Undeniably Well Episode 1 Transcript:

Intro:

You are listening to the Undeniably Well podcast hosted by the University of Delaware's Employee Health and Wellbeing team. Keep listening to discover ways to be your best self each and every day.

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Welcome to episode one of the Undeniably Well podcast. On this episode, Beth Finkle, the director of Employee Health and Wellbeing is interviewing Anna Greenwald, founder and CEO of On the Goga, an organizational wellbeing company with a simple guiding principle, happy people do great things. Together, they discuss bringing well-being into conversations at work, especially as we navigate the new workplace in a post pandemic world, as well as tips on how to live in the present and be mindful and open about what your wellbeing needs may be. Without further ado, please enjoy this conversation between Beth and Anna.

And if you have any questions, concerns, or feedback. Please reach out to us through our wellbeing, inbox wellbeing@udel.edu.

Beth:

Welcome to the Undeniably Well podcast. We are so thrilled to have you. Anna joins us today as founder and CEO of On the Goga.

Anna:

Thank you so much for having me. I'm so excited to be here.

Beth:

You're one of our first guests and we have been in partnership with On the Goga for many years now. You have brought tremendous programming and value to the University of Delaware. So I was just really excited when your name came to the table and to really interview you this morning and talk a little bit about all the things, right? So we're going to talk about some mindfulness. We're going to talk about emotional wellbeing, um, but primarily situate, all of that in what is in front of us right now, which is returning to work and supporting our employees with a very, um, extreme, , environment with a lot of uncertainty, , and I guess my first question would be how are you supporting your employees in our current environment and context?

Anna:

Yeah, that's such a great question. I think, there's kind of two directions my mind goes when I think about this question. So one is my employees on my team. And one is the diverse kind of different styles
of employees that we work with, in the work that we do. So our employees on our team, we are now a fully remote team, and we were very much an in-person team before COVID. Remote was never something that we really were interested in because the work that we do is organizational development, organizational change, employee wellbeing, and such a big part of feeling connected to your work is that in-person interaction, right? And so that was something that we really prioritized for a long time.

And therefore our team was all in-person. So when COVID began and we needed to pivot, not only for our team, not being able to come into the office, but asking ourselves, how are we going to serve our clients? How are we going to help our clients and their employees stay well, build healthy, happy organizations and cultures amidst just total chaos. And what we found was that if we came back to our core value, our mission statement, which is to make the world a happier, healthier place, what it looked like for us was, alright, let's take all of this stuff that we were doing and make it accessible remotely. And what that did for our team is that it really expanded the scale at which we were able to operate.

And so, yes, we, you know, missed that being in person, getting to hang out with our clients and their employees, but we gained this ability to do more in a shorter period of time, reach farther across the globe. And so our internal team became fully remote and that at first was a big transition, but I feel very grateful to say that I think our team kind of relished in it.

In that we center employee wellbeing at the core of everything that we do. And one thing that's nice about being remote is that we're able as a team to create these policies of flexibility to say, Hey, if you want to take your dog out in the middle of the day, that's awesome. You want to take a nap? That's awesome. But here's how we communicate that on our calendars. And here's how we communicate that about that in our slack channels. And so for us, it's really about prioritizing flexibility. And encouraging people to take breaks because it's kind of this fallacy we have that, oh, we're home and that's more restful, when in fact we see not only in our team, but in the data of how people are working in this new world, that people are working more, right. So encouraging people to take rest, and then just making sure that we have really specific agreed upon ways to communicate with each other about what we're doing, where we are, what we need and making sure that we're all kind of just on the same page and have all the resources that we need.

So I think for us, it's just been adapting our culture to the new remote world and kind of leaning into all the awesome benefits of this. We were talking a little bit before we hit record about how On The Goga's team has expanded now across the country, which is amazing. We have all these new incredible team members.

