

146 Rachel Arch Part 1

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Welcome to the SLP Happy Hour Podcast. I'm Sarah an SLP. Working in private practice in Oregon. I'm also a materials designer on teachers pay teachers. You can find my parent handouts bundle by going to the TPT website and searching for the SLP Happy Hour store. And I'm also a speaker on Burnout. You can get more information on my work as well as show notes for this episode, which includes a transcript@slphapyour.com. My guest host today is Rachel from Ptsdslp on Instagram.

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Hi, everyone, I'm Rachel. I am a speech language program specialist in South Florida, as well as run an Instagram page called PTSD SLP, where I discuss trauma, informed care, and mental health. I'm also a co host on the Speech Science podcast.

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And now for our Five Questions segment, where we get to ask each other five questions on a given topic. Today's topic. Is finding time for our out of work life and the business of being a human, especially prioritizing. That when work gets busy first. Rachel, you've switched in the past year from working directly at a school and providing service to being an SLP program specialist. How would you describe how you found time for your out of work life in each job? And what were the different challenges of the different positions? And was one easier to disconnect from than the

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other? To be honest, it is really hard. The current job I hold as a speech language program specialist is more of an administrative role, which I love, but it also comes with less work life boundaries. People text, call, email at any time of day, and I usually respond. I think that's my ADHD brain. I prefer that to answer as soon as it comes in, rather than answering the next morning. This year in this job, we've taken on a lot of other people's jobs due to absences vacancies. So on weekends I watch a lot of TikTok to relax and I've also been inundated with requests to speak, which is a super great thing and it is overwhelming. With the start of the new year, I've tried implementing more boundaries with work life balance while also trying to grow my page. But it is tough. Yeah, you're doing so much and I really feel you there. I have like you the full time job podcast. Like you, I do some limited speaking, but not like you've been doing. I have the Teachers Pay teacher store and I'm realizing I can't just balance all these things. This year I have to do less and I'm not sure what my right blend is, but I struggle with it.

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So, moving on, let's explore burnout a bit. Have you ever experienced burnout or twinges of it? And if so, what were your symptoms?

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I completely know burnout. I might actually been in active Burnout. I burnt out from therapy at a very involved school and that's part of the reason why I started looking for my new job and started my new

job. I don't do therapy anymore. I assist other SLPs and support them with whatever questions they have about treating. But I'm starting to get burnt out from this job too, with the heavy demands. I know I'm in burnout when I start looking at other jobs on LinkedIn or wherever, specifically ones that are not speech related. I applied to be a front desk person at a Pilates studio and I've never done Pilates, so I'm an introvert, so I really need time in silence on the weekends to relax. So especially when I'm burnt out, you can find me on my couch under a blanket the entire weekend.

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And I've done that too, looking at jobs and wondering about not being an SLP. And I'm extremely introverted. Maybe you are too. And I need at least one full day of quiet and rest each weekend, or I'm horrible to be around, and I feel very unrooted. What are some boundaries you do have that have worked

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for you to

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separate your work life from your home life?

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It's a very difficult thing to do with this new role, but this year, I am working two clock hours. I try not to answer emails after hours. They come in on my phone, but I choose not to respond to them. I am saying no to a lot of extra duties, and my mantra is your inability to time manage is not my emergency. I also did put an app on my phone that turns off certain apps that I use during the day, and that has been very helpful.

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Yeah. And that philosophy that your problem right now is not my emergency right now. And because it's urgent for you doesn't mean it's urgent for me. I love that. What are boundaries that you have with other people to protect your time as an SLP? Or I guess with other apps.

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Right. So, like I mentioned, this year, I downloaded an app which blocks certain apps during scheduled hours. Specifically, those apps that are time drainers during work are TikTok and Facebook. For me, it's been helping a lot with my productivity and it lessens my anxiety. I probably should block Instagram too, but I haven't yet. And I feel like I consider Instagram more of a work thing because that's where I get a lot of my speaking engagements. So that is my next step. But that seems like a big step for me. And I'm not there yet.

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I don't have TikTok, but I will at some point probably try to get it for the SLP happy hour. Are you on TikTok as PTSD SLP.

