shatte:** Well, first of all, let me say unabashedly that Talent Tectonics is a fantastic read. I, this is not a paid advertisement or endorsement, but everyone should read this book, Steve. I love it and it's got a lot that's incredibly valuable for people. To answer your question, I think there are three very discreet and concrete things we need to do, and I'll name them and then I can talk a little bit more about them at your convenience and leisure.

[00:14:37] But one of the first things we need to do is to map out our sphere of influence because there is no doubt that there are a lot of things we will not be able to control. And we spin our wheels trying to control what we can't, and then we fail to gain control of what we can. The second thing that we need to do is to develop that growth mindset that you were talking about, where we are looking for the opportunity and reinventing our concept of what change means and how it impacts us.

[00:15:06] And then the third thing we need to do is to really build our self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is that sense of mastery that we have in the world ideally, it's based on past experiences we've done well in the past in certain things. We've learned a lesson about ourselves and those events, and then we apply those skills again in the future, more consciously and more movivatedly.

[00:15:27] One of the most telling statistics that we at meQuilibrium found throughout the course of the pandemic was that the level of burnout, stress, and sleep disturbances was two to three times higher in people under 40 than those

over 40 in the workplace. And that was not because of age. Age was a marker for something else, it was a marker for self-efficacy.

[00:15:52] And those of us who were a little over 40, even though the pandemic threw novel curve balls, we could think back to what we'd done in the past, in the great recession, in the aftermath of 09 / 11 and the economy tanking and we could apply those during the pandemic as well. Those who were younger through no fault of their own, just didn't have the benefit of that experience.

[00:16:12] Unfortunately, all of us have the capacity to fail, to learn. So, we really need to be very conscious about how we got through the pandemic and how we can apply that into the future. We're not doing that. I think teams should be sitting around and they should be whiteboarding all the strengths that they use to get through the last two plus years, almost three years, and then think, what kind of stuff are we gonna be facing in the next 6, 12 months, 2 years, 5 years, that we can really consciously deploy these skills on?

[00:16:45] So I think they're the three things that we really need to be doing to successfully navigate into the future.

[00:16:51] **Steve Hunt:** Yeah, I, I'd like to unpack each of these, and I'd like to start actually kind of in the reverse order of you presented them, cuz it seems like self-efficacy allows you to affect your sphere of influence and take a growth mindset. If you don't have a sense of confidence that I can make a difference can you build a little more on that?

[00:17:07] Like, if I'm a person and I am, you know, I'm anxious, there's layoffs happening around me, I know my job and I want to build the sense of whatever comes to me, I can get through it. What are some tips to help build that sense of confidence? Are there things that people have higher levels of self-efficacy? It's not just, well, you gotta be successful first. I hope it's more like, you know, what is it you can do if you're not necessarily feeling really successful that will help you build that sense of self-efficacy.

[00:17:37] **Andrew Shatte:** Self-efficacy was one of the original seven ingredients that we had for resilience back in the mid-nineties. So it's been a stalwart for us, and you're right; it does require building. You actually have to have achieved some stuff, but everyone can achieve some things, even if it's really small steps.

[00:17:56] The biggest threat to self-efficacy is not failure to achieve. The biggest threat to self-efficacy is the mindset we develop about ourselves and our

competencies that have us failing to see ourselves as being effective agents in the world. Now there's a really powerful thinking style that's around how we explain the good and the bad stuff that happens to us.

[00:18:16] And there are some people who tend to really internalize the bad stuff that happens. Blame it on themselves and huge aspects about themselves: ability, talent, mastery, personality, motivation, the kinds of things that are very difficult to change, and they're actually at risk for greater depression.

[00:18:34] This was established in 1978 and has been seen ever since, and then those people have a tendency to also attribute the good things that happened to them to external factors. I guess I got lucky. That was just a fluke. So, they don't take the lesson with them. There are also people out there, Steve and Robert, they tend to attribute all the bad stuff to external things, other people were doing it to me, I'm fantastic, and all of the good stuff to stuff inside of them I'm brilliant. In the, in psychological circles, we call those people sales. So, there's, pros and cons to, to all of this stuff, but we have to understand how that mindset has a tendency to affect our capacity to learn from the past.

