

Lawyered Unplugged Ep 5 (Bonus Episode Preview)

Lawyer Happiness ft. Paul Karvanis

Episode Transcript

[00:02 HUSEIN: Hello, and welcome to another installment of Lawyered Unplugged, the exclusive podcast series for members of the Lawyered Patreon Community. And on this special episode, we'll be speaking about lawyer happiness, with Paul Karvanis, who is a coach and researcher about this exact topic. And we'll be talking about some of the trends that he's identified that separate happy lawyers from miserable lawyers, as well as a practical draft model for lawyer happiness.

[00:29] And you'll also get to hear Paul conduct a live coaching session with me. We will discuss balancing multiple priorities and some unique takeaways in terms of time management. So, whether you're an aspiring law student, or senior lawyer, or somewhere in between, I think you're going to be pretty happy with this episode. So, stick around, this is Lawyered Unplugged.

[01:03] Hello, hello, its Husein here, I hope you're all keeping well. The interview you're about to hear in a moment is part of a preview from one of our latest bonus episodes, from our series called Lawyered Unplugged, as you may know. The regular episodes throughout the year are **[inaudible 01:23]** episodes about different areas of law are free, and will always be free.

[01:27] And we've also launched a side crowdfunding campaign to improve the overall quality and accessibility of this podcast. So, you know, the show is about decluttering the law, and the idea is that with more resources, we can reach more people in more creative ways. So, if something you're **[inaudible 01:41]** in exchange for a couple of dollars a month, you can become part of our Patreon community and we receive a bunch of rewards, including shout outs on air, earlier access to content a couple of days before the official launch date.

[02:00] And one of the other rewards is access to these bonus episodes. Now, we've done a number of the bonus episodes so far, I think this is about the fifth one that's launched. We break them up throughout the year, and listeners find that compared to our regular standard episodes, these bonus ones are a bit more practical, a bit more loose, and free flowing. And they're based on this theme of decluttering the law. So, some of the ones we've done so far have been about building community, we did a really impactful one about mental health. Last year, we've gotten a bunch of them coming through the pike as well. And you can learn about what those are on our website, if you're interested.

[02:44] And so, this audio file you're going to hear is a limited preview of the overall episode, and if you want to hear the whole episode, which is about 90 minutes or so, you can check that out on our crowdfunding website, which is www.lawyeredpodcast.com/patreon. That's www.lawyeredpodcast.com/patreon, to find out how to do that and get more information.

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[03:08] One of the particular differences between this episode and the full episode is, in the full episode, you'll get to hear our guests, Paul Karvanis, do an actual live coaching session with me, as I guess his client in a sense. And in that discussion, we go pretty deep, and we talk particularly about my own time management, some of the challenges that I find, and some of the strategies that I've been trying to implement. And yeah, it's all based on this theme of happiness, and I've got to say, it's a pretty vulnerable conversation, so much so that I actually went back and forth, and back and forth again, about whether I actually wanted to publish it for anyone's consumption.

[03:56] But I really do think it is that valuable, that other people will get value from it. There's a lot of tactical suggestions. So, even if you're someone that's not me, I'm going to guess that you have your own struggles, with priorities, whether it's work, family, friends, community, your pet, whatever it is, or whatever they are. And so, I hope you get some value from that, if that's something you're interested in hearing. And with that, I hope you enjoy this preview over our interview with Paul Karvanis

[04:34] For this bonus episode, I'm very happy to introduce Paul Karvanis. Paul is a life coach and corporate lawyer, and is trained as a coach with the Coactive Training Institute, and is accredited with the International Coach Federation as an associate certified coach. Paul has been coaching for over 4 years and runs Leader Rising, and he does individual coaching, group masterminds, has a blog and podcast.

[05:00] Also, and particularly relevant to our discussion today, Paul is working on a book called *The Happy Lawyer*, where he's interviewed over 85 lawyers, including yours truly, and has pulled out the major patterns among happy lawyers and miserable lawyers. And he's working on a protocol that will make us happier. He was called to the bar in 2010, and has worked on a Bay Street in the private sector and at an international retailer. And in the public sector, at a crown agency. And actually, as of the date of this recording, which is ultimate August, yesterday was his last day as a lawyer. So, Paul, thanks for joining us on the show today.

[05:38] PAUL: Thank you for having me.

[05:39] HUSEIN: We have a lot to get into, but I just want to get your thoughts, as I mentioned, as of today, you are no longer practicing as a lawyer. So, I know it's very early days, how does that feel? What's going through your head right now?

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[05:55] PAUL: It feels all over the feels, like it feels awesome, it feels scary. I feel sad to have left my colleagues behind. I feel a bit vulnerable, happy, courageous, but if I could sum it all up in one word, honestly, I feel alive, and that's pretty awesome.