The flip side to that is for our clients that are either going back into the office or going back to a hybrid model. It's really about listening to what, what is needed, what are your employees need? What is your leadership feel that they need and why do they feel that they need that? And then also what does the organization need and, and sitting with sometimes the fact that there's some conflict between those wants and needs, but the idea of having an open and candid dialogue, I think is the most important thing for organizations right now to build a culture and a new way of working, that's going to help people feel safe and trusted in the organization.
Beth:

I want to unpack that a little bit because you have hit on so many things, and key language that we're using with our managers at the University of Delaware and also our senior leaders as well. I think first and foremost, you are absolutely right. People seem to be really rallying around why flexible work is important, but I think what they're grappling with is how to move through this process and understanding that it really is about trying what works; clear, very super clear communication along the way; and checking in with your employees to see what needs to be changed. Um, so not only are you doing this with your team.

And it sounds like you all have a very iterative process where you're, you're checking in on one another, you reflecting on, you know, the wins, managing sort of the gaps and the barriers when things maybe aren't working so well. I know you're working on various time zones, but when you start this process with a company, where do you begin?

Anna:

Yeah, it's such a great question. I think, iterative is the core kind of piece to our approach. And I think that something, I just like to remind myself and remind our clients is that this huge disruption that we all just faced over the last, you know, over a year now it's been, has forced us to really address what has always been the reality, which is that everything is always changing, needs are always changing.

And so I think that people are like, okay, how do I go to remote and how do I get back? what we're experiencing is actually, how do I listen? How do I have resilience? How do I move through the next challenge? And I think that is the sign of a really healthy organization. Not, can you stick the landing, but can you get out there and practice?

I mean, the Olympics are going on right now. I see these gymnasts out there doing these incredible balance beam routines that make me like curl up in anxiety cause I'm so nervous, but they are not amazing because they stick the landing or they take a small step back, right. They're amazing because these athletes have gotten out there, their entire lives and practice and move through challenge. And I think that that is the key to a successful company culture. So when we start working with a client, we just sit down with leadership. We sit down with employees and we begin by listening. We just get a feel for what's going on. What, not only what are the practical policies and the ways you communicate and the meetings you have and the roles you have within your organization, but how are people feeling? Is there a difference between how people are feeling in leadership and how people are feeling on the team?

And once we collect this information, we come back to leadership and we say, all right, now the next point is to help you understand where this is. And chart a path forward, but our goal is not always to hit the exact goal we're going to set out today. Our goal is to try some things out, experiment, listen, learn, and iterate.

And when we can get organizations realizing that being in that flow is actually what it takes to become the best company culture, the strongest organization, that's where we really start to affect and see the highest level of change.
Beth:

One thing that I'm hearing you talk a lot about in your example is asking senior leaders to show up as vulnerable and understanding that they perhaps don't have it all figured out and that they need help getting to the destination with their teammates on board and as part of that process, but really as you know, a stakeholder in, in that regard. We talk a lot about transparent leadership. You had shared some sentiments along the way, but do you have any good examples of how leaders in other organizations maybe said something along the lines of, we don't have it all figured out, but this is what we're willing to invest in.

This is the risk that we're willing to take to get to the point that we need to be so that everyone has what they need to be successful and realizing that needs are very different person to person, team to team, and, and based on, on what it is that you do for a job. So I guess my question is, do you have any great examples of how leaders have been vulnerable and transparent in this process of supporting their employees?

Anna:

That's a great question. And I think it's one of the biggest challenge for leaders because leaders are human beings and human beings have a really hard time opening up to the idea that maybe, they don't have it all figured out. And so I think that one of the really interesting things about when an organization begins working with On the Goga is that they've taken the first step of acknowledging that either explicitly or implicitly by saying, we need help. We need expertise that we don't currently have on the team. And I think that, that is an important first step. The first step, especially if you are a leader who's hesitant to come out and say, I don't know exactly what to do, or if you're working with, or for a leader that you might notice is having a challenge with that.

I think that the easiest way to begin that process is to ask that leader to say, What resources, what expertise, what knowledge do you not currently have on the team? And if you can start that, that gets into the inquiry of, oh yeah. We don't know this. We don't necessarily know that. And through the process, you can really re anchor yourself as a leader and to realizing strength in leadership comes not from knowing everything, which would be impossible, but from knowing where to go to get that information, and where we see human centered workplaces evolving is leaders who have that knowledge of, I know that I can go to get the information I need to make the best possible decision and realizing that their employees are a crucial source of that information.

