Burnout, Perfectionism & Identity: Reclaiming Peace Beyond Your Role Transcript

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Opening and Guest Introduction

And if you are caring for people, you're putting your life on the line every day. You're putting your needs aside. And so I was like, I loved taking that on as my identity.

And I love taking that on and saying, I am a nurse so proudly, even with all the hard days and the burnout. And I didn't, I felt like I was more worthy because I was that.

And that people would like me more or, you know, think more of me and when I put it on the back burner that was really hard and it took a whole year literally a whole year of sitting in quiet times with God and asking him well who am I if I'm not a nurse if someone asked me today or tomorrow hey what do you do who are you you know tell me about yourself and I can't say I'm a nurse What do I say?

Welcome to Take Back My Brain with Lori Hammer, where real healing starts in the brain. I'm Lori, a functional nutritionist and mom who's walked the path from anxiety and burnout to clarity and calm.

Each week, we're going to dive into brain-based tools like amino acid therapy, gut health, fasting, and faith to help you reclaim your energy, emotions, and sense of self.

Hey, everyone. Welcome back to Take Back My Brain. I'm your host, Laurie Hammer, and today I have with me a very amazing woman. She is a wife, a mama.

She's a daughter of the king. She's been an RN for 19 years, and now she is a holistic wellness coach, and she helps nurses and other people, a lot of people out there, because she has an amazing podcast, deal with identity and stress.

So, Shan Wright, welcome to the podcast. Thanks so much for having me. I'm super excited. I love it. So you and I were just talking off camera like nursing and helping, you know, changing your podcast title to holistic nurse.

Burnout in Nursing and Early Anxiety

So probably when this comes out, you'll probably have already changed your title. So all of you out there, listen to holistic nurse. I don't think you need to be a nurse to listen to it.

So, you know, make sure you jump on over there, but you spent 19 years as a nurse and you burnt out. And I would love to hear your story because so many people in the healthcare profession, even holistic practitioners, who are not in the mainstream medical system, we burn out.

I've done it. I'm always having to kind of regroup myself. A couple of times a year, I kind of have to check in with myself. I'm like, things are just feeling a bit too much.

I'm kind of tired, exhausted. I need my own amino acids again. There's just that tendency to be driven to that burnout. I think a lot of it has to do with society and whatever, but I would love to hear your story and I want to dive into How do we keep recognizing it so we prevent it?

And, you know, why do we get there in the first place? So. Yeah. Yeah. I would love to share. So what's interesting about my story is I was a nurse, active nurse in healthcare in the hospital for 10 years, and I didn't even know I was in burnout until, what was that?

about three years later after I had put nursing on the back burner and then I realized I was in burnout the whole time and still was and I came to my breaking moment and that's why when I started my whole business and my private practice and coaching and my podcast I was just like I just got to talk to that burnout mom that stressed out mom and I didn't know I could help the nurse because I was not still in the healthcare field.

But I had some other wiser than me coaches say, you know, why don't you niche down to the burnout nurse? Because that's your story. And I'm like, that is my story, but my healing came after.

And they said, does it matter? Could you help that nurse with that same healing method and the way that it happened for you and the way that, you know, just give them hope for where they are?

And I'm like, absolutely. So that is why I'm changing my podcast name from Holistic Moms to Holistic Nurse because I do have that super soft spot for that nurse who is trying to care for everyone She's doing the right things.

A lot of us are high achievers, perfectionists. We want to be right. Obviously if we're wrong, it's life and death sometimes. So we're always trying to be right and that's a good thing except when it burns you out because you can't be right and perfect at every single thing in life.

Right. Yeah. So I do have a soft spot for her and I want to help her and I want to let her know you can still be active in nursing no matter what that looks like.

There's a million different nursing jobs out there. They look so different. You can still be an active nurse and not live in burnout. Like it doesn't have to go hand in hand.

And I think a lot of people actually have gotten pushback where people have said, well, it's just a stressful career. It's a stressful position. It is what it is.

Healthcare is just stressful. Okay, that is true, but you don't have to live there. You actually can choose to say, I am living, I'm working in a stressful environment, but I don't have to choose that for myself.

