

Ask Me Anything Webinar with Peggy Swarbrick 08-18-2015

David Blair: Good afternoon everyone, and welcome to Ask Me Anything About Employment with Peggy Swarbrick. My name is David, and I'll be your moderator today. This webinar is not a presentation, but an interactive question and answer period, and for the next Peggy will take your questions about engaging the vocational process and questions about health and wellness. Peggy works at the Collaborative Support Program of New Jersey, coordinating activities for the Wellness Institute. She is also a part-time associate professor at Rutgers University. Peggy is involved in research, training, and consultation activities in the areas of wellness and health promotion, employment services, the role of the peer support workers, and strategies for enhancing recovery through participation in valued occupations. Today's event is a part of the National Resource Center on employment, jointly funded by the National Institute on Disability Independent Living and Rehabilitation Research and the Center for Mental Health Services. The content of this webinar does not represent the views or policies of the funding agencies, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal government. During the registration for this event, you were given the opportunity to submit a question in advance. Over the course of the webinar, we'll alternate between questions submitted in advance and the ones you have today. To ask a question by phone, please indicate that you would like to in the chatbox; and when called upon, you can press star star to unmute your phone. You may also type your question if you'd like, and I'll read them to Peggy on your behalf. Your participation is really important and critical to the success of this event. As a reminder, if you should have joined us by telephone, please make sure to mute your computer speakers before asking a question. It will cause an echo sound that is not pleasing to anyone listening. Welcome to the webinar and I hope you enjoyed the next hour. Peggy, we're going to get started with the questions submitted during registration, and if anyone would like to start typing questions they have now, please go ahead. How are you doing, Peggy?

Peggy Swarbrick: Great. Thanks very much for having me today. I'm really happy to be here and talk to you guys about, you know, answer some questions and really have a group dialogue today about really physical wellness for work.

David: That's great. I'm really looking forward to that, too. Um, let's take a first question. This one's from, and I'm, I apologize, I'm going to pronounce this wrong. Maybell, "What do we tell our patients who don't seek employment for fear of losing entitlements?"

Peggy: So the question about, you know, working with people, who often really want to work or are thinking about it, who often have the fear of losing me entitlements, I mean is a common concern and a common question that's brought up or it comes up in a lot of conversations. And what we'd like to try to do or how to approach this issue is to try to really talk to people about their reason for wanting to work. Kind of looking at what are their reasons because if someone's saying they don't seek it, they want to seek it, but they fear losing the entitlements. We really go to the question around, what are you looking to do? Why do you want to work? And what's that seemed like, because a lot of times when people can strengthen their reasons for wanting to work, often they can help to look forward how to break down some of the barriers that are there. As a person who was on Social Security for a period of time and made that decision, I know that is a challenge. I've also had the experience of really working through that question and been really able to help other people to look through that question; and many have successfully worked through the fears and been able to successfully, you know, get off the entitlements

and pursue full-time work and others part-time work. So I think it's a really around exploring and helping people to strengthen their reason in their readiness around working.

David: What you're hearing rings true for a number of the previous Ask Me Anything sessions we've had so far. Joan Rapp talked about people looking about how to maximize their income instead of just their entitlements, and "How can they can bring in the most money, instead of worrying about just what they're losing, looking at what they can gain as well. Does that sound accurate to you?" Or?

Peggy: Yeah, and we had an example about 10 years ago at our agency. We're a peer-run organization where we, um, I was very fortunate to be part of a project where we were able to create full-time work positions for people in recovery. And at the time it was a little controversial, and I encouraged them to put in the grant, a full-time, rather than a part-time, position as a manager. And the idea was we needed to hire 22 people pretty quick, and people didn't think that people would step up to the plate. Because for many of them, it was much more advantageous at that time to stay on their entitlements. And we were able to hire the 21 people over that period of time. And I'm happy to say some, many of them are still in that position, and any of them have moved onto other positions. So they actually transcended meeting, you know, entitlements and were able to move into the full-time work. And so it just, and I know 10 years later, it's a study we should write up on. They still work, and many of them would continue to say that it was much more cost effective for them to keep their housing entitlement, their food stamp entitlement; but they were so much, they took that, they worked through the fear, and they were given the opportunity to really have a job that they really love and, you know, be able to not have to worry about filling out those paperwork every year, every year after year.

David: Alfonso, in the chat box, is asking a question right now about, "Is there a federal guide about how one ends up losing their entitlements, and you know, what happens at what point do you lose them and how did you get them back?"

