

Intro 0:04

Welcome to the advancing women podcast. We're ambitious women come together to challenge the status quo, advance their careers and uplevel their lives. The advancing women podcast is hosted by gender equity expert and executive coach, Dr. Kimberly DeSimone.

Kimberly 0:21

Welcome warriors to the advancing women podcast. Do you ever find yourself screaming either to yourself or out loud? I can't do this anymore. I am done. Sometimes even for the smallest reason. You feel that wave of emotion and almost explosive anger or frustration, the suffocating feeling of not just the physical and mental to do list, but the constant managing, managing of every small task, but also managing not only our feelings, but the feelings of everyone around us. Yes, even worriers feel this. There's all we have to do on the surface. But then there's the invisible work that other people don't ever seem to see. But we feel and see. We see it everywhere and everything we do at home, at work everywhere, emotional labor. I'm incredibly grateful for the term emotional labor and how it is helping create a culture of awareness of a phenomenon that affects so many of us, we need to have the language the words, so something isn't just a nameless problem. The term helps us address a real problem. We need to see the water we're swimming in so that we don't drown in it.

Kimberly 1:39

The term emotional labor was first coined by sociologist arlie Hochschild, you may remember her as the scholar and author I mentioned in a previous podcast who coined the term and wrote the book, the second shift, which was referring to the household and childcare duties that follow the paid day's work and how women, even those working full time tend to shoulder most of this responsibility. So Hochschild defines emotional labor as it relates to regulating or managing emotional expressions with others as part of one's professional work role. emotional labor in this way is parallel to physical labor. Both tend to require a lot of effort, but emotional labor is effort around emotions, managing emotions during interactions to achieve professional goals, and conform to work role requirements and expectations.

Kimberly 2:31

It emerged actually initially from Hochschild research on the service industry, where emotional reactions and interactions are a big part of the job. It started with flight attendants whose job was essentially meant to distract weary nervous fliers from the fear or discomfort of flying. By creating this warm homey experience. It meant no matter how the flight attendant felt, or even how they were treated by customers, kindness, patience, warmth, and a big smile, were always to be expected,

Kimberly 3:01

actually found that this expectation had a very negative impact on the overall emotional well being, and subsequent research of these types of service industries brought into the forefront the importance of the topic. And although this isn't a gender specific problem, inherently there are men who are in service industries. Because women tend to dominate in service related industries in terms of numbers, we're caring, warmth and nurturing are seen as crucial parts of the jobs. And because these types of jobs tend to have a much higher percentage of women, it is important to consider the impact on women.

Kimberly 3:36

It has been found, and I talk about this often in my research and on this podcast, that in male dominated fields where women are constantly working to advance, there tends to be a lot of emotional labor as well. So this isn't just in the service industry. It is actually across many industries. This process of managing feelings and expressions to fulfill the emotional requirements of a job, or in this case of the workforce in those top level leadership roles, managing not only your emotions, but the emotions of everyone around you, ensuring you don't upset the applecart. The existing power structure that is an environment that was not designed by or for women where we are the outsiders wanting to advance. We need to not offend those with power, especially those with the power to hinder our advancement. This leads to so many invisible rules, exhausting roles that create emotional labor for women in the workforce. And emotional labor is an important discussion, especially for women because it's a problem in the workforce and in the home. constantly having to be mindful of how our every action, everything we say or do might be interpreted, misinterpreted or judged. So emotional labor then is the unpaid job that many still don't understand. Just like the men

Kimberly 5:00

physical labor of our jobs. emotional labor is effortful and fatiguing when done repeatedly all day long, and can result in some very real consequences. Like feeling exhausted, feeling resentful, feeling dissatisfied in our jobs or in our lives, feeling burnt out, just playing cranky, or resulting in us making more mistakes. So we need to bring this important conversation to the forefront and keep having it.

Kimberly 5:26

So you might wonder how is emotional labor then gendered? And this is about how we are conditioned in our society as women, the caregivers, emotional labor in the form of caring and nurturing sacrificing has been associated with femininity, in that it draws on traditionally feminine attributes of warmth, nurturing service to others, the unpaid invisible work we must do to keep those around us comfortable and happy. And in the workforce, it's about making sure we walk the tightrope, balance the desire to advance the barriers to the advancement without ruffling feathers or making those in the existing power structure, uncomfortable or making them feel bad or blamed in any way. As it relates to inequities that are holding talented women back. It's an emotional load many women report feeling and experiencing.