Beth:

I love what you shared. And it's making me think about all the work with Dr. Vic Strecker around purpose and organizational wellbeing and creating really aligned visions for your team and just understanding that everyone does have a role to play when it comes to success in any organization. So that's a great example and it, it sounds like you work very closely with leadership teams. When we break
it down even a little bit further for our listeners and thinking about all of this in the context of individual wellbeing, how can we get started with mindfulness in mind?

With mental health crisis on the rise, which is something else that you alluded to. Again, mental health is not a new thing that is in front of us. We have been with mental health crisis for a very long time, but sort of the COVID, implications have sort of pulled away at that for us. So how do you advise individuals to start this journey in returning to work and creating healthy boundaries, emotional wellbeing, being a huge part of that for themselves, as things are starting to shift again for us.

Anna:

Yeah. I always come back to this idea that. We use, I'm a word nerd. So I love understanding, like, what are the words we use?

Where do they come from? Why do we use them? And, in this work we use different words like leadership teams, like employees, like mental health, physical health, returning to work. And these words all carry meaning. And I think at the end of the day, I often come back to this idea that what we have now are human beings in transition and adapting and finding new habits and searching for, what do I need? And that's where that mindfulness comes in. My favorite definition of mindfulness is simply that mindfulness is just being aware of what is happening right now without wishing it were different. When we can, you know, as humans, whether we're a leader, whether we're an employee, take a second and engage in that same process of listening, what's going on in my body.

You know, what do I need? That's the first step. And one thing that I, I am very mindful of right now is even the words returning to work like we've been working. You know, and some of us have been working

Beth:

That's a great point that you make.

Anna:

And some of us have been working so hard, right? Like in so many ways, this past year has been harder work for many of us. You know the many, many, many years before that. And so what we're really doing is we're returning to an office, but I almost even hesitate to say we are returning to, because we're really stepping into a new space. That we're different people. Everyone we're going to be working with is a different person.

We're going to have a totally different relationship to everything about that working environment, all those habits that we had ingrained into our brains, even just like smells, that felt familiar, thoughts we had when we looked at this particular water cooler over there, that's all gone. It's all been wiped.
Beth:

I want to stay here for a minute because actually you're hitting home on a very big thing, which was sort of, and in a way, a misstep for the University of Delaware. When we did survey our staff members, we used the wrong language. We use the language Return to Work survey. And it was not inclusive and it was not respectful in the essence that people have been working very hard with way less, with many more things to consider and think about each day.

So when we got the survey results back, We did consume that feedback and we really thought about it and we actually changed the campaign name to the Future of Working at UD, because it is really important to acknowledge that people have been working extremely hard this entire time. But the one thing that I want to stay with that you said, that I think is so critically important to underscore is that whether we like it or not, We are returning to a brand new culture.

One, whether we like it or not, we have created a brand new culture because humans, they have changed. We have changed through this process. We have, there are many other, even outside of COVID, there are many other elements happening around us that has caused us to show up different. And so we do truly have a real opportunity as an employer to harness this new culture at hand and do the right thing with it and create the right environments, to create the right feedback mechanisms that you're talking about, and to almost slow down and reflect and learn how to better move forward. So I just wanted to really underscore that piece that you shared because it's, it's a gift that, we've been given in many ways. And it's, it's one thing that I, I don't want to lose traction on. So I didn't know. Or I'm curious if you have any follow-up thoughts on that.

Anna:

Yeah, absolutely. One way that I, and we at On the Goga, define company culture is company culture is the outcome of the boundaries that you have set as an organization. So that is the explicit boundaries. Like this is our PTO policy.

These are our working hours, you know, this is our parental leave policy, but also those implicit boundaries. Boundaries are just the limits we set that indicate what behavior is acceptable and unacceptable. Right? So maybe there was, you know, someone who always used to sit out at a bench in the park at 12:00 PM every Tuesday and eat their lunch.

And everybody knew like that was kind of their bench, right. Those small little things that make up. Oh yeah. This is what it's like to work in this environment. We've just come out of a year. Where everyone's boundaries, physical boundaries, emotional boundaries, mental boundaries, time boundaries, have completely changed.