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I am, but I don't post the same things. I typically use the TikTok for more fun stuff, but different different content

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and scroll Instagram reels, which is a horrible habit. So I'm sure I would do that on TikTok as well. So what is a situation at work or at home that you're dealing with now where you need something to change or you need to implement a boundary because something is sucking energy out of? 1s Um,

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I've been in somewhat of a writer's block with my Instagram page. I don't have the energy to come up with things after work, and I do view my Instagram as a priority. That's where I get the word out. So I set aside time on the weekends to go to a coffee shop and write. That's been the last couple of weekends. But I don't do a specific amount of time per week because then I won't do it. So, like, all right, Rachel, we're going to spend 6 hours this Saturday at a coffee shop because that makes me not want to do it. It's just like, let's go for a fun little adventure at a coffee shop with my computer and see how much we get done.

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So you're treating it gently, you're not holding it tightly. Yes, exactly. And I know how that feels, having a professional Instagram account, it's really time consuming. If you don't have one, I don't think you realize. Yes, it's like hours and hours and hours and hours each week, even if you're not posting a ton, because there's posts, there's reels, there's stories, there's direct messages. So for me, it's a labor of love to educate others about mental health and being an SLP. But it does take time and energy to do so. Let's switch roles here. I've asked my five questions, and you've prepared some questions for me, I think. So. What do you have?

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All right, I have what are your biggest challenges when maintaining a work life

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balance? So I'm a little nervous to answer this question because it's really personal, so I'm going to try to just be general. But since 2020, both me and my husband have been going through some grief and loss. And when both people in a partnership are hurting and when both people people are feeling really sad, it's hard to support each other through that grief and connect. I find myself sometimes overworking because home feels hard. 1s And sad as Alex and I grieve a personal loss to both of us. My goal right now is to prioritize my own home life and work to redevelop a friendship with my husband Alex, even when things are sad and hurt. So I've also done a lot professionally to simplify things at my clinic. I take fewer insurance plans, I use systems that save me time. I am starting to feel like I finally have some bandwidth with my days at work and that's been really helpful. I'm also trying to focus on adding in fun

so when you're tired, sometimes you don't want to do anything. So I keep reminding myself add in fun and that's things that are fun for me, like watching Murder She Wrote or going on a walk, I have kind of silly things that are fun for me and I want to make sure to do those. So I don't have a balance between work and life right now. It's something I'm struggling with. I'm working on creating my clinic, being my day job, where I go for 8 hours and where I don't, then come home and do a lot of continuing education and research and I need more energy for home and family life.

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I totally get that. And thank you so much for sharing all that and being so vulnerable. And I love what you said about trying to focus on fun, doing things that are fun for you, because we forget to do that sometimes and it really is so important. What is your method of time management? So

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my method for time management is going to scare people because ~~is~~ it probably sounds horrible to 99.9% of the people listening. So for time management, I rely on a system of timers that I think would drive most people baddie. And for reference, I work full time. Plus I have this podcast. I have an Instagram professional page, a teacher's teacher store, and I have some speaking gigs. So I have a lot going on. And while I'm doing that, I have to work hard to protect my mental health. And I have some health issues, so I have to protect my physical health. So here's the system. It's not for everyone. It's for me and my specific needs. I don't think it's doable or realistic for most people. So I set a timer for 30 minutes, and then I take a few minutes break to stretch, move around, get some steps in, walk around when the timer beeps. And I do take longer breaks, too, but I usually just take mini breaks. They're important for my body and my mind. The second thing I do is I schedule everything on a Google Calendar. I've realized although I love to do lists, they become a struggle because it's just a long list with no end in sight. There's no priorities or like, sequence of things to do. So now if I make a to do list, I then look and I say like, okay, what are my top priorities? And then I schedule them in, usually in my Google Calendar, and I schedule them in during those 30 minutes work times. So, for example, let's say I have to edit the audio for episode 145 of the podcast, right? I would set a timer for 30 minutes, and it would be in my calendar as a 30 minutes segment. And that helps me manage my time. So I'm scheduling in a very specific task I'm going to do. I'm also defining what done looks like. For me. Done is when the 30 minutes is over. Done is not when the project is done, so I don't get sucked in. So again, defining what done looks like, that's been a third really helpful thing for me besides that scheduling and timer system I have. So that said, when I find a task interesting, I can still get really sucked in and do it for hours and not even notice time it's passing. So that happens too.