My nervous system, my brain, my mentality, my spirit doesn't have to stay there. So my story, I grew up as a perfectionist and just the high achiever, always trying to not ruffle feathers, a kind of chaotic childhood.

And I just wanted to fly under the radar and get the straight A's without having my parents have to worry about it and not make them mad and not disappoint.

Well, I didn't know that was turning me into a massive people pleaser. And I actually, until I got to college and got my first C and just realized what that made me feel like, did I realize that I had some anxiety?

It just sounds like me, Shan. I was pretty much a straight A student and get to college. I'm like, this is really hard. I know. I'm happy to say, I just had this conversation with one of my kids the other day.

I'm happy to say I'm not raising kids that were just like me though. They're like, wait, you never got a C? And I was like, no, but it's okay when you do.

It's totally fine. Yeah, don't worry about that. Yeah. And so I actually was nervous that I was not going to pass nursing school. I, it was pretty hard and I blamed it all on my test anxiety.

Identity, People-Pleasing, and Values

And so I went to my advisor and I said, you know, it was senior year and I was like, I've got to pass, right? Like this is ridiculous. And you know, they didn't let you pass if you had to see, like you had to have, you had to, yeah.

You had to ace it. You know, you're going into nursing. So she was like, well, how about you go see the school counselor? So I went to the counselor and I'm like, I have some test anxiety and I just have to pass the exams and

my finals and I need help.

And she's like, okay, well, let's talk about your growing up and let's talk about like, and I was like, no, it's test anxiety. It's very particular. I just don't test well.

I get so anxious and she's like okay let's and she like planted those seeds of course I was a stubborn what 21 year old I was like I don't have anxiety but I she planted those seeds and then God just started working on my heart and like opening my eyes to like this perfectionism that was covering up the anxiety because I thought being perfectionist was a good thing.

Right. And I even like was called that from family and my mom and I was just like, yeah, that's good. I love to be a perfectionist. And then I saw that underneath of it was the anxiety and I I just over time, it was like a long journey, started seeing it.

So that was my first experience. And then I go into the nursing world shortly after that and realized that this anxiety followed me. It wasn't just test anxiety.

Literally, you're on a test every day of your adult life. Especially when you're in a hospital and they're like, you have to give out medications and do calculations.

You're like, this is a test, a real test every day. And so I was always, always anxious when I was working and I didn't know how to deal with it. So like afterwards and I, afterwards I would just, you know, not debrief properly.

I was with cancer patients. So there was a lot of death we're dealing with all the time. And I did not know how to handle all those emotions. It was, you know, you are, you're 21 and you were 22 and you're just like, I don't know how to do this.

I don't know how to adult this way. And so I had all these bad coping mechanisms I came up with and just try to go about life. Anyway, move. And I was in burnout right away.

And I I would go to older senior nurses and ask them, okay, so, you know, does this feeling go away? Like, I just, does it get easier? Like, I didn't really even know how to verbalize it.

And they're like, oh, no, it doesn't. No, this is it. That's all we have. They're like, you try to get used to it. And you adjust, but this is how it is.

And so I had no hope. And I was like, okay, this is what it is. This is what all the older nurses are saying. Then this is how I'm supposed to feel as a nurse.

Okay. So anyways, I never felt really soul aligned to the healthcare profession of nursing. And so then I was like, well, let me travel. I'm going to go do travel nursing.

Let me mix it up a little bit, go have some fun. I knew I needed fun my life. And so that sounded really fun. So I did travel nursing and that led me to San Francisco where I met my husband and stayed there and had an amazing job actually as a nurse there.

But the anxiety never left me. And like I said, I put it on the back burner after our second child and became a stay at home mom. And it was then that I was faced with this postpartum anxiety.

Again, very specific. And so it was God really saying, this isn't from nursing. This isn't from schooling. This isn't from just you producing as a professional.

This is actually deep inside of you. You're just unlayering the onion deeper and deeper so that I could see this is actually a me problem. This is not a circumstantial thing.

Yeah, I mean, I came to a breaking moment after my third child and I was like, help God, help. I'm trying to keep this perfect home, perfect kids, perfect marriage.

I had a business at the time, perfect business. I'm trying to do all these things and I'm drowning. And very clearly, this is my burnout moment. Very clearly, God says to me, no, I'm not going to help you.