[00:19:20] We have to get really concrete. I'll just give you an example from home if I may, just very quickly. But, um, my son, who is 11, you know, this kid from the age of 8 when we first moved to online school, was sitting there from 8:30 in the morning to 2:30 in the afternoon working on a computer screen with his online classroom.

[00:19:44] I can't do that as an adult for more than five minutes before my attention starts to move, and I'm looking around the room, and then so when he comes to me now and says, I just can't do this math. It's too hard. I don't wanna, I remind him, look, I watched you while you worked for six straight hours on stuff until you mastered it day in and day out.

[00:20:05] So don't tell me you don't have the capacity. Something else is going on here, and let's work out how we can bring those strengths that you showed back then to the task today. This is the kind of stuff that we need to do to really bring that self-efficacy to the fore.

[00:20:20] **Robert Richardson:** Your story's a really good one cuz it sort of emphasizes two factors here that I think are important: one, from a psychological standpoint, studies have proven that when you are in any state of emotion, it is hard to access memories that have a different emotional flavor, so to speak. So if you're feeling very negative, it's very difficult to access then positive past sentiment and your past successes and all that. You know, if you're

in a very positive state of mind, it can be harder to access negative previous experiences. Right. And so maybe you can see where I'm going with this. You know, for your son it's, a difficulty perhaps accessing and for all of us accessing other memories, but we need a growth mindset that says I have to work on this, I have to work on my own mental resilience. And in order to do that, when I'm in that negative state of mind, I have to actually do what's good for me, and that part is sometimes the very hardest thing I think humans do, to not do what is typically your tendency. But instead, as you were saying, perhaps start writing down what you're thinking and maybe force yourself to reframe what's happening to you right now in a different modality, a different frame of mind.

[00:21:31] So how do we develop that growth mindset?

[00:21:36] **Andrew Shatte:** I think that the first thing we need to do is to move from, I really hate change to, I guess I'm sort of okay with it. And the key to that is to really understand some of the iceberg beliefs that we have that are getting in the way of moving to, okay, now I call these icebergs because they're large-scale beliefs, only the tip of which is in our conscious awareness, just like only the tip of the ice is above the water. But these are big and profound, and they really push us around, and they're things like I've worked hard, I'm smart, so I should be entitled to an environment that's steady as it goes, or the more control I get, the better my life will be.

[00:22:17] Now, that's true to a point. But I think if the pandemic showed us anything, it's that that's gonna break down around the edges, right? And this is exactly what is happening with change. And then I think once we're change, okay, once we start to put a pin prick in that balloon of entitlements and all those shoulds, then I think we really need to start totally revamping our relationship with the concept of change.

[00:22:42] Now, this doesn't come easily, but it is doable and I'm an object lesson in this because, I don't like change. I never have. But I realized, if we're sitting around waiting for events to lighten up so that we can be happier, that's futile.

[00:22:59] It's not gonna lighten up. The events aren't gonna change. Organizational transformation isn't gonna change. If we're gonna end up feeling a little happier, a little more balanced, a little more relaxed, a little more content we have to change to accommodate what's happening.

[00:23:17] Really good things can come out of this uncertainty. I often remember the advice of a mentor of mine as we were going through the Great

Recession, and I was boohooing about how difficult it was to sustain my business. And he said, Andrew, bear in mind that money doesn't disappear; it changes hands. So the question is, is it going to leave your hands or come to them? Now, that's not, I think, completely economically sound, by the way, but it is a really good point that when there's flux and change, just by our own mindset, we can get bogged down in trying to resist it, which is feud like, you know, king canoe trying to keep back the tide, right?

[00:23:57] Sitting in his throne or we can start to look and say, hey look, it's an Ill win. That blows no one no good. How can I mitigate the worst impacts of this change but really embrace some of the better sides of this change? And the history books are clear. Those people who quickly get ahead of the wave when it comes to change are the ones who do better on the way out.

[00:24:22] But this is not gonna be comfortable. There's no doubt it's not gonna be easy. But the net effect is that we are going to experience that contentment that comes from knowing we've done all we can. And that gets its sphere of influence too.