[06:19] HUSEIN: And I mean, you must have a really unique take on this, given all this research that you've been doing over the last a while or so. So, yeah, we're listening to get your thoughts on your findings and also how that's impacted you personally, because there must have been an interesting dialogue, going from one to the other. I think maybe the first place to start is to talk about this “lawyer happiness” journey that you've been on, in terms of your research, and your findings. So, could you start by telling us a little bit about what was the starting point that even got you onto this whole track of making this something that you're passionate about, learning it?

[07:02] PAUL: I don't know if you've ever heard the expression, “Your mess is your message.” But this very much was my mess. I was called 12 years ago. I've been a lawyer for quite a bit of time now. And I've been miserable for quite a bit of that time, and so, I wanted to focus on actually being happier for myself. I got into this because I needed to, because I wasn't happy where I was, and I wasn't content with being unhappy. Like both of my parents are lawyers, and I went to law school because it was my second choice, because I didn't know what my first choice was. But I grew up on the belief that if I loved what I did, I would never work another day.

[07:56] So, here I am, I didn't know what I loved, so, I went to law school. And I found myself working all the time, and always feeling like work, and never being in this space where it didn't feel like work. And I was like, “This doesn't feel right, this isn't right, this isn't right for me, maybe I can fix it.” So, I tried to fix it for myself first, and that led me on a years long chase/journey to where I am now.

[08:25] HUSEIN: And tell us a little bit about that. You mentioned like you tried to fix it for yourself first, so are you comfortable telling me a little bit about what that entailed?

[08:32] PAUL: Yeah, I started at one of the big firms in Toronto, on Bay Street. Then I moved in-house, in the private sector at a retailer. And then I moved in-house at a government agency, just each time, trying to say like, okay, there are a few things I don't like about this, maybe I can change the circumstances, so that I can be happy. And things got better, certainly, like when you've got a better work-life balance—sorry, when I have a better work life balance, and I am able to focus on the things that I'm passionate about, it makes me more satisfied in life. So,

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things got better, but they weren't better enough, they weren't better to what I wanted them to be.

[09:17] HUSEIN: Right. And so, did you feel like it was a matter of location for you, like maybe I'm at the wrong place, and if I'm at somewhere else, or a different office, or different department, things could be different?

[09:29] PAUL: Yeah, I mean, I certainly had that feeling, and I don't know how correct it was, right? Like I tried to chase that down, and to solve for that variable. And I've worked with great people overall in all three places. And yet still, it wasn't what I wanted, which is actually something we'll probably get into a little bit later, is like, what are our expectations for our lives? And it's clear to me that mine have always been high, very high.

[10:03] HUSEIN: For sure, and I mean, I can't speak for everyone, but I think it's a very relatable topic. Because I think a lot of people go into law school thinking that the profession will be one thing. And then their first year of article, it changes, like very quickly, and then even during that period, there are ebbs and flows and different directions entirely. So, tell us a little bit about— so you went from, trying to fix it for yourself, and then at some point it became this whole bigger exercise. So, you can tell us, Paul, about, what is your...If you were to describe your methodology, in terms of how you've been doing all this research, what does it look like?

[10:44] PAUL: So, it starts with interviews, right? I have my own personal experience, I have the experience of all of the people I've coached, which, probably were about half lawyers, especially in the early days, although it's definitely skewed more towards lawyers as time has gone on. And I wanted more, I wanted more data, I wanted more inputs, because I have a belief that we can be happier. Maybe we're not all going to be super happy, but we collectively can be happier, this profession collectively doesn't need to be so miserable, and I believe that truly.

[11:23] So, which actually, I guess reflects also my belief for myself, like, I did not need to be so miserable. I was in a weird sweet spot though, where I believed, one, that I could be happier, believed, two, that I was responsible for it, and believed, three, that I was responsible for where I was. And so it was a weird mix of feeling like I was capable and therefore, the blame was on me, but maybe not feeling capable enough, or not knowing the right way to be able to walk forward and actually move the needle and make a difference and make me happier.

[12:00] HUSEIN: Right. And having that awareness is a big part of it as well, like knowing that you haven't got what you're looking for is a big part of advancing the research, I imagine.

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[12:08] PAUL: Huge, huge, especially personally, right? But I have found that self-awareness is actually a critical component. The methodology from like a quick bird's eye view is, one, it starts with interviewing people. I interviewed happy lawyers, I interviewed miserable lawyers, I interviewed all sorts of lawyers in between. A few of them were not practicing anymore, they had left practice, but the vast majority were still practicing.

[12:36] HUSEIN: Again, I've been part of at least one of the interviews, but when you're interviewing them, what kind of things are you asking?

[13:42] PAUL: I'm asking, I've got four questions that I ask everybody. I don't need to repeat them verbatim here, but the bottom line is, the first one goes to what they want for themselves over the next year, like what's their dream come true future? What are they really looking for in their life? The second question is, what's going? The third question is what's not going well? And the fourth question is a bit of a fishing question, based on a hunch of mine, where I've always had a passion for the idea of having passions. And maybe it's because of that quote, "Find something you're passionate about, never work another day." So, I have some real curiosity around passions, and so, the fourth and last question is just a fishing expedition around people's passions, and their allocation of resources.