People would be like, really what? He was like, no, I never told you to do all those things. And I never told you to do them all perfectly. And this is your perfectionism that is leading you to this place of full burnout.

And I want you to do four things. And so he knew I was in this moment of trying to do everything and trying to be perfect at everything. And he said, four, I'm going to give you four very simple things.

If you do these, you will have peace. And so I did. And I started my healing journey. And that's why I talk about it today and help other people come to this place of just, just chasing the right things that are for you and not trying to do everything and stressing yourself out and bringing the stress on.

and living in this place of burnout. Right. Why do you think we chase those, all those things? I think because a few things. Again, the people pleasing.

We don't see ourselves worthy of the greatness that we are, the love that we have received from God, the way that we're created, the masterpiece that we are.

We don't see ourselves worthy. So we keep trying to prove everyone else around us and prove it by our production, by our work, and just by pleasing them.

Like, let me just make you happy because if I can make you happy, then you'll love me and I'll have to be worthy in your sight. And it's like, no, you are worthy as a daughter of God no matter what.

And you're worthy to just do what he says and not try to listen to everyone else and feel like you have to strive all the time. Just live. Live in the moment we don't get tomorrow promised.

So live for right now. And what makes you come alive and what helps you bring glory to God in this moment, not what pleases the neighbor next to you or your husband or your kids even or your parents.

No, what pleases God and what pleases Him is when we are giving glory to Him through the way that He made us. Right. I think it's really hard to unwind all of that.

Because we get so caught up in the people pleasing and it's hard to make that discernment between how do I honor love, respect my husband? How do I honor love, respect my parents?

How do I take care of love my children and not fall into that trap? Not fall into that striving and finding my identity in doing all of those things. So what do you coach people in?

Because those are all good things, right? All the people around us, it is a fine line to walk between loving and honoring and respecting and serving as opposed to finding your identity in those things.

I mean, being a nurse is a very reputable profession. You are caring for people. You're putting your life on the line every day. You're putting your needs aside.

And so I was like, I loved taking that on as my identity. And I love taking that on and saying, I am a nurse so proudly, even with all the hard days and the burnout, and I didn't I felt like I was more worthy because I was that and that people would like me more or you know think more of me and when I put it on the back burner that was really hard and it took a whole year literally a whole year of sitting in quiet times with God and asking him well who am I if I'm not a nurse if someone asked me today or tomorrow hey what do you do who are you you know tell me about yourself and I can't say I'm a nurse what do I say like and I don't want to say anything else I want to say that

and he had to like break that in me and say no I made you for so much more and if I made you If you are defined as a nurse, then that means that couldn't be taken away.

But it can be taken away. You could have not even passed boards. You could have, whenever you don't have a job, doesn't mean, in the profession, doesn't mean that your identity is taken, right?

So I feel like we put on these identities as roles or our roles as identity, and that's flipped. our role as a mom, our role as a wife, our role as whatever profession you have is not your identity.

It is your, like you have skills and gifts and abilities and you were created to live those out and sometimes those professions make the most sense to live those out but it's not your true kingdom identity how God made you.

Your brain runs the show so don't let toxins run it ragged.

Recognizing Burnout Signs

God designed our bodies to heal when we remove the interference and zeo charge from zeolite labs helps me do just that this detox magnet targets heavy metals, mold, and other toxins while sparing your essential minerals.

It is clean, third-party tested, and so easy to use. So I want you to take back your brain today with ZeoCharge. Get it now at zeolitelabs.com. That is Z-E-O-L-I-T-E labs.

What he made you in and how he made you can't be taken away. He's the only one that gives and takes, right? Like he gives it to us. He created us. So then he's the creator.

He gets to say, what the creation does and who the creation is. It's like a piece of art. You're looking at it and you're like, what did the artist mean by that paint swiper?

What did the artist mean? And it's like, you have to ask the artist. You can't come up with your own identity and be like, I'm this and wear a mask. That's where people get in and try to be other people and wear a mask.

And it's like, no, you have to go to the creator and say, who am I? And then a lot of it, that's hard to do. You have to hear God's voice as a stepping stone to even get to that point of asking God, who am I?