And so when we step back together, these collective humans into this collective world, where we're bouncing off each other's new boundaries. It's going to be a different culture. It's going to be a different outcome. And that is exciting because what it points to, again, coming back to what we were saying in the beginning is that life is always this way. We always have the opportunity to begin again, but it doesn't always feel this way. And what we have right now is everyone at the same time, having this reckoning of, oh my gosh, the way I did things, isn't the way I have to continue doing things. And when
we can have a moment like that, we really do have an opportunity to use that as a catalyst to continue that change.

But I also want to say to the people out there who are a little worried about like, what if I mess it up? What if I lose that traction? That's okay, too, because it might be harder to see three years down the road, five years down the road, but the key to systemic change, cultural change, individual wellbeing changes is the realization that it's never too late to start doing things differently.

Beth:

That's a great, great segue. when you talk about implicit versus explicit, right? So I think we have come to a place where managers realize that wellbeing is important. They understand that, that it is a tool, and a sense of being that their employees need to be successful at their jobs. So, what are intentional ways that they can make that implicit, explicit for their team?

Anna:

Yeah, I mean, it sounds so simple. And I often say if it sounds so simple, it seems like it’s not worth doing, it’s probably the perfect thing to do. Just say it out loud. There are so many things that we think, I think people should know this, people should know that, people should understand that I’m this type of manager. I’m that type of manager. We do things this way. We do things that way. Just say it out loud, and better, write it down. Send your team a list of acceptable ways for them to take a mental health day, acceptable ways for them to communicate back to the team that they are having a struggle with something that’s going on.

And we can do this on a piece of paper that we like give out to the team, but we can also build these boundaries into meetings. So one thing that you can do is hold a 20-30 minute team meeting with your team every week, every other week, where we it's just a standup. Anybody can come up and say, Hey, here's the general topic, mental health, or here's the general topic, you know, team communication and just get up and share your perspective.

Right? And so as managers, we can A.) Say these things ourselves. B.) Create spaces for our employees to say these things out loud, and most importantly, write them down. When we at On the Goga, think about organizational wellbeing. We think about employee wellbeing, which is really the individual human wellbeing; leadership wellbeing, which is what we’re talking about now, leadership having the skills to understand how do I facilitate these environments that actually support my team; and then policies and operational wellbeing. It's one thing to say it, and it's there, it's more than a lot of people do to say it, but it's another thing to write it down so that someone can rely on, alright, I know this is the boundary and this is especially true if you have new employees on your team, because this is something that we found, we will have employees started On the Goga, and we don't work on Fridays.

We have something called flex Friday, where if you have some work you want to do great. Go ahead. Do it. If you want to sit back on the beach, drink a margarita. That's great. No one's going to bother you. And we've literally had employees come in and say, I sat in our virtual office for four hours the first Friday, just waiting to see if this was a joke.
Like if this was a trick, because people have these fears that are just built in from such a young age and so if you’re trying to create a meaningful and different culture, that centers around wellbeing, say it out loud. Write it down, build it into your meetings.

Beth:

So two things, Anna, while we're hot on this topic, I completely agree. First and foremost, people will do what they see their leaders doing. And some of our senior leaders are really with that mantra, they’re really understanding the impact of role modeling within their team, but just for our audience, you know, On the Goga is... you all are movers and shakers, and you're very adaptable.

I would gather to say probably a much younger generation, than perhaps some of, some of the, the employees at the University of Delaware. So when it comes to breaking or modifying some of these traditional generational work styles, how do we start in that process?

Anna:

Well, it's interesting because you're right. On the Goga we tend towards the younger end of the spectrum. We're very all invested in organizational wellbeing, all the data on how human centered workplaces, not only are the best places to work experientially, but also create the best outcomes for the team. But a lot of our clients are not that way. We have very traditional clients and I think one thing that's, it's impossible to have this conversation without speaking about values. And this is really goes back to what are the values of your organization? An organization like the University of Delaware, I think about you guys like a city, not just one business, but a city with all these different departments and all these different little neighborhoods within the city that all have their own unique cultures that are part of this broader culture.