Kimberly 6:20

journalist and writer Gemma Hartley building upon Hochschild work wrote an article for Harper's Bazaar in 2017, titled, women aren't neqs were just fed up. emotional labor is the unpaid job men still don't understand. Well, this article went viral very quickly, with 10s of 1000s of women writing in expressing how this term emotional labor and what Hartley was describing just nailed it. From the article, then Hartley created the best selling book of a similar title, fat up emotional labor, women and the way forward. And I want to just share one quote from the book that really captures the gendered nature of emotional labor. And I highly recommend reading or downloading the audio book, it is so excellent, but this particular quote really jumps out, quote, men don't owe emotional labor to the world, their time, emotional energy, and mental space is never and will never be considered a communal resource. Yet, for women, this is the expectation. Our emotional labor is supposed to be free for the taking, and altruistic effort we do for the good of those around us. And quote, and this is a key part of how we justify under paying for women's work, and allowing the emotional labor performed at home and at work to remain invisible, unnoticed and unrewarded. So the purpose of this episode, therefore, is to help make this invisible, unnoticed and unrewarded work more visible and noticed, so that someday it might be rewarded, or even better, shared equitably. It is important to note that in no way is calling out the inequities of emotional labor of blaming men, or villainizing men. There are many social, cultural, structural, societal, and organizational influences at play here that often lead to inequity despite most people's desire, including men, including husbands to create a fair and equitable environment and to be a part of a fair and equitable environment. To a degree, this concern and sensitivity is why we have so much trouble even having a conversation around the topic. The emotional fear, anguish, concern for the feelings of others that women have, that they will be seen as criticizing, whining, complaining, playing the victim, if they note their lived experience with emotional labor, the fear that men will be defensive because they feel called out.

Kimberly 8:53

Freelance journalists, Kelly Burch expressed the sentiment when she wrote, quote, what bothers me the most about having any conversation around emotional labor is being seen as a nag. And of course, this need to tiptoe around emotional labor, and the inequity to do so gingerly. So it's not to create an environment that is defensive, contentious even, is even more emotional labor. The Invisible labor of ensuring we keep everyone happy and comfortable. We can't talk about it because it makes people feel bad. even asking people to see emotional labor and the work it creates creates more emotional labor. Talking about this can feel like a personal attack on men or their character, which it is not. But see, even as I talk about this now, I have to be careful with my tone of my word choice. Because if we point out random emotional labor duties we carry out daily, it can be taken as look at everything I'm doing that you're not or you're a bad person for ignoring my emotions and or not pulling your weight. And whether at home or at work in society in general. It is seen as complaining

Kimberly 10:00

Blaming and victim mentality. And so we don't even get to mention it, which is why there is this fat up resentment bubbling to the surface, which can unfortunately manifest as what is then often perceived as an overreaction. When we do snap over something that seems smaller, innocuous. So we struggle, more emotional labor to not offend, to not nag or complain or worst of all, be seen as emotional or unstable or unhinged. When we are literally at the breaking point. We don't want to complain more, but often feel that if we don't complain, people just won't see the other cues. They won't see the exhaustion they won't see the inequity, but they'll surely see any ball dropping. And they'll likely judge any lapse if we fail to meet the needs of those around us. Or if we dare to make anyone feel like they are at fault or not doing enough, or that we dare to suggest that things are unfair or inequitable.