Peggy: Yeah, I believe there are, there's a lot of entitlement people, who really specialize in this kind of work in many individual placement and support teams, IPS teams, supported employment teams, have usually someone or many of the staff that are working on those teams are usually pretty well versed in what are the limits. And it something we really encourage people to really work with someone, whether it's a supported employment person and/or someone, and really work directly with the Social Security Administration because often it's people situation is very individualized, and there's usually not a one answer for every person on certain entitlement category. So it's something you have to really work through is an individual or getting someone to support you through that process. So we really encourage people to make an informed decision based on working and finding out who that right person is to talk to, and finding out the right details around how much can I make, you know, and at what point do I lose my, um, you know, lose different types of things. And many people do go through that process though. And it looks like some people are saying there's a transitional program we're seeing on, in the chat box.

David: Yep. So it's Thunderbird clubhouse, right. "At Club International, we have a transitional program where staff accompanies the employee and coaches them on the job, and they go on and ask a question, Have you heard of this sort of program with other organizations?"

Peggy: Yeah. Well, it seems like that is the clubhouse model with the transitional supported employment and a variation to that with supported employment programs, individual placement and support would be that the supported employment worker, or whether that's a peer or a non-peer, often is the coach will coach people on. That's a big piece of supporting, IPS supported employment.

David: Yeah, and just kind of moving on here. Diane asks a question and she says, "One of the burning questions in Iowa is, what is the going compensation rate for peer support specialists? Do you know anything about that?"

Peggy: For peer support specialists in Iowa? I'm not exactly sure, but a place where you can get some information about that might be the International Association of Peer Specialists (iNAPS), and they have been doing some scans the country of what are the average rates. I do believe the average rate though, this is not Iowa for they may be below the average, is about \$12.60 an hour. That's the average that I've heard, when you come from in a couple of different flights, studies of people gathering that information from states and programs around the country.

David: Great, and it looks like if you're reading the chat, Diane got exactly what she needed. But let's move on to another question that was submitted in advance, and this one is from Sabrina. She asked, "What's the most effective strategy for managing my anxiety while at work?"

Peggy: Yeah, that's a big question. One of the things that, you know, would be important to think about is what is your anxiety? What happens with your anxiety? Like for you, it may be, you know, figuring out what that is, and then finding what are some of the stresses and ways you can manage that? So, for some people it's really figuring out how to pace your workload, and then maybe taking breaks where you can get away from the work environment. So if anxiety is provoked by something in the work environment or something about the pace of the work you have to do, often people will find this really useful to take that break away and get out for a fresh breath of fresh air. Um, if your anxiety is really related to things around other people, you know, dealing with other people in the environment that cause impact and anxiety, it may often be working with your supervisor or working with somebody at the agency to see, and be in a location maybe where you're not exposed so much to people, so you can have your workspace be in a comfortable way that's not provoking your anxiety. So it's really hard to know exactly an exact answer for you, for sure. Sabrina, unless maybe you want to give us a little more general ideas about what happens. But the idea would be to be thinking about when the anxiety comes about and what are some of those things that are triggering it; and then figuring out really most important in managing anxiety, what you can do. And that's really a powerful thing because we can do things, we can figure out ways to take that break, figure out ways to go get a cup of water, you know, find those things you could do in your work environment to manage your anxiety. I had one example where, you know, I was working at a state hospital, and one of the things that I found was really helpful was like before; cause I deal with a lot of anxiety, too, is I used to like almost do a meditation as I got to the job, and I try to do this in other jobs, too, of doing almost a meditation before I get to the work and try to really clear my head of all the other things that are stressing me by the time I get there. And sometimes it's good when you have that separation of pulling out all those stressors in your mind, so you can get to the work environment, and then really be there in the environment. And that kind of really relates to a lot of mindfulness, being really mindful to be in the environment, especially getting rid of that anxiety because a lot of times we bring anxiety from our home life or other things in our life.

David: That's a great answer to this question. Two people in the chat box, Diane and Robin, also suggested people look at the WRAP plans, or the Wellness Recovery Action Plans, as a way to help manage the stress.

Peggy: An essential component of the WRAP is that idea of figuring out those triggers, like I mentioned, and being really aware, and really I find the biggest thing in a work is to create an environment. And my colleague, one of my colleagues just recently, she just moved her desk and really created her environment there that I think she's not anxiety provoked because she's got it so calm and very nicely decorated, and I think that's a really important thing in a work environment to have to create that environment where you can feel, you know, not provoke your anxiety and feel really comfortable.

David: Great. We have another question in from Mabel, and she writes, "I have a friend with a diagnosed mental illness and has not been employed for several years. They want to get part-time work, but is concerned about a paper trail when it's getting paid for her services. Is there any advice about how to direct her?"

Peggy: OK, I'm not sure I understand about what it's meant by a paper trail.

David: I don't either. If Mabel could clarify. She may, I mean there's a couple of directions, just guessing. It may be concern about losing her benefits and a paper trail leading back to that. That's the only paper trail I might be, that I think that they might be concerned about.