And the University of Delaware, it has certain values and especially in an academic setting, higher education, one of those is some of the amazing traditions. And so it's not necessarily a bad thing to have traditions, to have a certain way that things have been done. And in fact, what we find is that if you try to push through a totally new way of doing things without, again, it comes back to listening to all of the voices there of like, why are these traditions so helpful? You know, what about this makes life better? We can integrate these things. What looks correct and, and feels good for our organization is not going to be the same thing. And so I think it's really about not throwing tradition out the window, but sitting down and kind of pondering like, Hey, so we've done it this way for a really long time. How do you feel about that? What outcomes is this producing? How do we save the best parts of that, but maybe supplement that with some new experiments.

And that's another thing that we often encourage ourselves, on our team and our clients to do is, I always say you can always go back to doing it the way you were doing it, you know? What little bit of wiggle room can we try here? What little bit of wiggle room can we try there and thinking about, this as simple as let's think about things a different way.

So if you have, if you are a leader that's a little bit more traditional and sitting there and thinking like, well, this is a little past what I'm comfortable with or what I'm interested in. Something as simple as
we've talked a lot about mental health. Our brain is inside of our body. All of what we know about science psychology indicates that just like we can have a heart problem or a blood pressure issue, or a gut issue, we can have a mental health issue going on and not taking care of our bodies, making sure we have enough sleep, making sure that we're getting up and moving during the day, resting, eating properly. That's going to affect our brains in a way that is just as out of our control as our blood pressure and all of that.

And so just thinking about, if you're sitting there thinking, how can I think about mental health? Well, how can you think about the general wellbeing of your team? And just a simple thinking about things differently can sometimes be the next step. You don't have to stop working on Fridays. You can just consider that mental health is part of your physical health.

Beth:

Or even thinking about something that, that, you're sort of reminding me to say right now is the power of connection. And so prior to COVID, when we were in the office nine to five, we were there, but we weren't necessarily connected. And even the spaces that, that some of the University of Delaware still has is prohibitive for connection, whereas you know, we're working at the Tower, and you've been there and it's open concept design. You almost have to run into your colleagues and have a conversation. So I guess the long-winded way of, what I'm trying to get to is start small, maybe that return to a physical workplace isn't so that you can sit in your office alone, but maybe it is very much for that intentional meeting time or that time that you are meeting with your students or you're meeting with partnerships across campus.

So even thinking about how you can be more intentional with your time, and realizing that you're still providing this great flexibility, which is what people, not only want, but need right now for that work-life integration piece, but you're still asking them to show up for the business implications and spend that intentional time connecting with one another.

I think the power of connection is huge, and something that we have taken for granted. Now we are forced to figure it out. How to connect in virtual spaces, how to move through this sort of change mindset together. What would you share on the power of connection and why that's important for employers to consider?

Anna:

Absolutely. I mean, I think that connection and communication are the exchanging of ideas. Whether that is, you know, I really love your shirt today, Beth. That's an awesome shirt or it's, Hey, I'm, I'm planning this giant event and I want to talk to you about, about these logistics. That exchanging of ideas is so good, important, and we are so lucky that we had video chats, phones, emails during this time, because we weren't able to stay connected in many different ways. And especially with video, it's like, yes, it can create zoom fatigue absolutely. so it can being at the office all day as well right, but I think. What this, this last, year and change has taught us is that sometimes we have to find ways to connect.
And I think a lot of us pre COVID were kind of in our own little habits, not necessarily going out of our way to connect or even to connect to our environment in a new way. So I love what you're saying. This is actually something we just, I was just reading our August newsletter that's about to come out and it's all about easing into the office.

If that's something that you're going back to and a big part of what we talk about in that is the reframe, because there are certain things about University of Delaware and being, I mean, think about just the campus. I'm thinking about how much I want to go. Right? Like walk around the campus.

Beth:

It builds your energy bucket just being there that no one can, can deny that piece.

Anna:

Absolutely. And I think it's like, all right, if you're feeling a little bummed about having to leave your dog at home or having to leave your child or not getting to sit next to your partner all the time, think about maybe the days where you go to the campus are the days where you get your extra long walks in, or the days where you do set up a lunch date or try one of the cute little small businesses downtown, just off of campus. Right? So we have a lot more power over our daily experience than we often consider. We didn't choose most of us to go work from home. And yet many of us found some benefits to that.

And now, again, some of us are being asked to go back to the office. Some of us are pumped up about it. Some of us are less pumped up about it. We do have the power to seek out new experiences and interact with our environment in a new way, interact with our coworkers in a new way, get to relearn who your coworkers are, and also to interact with ourselves in a new way.