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That sounds like how I should organize sometimes and also how I shouldn't because I don't find that I get sucked into things. It's the initiating the task that is really difficult for me. So I love this method. Do you have phone or social media boundaries?

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Yes and no. There are certain things I feel like I'm pretty good at and other things I don't. So I do take did social media breaks, usually in the summer and sometimes actually I've done it every summer and then sometimes in the winter, like winter break as well. Summer breaks. Sometimes it's a month or two, sometimes it's the whole summer. And on those breaks I really realized that the SLP Happy Hour Instagram page, it could be bigger and have more followers if I made more Instagram reels and spent more time on it. But I don't want the life where I'd be spending more time in Instagram. So it is what it is.

And I have also gotten totally pulled into researching like how to make an Instagram strategy and what you're supposed to do. And that's too much for me right now. So doing social media the right way can feel overwhelming and really time consuming. And I'm purposefully choosing not to spend that much time on social media anymore. So I do leave a lot undone when it comes to social media. I also only have one social media account, Instagram. Instead of having multiple. I do have Facebook, I haven't logged on for a long time. I secured like a TikTok account. So I have the SLP Happy Hour TikTok, but I've never hooked in. So there you go. So that said, even though professionally I'm good, like, I'm not just scrolling during the day when I'm tired. In the evening I will scroll Instagram reels and it might even be to the addiction level. It's just a really bad habit that I'm trying to change. And I won't even realize time is passing because I'm just so tired. So I'm trying to not have my phone in the bedroom.

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That makes a lot of sense. Do you find social media fits into the work or life category more for you?

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Work for sure. So SLP. Happy hour and Instagram. It's a professional account. And I do try to stick to being on their weekdays to be like, this is my work account, I'm here on weekdays and to remind myself the topics or work. So I used to, in my Insta stories, put more of my personal life if I went out for dinner or went snowshoeing. And I've purposely really done less of that now. I also like to maintain my private this C. So that's another benefit of not putting much about my personal life and reminding myself this is a work account is really important for me to help me maintain boundaries.

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I do miss the snowshoe stuff because as a Floridian, I just can't understand that world. And it looks so nice and so pretty with all the snow. So I do miss that. How do you measure a good work life balance?

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Great question. I think it's defining what's most important to me and prioritizing it and letting everything else go. So go. What's important to me, my health, my family, relationships and being present. Everything else has to wait. Those things take a priority. That said, I am saying that, but I am not doing that. But I do think you can choose a few priorities, put your energy there, and the rest has to fall by the wayside. We can't do it all. We have to let things go. So since we've touched on job changes and burnout, I wanted to talk about growing out of a job you love. This is important because a job can be a really great fit for a while and then no longer work for you. You can grow out of a job you love. Sometimes you need a different fit and sometimes the job needs a different fit. So I know I've experienced that. Rachel, have you experienced that? Absolutely.

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I left my school position. I still work for the same district, but I was too comfortable in my school position. I was too comfortable that I was bored. I realized also that as an SLP with ADHD, I work better when things need an answer ASAP. I need my days to be different and in this role it's, hey, I have an emergency. Can you come to the school now? Can you call me on teams? Can you call me on the phone? That moves my day so much more. So when schedules are monotonous, I am not focused. And this goes against what I know about PTSD who craves routine. But the school was easy. I was bored and that made me sleepy. So I would also feel bad about being exhausted every day. So that was one reason I left.

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Okay, I have to ask a follow up question. So feeling exhausted every day, but it wasn't because you were expending too much energy and you were actually fatigued? You were fatigued from not having enough stimulation and variety?

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I think so. And I'm a generally sleepy person. I could sleep all the time, and I feel like I need more sleep than others, but my brain was not being stimulated.