First, you have to hear God's voice. And so what I really start people with is really looking at their values. What do you value? There's a lot of values that we have and like and want and desire, but what ones are true to your core?

And when they're not there, you feel out of alignment. So because I was saying hospital in hospital nursing did not feel so aligned with me because One of my values, well, I have several, but the one I couldn't practice them, I couldn't live in them in the hospital setting because I cared so much for the spirituality and for the peace of my patients.

And when you are just pushing pills and taking one order to the next. And I just felt unaligned to my values and my ultimate, my identity. But so I help people come to these values.

What do you, if you don't live in that and you're not, you don't be that, we're not human doings or human beings. If you don't be that value, then you feel something's off.

You're not living in freedom. You're living in conflict. You're striving, you're pushing, you're producing, you're stressing out to try to come to in alignment with that value, right?

Does that make sense? Oh, yeah. Totally. Totally. So how do we even get to the point where you can assess that? Do you know what I mean? Let's go from like the burnout signs.

So what are some signs, typical signs of burnout? Because I know me as a woman and I deal with, you know,

women all day long. We ignore those things or we say, oh, you know, that's really common.

That's what everybody has. You know, I just have to push through it. How can you get real and raw and say, no, this is a sign of burnout? Yeah. there's a lot of signs of burnout.

And I feel like if you experience even just several, a couple of them, then you're headed that way. So what I, what I love is the, is the Yerkes Dotson law.

And this is a stress curve. And so at the bottom of the stress curve, you are not really doing much of life. You're laying there, maybe breathing. You have no stress in your body.

Stress is a good thing, right? Our body reacts. It's a physiological response to life. And so when you go up the curve, your organ systems are firing.

Everything's working properly. It's doing what it should do. And you actually get to the top of this curve, this mountain, and it's optimal stress. This is your, this is your biggest win.

This is you crossing the finish line. This is, you know, you are on a mental high of life. You just did the big thing, the big project and you are so, you had the stressor in all the good ways and your nervous system is handling it at the proper threshold that you can handle.

right after that optimal level is fatigue. And if we don't let our body come to a place of equilibrium and like switch over into our parasympathetic nervous system and go back and forth and don't rest, then we end our fatigue.

Well, we all know the down slope is a lot faster than the up slope. Climbing the mountain is harder and takes longer, but to go down, you just slide on down.

So right after fatigue is exhaustion, then anxiety and anger, and you get to burn out before you know it. And so if we do not build in these rhythms of rest and restoration with letting our body get into our parasympathetic nervous system and turn off our fight or flight and come to a place of, yeah, literally restoring ourselves back to their proper function, then we are going to be in burnout before we know it.

And so the fatigue sign, just the decision fatigue, the mental fatigue, compassion fatigue is a big one for healthcare professionals. When you feel that fatigue and the fatigue means like rest doesn't take like a sleep, a night's sleep doesn't take care of it, right?

Even sometimes a vacation doesn't take care of it. Sometimes it makes it worse. Yes, yes. And sometimes you come back and you're like, I still feel tired.

Well, that means it's fatigue. It's not you're tired or you need a nap. And then this exhaustion that we feel, there's so many different types of exhaustion.

There's emotional exhaustion. Just when we literally feel that we cannot rest. When we can't regulate our emotions, that's emotional exhaustion. Our emotions don't know how to respond properly or appropriately to certain things.

We snap at our kids because they threw their socks on the floor, which I've done. I've done this, okay? Me too. It's okay. It's okay. Socks are my nemesis.

I hate socks. But when I react to them in a yelling manner or like scold my child for it over and over, that's inappropriate. That's not the right emotional response to that stressor.

Right. We know, okay, this is a sign. I need some sleep. So we have to be aware of our emotions. We have to be aware of our thoughts and what's driving those emotions and our actions.

And when we can tap in, I think that's one of the big problems is we're just not reflective and aware of what's going

on inside of our body. And so we're like, Oh, I have this other ailment and I don't feel good again and I have another headache and I can't sleep at night and we don't say, oh, this is probably a sign of stress and burnout.

And I need to have a full makeover of my holistic body because I am in burnout.

Decision Fatigue and Practical Boundaries

And yeah, so there's so many signs, but those are a few. Yeah. Those are good ones because they're like all around us. If all of us stop and think, we'll be like, oh yeah, I felt that way six months ago, or maybe I feel this way now.