[00:24:36] **Steve Hunt:** As I'm hearing you talk, the analogy I'm thinking it's a little bit like, and Robert, this will apply to you cuz you live in Minneapolis. I remember when I moved to Minneapolis, lived there for a year, and it is stupid cold there in the winter.

[00:24:48] It's just, it's not, somebody said it's unseasonably cold. And I was like, no, it's unreasonably cold And, and you can either sit there and curse the fact that I'm living in a place with really cold weather or I can buy a jacket, right? And I can do what I can to do the best, in that environment.

[00:25:05] And what is probably the worst thing to do is to do nothing at all cuz then you're just ruminates. Um, you know, find something that you can do, do it, which will build you confidence in your self-efficacy, which help you move towards the growth mindset. But then, you know, it does get into that sphere of influence, which is thinking about, well, what impact can I have?

[00:25:25] But so much of this does seem like, um, you know, focus on what you can do. I remember a friend of mine has a great when my son was looking for a job and he was talking to me, he goes, activity creates opportunity. Just do something

[00:25:39] **Andrew Shatte:** Yeah, that's exactly right. We can become paralyzed with fear, and we don't know which step to take. So, we take none.

People often talk about fight or flight, but there's a third piece to the fear response, and that's freeze. And that's not conducive to getting away from the threat.

[00:25:54] Freezing just doesn't work unless you're a possum. Freezing doesn't work. Um, and you're really hitting up here against the concept as sphere of influence. And you've reminded me of another great example of this. You know, seasonal affective disorder, when we go into the darker, colder months, affects millions and millions of people around the world and in one of the worst environments for this.

[00:26:16] In Iceland, they have less seasonal affective disorder than any other nation on the planet because they just don't let the darkness get in the way. They'll string up lights on a golf course, and they'll play golf if it's pitch black, but they're all out there having fun, social gatherings.

[00:26:33] They try to find what they can control. And the sphere of influence is, pivotal. To step in and try to control what I can.

[00:26:41] Mapping that sphere of influence and constantly revising it. What do I have control over today? What do I not, what should I be spending my time on as a priority now? Oh, I just caught myself fretting, uh, over something over which I have no control. That's a complete waste of my energy. and so I think those sorts of concrete skills are gonna stand us in good.

[00:27:04] **Robert Richardson:** Yeah. and I think it also emphasizes, again, that point, one of the hardest things about this is, uh, recognizing your triggers and then being sure you're actually doing something about them. You're not going straight to your go-to behavior, right, which could be negative, but actually engaging in something different. I think what was interesting about part of the story you told earlier was that when you were challenged with your own business, you had a mentor who also helped pull you out of that. And one of your three points was expanding your social network. And so, my assumption is that that is a critical part of this and that you should build your social network and tap those individuals who may have healthy advice for you.

[00:27:48] So do you wanna talk a little bit about your social network and then, and then we'll transition to what to do immediately, right? if you find yourself laid off, what do you do next? What is your next step?

[00:27:58] **Andrew Shatte:** Yes, social support is absolutely critical. In fact, again, empathy was one of the original seven ingredients that make up

resilience precisely because people who had high empathy tended to automatically develop these social support networks that stood them in good stead when things got tough. So that's absolutely true.

[00:28:16] The caveat is, and you cover this at the very end of your statement, is it's gotta be the right people, a social network of a hundred people, all of whom are doomsayers, is not gonna get us where we need to be. So, we need to surround ourselves with people who are realistically optimistic, which is also one of the original seven ingredients that make up resilience.

[00:28:39] We know that pessimists don't do well over optimists don't do well either, right? So having that sort of Pollyanna approach is not going to be successful, I would never advocate it. But we need to be realistically optimistic. We need to surround ourselves with people who have that kind of positive energy.

[00:28:55] And if we're not surrounded by them, we need to find them. And we need to have, I've always been a firm believer in sort of a social exchange theory. I'm gonna be there for you when things are tough if you can be there for me when things are tough. And I also believe in an event exchange. if I have an upsetting argument with my daughter, then at the end of the day, I wanna make sure I have a really good 20 minutes with her; that's sort of one-on-one and productive. I want to make sure that I, I'm keeping that sort of balance in place. So, if I have an argument with a colleague, I want to immediately reach out to someone who I, a colleague that I can just say, Hey, I just need to talk about something good for a few minutes.