Peggy: That's really where finding someone on an IPS team or on a program that's really well versed in how much, so how much money you can make. Many times people can make a certain amount of money before it starts to affect your benefits. So it would be really finding that job that you can work so many. I know a lot of people will have calculated that I can work 10 hours a week or 10 hours a month. So finding how much that is would be important, but if there is the burn to work, the other piece is to even find volunteer work because you want to maybe really keep yourself in the flow of doing something because it's so important for our mental health and recovery is being active, doing something that really uses your skills. You're productive and you're giving back to other people. That's going to be an asset when you eventually do get the full or part-time job you want.

David: Right. And I'm going to recommend Mabel e-mail us at psyrehab@bu.edu with that same question, and we can direct you to someone who can help with this particular situation, or you know, get you in hold of someone who can help you sort this out. And that goes for anyone here who has a question that's super specific and they don't want to ask in front of everyone, send us an email, and we have people here who will reply to you and try to help you out as best we can. Next question we have, and I'm just trying to stay in order here, comes from Robin and she asked, "How do we encourage employers to respect peer specialists and treat them more like professionals?"

Peggy: Well, that's a, that's a real challenging question, but it's all doable. I think an employer, you know, I find what happens is, I'm very fortunate we have people really who value the peers' work and a lot of it is we did a lot of groundwork on, for example, going in and educating employers and administrators because administrators are really key about the value of peer specialists' work. I'm a big one for articles, so I'll pull out or I'll go online and pull down a really good review of the literature on the

state of the affairs of peer specialists' work. And there's some really, really good references I can shoot to you guys that you could bring. And when they read that, they read an article that's in Psych Services (Psychiatric Services) or in one of the journals and they see, you know, there's been this research or these researchers are talking about it. That's a powerful statement, and that's a great tool to bring in. And then bringing in somebody, if it's yourself, or if you need any help, I've helped people devise little in-services for administrators and staff because what happened, and I've done a lot of work on this of going into act teams and supportive housing teams and all these different teams that are bringing peers to their service delivery and working with the staff to help the staff educate what's the role that's critical. What's the evidence is one question. What's the role, and how it's going to really help augment people's recovery and wellness. You really want to help make that the message. It's gonna really augment their work, and it's going to help further people's recovery wellness. And bringing those clear messages and then working through the fears. People have fears that people are going to get sick. People are going to take their jobs. There's all the different fears. Those come out later perhaps, but I think going in with some good knowledge and evidence, and then really helping to be clear about what the role is and how that's really going to help really make their work more effectively to support people's recovery and wellness. Those are the kinds of things I would say.

David: Thunderbird clubhouse asks, "Do you have any suggestions on how to educate employers about the needs of their employees with mental illness of different sorts? And then I'm scrolling down here. Then Richard follows up and asks, Are there any resources out there for educating employers as well?"

Peggy: Yeah. And well, I use a universal design kind of approach to this. I would talk to employers about why you should create a work environment to make everybody's mental health good. So you're not then coming in, because when you really boil it down, many people don't need that many accommodations. So going in from the perspective of the workforce could benefit from, you know, they could do XYZ strategy, whatever strategy you might be encouraging, because the workforce could benefit because as we know, many people get stressed, many people have mental health things they don't, you know, come out with. So it's bringing it out from a perspective of everybody could really benefit from having an environment that's really conducive to people's to really good mental health and wellness for the workforce is the way I like to approach it. And then helping people to know how to then ask for their specific needs. You want to have a flex, depending on the work, you want to have a flexible work schedule, if that's doable in that kind of work and that can be really helpful for the single parents or people with children. So those are the ways I tend to focus in on how to work with employers around, you know, supporting a good positive mental health workforce in general.

David: I just want to take a moment to plug something that the Center has just recently released here. It's called the Repository of Employment and Vocational Recovery Resources, which has different sections for employers, potential and current workers, providers, administrators, and we're building a brand new section for family members. So it's a little old right now, the design, but we're overhauling it as we speak, and many of you might benefit from taking a look at that as well for specific resources. And I'll paste the link into the chat in one second here. Let's move on to the next question. And this one was submitted in advance by Kay. Kay writes, "What can you do if your 21-year career ended because of the mental issues, and you have a physical disability? I'm interested in how to touch on the subject without looking unemployable."

Peggy: So it sounds like, Kay, it could be for yourself or someone else. And I guess the gist of what I'm seeing is that your career, the career you were doing ended and, so there's some things that are getting in your way of doing that kind of work that you can't do any longer. So maybe perhaps, the idea would be to really try to work with someone or really work on there's a cup, some really good resources you can do this is to kind of look at what you think you want to do now and really perhaps think about what your career was and what are your, you had a lot for a 21-year career. There's so many skills and capacities and accomplishments you've had. So really to map those out, and then see where they're going to fit with something new you want to do. And you know, look at it as finding something new that you've perhaps wanted to do in the past that haven't been able to or finding something that you didn't even know, and that would be something maybe you could get some feedback from some people. But I think the biggest thing to look at it, is to really map out your strengths and accomplishments and things from your previous work. Because those are going to really bring, even if it's a no new career, many of those assets you have are the things you're going to want to bring to your new work.