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Okay, so here's my experience of growing out of a job. So during the 2020 2021 school year, I was working part time in the schools and part time in my own clinic. So for many years, I loved contracting in the schools. I enjoyed the hours being done at 04:00 p.m. Every day. I enjoyed the school culture. I really liked my coworkers and students, and I'd been working at that particular school for five years. So sometimes it's hard to realize that something has been a fit for a long time, is no longer a good fit. It also feels bad to walk away from a job that's been good to you and you've been good for it, and then for some reason, it just stops working. It doesn't always feel good. Is I don't regret leaving that job. I am much happier full time in my own private practice. But I think it's important to note sometimes you leave a job and it's a good job. It's just that you and the job are no longer a good fit for each other. So when we talk about leaving jobs, we can tend to think about the extremes, being really unhappy, being in a toxic environment. And while I've experienced those too, I've more commonly found this situation where you have a job that's a good fit all around for a while and it stops working. And in reality, that can make you question, should I really leave that job right now?

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I think also we are in a female dominated position. Many of us only leave when things get really bad. We've been threatened with what about the kids? What about the patients? And even if it's a super unhealthy toxic environment, that is something that makes us consider if we should stay or not. But it's also very scary taking yourself out of position that you know what you're currently in and putting yourself in perhaps a worse situation.

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Right to want to stay somewhere safe, even if it's not good. Exactly. Because the next thing could be bad, but it could also be good, or it could also be in the middle. You don't know. Yeah. And I want to add that the systems we work in benefit from our overwork. So in other words, the place you work, your employer benefits when you're overworking because you are doing the job of more than one person and you're getting paid as one person. So if you're listening to this, your self care challenge is to ask yourself, is this job still working for me? And am I still a good fit for this job? Remember, it's often not an extreme, but this intuitive feeling where you realize, you know, this just isn't working for me or, I'm not working for this job. It's not a good fit. I need something different. It is so scary to change, but I've never regretted stepping away when it's not working anymore. Rachel if someone's listening and they're not in an extreme job situation, which it sounds like you weren't in something that was toxic or horrible fit, but they're just thinking about moving on to another job, what can they do right now? It's interesting

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because I would somewhat consider my last job as a toxic environment, but there were good people there that made me want to stay. It was the job of SLP that I was burnt out from and needed a change in that day to day. And I understand it is easier said than done, but check your finances. I know it's a very privileged view to be able to say, you know what? Just leave this job, you'll find another. That is not the case for many people. So check your finances, see if it is possible for you to make a move and how much time you would have to look for a job if you haven't already found one. Is it possible for you to leave the position? Can you find a position if you leave? I know some states threaten to hold your license if you leave midyear. I've heard from Ohio school board, for one example. Some districts seem to have no consequences, for example, mine. But ultimately, your health is what you need to take into consideration. Reflect on why you're staying. If it's for any of those toxic, we're family and it's for the kids, your health is not worth the toxic stress. I have a friend who went through a really traumatic personal situation, and when I was talking to her about my own private practice, not having boundaries, letting clients push me around and how it was impacting just my mental space, and I was saying, I'm worried my job is affecting my health. And she said, you know what? When it gets so bad, you just have to get to a point where you say, I only do things that are healthy for me right now, whether that's your physical health. ^{1s} Or your mental health. And it's so incredible how we can push that very important, those very important keystone Foundational things aside and think like oh, the kids need me. Oh, it's not that bad. But I really

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like a change to instead be like wait a minute, what do I need? And I need to be physically and mentally healthy. Is my job one that is detracting from that significantly? If so, have I tried to make changes? If I've tried to make changes and they haven't worked, can I step away? Like, do I have the bravery to do that? Because there are a lot of people who stay in positions just because of fear of the unknown.

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I think a lot of us do and I think in our fields as women, ^{2s} this is one of the reasons why we are paid overall lower than a lot of us stay in negative situations that we don't know what else is out there. And that is a very scary feeling and I feel like a lot of us might be type A and I think I'm more of the type B, but ^{1s} a lot of us have difficulty with change and it's very scary and transitions are hard. And to go into that unknown of knowing what your everyday looks like at a job that might be toxic, to put yourself into something that might be worse is terrifying. So I understand why people would stay in certain jobs.

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So how can we move forward when. ^{2s} I will say in general, my general rule of thumb, Rachel, you can let me know if you would agree or disagree is if you're thinking of leaving a job, you should take that very seriously, because when I'm happy in a job, I don't actively think about leaving that job.