[00:29:37] Do you mind indulging me? So that balancing, I think, is extremely important. And you also ask, what can people do right now?

[00:29:45] And that's fear of influence, right? So, no matter who you are or where you are, making sure any chance you get that your resume is polished up, that your skills are up to date, that you are successfully networking with people inside and outside your organization, it's just gonna maximize the chances that you're gonna rebound from this successfully.

[00:30:05] The idea of ensuring that your identity is bigger than your job, because. . I don't want to pin my identity to something that I can't control. and I can't control whether or not I'm gonna keep my job. So if that's a central part of my identity, of course, I'm gonna be anxious every single day because if that goes away, my identity does as well.

[00:30:28] So we need to make sure we're, leading really rich, productive lives, even if it's just something silly. Just

[00:30:34] lately, over the last few months, I've become obsessed with this ancient Celtic script that they used to carve on trees and carve on stones, and I'm teaching myself to to interpret it. That's not gonna get me another job if I get downsized, but it's just expanding my universe and my identity beyond what I do as a psychologist.

[00:30:55] **Steve Hunt:** I think that's, that's a really good point cuz I, in our society, what do you do as a typical opening question? And people usually think that means work, but we should probably all develop an answer to that that is not involved with employment. You know, I think that would probably be healthier for us and probably would lead to better conversations at parties too actually.

[00:31:13] **Robert Richardson:** That next time. I'm not gonna answer. I do, I'm gonna answer with my hobbies.

[00:31:17] **Steve Hunt:** exactly.

[00:31:17] **Andrew Shatte:** I thought my soul was to identify as a parent, but that hasn't worked out that great either when you have a 16-year-old.

[00:31:23] **Steve Hunt:** yeah. No, no, no. Just time You wanna disassociate from that, as I told my, my wife and our kids we're teenagers, that it's time to start throwing some conditions on this love. Um, but bringing us back to, the topic, the last question as we're wrapping up is, we've talked about a lot of things To be more focused on building self-efficacy, which has to be built, constantly built and focusing on what is ours, what can we control, sphere of influence and I think if you have self-efficacy and sphere of influence, growth mindset just becomes naturally from that. But what about when it does happen? When somebody gets, you get that shock? Um, Robert and I, we've both been laid off. When you get that suddenly call or whatever, it is a shock. I don't think there's any way around it. No matter how much you've been preparing for it. What should you do? Somebody says, I've been laid off. What mental process should they go through in reaction to that?

[00:32:17] **Andrew Shatte:** I think the first thing to do is to cut yourself some slack and allow yourself a little time to grieve. and just, even if it's just a day or two, it's okay to wallow for a little while and feel all of those emotions. It's

gonna be some guilt for sure. And particularly if you're one of the providers for your family, there's gonna be some shame.

[00:32:35] You know? Shame comes along when we believe that we're not meeting our own standards of how we should be in the world. Guilt when we think we're violating the rights of another, anxiety's gonna kick in straight away. We're gonna feel frustrated because this was something that we control and frustration is about, um, lacking the resources we need to have that control.

[00:32:53] We're gonna feel angry because for many of us, we're gonna say, this isn't fair. I've given a lot to this organization. Why me? And so, allow yourself to go through that. At least many rollercoaster of emotions. But as soon as you've been able to get through that, and most people need at least 24 to 48 hours to really, really get, you know, navigate through that stuff, that's something, they're not gonna continue to have those emotions.

[00:33:17] They will, but they're probably now in a place where they can start to problem-solve. And problem solve effectively. So, there's very logical, logistical, and practical things you can do. As I said, polish up that resume, start getting your name out there. really banging on doors and phones is social media now is the way that most people get hired.

[00:33:37] so getting, you know, your message out that way as much as you possibly can. these are all things that we can do, but in addition, I think we need to get very concrete around self-efficacy. Have I ever been through anything like this before? And it may not have been getting laid off, it might have been getting downsized in a relationship.