David: That's great. And one of the things I think that's important to touch on is this issue of disclosure and when does it happen and how do you do it? You know, I know it's individual, but do you have general rules about that?

Peggy: Yeah. With disclosure, I am more about, and then everyone has their own take on it. I believe strongly that it's something that you really only should do if it's absolutely necessary. And it's probably better not to bring that out early on, on interviews and things because of the stigma and of the necessity of it. And I think disclosure is something that you want to do very cautiously and really have talked through with someone. And there's some really good stuff on the IPS Work on the Dartmouth website as well that can help you walk through how to think that through for yourself as you're going to a new job or getting a new job. But I'm under the, I've had the experience that it was better for me to do it very cautiously over time, and that in many examples, not at all. It's to keep it very, only when it was absolutely necessary.

David: That's great. I've noticed the number of people have joined us since we began, so I just wanted to let everyone know that if you'd like to ask a question, you can either type it into the chat box, and we'll be happy to ask it on your behalf to Peggy, or you can indicate that you'd like to ask it by phone, and we'll call on you and just press star star to mute yourself, and you can talk to Peggy yourself right now. So it's just not a little conversation between me and Peggy alone. Until then I have another question. This one comes from James, and James asks, "How does one know when it's time to go shake the fear of dogs, take new risks, to learn a new skill from one secure job to other opportunities?"

Peggy: That's a great, that's a fantastic question. And it's when I'm grappling with myself right now, so it's very near and dear to my heart. You know, it's to do it in a cautious way, but not to not procrastinate to the point that two or three years later you're still thinking about it like me. But, is to really find somebody who you can have as a mentor and talk it through a little bit. I think if you have someone like that who can help guide you, it really helps. I find that's helpful when I reach out to certain people, and then sometimes you just have to then, once you've made that decision of going through the balance of it is just take the plunge in, and often there's also, there's a lot of times the risk and the anxiety that goes along with it, but just taking the risk into taking a new chance and a new opportunities are really a positive thing. I think always not to burn the bridges. That's what I always encourage people about, too,

is to make sure that you're know you're leaving somewhere to leave on good terms. You know, when I see that, where people then didn't step back to the job, too. So, you know, really getting someone to talk it through. And then for yourself, you'll probably know when it's really that time to take that new opportunity and make the leap.

David: That is so true of many people, even those without facing additional challenges in the employment process. And again, I'd love to, I can sit here and read the questions that we've had submitted in advance. But again, if anyone here would like to ask a question, I'd, I'd really love to get your question out there. Um, then we'll go on to another one submitted in advance. **This when comes from Karen, and Karen asked, "So whenever I work an overnight shift, everything in my life gets out of control. What can I do?"**

Peggy: Well, that's a, that's a really great question. So you've identified already, you know, this pattern for yourself. And then the couple things you want, you would want to maybe think about is, for example, is it overnight shifts? Is it something you have to do? Because if it is impacting your other parts of your life so much, and you don't have to do it, it may be something you just realize that's just not something, a shift that I'm going to take. If it's something that you have to do for some other reason, then the key is that really figuring out how you can get your recuperation time, to be able to not allow things to get out of control and to have that recuperation period, so you can. I always think about, it's like, I do a lot. One of the things in my work is travel, and then that happens to me. It's instead of saying overnight shift, every time I have to travel, that's when things start to feel out of control. So I started to really, really build a plan around my travel and really made each, did certain things around my sleep and my activities and my social context. I really got a little more control of those things to help make sure things didn't totally explode when I had to make those longer trips that were really causing my equilibrium to be really thrown out of control. So it's asking yourself, do I, like I said to myself, do I have to travel for work? I didn't, so I could really cut down and minimize it to a very minimal. You have to think about that through. But um, maybe if you don't have to have the overnight shift, it just might be something to not do because I think it has to do with our circadian rhythms, too. You might want to realize that it's really wreaks havoc on that, if that's not your normal schedule. So hopefully something you can change, or if you can't, hopefully you can figure out a way to make sure you get back to that rhythm that really will help you feel like in control and feel really well.

David: And I should say that, and this is just my own personal thinking, is that no one is trapped in any one job. And when James asked that question about how do you know when it's time to go, perhaps it's time to start looking for something different if you can't change the schedule.

Peggy: Yeah.