Kimberly 10:58

And this isn't about men being less than or needing to defend how they help. It is acknowledging how women have been socially conditioned to think one step ahead, to anticipate the needs of those around us and care about them deeply. Learning that it is our job our responsibility as women to sacrifice for others. Emotional labor is a skill set most women have been trained in since early childhood. Often men though, have not received that same education. I'm not saying men are not caring, but they're not as likely skilled at caregiving, nurturing, and sacrifice, because these are the attributes society values and therefore infuses in women. Men are as capable of these caring skills. Of course they are, these skills just aren't as valued for men. And certainly, these skills although required for women in the workforce, lest we be seen as difficult or shrewd, not typically a compliment for women, unlikable, bitchy even are not required for men, men, don't worry every day that they will be seen as bitchy if they aren't warm enough, if they don't smile enough, or if they challenge in any way that they will be seen as difficult. That's not something that they have to think about all the time, the way women do the emotional labor of it. And the research shows clearly that the way men are perceived for specific interactions and behaviors in the workplace will be very different than the way women will be perceived for the same actions and behaviors. And as women, we need to be mindful of this to manage this every single day in every single interaction. Otherwise, there can and often are consequences. And this really pulls in the tightrope bias that I've talked about in other episodes the emotional labor of navigating tight rope bias. And Tyro bias, again, is about both the descriptive bias which are the assumptions of what women are, what traits women have, and the prescriptive bias and assumptions of how women should be. And it results in this double bind barrier, where women who behave in traditionally feminine ways aren't viewed as leaders and women who behave in ways seen as traditionally masculine are often disliked and seen as lacking social skills. So this is the problem in the workforce. And too often, it is an equitable change that results from discussing this. It's increase in women's emotional labor to cope with to attempt to transcend these biases, fallacies and barriers using emotional labor to navigate success and advancement. And existing power structures impact emotional labor. For example, in my field in academia, research shows the faculty low in power at the university and in academia that untenured faculty exhibit higher levels of emotional labor and their interactions with other faculty in meetings with students, as compared with colleagues high in power or tenured. But this can be the case in all domains. When you're in a lower position of power, you have to of course, be more careful, more mindful, it's more emotionally laborious. And for women, the advancement doesn't always equal the ability to lessen our emotional labor efforts. It can even exacerbate and force us to be more careful. lest we be seen as queen bees, or throwing around our power. And we know it, we are keenly aware of the consequences

of expecting to be able to interact without being concerned with how this will come across differently to others. I can give you a recent professional example. I teach graduate students, these are mature professionals. It's a leadership program. So they're working towards their masters while also working in leadership roles typically. So I know they have busy schedules, and it is my practice to share my personal cell phone with them and allow them to reach out anytime they want. I set the boundaries if I can't answer I don't. But they don't have to manage my time they can call or text as needed. And I had a male graduate student in one of his first interaction

Kimberly 15:00

Shoot me a text and he started the text with Hey, Kim. Now anyone who knows me knows that I am not Kim. I am Kimberly, without exception, even to my closest friends even to my husband, but to my students, I am Dr. De Simone. I have earned the title of Dr. And did not think that expecting as most of my male counterparts do, the calling me doctor would be so bothersome. But when a student called me, Kim, I politely and lightheartedly asked that he called me Dr. De Simone. I even joked about it. You know, I tried to make light hearted I was like, Oh, I worked really hard for that doctorate lol to try and soften the blow. But it wasn't enough, not nearly. And what's funny is that as a woman, I had already absorbed so much emotional labor, even in this process of asking. I had reached out to three separate colleagues before I reached back out to the student asking their opinion and perspective, should I let it go and not ruffle feathers? Or is it okay for me to ask the student to call me doctor. And I asked men and women alike and all suggested that we have the right to ask to be called doctor in our academic classes. But of course I worried I didn't want to seem like I'm bragging or belittling or hottie I was just asking to be addressed in the standard way that is suggested. And you can google it Google, what should I call my professor. And you'll see, anyone who has earned a doctorate degree should be addressed as Doctor, and then their last name. This is the standard. But despite my efforts and emotional labor to try to make sure I softened this feedback, it was interpreted as obnoxious. And there were immediate and lasting consequences. The person went to my Dean and said they didn't like my communication style, and that I was kind of throwing around how I had a higher degree than them like I was better. All I said was, if you don't mind, can you please call me Dr. De Simone, which is a respect that I would grant any student I interact with a student asks me to call them Mr. Mrs. By a nickname, their preferred pronouns, whatever that is out of respect as a human, not in my position, I would do so I was asking for this very reasonable, in my opinion, ask and in a way that I had made efforts to try to ensure came across as easy going, then I get blasted by them on my evaluation. And the comment has been made in subsequent courses I've had with the students. And it's kind of frustrating, because there's this feeling of audaciousness in my asking to be called the title that I have earned. And that is standard in my profession. And I know that I'm not alone in this. There's a lot of research that shows that women and persons of color are often more likely to not be called doctor or to be given the same level of professional addressing that others in the profession do. The research shows that even when women achieve higher levels of power, there can still be backlash. So unsurprisingly, the research shows that even in academia, even when we hit the position of power, that tenured position that is meant to alleviate some of the emotional labor. The research shows that for women displays of assertiveness, firmness or authority are still not well received. And really, it is only among individuals who are both tenured and male, where the emotional labor is significantly lessened. It's the intersection of both power and societal and gender norms, and expectations of who should exhibit authoritative versus

friendly emotions. It's about gender norms and role expectations. I've talked about women as caregiver nurturer sacrificer, in many episodes, is women were meant to be nice, show warmth, make others feel good and comfortable. We have to constantly be mindful of the consequences of getting it wrong. And it's not as simple as not being emotional. It's about which emotions are okay and which aren't. It's about exhibiting authoritative emotions versus nurturing emotions. So we are meant to be nurturing. And there's backlash if we're not, but then we're not seen as strong enough is exhibiting leadership skills. So then we're authoritative and there's still backlash, because that's not what you expect from women. It's seen as not nice, so that's negative. And you spend all this emotional mental time and energy and feel the anguish of walking that tightrope.