Sleep is so huge. Just that overwhelming fatigue. I love how you mentioned decision fatigue. Because there are times where I'm just like, I can't make one more decision.

I just can't because I don't want to. I want somebody else to just fix it and deal with it. I don't want to pick up another thing in the house. You know, like all of those little things when you're feeling that way, that is definitely a huge sign of you're on your way to burnout or you already are.

In that burnout mode. Yeah. Yeah. Decision fatigue is so big. And I actually just did an episode on this because I had clients coming to me. a lot of their complaint was clutter.

They're like, I just need to organize my home and my things. And then I feel like I'd have more peace. Like their complaint is overwhelmed. And then they relate it to the clutter.

And I'm like, this is all backwards. What's going on is you have decision fatigue and all the clutter, every single item is an unmade decision. Right.

I mean, I'm looking at my room right now and I have it in this room. You have some unmade decisions, is that what you're saying? I have some unmade decisions and if I don't…

Me too. If I don't handle it, it will get to an overwhelming. I said this too, everyone has their own threshold for that. So some people, they can only handle a few decisions and like, you know, bigger decisions.

And then they are completely overwhelmed and they can't focus on anything else. They can't think about anything else. Like, you know, those people in your life where you're like, It's not a hard decision, just do this or that.

But some people, like our kids, like my daughters, their biggest decision is what I'm going to wear today. And it stresses them out. But for me, I'm like, just put the clothes on that are most comfortable and go.

Like it's not a hard decision. But, and then as I mean, again, like when we're adults and professionals, we have big decisions that have lots of consequences and that weighs on us.

What I love this quote and I don't know who said it, but I claim it. No, I don't. I just don't know who to give respect to, but it's decisions can be made in the moment when devotion is made in advance.

So that's why I love to go through values with my clients because when you know who and what you're devoted to, the values you're devoted to, then when you have a decision to be made, you know the the decision to go with, and once you do, the stress goes with it.

Like, am I gonna do, am I gonna say yes or no, or maybe you make that decision and then it's done, and then you have more room in your brain for another decision.

But when we have all these decisions, I don't know what I'm gonna do, I don't know what I'm gonna say, I don't know if I'm gonna do this or that, and it just piles up, we have all these unmade, there's no other decisions that can fit in there.

And so when you know, one of your decisions is peace, or one of your values is peace, and you come to a decision to make, and you're like, oh, this is a hard decision, I'm not sure.

Well, yeah, there's gonna be contemplation, there's gonna be prayer, there's gonna be looking at some scripture, there's gonna be talking to some wise counsel.

But at the end of it, which is the most, if you chose that, you are being a person of peace, because that's a value to your identity. So like, would it be yes?

Or if you said no, would that be living in peace for you, your identity. And so you really have to look at the values that you're devoted to in life and in your relationships and in your work to help you.

And then once you have those down, then it makes decisions so much easier. Yeah, absolutely. And it's just taking it piece by piece, right? Just eat the elephant one bite at a time.

Yes. Yes. I mean, yeah, obviously we look at the whole big picture and we can get overwhelmed, but it's like, what's the first step that we can take and what's the first decision that we can make?

That's the easiest. Let's do that and get that off the plate and then yeah, move forward. Yeah. I love it. These are so helpful. because I think burnout is really real and it's an epidemic.

It's an epidemic in our society, unfortunately.

Healing Steps and Finding Purpose

If there are three things that you would tell everyone listening to help them either avoid burnout, work through burnout to get to their true identity in Christ, what would they be?

I would say number one would be to give… I mean, I don't know how I got through my burnout without God. So I would say to give your burdens to God.

And I love to do a brain dump. And so literally every decision that's stressing you out every, cause we just talked about it. Everything that's there is building up to a point of stress.

And so putting it all out, even if you don't think it's a stressful decision, like I have an appointment tomorrow, still put it down, but every little thing that's in your brain on the paper and then ask God, what do I need to know about this?

I just did this last week. I was in a really crazy week and it was just the weirdest things, a lot of events and I was overwhelmed. And I, so I practice this often and I went to God and I said, I bullet pointed, right?