David: **Mary had a question and is, "I was told that the ADA will not protect me if I do not disclose it to my employer. Know anything about that?"**

Peggy: Well, with the ADA is you have to disclose if you need an accommodation, and it needs to, for to get an accommodation for whatever you need an accommodation, you will have to disclose to the, you don't have to do it to your supervisor, but you have to do it within, the HR, Human Resources, function of the employment things. So that's where you're making a decision. You need XYZ accommodation, and

you'll need to get that medical documentation for that. So for that, that's the correct statement there. But I'm just saying in general, we don't have to go in and blast it on our forehead that we have a mental or substance use issue. There's no, there's no need to do that. You know, many people feel they're, you know, they feel they have to tell people, but we really don't have to tell people that, and probably, it's probably better. I was just saying that it's not useful to do it, if it's not a necessity, and if you need a specific accommodation, then yes, you'll have to make that known to your employer.

David: Can I ask my own follow-up question? "If you do need the accommodation, at what point in the employment process would you do it, you know, interviewing, on your application, or after you started?"

Peggy: Well that's something you depend. If it's something about the essential job function, and it's not, and you can't do the essential job function without that, you probably have to do it during that process. So, you know, you'll look at the job description, and you'll know in the job description that's one of the essential functions more than likely. But those are the kinds of things really where a supportive employment worker, whether a peer or non-peer, will be really good to help people sort that through.

David: Ok. Richard asks the question, "What is the best advice you can give vocational rehabilitation counselors when it comes to helping individuals with behavioral health conditions obtain and maintain employment? The best advice?"

Peggy: Well, I think, so typically they're working with people with mental health issues. I think the biggest thing we can make the message is that it's really important not to discourage people from pursuing work because I think that's become a pretty prevalent pattern is to discourage people because you're better off on Social Security Disability, and people sometimes will discourage. So giving them the hope that it's possible and it's kept people can, and then helping people to then find the best job match, not putting people in the McDonald's job when they have, you know, a degree or they have some kind of other kinds of training or specialty, when McDonald's job isn't something that they weren't really looking for. Maybe they want some McDonald's job, and I'm not bashing McDonalds. I just wouldn't eat there, I'm a vegetarian. But it's just the job that sometimes they put people into, everybody into McDonald's, or everybody into this job or that job, to help make sure that they're helping people define a job that really matches their skills, rather than putting everybody into like a, either not encouraging people and/or setting them into jobs that might not be a good fit for people's skills and career aspirations.

David: It looks like Richard is typing something, so I'll give him one second here. Yeah, it says, good advice, thank you. "Do you have advice for people about how to follow up, you know, when they've done a placement, how to follow-up to make sure it is a good fit with the person and that they're not just saying it's ok?"

Peggy: Oh, you mean when you're working about taking the job? Well, usually follow-along supports; many supported employment programs will have like a follow-along support from someone. That's really where a support worker, a person who's a supported employment counselor or supporter, can help keep checking in with people. And I really encourage people, especially for the first couple of months of work, is to really figure out, whether it's a phone call, an email, a text, and set up a system

with someone to do that check in. I really encourage that with people. I mean, many people do that with their family, their spouse, or their friends. But sometimes people who don't have that or need that have that other support, it's a real good tool to use with people to make sure, especially after the honeymoon period sometimes gets over, and then the real stress comes about, and that could be in the two, three or four-month period after the job starts.

David: Great. So, let's move onto another question. This one was submitted in advance from Sauna. "They ask about making requests for accommodations in an office setting where the workload is unmanageable for them, but it's also unmanageably high for everyone else around them. And I think it's the fear of, you know, this is how it is, how can I ask for this?"

Peggy: Well, maybe it's just, you know, really having a conversation with the supervisor around, you know, about this issue and if the person is, if you're feeling that it's just so much stress, and you don't, and you know that is the norm in that work environment, maybe, you know, seeing if there's something else in the agency that could be another job that might be a better fit, could be one option. Or really maybe working with someone to see if that, if this is like an enduring issue that's not going to change and you know yourself, this is just gonna make me go home every night and be so depressed or whatever it does to you that's not so positive. Making that decision about maybe finding something different that's going to be a better a workload match. But I wouldn't just jump ship from the place because this happens in our agency a lot. In my department, we have, we worked, we have that reputation that we work, like we work hard, like there's a pretty big productivity kind of a thing. And it was tended to hire, we tended to work with people who work in that mode. And then other people, sometimes would come to work in the department and see that that just wasn't good for them. And what they would do is find them something in a different part of the agency that didn't have the, and it was just a flow, it was the flow of the people in the work. That's how they worked. And they didn't perceive it as it, but they, the other people just wasn't a good match, so we found something else for them.