Beth:

So that's a great point that you make. And I think the power of connection, which then we lead into a little discussion around autonomy of time. And what does that produce? But creative ways to do things in a different way. I will tell you, I have not ever seen the amount of meetings taking place at our Creamery, UDairy as they have now.

And people love that. They love being able to sit outside, be at the Creamery, of course eat ice cream, but be with one another. Not to say that they have to be there nine hours that day, but they're very intentional about why they're there and what they're there to do, which then translates into a really strong business outcome.

So I think to your point is really it's important. And one to note is like, take this opportunity to activate around that creative piece and figure out, can you do things a little bit different maybe in different spaces, places, and perhaps feel good about it or feel like it enhances your wellbeing just a little bit more, which is better than where you started.
Anna:

Yeah. And I think that, you know, again, if it seems so small, it seems like it's not worth doing, it's probably the perfect thing to do. And that's something that we've been saying at, On the Goga for years and years. That's the other funny thing about this next iteration. And again, it's not going to be the final iteration.

It wasn't ever the first iteration. We've been doing this forever. Right. We're kind of more awake now to this idea of oh yeah. Things are constantly changing and those small little changes make a big difference. I mean, I often used to say about, in our habit workshop, I'd say, okay, imagine you've got two people, Larry and Bob. And every day at lunch for 30 years of working, wherever they're working, UD, Larry takes a 15 minute break at lunch to go and take a walk outside, watch a puppy video on the internet, call a friend, something that makes him happy. And Bob doesn't. Who do you want to be at the end of 30 years? And if the only reason that you pick, I want to be the person who took the 15 minute break is because it makes you feel good. Like what better and more valid reason is there than that.

Beth:

Yeah. It's such a good example. And it goes back to that intrinsic piece. Slowing down, we talk a lot about mindfulness, but slowing down to really take account of what you need to be successful. And so I'm going to lead us into a little bit of a different discussion, but what I need to be successful and well, and produce, what I need to produce at work is very different than what Anna needs to be successful and well, and so then we get into equality versus equity. And so do you have any thoughts around, and you talked about being a word nerd and I don't want to take light of the difference between equality and equity with all of this. What are your thoughts around that, in the context of wellbeing?

Anna:

I mean that that's such an important question. What do I think about the difference between equality and equity when it comes to wellbeing? I think that at, On the Goga our motto is happy people do great things. To me, what that means is that the definition of happiness, the definition of wellbeing, is so wildly different for all of us. And we're all starting at different starting points. There are so many aspects to our lived experiences that change our mental health, our physical health, our emotional health, our social relational health, our financial health, our environmental health. And so to me, when I think about equality, equality means we're going to do this thing and we're going to give everyone the same thing, which feels incredibly prescriptive and lacks a lot of listening to what are people's needs. Equity means that we are going to look at everyone for who they are and what their starting point is and give them the things that they need to get to a baseline where they feel equipped and well and supported to. You know, contributing to the organization then becomes the natural outcome of living a life that makes them actually joyful.

And I always love Shawn Achor is a Harvard researcher. He says happiness. Isn't the belief that everything is great. Happiness is the joy we feel striving towards our potential. So those are the things that come to mind when I think about equality versus equity, equitable wellness is obviously the path
towards the future, to get us all into a space where we can be striving towards our own unique potential.

Beth:

Yeah, you hit the nail on the head with that definition and what I would encourage our listeners to do, whether you're listening to this for individual wellbeing, or you're a manager looking to apply it within your teams is encourage your team members or intrinsically look at what is it that you need to do this in a successful way. The other thing, bringing it back to psychological wellbeing, you allude to joy. that is the act of being in the moment to feel that joy is the act of being in the moment. And I think whether we like it or not, we are just in a constant state of burnout or nearing burnout and trying to just spin our wheels and figure this thing out.

What recommendation would you give us to slow down, not the antidote to burn out because I know that's a loaded question, but what can we do right now to just be more present to so that we are able to feel that joy?