[13:31] I am really interested in the practical application. Like, I love talking theory, but only insofar as its practical. So, I didn't want to just ask a whole bunch of random questions and then figure out how things worked, if I couldn't also figure out how we could make things better. Because that's my true interest, is personal transformation, is moving the dial. And I think it's one of the reasons we talk so much about the big things, and not just the day to day, because I try and focus in on the things that will move the dial. Sometimes that's day-to-day things, but oftentimes, it broader, how you approach your life.

[14:11] HUSEIN: Okay so, methodologists. So, you do these interviews, and then what else happens as part of your work on this?

[14:19] PAUL: Well, I make a whole bunch of notes, and then later I go back, I go back over them. And I look for patterns among the conversations I've had. And then I try to pull out the patterns. And then just from the bird's eye view, I pull out the patterns, and then I take that to try and create a model, or a protocol, which says, "Hey, try doing these things, try to stop doing these other things, and maybe try thinking about these things a certain way, and you'll become happier. Maybe not happy, or maybe not right away, but it will move the needle for you."

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[14:57] And that was the plan. And I know as well that I'm not perfect, and nothing I can do, or frankly, any of us can do is perfect. And so, this model is going to be good, because I have faith in myself, and the people I was talking to, and the connection I made with them while I talked. But I want to test it, and I want to test the model, I want to iterate it, and in fact, I already have something I think I'm going to change about the draft model, that I haven't written or posted about yet. But as I've been continuing to do interviews, and continuing to coach people and work with people, I've looked at this, and thought like, oh, this is missing, like this actually is as important as some of the other things that I have.

[15:36] **HUSEIN:** So, let's talk about that. So, you mentioned that as part of your work, you are looking for patterns, and I know you've written a little bit about what some of these are. Why don't we start by you telling us about some of the more interesting patterns that you uncovered, that maybe surprised you as you were putting them together.

[15:58] **PAUL:** The most surprising—and it's funny, I wasn't planning to start with this pattern, but certainly the ones that surprised me the most was self-awareness. All of the happy lawyers were at least somewhat self-aware, like, I would say they ranged from being extremely self-aware at the high end, to at least being probably more self-aware than average on the low end.

[16:23] **HUSEIN:** And when you say self-awareness, what do you mean specifically?

[16:27] **PAUL:** I mean being aware of yourself, your values, your gifts, whether things are in alignment, what's really going on, your emotions, your thoughts. So many of us operate on autopilot, and self-awareness is seeing the autopilot in action, and understanding what's happening, even if you don't actually change it. I found that surprising. I guess I would've thought that people could luck into it. I would've thought that there would be a few people who were not self-aware, who would've been happy, because they would've just lucked into being happy, like everything else fell into place. I haven't found that, I'm not saying it doesn't exist, I'm just saying I haven't found it yet.

[17:14] My theory for why I haven't found it is because things change, man, life changes, we change. And what works for us now may not work for us in 10 years, it may not even work for us next year. And so, the people who look into being happy may not stay there if they don't have the self-awareness to adapt as their life changes. Anyway, that's my working theory, but we'll see, as we keep going.

[17:44] **HUSEIN:** For sure, and I imagine that people's degree of self-awareness will change throughout their lives and throughout their career, depending on what happens.

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[17:53] **PAUL:** I think anecdotally, my experience is that most of us get more self-aware with time, rather than less, because it's something you build on, and it accretes. Or maybe doesn't accrete at times, but presumably it doesn't really wear down, and wear out.

[18:10] **HUSEIN:** What are some of the more interesting patterns that you uncovered?

[18:25] **PAUL:** I'll talk about the biggest one.

[18:17] **HUSEIN:** Sure.

[18:18] **PAUL:** Because every single happy lawyer talked about it as something that was working for them, was the autonomy they had in their lives, and especially in their work. They could decide when they wanted to work, they could decide where they wanted to work, if something came up, they could move their schedule around, they could go to the gym in the middle of the day, if they wanted to. They could leave early to pick up their kids and log on later, like this control over your schedule, this schedule autonomy, was massive, like what a massive correlation between the happy lawyers and this one aspect of their lives? So much so that I don't think it's fully correlative, I think that in fact, having the control lets us drive some of the things in our life that actually make us happy.

[19:06] **HUSEIN:** So, you gave some examples in terms of what that control. Looks like, I hate to bring back to the pandemic every so often, but a lot of people have been saying, "Oh, well, the pandemic gives me all this flexibility." Do you think that this causation or correlation you've identified about autonomy would've been true before the pandemic?

[19:28] **PAUL:** You can't see, because you can't see my video, I'm nodding my head. I believe so, yeah, I don't see why it would've changed. I think if anything, the pandemic, all of a sudden gave us more autonomy in a way, as we struggled to try and mesh our life and our work in a new way, and we struggled to do it on mass. So, I think that in a way that moved this conversation up a little bit, in terms of our collective awareness. But I suspect that had I been doing these interviews before the pandemic, I would've seen the same thing. Obviously, I don't know, because I didn't.