David: I really love these examples from your work in your life. It really adds to the conversation here. One of the questions is, and this one was submitted by Bruce. He says, "The last job I had caused me to relapse from all the stress. How can I get an idea of what a company will be like without having to explain why?"

Peggy: Yeah, that's a good one. It's really hard to ever fully know probably. But, it might, if at all possible, it might be good to ask. And we've actually been doing this in our workplace is having people come in for a couple of hours prior to being hired and just like shadow the people in the job. And some employers, we're doing it now because we just think it's so much better for people to know about who we are, and what we do, and what to expect. And then we can get a sense of that person, too. So if you can maybe ask them if they had, you know, that opportunity if they ever allowed people to come and observe the work, you know, for prior, during the interviewing process. Or if you know other people that work there, if you can get, it would probably be hard to know for them to give you other people that are employees. But if there's a way you can get some insights from other employees would be a good way. That would be the two suggestions I could have is to ask them that question about the pre-employment observation. But that's a great question because it's, you just don't always know what the environment is. And the stress can be the work environment, or it can just be, you know, so many different things

David: One of the things I've been noticing about all of these questions is they seem to get at this idea of a work life balance. And they're not specifically asking, what do I do to maintain a balance between these two things? Do you have advice for people about that, about how to maintain that balance between work and life and keeping? You know, what is that, and how does, how does it work right?

Peggy: Yeah, that's a great question. And I'm not the person to answer it because I've been considered a workaholic, and I'm looking for a support group to go to. But finally, actually just recently, and I mean that was for 20 something years, because after being on Social Security, and I never want to go back. I always had an extra job and always work, work, work, work. But thankfully about a year and a half ago, I started to seek some solution to this question thankfully. So I don't have any expertise, but I just have experience. And I'm really finding that, really trying to balance that out. Having finally finding some other things to bring that balance to the work. To just really be sitting down for yourself to know I can work six hours, I can work five hours, and this is the kind of work I like; and just doing that introspection is a really important thing for you to do as you're pursuing work or keeping work or figuring out that balance. And that's what I've done. I, like I said, I was the over-balanced person, and my wheel of work was 90%, now it's 70, 68, 70%. So it's getting better, and it's finding those things that you can really go to that drive you. Like for me, it's swimming and Yoga and walking and doing more of those things really helps me. And, you know, it's just finding those other activities that, you know. There was that period about 5 or 10 and 20 years ago, I just thought work was the only thing that should define me because I never wanted to go back on Social Security. But now finding those other things that really drive you, and then figuring out how to take the 24 hours of the day you have and making sure you fill them in. The other, I think the other thing you've got to think about with the other 24 hours, which has always been mine, is sleep. Figuring out what's that right amount of sleep that you need and that's the one I really, that was one that really helped me a lot was that making sure I knew that sleep. And so if I was going to work too much though, I didn't, I never interfered with that sleep time, and I have that on the calendar. Seep my appointment with my bed. You know, you have to do it, and that's going to help you really get that balance a little bit more, and then really feel really good when you're doing those other things. Because loss of sleep can really affect our mental and emotional well-being very negatively and/or positively, if we get the right balance.

David: I have to admit that I am personally guilty of giving up sleep for work many times. Can you speak really quickly, and we have a question from Michael. "Can you speak quickly to how often people should re-evaluate their work-life balance? Because you know, you can set it at the beginning, during the honeymoon period, and you find yourself two years later burnt out and ready to give up."

Peggy: I think, if you have a calendar or you've got a phone that you put it in. Start putting it into your routine, into your phone or your calendars. And regularly looking at it at the beginning of the week, Sunday when you sit down with your coffee or your breakfast, looking at the week ahead and making sure you're plugging in that time for those things that are going to help you unplug and get that or restore that balance. I think it should be something people should be thinking about on a more conscious, regular basis. And you know, or talking to people about it on a regular basis. I would say if you can once a week, if you can't, at least every month because like you say, it can be out of control and then you hate this job that you once loved.

David: Right. Moving on to the question from Michael, and I apologize to Michael because there is a disease in here that I don't know how to properly pronounce. He says, "I developed Tardive Dyskinesia after I stopped taking Abilify. I took Abilify for five years. It was prescribed for me as a mood stabilizer. I'm also out of work and seeking employment. I have a number of interviews that I thought went well, but none of them have resulted in a job offer. Although I try to minimize them, I'm afraid that my facial expressions, constant foot and leg jiggling, and animated hand gestures, may be observed by interviewers that may factor into why have no offers. Do you have any helpful suggestions? According to my psychiatrist, there is no cure for the disease and the best case is the hope it will wear off. Thank you."