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I like that. I agree with that. As we were talking, I was trying to reflect if I've ever liked a job or if I actively disliked a job. And everyone I've been asked before if I were to never have to work again, would I? And I'm not one of the people that would be like, I want to work. I would be totally fine with not working. I would find something else to do, would do charity, whatever. But I think a lot of work environments can be toxic based on who the management is and the setting that you're in. And as SLPs, a

lot of time we're put into not great working conditions, whether it's the room, whether it's whatever it is high caseloads. And I think that contributes to the burnout that we see. And I think you should be evaluating constantly. Is this good for me? Should I make a move job wise, career wise, even?

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And you can probably find another job if you're an SLP, right?

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Yeah, I would say so. I know down here we've got tons of vacancies if anyone

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wants one. 2s Come on down. Work for Rachel. So let's say someone's listening and they're thinking, I'm not miserable at my job, but I'm unhappy if I think seriously about it, it is detracting from my mental and or physical health. I would like to change. But what if it's just the same? And people who find themselves who find themselves stuck in this fear loop or this kind of rumination where they're in that rocking chair and they're moving, but they're not going anywhere because they're stuck in those deep grooves of thought patterns of of yeah, but I should be thankful I have a job. Yeah, but I know what my job is like now. Yeah, but what if my next job is

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worse? I have a recommendation, and I don't know if this is. 1s Just off. This is what I do, is I constantly interview. When I see a job opening on LinkedIn or wherever, I constantly interview. So that way the feeling of an interview is not this, oh, I can't believe I'm leaving, or I could be leaving. It's not a big of a to do. In case I find this job that actually works for me, I just interview whatever job I see that is related to my field. And that way it takes away the anxiety of, oh, I've got this big interview, I've got something big that increases that change, that transition part that's very scary for us. So I go on a lot of interviews, one to get practice. It's always helpful to do that. But I want to see what else is out there. I want to see what other people are making. I want to see what my skills would be best suited in a different job. So I think that's one way of getting rid of that or getting over the hurdle of even going on an interview is very scary to people. So I think that's one way to get yourself in the mindset of keep looking for jobs.

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Because anxiety, when in anxiety, one can be stuck in ruminating thoughts that come over and over, similar thoughts that come over and over again and are played in the thought loop and a pattern of inaction. So what you're saying is, in order to dissipate that really pent up strong feeling, what we can do is take the first, next right step to take some action, to look at a job, to actually apply and to try to get some interviews and just see what happens.

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Exactly. And to even just see what's out there. Because I think a lot of us that are say in the school system, you have a lot of people that stay there for a long time, they don't know what the other options are or what other jobs look like, how much money they can make. It's really helpful to go and see what we are worth in other jobs and whether that's enough for you or something that you want to just take into

account as, all right, I went on this job interview. It wasn't for me. And let's keep going and I'll stay in my job, but see what else is out there. I think it's always helpful to see what else is

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out there. Are you glad that you made the change that you made in your own work? Do you regret any of the jobs you've left? Like the last position where you were working directly with clients?

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No, I think it was the right decision for me. And I remember being very nervous of, oh, my gosh, like regret kind of, did I make the right decision? And as soon as I started, I was like, this is the job that I am supposed to be doing. I don't necessarily want to be doing therapy right now. I want to help other SLPs that I feel is more up my alley. And although it was scary in the beginning to go through the unknown and all of that learning in the beginning, I made the right decision. And even as hard as it is right now with all the organizational issues within my district, I still really enjoy my job and that makes me want to stay and have change. I think as long as someone is being thoughtful about leaving, it's not really likely that you'll regret it. I have yet to regret leaving a job and I've left a lot of jobs.

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Yeah. And sometimes a job is for a season and not a lifetime.

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I like that.

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So if you are listening to this episode and you want more on this topic, I would recommend checking out episode 136 of this podcast, which is called *Moving Past Fear and Walking Away from a Job*.^{4s} So that's it for this episode of the SLP Happy Hour podcast where we talked about growing out of a job and asking yourself, does this job I care about care for me back? It's not selfish, it's self preservation. That's it for this episode. I hope you enjoyed listening in as much as Rachel and I enjoyed recording it and that this was a little slice of an SLP Happy Hour for you. Until next time.