[20:09] **HUSEIN:** No, of course. I'm curious, it's all well and good for people at the top of the organizational hierarchy to say, oh, I have all this autonomy, you listen, I run this company, I'm a partner here, people report to me. Have you uncovered lawyers who have autonomy, when they're maybe at a more junior level, when they're reporting to people above, and have traditionally less control over their work?

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[20:35] PAUL: Yeah, I mean, I'll say I was one of them, I wasn't necessarily one at the firm, although I do think my firm didn't have a ton of like the FaceTime component, so, if I wanted to disappear in the middle of the day, I did. Lawyers in my experience, tend to talk again about saying, "Look, as long as you get your work done, I don't really care when and where you do it." And through the circles I've traveled, that's been largely true. I've heard stories about other people where they say that, but you know, they still expect your bum to be in your seat from X time to Y time. But that wasn't the case with me.

[21:08] So, I always had some schedule autonomy, and certainly the more time went on, the more I took for myself. I don't want to say I was given—I was in a way, but it's a lot easier to act that way, and then see how it goes. And this hasn't really stemmed from my research, this is just more from my personal experience. But when you start working at a new place, you get a sense whether quickly or slowly, for the decision makers in the group, who you really need to jump for when they say jump, when you really need to get things done by, what can afford to wait, right? Because the reality is, we can't do everything.

[21:51] I do think that there's an incredible link between autonomy and excellence, and I'm going to sort of foreshadow a little bit later, we'll probably talk about the draft model that I've been creating for happiness. Excellence is a piece in there, for two reasons, one, I think that when we pursue excellence, it is in and of itself satisfying to excel at something. The process of getting to excellence is growth, which is in and of itself satisfying to us, at least to the people that I work.

[22:29] HUSEIN: If this is one of the primary attributes that you found, autonomy, are there other things that lawyers can do in particular to carve out more autonomy in order to, by extension, get more happiness? Because what I've heard you say, and it makes sense to me, is that the more investment you have into excellence, you will be able to generate more autonomy from that.

[22:58] PAUL: I will walk you through a decision that I made a little while ago. So, I went part-time part way through my last role. So, for the first, I can't remember, two or three years, I worked full time. And then for the back half of my time there, I worked part-time. And I went to working three days a week, so, I went to working 60% time. And when I did that, I managed to keep up with 90% of the work or so. And I went to 60% of the time, but just kept up most of the work. And I did that by just becoming more efficient and better at what I was doing. And I did that in part, by setting stricter boundaries around myself when I was doing work.

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[23:53] And realizing too that yes, sometimes you are taking a risk, like one of the things I love to do is turn off my emails. It seems like all law firms use Outlook. Outlook has a button, where you stop your connection and no emails get sent out, no emails get received. And then you can just do your work in peace without worrying about all of the emails that are coming in. And like yeah, you might piss someone off, but I weigh the two things separately. On the one hand, I might piss someone off because I am focusing and not responding as soon as they would like. On the other hand, I am delivering the quality of work that I need to do, that really is the basic prerequisite for me fulfilling the role.

[24:45] And that comes at the expense of this risk that someone is going to be unhappy with the time I'm taking to respond. And that's a tradeoff I will gladly take any day of the week. Because responding quickly doesn't matter if what you're responding with isn't good enough. When I was an article student, they told me people will usually forget if you're late, people will never forget if you're wrong. So, in other words, like quality first, and like ideally you have both, but remember, don't forget the order of precedence here.

[25:19] **HUSEIN:** These patterns are really interesting, and again, we'll put a link on our website, where people can read the full article, and I know that there's still more findings to be had. I'd love for you to tell us a bit more about the draft model that you created. And before we go into it, I know it's a very visual format, it will include a link on our website as well, and then they'll show us so people can look at this model, which might be a bit more easy to digest. But could you walk us through verbally what this model says and what it means?

[25:48] **PAUL:** For sure, and I'll start with talking about as well, how I came up with it, right? So, I was looking at the patterns, I'm like, "Great, I've got these patterns that happy lawyers have in common, I've got these patterns that unhappy lawyers have in common. What do I do with this?" I was not in substantial list, and then after a little bit, I realized that some of the patterns were actually opposites of each other. Like, the happy lawyers were generally all intentional, and the unhappy lawyers were generally all reactive. I'm like, "Oh, okay, wow! Look at this. So, here are two patterns that now show that they're opposite, maybe this is a good place to start."

[26:28] So, that was where I started. And put them together, and added a little magic, and came up with this model that I'm about to describe. The first thing to know about this model, so just imagine it's like a clock face for a second. And on the nine we have Self-Awareness, and then there's an arrow going up from nine all the way around the edge of the clock, down to the three. And on the three is Intentional Action. And then an arrow going around the other part of the clock, connecting Intentional Action to Self-Awareness.