Peggy: Michael, I think the thing that might be a more conscious of when you're on the interview with that probably the stress you're feeling, which you're normally going to be feeling because you're on an interview, could be really causing them the twitches to come out a little bit more. To start to think more on ways you can either do more breathing, you know, breathing and then for example, like with your hands, maybe keeping them in your pocket, and/or doing things with your feet or legs that you know, that you can get a little more control over them. You won't have full control because people perhaps are often just even thinking that those are your signs of your anxiety, you know, and they may see it as like being anxious. They may not know that it's Tardive Dyskinesia, which, and you don't need to tell them that. But perhaps being more thoughtful, thinking more about how you can sort of get a little more control over things. You may not totally not come about, but you at least have a little more control. And like the doctor said, the doctor said they will possibly will go away eventually, but being more kind of aware of like some breathing exercises and other kinds of things you can do to kind of minimize the twitching that happens often. You know, it's involuntary, but by working on like breathing and maybe putting your hands or holding a pencil or something, doing something with your hand could help it a little bit.

David: Great. You know, Michael, if you have follow-up questions, please feel free to type in. I'll pass on to Peggy right now. Mary actually wrote in the chat, Unable to sleep due to stress on the job. That's always a problem for me.

Peggy: Yeah.

David: Any good ideas for her about either handling that stress or how to get to sleep at night?

Peggy: Yeah, that's a big one. I think maybe just starting to read a little bit more about sleep and perhaps even, there's some great, and I can send and you guys could put it out there. A sleep log. I help people develop these sleep logs, so they can help kind of get into the sleep cycle to focus more on the sleep that getting good sleep and when you're going to go to sleep and what's in the environment that might be triggering sleeplessness or not getting a good restful sleep. Starting to focus more on creating that sleep environment may be a way and realizing like the benefits of the sleep. You're still gonna have the stress at work, but if you can focus on your sleep, it may actually help you to deal with the stress a little differently, but you're also then really assured that you can get a good night's sleep or at least a halfway decent, good night's sleep, which really is so essential for mental health recovery and particularly the preventing medical things because there's a lot of medical things that happen to us when we don't get really good restful sleep.

David: Yeah. Just to jump back, Michael just said thank you. I, as you talked about having done work on this, you know, sleep and rest, I went out and typed in your name and trying to look for a little pamphlet that you're talking about it, and I found this PDF that you helped put together with Jen Cone and Marine Costa.

Peggy: Yeah, that one is good. Yeah. And I have another even better one for that, too. That's good. That one goes over all the physical dimensions, and then I'll send you another one we just recently developed that will be really good.

David: I just blinked everyone, that physical wellness booklet that Peggy put together, magic of the Internet. I have to say.

Peggy: If you go up to our website. I'll type it in here, and you go on our resource section. We have, I think the sleep thing I'm talking about. It also has something on mindfulness that might be helpful.

David: OCEACT.org for sleep and wellness. Sleep blog and sleep resources.

Peggy: Yes. Yes. That's the one. The sleep log is great, and it helps you to really work with people on doing that, and then really figuring out what's happening and then moving forward and creating a way you can create the conditions in your sleep environment to help you know, get that, whatever it is. Some people seven hours, some it's six hours, some it's five, it's always going to be different for everybody.

David: Great. This question comes from Bonnie, and Bonnie asks, "Is there a short-term disability for part-time workers with a mental health diagnosis? She's a part-time worker, and she's trying to, with a mental health diagnosis. Is there short-term disability for her? Does that exist?"

Peggy: That I'm not sure about that. That's a question I don't, I don't know for sure.

David: And Bonnie, if you were to, if you're listening, if you email us at the psyrehab@bu.edu email address, we can get someone to help you look into it. Because I know it, it almost varies from state-to-state as well. So this is really specific question, but we'll try to help you out. Tanya asks, "Are there tools that you would recommend for building or exploring natural supports in helping employers create inclusive mental health friendly workplaces?"

Peggy: I think SAMSHA has a resource on this. Maybe we can find that .SAMSHA did a big project on this not too long ago, and it was geared towards employers, so that's a definite, like that just jumps right into my head, and then once that comes into my head, there's like 20 different things I could follow, but that's the resource that I would go to for that. That's one definite tool because it was like a toolkit.

David: Supportive Employers' Employment to Evidence-Based Practice Toolkit?

Peggy: I think, I'm pretty sure that's what it is. Yeah.

David: I would say that's a free tool kit that you can download off their site, and I'll share it with everyone right now.

Peggy: But I think just in general, I think it's, it's just the, there is, that tool kit is a good one, but it's just such a great thing. And if you're working in a place you can really be that champion for that, you know. And we are very big on wellness. We try to help promote wellness in the workplace. And that's another way to approach it that people, in general, can really benefit from wellness: physical, spiritual, social, emotional, intellectual, occupational, all the eight dimensions. And that makes the, that's another nice way to make it, like really for everyone in the workplace.