Anna:

Yeah. This is the eternal question. I think we're always seeking for, you know, different ways to think about this and different ways to, to incorporate this into our life. Something that's been coming to my mind very presently recently is this idea that we're in this new transition returning to the office or returning back, into in-person interactions socially, professionally. Burnout is just the body's physical response to chronic stress. And we're trying to solve for that. We're trying to fix it. We're trying to get back to the office. We're trying to, we're always constantly moving towards a goal and that inherently is a contradiction to what the practice of mindfulness really teaches us, which is that in the idea of mindfulness is not to move, but to sit and to breathe and to be where you are. And so when I think about what's the, the antidote to burn out the way to get back to the office, the way to get into a state of, of mental health. I often think about that moment where you're trying to relax. Right. I always think that's such a funny phrase when people say, try to relax. When you, when I say that to you, like, what does your body do? Right. It's like, oh, I clenching to relax opposite the literal opposite. And so I think about that moment and then becoming aware that we're doing it. And just taking a second to laugh at ourselves and be like, oh yeah, this whole thing is really complicated and I'm, I'm doing my best.

And that's not going to help, but really the point isn't to find the thing that's going to help, that is tension. The thing is to realize that one breath. One nice thing in your house being totally involved in one activity, whether that's petting your dog or smiling or laughing at yourself or watching a funny movie, those are the moments that make a joyful life, not the tension to try to get to the joy through.

Beth:
It's so important. And we talk a lot at that team, that local level. Not just figuring that out for yourself, but showing up for one another as well and understanding, and talking about just simply talking about, this is my stress response. You know, my colleague and I, Ryan, we are very close connected in this way when I'm showing up, and I'm showing my stress response. She knows that about me and immediately it's like, okay, what can I help to break down? What are we doing that maybe feels duplicative? You know, where can we slow down to figure this out? Same thing with her, but that takes time and intention. So again, going back to that power of connection in the team, there are so many ways that we can, amplify mindfulness with one another as well. I wanted to just ask you a couple of things. I know we, we could talk for hours. We do often whenever we get together. Yeah. It's just, I just love our dialogue and, and I already know we're going to have you back on the, but again, just being respectful of time, your time.

There's two questions that I wanted to ask, that we're asking all of our guests and the first one being, what helps you to be your best self?

Anna:

What helps me to be my best self for me? It's time alone. I'm a very, I would say extroverted categorically person. I love people. I love talking, just chatting about this to your point, like you and I could sit and talk about this forever.

I think for me to be my best self, I really need those moments, whether it's me going on a walk in the woods in the morning, or I've been taking these little solo vacations where I find a little tiny house on Airbnb and just go for a couple of nights alone. That moment to reset and be like, who am I when I'm alone? And then bring pieces of that back into my daily life is something that I have found is an irreplaceable part of my own self care routine.

Beth:

I love that. And that's great advice. What does undeniably well mean to you?

Anna:

Hmm. You know, it's funny because. I think the first thing that comes to my mind, it goes back to this idea of, at first tension, like undeniably well, like I'm going to be so well. But then I think that to me, what comes to my mind after that is this idea that so much of what we do around our own wellbeing is seeking. I'm going to be this, I'm going to run this half marathon. I'm going to do this diet. I'm going to do this diet. I'm going to try this meditation. And in the reality of life and kind of the humor of life is that we're already well in ourselves. And everything we need actually already exists within us. And I think for me, the path of wellbeing is really less of an additive and more of an unpacking and getting back to baseline.

Beth:
It sounds very much like getting clear with what that feels in that present moment for you.

Anna:
Absolutely. And just remembering that I am enough. And the more moments I have where I can realize that without feeling the need to add or subtract anything that is a moment of being undeniably well.

Beth:
Amazing. This conversation has been so uplifting for me. Again, the power of connection and talking to someone like-minded and at the end of the day, you really just want to help support people to be their best. So thank you so much for joining us and being on this podcast with us this morning.

Anna:
Thanks so much for having me, Beth.

Beth:
And so for our listeners, if they want to find out more about, On the Goga, where would you like to send them?

Anna:

Beth:
Awesome.

Outro:
Thank you for listening to the undeniably well podcast. For all things wellbeing at UD visit our website, UDel.edu/wellbeing. There you can access our on demand library, subscribe to our newsletter and see what's coming up to help you on your wellbeing journey. Until next time, be well.