[26:59] HUSEIN: So, it's like I cycle, going from one to the other, and the other to the other.

[26:03] PAUL: Exactly, and back again, and back again, and back again. You had it exactly on point, when you talk about a cycle. This is the most important part of the model, happiness is not a place that we get to, it's not like you've achieved it, you mark it on, you mark it off on a list. Happy is, seems to be, at least, a process, a continual living of your life. And this is how it goes, right? People who just have the action are just running around, doing all sorts of things, and hoping that what they're doing will make a difference in their life.

People who just have the awareness are stuck, because they have no action, they're not actually doing anything, they're just feeling stuck. And so really, it's the combination of the two of them. Yeah, you work on your self-awareness as little or as big as you want, and then you translate that into action, intentional action. And then in turn, you use that to generate more learnings, and you do it again.

[28:10] Now, this applies to everything, from "I'm a little unhappy now at work, I'm feeling frustrated over the last few weeks at work." Okay, why is that? "Oh, turns out, I feel like my boss has been leaving me out to dry, by asking me to do things, having specific expectations and communicating none of them." Okay, that's awareness, let's move into action. I'm going to schedule a meeting with my boss, to ask about expectations. What have I learned from that, right? And so, you can see how it ends up being a cycle of how we can apply it to everything in our life. And this is how life gets better.

[28:53] HUSEIN: Right, and it seems to almost, I said cycle before. I think it's also like a feedback loop, right? Like in terms of like the awareness informs your action, and the actions that you have informed your awareness. And you can't really have one without the other.

[29:08] PAUL: Mm-hmm. You're 100% right, it's a feedback loop. You can have one without the other, I just don't think it's helpful, right? Like you see people with awareness and no action, they're not doing anything, they're just feeling stuck. You see people with action and no awareness, they're buying all sorts of stuff, hoping that it's going to fill the hold inside of them. News flash, it usually doesn't.

[29:33] HUSEIN: Yes, yes. Okay, and I know that there's some other things in the middle of this model. So, what's happening there?

[29:37] PAUL: Yeah, so, in the middle of the clock, I've got three things in the model, and then a fourth I want to add. The three things are, excellence, self-compassion and alignment. And the

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fourth that I want to add is health. So, what these things are is, I call them the foci. So, basically you focus on them while you're going through your loop.

[30:04] HUSEIN: When you say foci, you mean like the plural of...

[30:06] PAUL: The plural of focus, yeah. I just really like the word.

[30:12] HUSEIN: Foci, look it up. Educate yourself.

[30:21] PAUL: These things I think are important, and these are the biggest levers for us to pull, to move the needle. If you improve your life in excellence or self-compassion, or alignment, or health, it's going to make a material difference. And so, when you're moving self-awareness to action, hey man, try focusing on these four points, and see what it's going to do.

[30:47] And then this entire clock sits inside a container with two things. One, community, and two, commitment. So, that's the model in its entirety, just briefly. We've already touched a little bit on why excellence is so important, right? There's growth, there is the inherent satisfaction in it, and there is the fact that it can give you the autonomy that you want. Self-compassion is incredibly important, I'd say it's a prerequisite, that people who aren't compassionate with themselves just drive themselves into the ground.

[31:25] HUSEIN: And what do you mean by, we talked a little bit about self-awareness early in this conversation, but what is self-compassion, and how does that compare?

[31:33] PAUL: It is essentially being compassionate with yourself. Like most of us know how to be compassionate with someone else, and we are not very good at being compassionate with our self. We expect too much, and then beat ourselves up when we don't get it. A lot of us, myself included, in the past, have loops, have things we say to ourselves, that if we said to our friends, they would stop being our friends. You're an idiot, how the beef did you think that that was okay? What were you thinking? Man, you're never going to amount to anything, what's wrong with you? That person who was casting shade at you yesterday, they were totally right. Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Man, if your friend spoke to you like that, you'd told him to take a hike, and that friendship wouldn't last. But yet, we seem to have this second standard for how we deal with our self.

[32:28] So, there's a lot that's tied up into self-compassion, there is shame, there is gratitude and trust, there's self-worth, there's imposter syndrome. Like, all of this stuff is linked with your

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relationship with yourself, which is ultimately the most important relationship you are going to have in your life.

[32:53] HUSEIN: And then what about the alignment piece?

[32:55] PAUL: So, alignment captures a lot of the things that most life coaches talk about, including me, especially through the early part of my year. So, we talk about like your gifts, your values, your priorities, your dreams even. Does your life, does your workplace align with who you really are? And with who you want to be?

[33:23] Like some of us think giving back is really important, and so, working in a place that just makes rich people richer, really bothers us. Others, really value problem solving, and so they love being given complex problems, and they wouldn't be happy in a job where they didn't have that. And other people love people, if they're not talking with people on a regular basis in their job, they're not happy, right? So, in a way, the alignment requires the self-awareness to know what it is in the first place, but it is ultimately who you are at your core, and who you want to be at your core?