David: Great. And one of the things I'm noticing out here, there seems to be a resource out there for just about everything, and it's just finding the person who knows about it. So if you do have a question, you know, ask someone and you know, if you don't know, they might know or know somebody who will. So I think the thing is being vocal about what you're trying to find help with and not just keeping it to yourself. Jen wrote in the chat, and this is for Michael, but for the benefit of anyone who's just listening. Jen wrote, anxiety is not unusual for job interviews. Sometimes they find it helpful to acknowledge the interviewer when I feel like I'm displaying obvious anxiety. Gee, I can't seem to think of the word. I guess I'm a little nervous. And Jen tells Michael that they don't have to know that it's TD, but just that the interviewers just assume it's jitters.

Peggy: That's such a great point. And that's really what I think they're thinking, because a lot of people will start moving their hands or whatever their nervous thing is, it will start to come out.

David: Yeah. You know, I think we're kind of wrapping up here. We haven't talked a lot about what employers can do themselves, and could you maybe speak to, you know, a way that an employer can help improve wellness at work? What sort of, you know, policies they can put in place or programs they can look into?

David: Well, the first thing that I would say is they got to look at their health insurance plan that they're offering their employees and making sure it's pretty decent, which that's very hard because it's a complicated and doesn't cost, bring a lot of costs to the employee. That's one thing we always try to do. But then making sure that it has some decent coverage, you know, for both mental health and physical and wellness things, prevention type things. We also try to help the workplace try to do certain kinds of preventive kind of things, trying to help when you're doing things for employees, making sure there are healthy food choices, rather than just donuts and really sugary kind of stuff. That's going to be an energy drain, and that's going to affect your mood and your stress. Having healthy food choices for the different events. You know, understanding that getting people to screenings, that's a big one we do a lot with. And trying to promote that in the workplace is getting people screenings, you know, especially around flu season or different kinds of illnesses that people may get. Those can really affect productivity and people's mental and physical health and wellness. But, yeah, I think just promoting Me dimensions in wealth into workplace, we've done that with a lot of agencies here in New Jersey. We're very big with the wellness dimensions, not only for people with mental health and substance use. The way we look at it is we want to prevent these things, we want to prevent very severe impacts of mental health or substance use, but also the medical issues that are influencing people. People are dying 25 years. We get into recovery, and then people die. So we want to help people to have better access to, you know,

medical and dealing with cardiovascular risk things. So those are the kinds of things that employers can do through their health insurances, through their health fairs, through their activities that they do for their employees. Those are just a few. And then really a big one is hopefully we can make the employment, a place that gives people a lot of positive feedback. You know, giving people on a regular basis, good supervision and positive feedback about their work, and recognition for their work is a real big thing, I think. As well as I think another thing that affects a lot, I think a good way to go back and get education. Many people could benefit from employers that, you know, help support them going back to school or getting advanced skills and trainings are really good things, I think in a workforce that were employers to really help people's health and wellness. Just a few other things.

David: I see a couple of people typing questions, and we're nearly out of time, so if you have one you'll need to submit it quickly. I'll ask one more and this one just for my own benefit as we are building a Family Section for Recovery Repository. Do you have advice of where the family fits into all of this? How they can support the wellness of the individual at work and helping keep the balance?

Peggy: Oh, yeah, essential. Family, whether it's your parent or your spouse or siblings. Families are often the supported employment person for the, they become the default person many times. So helping people with their plans in pursuing them and working through the stress. There's the role for families, and then families also taking care of their own wellness. That's the biggest thing I try to promote with families that I know in my own family is making sure they're taking care of their wellness, so they can help be a supporter for someone who's making that step of going back to work or making a career change, and so really helping to support their wellness. But definitely, they play a major role. And they'll be a good person if they're doing a WRAP, they can be the supporter or help people with WRAP. And really, again, let's just say there, Diane, that self-care for families. I think because families, play that big role and having their own self-care through taking care of their own health, physical health and mental health needs is real important.

David: And if anyone's reading, who wants to be involved in the development of family section on our site, if you just email our psyrehab@bu.edu, I'll get you in touch with the person running the project. I'm sure they'd love to have feedback. Well, that brings us to the end of the hour. Thank you very much for your time and answering everyone's questions, Peggy. I really appreciate it, and I'm sure the people have valued your input.

Peggy: Yeah. I really appreciate the opportunity. I didn't know we could go the whole hour, and I'm so excited to see all these questions, and I hope this was helpful and great resources. I'm a big fan of resources, so feel free to use what we have, and so, I benefited from what I've learned too, so thank you all very much for the opportunity.

David: Yeah. Thank you very much. And thank you everyone for attending today. There'll be more Ask Me Anything About Employments to come, so watch your email, and we'll be sending them out. Have a great afternoon, everyone. Goodbye.