Kimberly 19:28

suppressing feelings because we don't want to make others feel bad, or exhibiting our less authentic selves to ensure we don't upset anyone. And unfortunately, this can and often does take a high emotional toll on women. There's plentiful research that shows how authentic expression of one's own emotional state produces job satisfaction, while requirements and expectations that we suppress our emotions, produce and contribute burnout and dissatisfaction as I talked about in the last

Kimberly 20:00

Episode The art and agony of No, just saying no doesn't usually spare us any grief or emotional labor. And we have to stop acting as though women can just opt out of emotional labor. That is consequence free to do so. There is the reality of others expectations and the shaming and judging, we as women often feel this is true at work and at home, even for the seemingly simplest of tasks, the consequences to women of missing a family member's birthday, or not getting the right gift or just simply higher for women. Nobody expected the man to buy the gift. So therefore, if it is forgotten or wrong, it is you the woman that the eyes and judgment will turn to it will be seen as your ball being dropped. And I'm not trying to minimize emotional labor. It's just a bunch of domestic gripes, but rather I'm illustrating how it is a social and systemic issue that touches every arena. It is the gendered expectations and norms that touch every aspect of women's lives. It's everywhere. As Hartley notes and fed up emotional labor, women and the way forward, quote, women are fed up, because we've realized we can't clock out. emotional labor is expected from us, no matter where we turn, we are fed up with the ongoing demand to be the primary providers of emotional labor in all areas of life, because it is taxing It is time consuming, and it is holding us back and quote, exactly that spot on. I often talk about pragmatic ways to address these biases and barriers that I discuss on the advancing women podcast. I'll admit this one is tough. It is tied to so many well entrenched assumptions and social constructs, how can we even begin to address it. And I think we have to start by not belittling the importance of our emotional labor, or the impact of it. We need to resist bottling up our emotions and feelings and be able to talk about this without being made to feel we must subordinate our feelings. To make sure everyone else feels comfortable and doesn't feel bad. We need to talk about this, name it and acknowledge it. We need to talk about the gendered issue of emotional labor and challenge the distasteful social constructs that suggest we as women are somehow genetically predisposed to this often invisible, unacknowledged and under appreciated effort, that somehow we are meant to want to do this work to quietly and without

complaint, take on the emotional labor of not just caring for others, but subordinating our time, our comfort and emotional well being to the needs and well being the comfort of others, that were meant to find this somehow intrinsically fulfilling part of being a woman. Yet this ideal image we're meant to strive for is an inequitable and unfair social construct that does not serve women. This isn't about gender, it's about equity. Acknowledging emotional labor is foundational to discussions of equity and equality. These conversations are part of our path to change. So each week, I have a key takeaway, what I call a manifest statement or a pragmatic takeaway. And this week, my manifest statement is this. emotions like caring, warmth, nurturing, and prioritizing the needs of others are not intrinsically female gifts bestowed upon women at birth. These are learnable skills that are mastered through action. And so we need to think differently, expect differently, and act differently.

Kimberly 23:35

For all you warriors listening who want to continue to transcend barriers and thrive, you won't want to miss next week's episodes, make sure to hit that subscribe button. For more resources, you can visit my website [www dot advancing women podcast.com](http://www.advancingwomenpodcast.com) and connect on Instagram at [advancing women podcast](https://www.instagram.com/advancingwomenpodcast). I love getting your feedback and ideas on topics you'd like to hear me cover in more depth or new topics you'd like me to explore. So please email me at Dr. De Simone at [advancing women podcast.com](mailto:dr.de@advancingwomenpodcast.com) with your ideas and feedback. That's dr. D S i m o n e at [advancing women podcast.com](http://www.advancingwomenpodcast.com) I just want to thank my producer Joe Jacobs, the audio warrior who wrote the music for this podcast. It's totally badass and I love it. And a huge thanks to Heather Harris, the creative warrior who designed the advancing woman podcast logo, and thanks to all of you for joining me here today.

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