[34:05] HUSEIN: And then you mentioned, and then I think the fourth new aspect was the health, and maybe obvious, but tell us a bit more about why that's part of the model.

[34:13] PAUL: Yeah, I didn't originally have it there, but then I talked with enough people where I saw health making the difference. Where there was an unhappy period, now they were happy. And the big deal was they started taking care of their body. This makes sense, right? Like there's a psychologist with a weekly newsletter who I love. He says your brain is part of your body. And so, he's like, "Your brain is part of your body. So, if you want your brain to function well, you're going to need your body to be functioning well," right?

[34:46] So, what does this mean? It means you get your sleep, you get your exercise, you eat in a way that makes your body feel good, right? Like, it's not rocket science, the stuff under the health category, but I do think it's a major lever to pull, if you're seeking to make yourself happier.

[35:05] HUSEIN: For sure, for sure. I'm sure we could talk about each of these at great length, but it's very interesting how you've consolidated these different factors. So, you mentioned from the outset that the intention of this is for it to be like a practical thing, like something, like some action. So, that said, I know this is in draft form, but do you think that this is something

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that if you give this to someone, a lawyer, that they can read it and just simply implement it immediately?

[35:36] PAUL: So, I think it's incredibly practical. I don't know that someone would just be able to take a look at the model, read it, and transform their lives. Maybe they can. My experience, like I was trained in a certain coaching school, in a coaching method, and they have their own model. And I actually found the model incredibly helpful, as I was coaching, especially as I was new, because I would just look back at it from time to time, and it would remind. Like the model itself is a reminder of all the things you need to do, as opposed to prescriptive steps of how to do it, right?

[36:15] So, I think that if people follow the path that the model represents, yeah, totally, it will make them happier and practically, and it will work, it's practical that way. I think in particular, how to approach it...There were two last parts of the model we didn't talk about, and that was the container that it sits in. So, there's community, and there's commitment. Commitment's easy to explain, like sometimes this is a hard process, and you want to stop, and the commitment is, you don't stop, you are committed to it, and you power through some of the hard times. Community is an incredibly important lever, and so by community, I mean the people around you, I mean your family, I mean your colleagues, I mean your tribe, I mean your squad, like your tight-knit group, right?

[37:12] All of this stuff matters. Jim Ron, I think his name is, he has a saying, "You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with." And while the math may be slightly off, the intent, I find is incredibly accurate. If you want to be more successful, you hang out with more successful people, if you want to be lazier, you hang out with lazier people. And so sometimes, just simply leveraging this community, and getting into a community that is full of the type of person that you want to be, can be incredibly.

[37:47] So, when we look at the practical applications of this, I think, and you know, these are some early thoughts, that probably working from outside to inside makes the most sense. The first thing to do is to lean into commitment and community, okay? Because this is going to be hard no matter what you're doing, it's easy to doubt yourself, it's easy to be like, "I'm really tired, I am just going to watch Netflix tonight." And leaning into commitment and community may be one of the easiest things you can do to get started.

[38:18] After that, so outside in, self-awareness and action. What's going on in my life? Or like, maybe you're deficient in self-awareness, so lean into that, what's going on? How am I feeling? When do I feel that way? What's the triggers? Or maybe you're doing a ton of self-awareness,

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and you're not doing any action. If that's the case, lean into action, it's more important that you do an action, than that the action is the right action. It's like, there's a bigger difference between, being stopped at a red light, and a split second after you start, when you're going one kilometer an hour, then there is between one kilometer and a hundred kilometers, because there's a state change, right? One is, the only difference is speed, and the other one, you are stuck, and then you are moving. That is the hardest...

[39:08] HUSEIN: The inertia.

[39:09] PAUL: Yeah, absolutely. And then as you're doing that, you get into the center things. And I was thinking about it a little bit before our call, what order would I lean into it, if I were just starting? I'd probably start with self-compassion honestly, because this journey is so hard if you're not being nice to yourself, it's hard enough as it is. And then I would move to health, because sometimes just getting a 20 minute walk a day, and a little bit of extra sleep matters an incredible deal. And then after that, I don't really know between alignment and excellence, it would probably depend on the person.

[39:44] HUSEIN: This model, you called the "Happy Lawyer Model." But I was curious about, do you think that this same model, that this model is specific to lawyers? Like, if you asked someone, different profession, whether they were a salesperson, or an engineer, or working in retail or whatever, are these concepts, would these concepts apply in different professions as well?

[40:12] PAUL: So, I don't think that it is specific only to lawyers, I believe it applies to other people. But I also don't believe its general, I believe that there are people that this doesn't apply to. I believe that there are people out there who are happy, who really just don't care about excellence, they don't care about it, and they're perfectly content in their lives. So, I don't think that this model works for them. I mean, they may still be happy if they were to start it, but it might not be necessary.