All the things, just bullet points, put them all down. And then what do I need to know? And then what do I need to do? He's only going to give us what we can handle.

And back to my burnout story, when he told me four things, it was basically the Martha, Martha prayer. She was in real life with Jesus, but I was in a prayer.

But he was like, Martha, Martha, there's only a few things needed in life. Indeed, only one. few things are necessary and indeed only one. That's what God told me.

You need to first put this relationship first with me and then the other things were, you know, taking care of my body, my marriage, and my relationships with others.

So that's what I would say. Go to God and say, what do I need to know right now for this day, for this moment, and then what do I need to do? And He's only going to give you what you what he knows you can handle.

He only gives us what we can handle. No, he's going to equip us with courage and confidence and all the things of him, the strength to get through a lot of things that we don't think we can handle.

But when we do it with him, we can get through it. So God, what do I need to know right now? What do I need to do? we're going to climb up that stress curve out of burnout, step by step.

Like you were just saying, one little bite of the elephant at a time. We're not going to leap back up to optimal stress. We're actually going to support our nervous system in a way that it's going to be sustainable.

And so if we like, you know, just our nervous system isn't used to it. And so it's going to react in fear and fear is actually It's comfortable. It's what we like.

It's familiar. And we like to stay there. And we have these fears because they feel safe. And actually going against them and having courage is really scary.

So every step out of this burnout is going to feel scary, but it's going to get you back to this place of healing and where your nervous system feels safe eventually, because that's how it was made to.

So yeah, we're going to take them step by step by literally knowing your values one decision at a time, processing your identity, again, learning how to hear God's voice, and then asking Him who I am.

Who am I? How did you make me? What do you have for me? And that's where you find your purpose. And when you have all of that and you're aligned in that, you have freedom, you have peace.

I was living under this perfectionism and this shy, actually, I didn't even talk about that, but shy label, and all these things for so many years. And until I came out of them and realized my identity was actually to be strong and courageous and to be a peaceful spokesperson is what God called me.

I couldn't live in my identity. I couldn't live in my purpose. I couldn't have You know this, I was always going to live in this stressful state because I wasn't even living in my right purpose.

I was trying to be someone else, do something else. But when you live in your identity, peaceful spokesperson, okay, that is terrifying. I do not like to speak.

And so I was like, no, no, no. The fear was like, no, no, no. But actually the fear goes exactly against your identity. So when you know the fear, what's the fear?

Speaking out, using my voice. having eyes on me, okay, then that means that signals to your identity. So go after that. So yeah, those are some things I would say.

I don't know if that was three, but. It was. You did fantastic. I love them. Yeah. This has been such a great conversation, Shan. I really, really appreciate you.

Thank you so much for being on today. Where can our listeners find you? Yes, thank you. Yeah, Holistic Moms is my podcast, Holistic Nurse, probably, because this in the new year will be Holistic Nurse.

And I'm on socials at TheShanright.

Where to Find Shan and Closing Remarks

So you can find me on Instagram, Facebook. I love to actually talking about stress and all these things. And you had mentioned before, like not even really knowing that were in this place of burnout.

And so I actually provide a complimentary stress assessment because I think that's so true. Again, I didn't know for years and years that I was in burnout when I was in nursing.

I did not even know. And so, I do a complementary stress assessment where we really look at your stressors of life and it even points to some physiological symptoms and things that can come up pretty soon if you don't get it taken care of, you don't come out of burnout.

And so, yeah, that's complementary. Would love to do that with any listener who is just wanting to get their stress under control and find the next steps that are going to lead them to healing.

I love it. Awesome. Well, everybody, make sure you like, subscribe and share this episode because I know you know somebody. If it's not you, it's got to be somebody else that you know that has stress and who needs to hear this information.

So thank you all for listening. Thank you, Shan, for being with me and God bless each and every one of you. We'll see you in the next episode. Thanks for listening to Take Back My Brain.

If today's episode helped you connect with hope or direction, I want you to follow the show, leave us a review, and share it with someone who needs it.

And if you're ready to start your own healing journey, explore our courses and our coaching programs at lorihammer.com backslash store. So until next time, remember, you cannot medicate away a nutrient deficiency and healing your brain isn't just possible, it's Powerful.