[00:33:57] It might have been, you know, getting jettison by a loved one, whatever it was, you know, some kind of rejection. Maybe it was, you know, you didn't get into your first choice university. I'm still waiting for Boston University to let me know whether I was admitted into their graduate school, and I applied in 1991.

[00:34:15] So this is heartbreaking to me. And every so often, I think I should call them up and say, Hey, look, I need to go out for milk and eggs. Can you let me know? But we've all gone through these rejections. What, it may not have been a layoff, but what kind of things did we do to move ourselves through that?

[00:34:33] start to look at our character strengths, start to make notes about what we're good at, start to make notes about what we're not good at. Try to

shore that up, but leading with our strengths. And then I think also just recognizing, Robert, Steve, we've had this conversation in the past in previous times that we've chatted, including on podcasts or at meetings.

[00:34:53] we know that every single moment people around the globe are going through horrific adversity. And right now, we've got a situation in Ukraine that is just incomprehensible. And so, we know that people are going through way worse than what we are when we get laid off. And I think that might sound glib, but it's really important for us to calibrate.

[00:35:18] What this actually means, uh, we've lost our livelihood temporarily. We haven't lost our lives, and in a society like this one, we're not gonna starve. Yeah, this is a blow, but let's put this in perspective. I think it's an extremely important thing to do.

[00:35:36] **Steve Hunt:** keeping ourselves grounded a little bit in that, I think is, that's that point which we go through and not fretting over things that may seem like they matter a lot, but don't matter a lot. And it doesn't help again that we live in a society where we're constantly being told we're deficient all the time.

[00:35:52] for people trying to get us to spend more money on things. I think that's a really good point that that last point about sort of grounding yourself and what's really important, and you know, now, don't want to trivialize this, it is anxiety provoking, but the chances are statistically you will get another job. The question is, will you get another job that is one that puts you in a better place than you were before, which

[00:36:14] **Andrew Shatte:** And it may not.

[00:36:15] **Steve Hunt:** may

[00:36:16] **Andrew Shatte:** work from that platform. Right. And you know, I, I think we need to flip the age-old question on its head. Steve, Robert, I've helped and consulted on the employee and employer side. In countless, I guess you could count them, but close to countless numbers of downsizings, and I've seen how people react and it's a predictable rollercoaster of emotions, and it's almost unavoidable.

[00:36:42] Um, having said that, some people come out stronger, about a third will come out stronger in this, a third will go out, come out the same way they went in, and a third will come. Permanently scarred and affected by this. And there's absolutely no reason why a hundred percent of people shouldn't come

out stronger if they practice a growth mindset, self-efficacy, and sphere of influence.

[00:37:05] And what I was gonna say is I think we need to flip that age-old question. I've seen so many people when they get downsized say, why me? And what I try to say in these circumstances to myself is, why not me? You know, why, why shouldn't it happen to me? I'm no better than anyone else. You know, I work hard, I'm smart, but there are a lot of people who work hard and are smart.

[00:37:25] So I tend to, you know, use the oldest rain expression of, get over yourself, get over yourself, mate. There's absolutely no reason why this shouldn't be you. But now, what are you gonna do about it? Now that it is you and I, that's the telling piece. That's the thing. The answer to that question, what are you gonna do now that it's happened to you, is gonna determine who comes out stronger and who does not.

[00:37:47] **Steve Hunt:** What are you gonna? And that point too, you said that it's not like you have to fix it immediately. You take another job, maybe it's not as good a job. Well, hey, when we talk about this whole thing is transition, you know, companies can fire like whenever they want to, and people can quit whenever they want to.

[00:37:59] It's a different world. And in that sense, there's a sense of freedom cuz there's a sense of movement. But with that freedom comes that sense of change and anxiety and it's learning how to focus on the, the positives and manage the negatives. Well Andrew, this has been super fascinating, we'll definitely have you back because I don't think that this issue of resilience is gonna go away anytime soon.

[00:38:20] **Andrew Shatte:** It's been a great pleasure as always, Robert and Steve, and to your listeners. I just want to say again, Talent Tectonics. You've gotta read that book. There are other resources out there too. There are books around these sorts of things that can help. I would suggest that you try to look at what your organization offers in terms of employee benefits around stress, anxiety, burnout.