[40:41] But for the people I spoke to, and certainly for me, excellence matters man, like I want to be good at what I do. So, the idea is, yes, it applies to others, no, it doesn't apply to everybody. I think there are some parts of what I'm looking into that do apply specifically to lawyers, like, the billable hour and its effects on our mindset and on our lives. Like, the zero sum nature of litigation. Like, how corporate lawyers always need to be looking out for what could go wrong. Like I think there are some parts of what we do that are fairly unique to the profession of law. But certainly, one of the most common reactions I've gotten when I've been talking about my findings online is, I'm not a lawyer, and this applies to me too.

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1:27] HUSEIN: And what about the other way? And again, like there's as many lawyers as there are types of lawyers—and you mentioned like billable hours as being one attribute. But I was like, you know, that there's a lot of people who work in government, there's a lot of people who work in legal aid, or a bunch of other facets as well. And furthermore, I won't name names, but I can think of a few lawyers I know who may not prioritize excellence as part of their work or their identity, which doesn't mean that they're bad lawyers, but it's something that I imagine they might say. So, I was wondering, what would you say to that?

[42:10] PAUL: My gut tells me that they are out there, that there is that lawyer who doesn't care at all about excellence, who is happy. I haven't found that person yet, and in particular, when we talked about some of the other things that excellence gives you, including schedule autonomy. Like, I've certainly talked to lawyers who don't have any scheduled autonomy, where their schedule is given to them for them, where they have to do things at a certain time, where they need to spend a ton of extra energy making their life fit around this work schedule, rather than making work fit around their life. And so, do they have those extra energy reserves to spend on that? Maybe they do, and they still have enough left over to spend on all the extra things to be happy, I haven't found it yet. So, I think in theory, it certainly exists, but in practice, maybe it's a rare beast, maybe, I don't know.

[43:12] My second gut is that, hey, maybe this isn't, I already said it wasn't universal, maybe it's not even universal within the lawyers. And so, what type of lawyer is this applicable for? I mean, it's certainly applicable to lawyers like me. I don't know, I need to give that more thought. But it's applicable, I would say, to the vast majority, if not all of the lawyers who I spoke to, where they're either already doing this, or where doing it a bit more, would move the needle for them.

[43:50] HUSEIN: When we talk about happiness of lawyers, I think that there's some obvious reasons why lawyers themselves will be interested in a model like this of being happy. But curious, like based on your research or even just general. Are there any other societal or external benefits to having lawyers who are happy?

[44:09] PAUL: It's funny, what I hear you asking is, what's the business case?

[44:12] HUSEIN: Not just the business case, I mean, but you can answer in whatever way you think is correct.

[44:20] PAUL: Yeah. So, I think, first of all, just to highlight what you said there is, the first step is, yeah, it's better for the lawyer, right? They're now happier, and that's just a nicer state of

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being to be in. I also see other knock-on effects, other benefits, like, one, happiness is contagious, so, the people in the lawyers orbit are now generally better, right? Like you're the average of the five people you hang around with most. So, if one of those people changes in your life, or if you are the person that changes in someone else's life, that makes a difference.

[44:49] Part of being happy is often worrying less, and having less anxiety, part of being happy is the absence of some of these harder, more draining things. Not the total absence, we're going to worry, no matter what, we're going to be anxious no matter what. But it's about having a healthy relationship and fitting it in properly in your life. And when you have that healthy relationship with worry and anxiety, you are more productive, you do more work better, and you enjoy your work time more, and that allows you to enjoy your home time more.

[45:21] I think to the natural state of humans, but I believe that at our heart, people are good, and that when people feel right, they act right. And so, if we care more broadly about society, this is a great place to start, because people who feel like their needs are met, are way more likely, I believe, to try and help meet the needs of others. Whether that's donating money, whether that's donating time or expertise, whether that's taking on other initiatives.

[45:43] HUSEIN: In terms of a business case, I imagine that you're likely to, if you are an employer, you'll probably have less burned-out lawyers, if they are a bit happier, right?

[46:07] PAUL: Yeah, totally. And, you might have fewer people leaving, less turnover, which means less time bringing people on board and training them. It means not losing your lawyers just when they hit peak profitability. It means having the people be more profitable while they're there, because they're doing better work, actually, I guess that's not profitable, if you're billing by the hour, but at least, it's good for your reputation and more profitable over the long run, because it's going to continue to bring in good work.

[46:40] Another thing we said at the firm was the reward for good work is more work. So yeah, I think that's part of the business case for happiness. Once again, my mission here has been first for myself, to make myself happier, and then for the others around me, to be able to bring them up, lift them up, and leave this place better than I found it. And so, I think about the business case in terms of like the personal business case, as opposed to the organizational business case, though I suspect the organizational business case is also there.

[47:14] HUSEIN: I noticed when you talk about this whole happiness model, and think about employers. I noticed that money or salary is not featured in this model. Can you tell us a little bit about that absence?

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[47:27] PAUL: Yeah.

[47:31] HUSEIN: I think I know what you're going to say, but I'm curious to hear.

[47:33] PAUL: Yeah, I'm going to echo some study that was done some decades back, that found that more money actually does make you happier up to a point, and after that point, it does not make you any happier. At the time, I think the number was in the \$70,000 or \$80,000 range, who knows what that is now?

[47:52] HUSEIN: Yeah, inflation...

[47:53] PAUL: Yeah, exactly. Inflation's crazy these days!

[47:56] HUSEIN: Yeah.

[47:56] PAUL: But yeah, basically more money doesn't make you happier after a point. And there were quite a few of the happy lawyers who had made career decisions to earn less money in order to get more alignment with their gifts, with their growth, with their values, and passions, and priorities. Whether that was spending more time with family, or whether it was because they wanted to work in a different industry, or whether it was because they just loved the people they worked with, and they had a seat at the table, and they had responsibility, and just, yeah, they could be paid more elsewhere, but they'd be a cog in a machine, right? So, the tradeoff of any of these other things that matter to you for money is worth it after a point.

[48:44] HUSEIN: We've talked about your draft model, we talked about some of the patterns. If there was one thing that you would suggest a lawyer to start doing, let's say tomorrow, to start getting on this happiness track, what would it be?

[48:59] PAUL: If there was only one thing that I could say, it would probably be the same thing, like outside in, start with your community, look at the people around you, look at the people who are adding to your life, look at the people who are taking away from your life, and just try and adjust the mix. Like, you don't need to cut out toxic family members completely, you don't need to leave your work, but you can always adjust the mix and get a little more of someone who is a good influence on you, and a good, has a good effect on you, rather than the negative drains, the energy vampires, I like to call them.

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[49:34] HUSEIN: And so, what does that look like? I have my suspicions, but what does that look like in terms of like adjusting who these five people are, or whoever?

[49:43] PAUL: It depends on each of our specific situations, and maybe even what you find easiest, right? Because if you're not doing anything, it's possible you're stuck. And what we said before still applies, like, just start any change, it doesn't need to be the best change, just start.

[5:02] HUSEIN: Yeah, absolutely. And I mean, I've found this even short discussion, very helpful, but I think a lot of our listeners, everyone's got their own lives and priorities. But I think that a lot of the comments that you've raised, especially in the last 20 so minutes are really impactful and we'll get a lot of people thinking about their own schedules, and priorities, and not the underlying reasons for those as well.

[50:26] So, Paul, I want to thank you so much for taking the time to chat with us today about this whole theme of happiness, I think it's a lot of, it's an area that I think a lot of people talk about at a very superficial level, but it was very exciting to hear new research findings and implications, and I'm very excited to hear what's going to happen going forward in terms of your research, and I'm sure our listeners will as well. But yeah, I want to thank you again for your time, and look forward to staying in touch as well.

0:54] PAUL: Thank you, Husein, I really appreciate being here, and I really appreciate your questions and your insights and your own journey, man, because you're on this too, and I'm excited for you. It's always great to see a kindred spirit walk the path.

[51:10] HUSEIN: I feel the same way.

[51:16] And that's all we got for this episode preview of Lawyered Unplugged, thanks for listening. I hope you enjoy what you heard today, and if you want to hear the full episode, which is about 90 minutes or so, you can check out www.lawyeredpodcast.com/patreon, to learn how to do just that. Amongst other things, if you hear the full episode, you'll get to hear a real in-depth coaching session, which Paul conducted with me, which he did a deep dive into time management, and provided some really tackle advice to be more fulfilled and overall happier. And so, I think that'll be really applicable, whoever you are, especially if you have multiple projects on the go.

[51:55] And, of course, if you become a Patreon, you'll also be to hear all of our bonus episodes in terms of that archive. I've done a bunch now, in terms of content about community building and mental health, and the work of public sector law, and a bunch of other bonus centers that

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are still coming down the pike. And we also got a bunch more bonus awards that are available, and all these funds are being used to improve the show, to make it more accessible to more people. So, if you want to find out how to do that and join our exclusive crowdfunding group, you can do that at our website, which is the www.lawyerpodcast.com/patreon, again, that's www.lawyerpodcast.com/patreon.

[52:35] And our guest for today was Paul Karvanis, you can learn more about his ongoing work regarding lawyer happiness on his coaching website, which is www.leaderrising.com. And he always post a lot of insightful content on his LinkedIn page, so do yourself a favor, check that out as well.

[52:55] And of course, you can check out our website, which is lawyerpodcast.com. I'll also throw up the links to some of the more relevant websites that Paul has discussed on our episode, including the visual of his draft model of Lawyer Happiness. Our sound edit work was managed by Solomon Krause-Imlach, and our website is maintained by Steve Demelo. And on the up chance that you're not doing this already, do it as a favor, do yourself a favor by subscribing to this podcast for free on iTunes, or if you have a podcast app, and as always, remember to follow the show on Facebook, LinkedIn or on Twitter. And our Twitter handles at @lawyeredpodcast. We have a lot more episodes in content coming out in the next few months, so we hope you stay tuned and keep up, until then, keep it legal.