[00:38:43] **Steve Hunt:** I think that's a really good point, Andrew, there are increasingly benefits that companies offer, and I think we forget this. Companies, they may do downsizing more often now they're not evil, and they want people to come through these and there are a lot of solutions. So if you are currently employed, go and ask what are the mental wellbeing, what are the

resilience tools? meQuilibrium is suit certainly a fantastic technology. We will put in the show notes some of the links to some of the things that Andrew's talking about. The time to work on our mental health is probably before we need to rely on it. Now is the time to take action.

[00:39:15] So thank you so much, Andrew.

[00:39:17] **Andrew Shatte:** Great pleasure; thank you

[00:39:19] **Steve Hunt:** well, Robert. What I love about the people we have on is they know so much about so many different things, and they have so many great stories.

[00:39:25] And I walk away from that conversation with Andrew just sort of processing a lot of things. But probably the, some of the biggest things that I took away from is that one, practice this stuff before you need it. We tend not to think about mental health the way we think about physical health if I'm gonna go for a big hike or something and I exercise in advance so that the hike becomes fun because if you don't exercise in advance, it's not fun. It's the same thing, you know, just keeping our mental health going. And then, you know, some of the very practical tips that he had, I think, which is, you know this, the one that I really took away is that idea that self-efficacy. It's something you have to build, and you have to constantly build. Takeaways for you?

[00:40:05] **Robert Richardson:** Well, first, how do you know that you're talking to three psychology geeks?

[00:40:10] They correct this flight or fight thing. They correct it. It's freeze, fight or flight.

[00:40:15] **Steve Hunt:** Yeah. And if you'd like Robert, who lives in Minneapolis, it's just freeze.

[00:40:18] **Robert Richardson:** It's, and for us, it's just freeze. That's all we do. We just freeze. Um, Yes. So, I agree. I also think that your point is so solid. You know, we went to Philmont, uh, my son and I, and, and hiked 125 miles over the summer. We did not just step off the plane and go hiking.

[00:40:37] We prepared right in the winter, the dead cold of Minnesota, we had backpacks on, and we're walking on our treadmill. And so, some of this work happens in advance. I think one of the most surprising facts to come out of this conversation for me was actually Andrew's focus on the pandemic and going

back and sort of working on yourself now, addressing previous hardships or trauma so that you are more resilient going into whatever is coming next.

[00:41:05] **Steve Hunt:** Yeah, I think that was interesting. Sort of that concern that we are like emotionally drained and exhausted, and we may not realize how much that has happened.

[00:41:13] **Robert Richardson:** I did not expect that to be part of the conversation. Yeah.

[00:41:16] **Steve Hunt:** and the other one that was, that I took away too, that you always think about reframing is that we live in a world when it comes to labor markets, that we have far more freedom cuz we can change.

[00:41:26] It's easier to get jobs. You're literally three clicks of Google to another job, right? But with that movement, the flip side of it is that companies don't have that, and with great power comes great responsibility.

[00:41:37] We have the power to change a lot too, but that means a lot more change can happen to us in learning how to master that change. Which is why mental resilience has always been important, but it is probably even more important now in that sense of the world's physically easier, but psychologically it is more difficult.

[00:41:53] **Robert Richardson:** Okay. That's our show for today, everybody. Thanks to our guest. For the second time, Andrew Shatte. Thanks to Robbie Echeverría who serves as our Chief Sanity Officer. Our editors also include Robbie Echeverría and myself, Robert Richardson, thanks to OpenSAP for supporting our publication here.

[00:42:13] And that said, Work Matters! Is a volunteer driven podcast. So, if you are interested in our mission to help the world's workforce lead better lives and have experience editing, producing marketing, podcasts, please check out our show notes and reach out to Steve Hunt or myself. We hope you have enjoyed this podcast and if so, that we've earned a new subscriber and maybe a quick and honest review. We look forward to seeing you on the next podcast because what matters well today, layoffs matter. Mental resilience matters, work matters. Thanks for joining us on the Work Matters! Podcast.