**LWQA episode 134**

You're listening to lifework, QA episode 134. Welcome to life work QA where I answer a listener question each week and provide resources and guidance to help you take your life and work to the next level. I'm your host. Dr. Katie Linder. On this episode. I want to ask the question of when should you take a sick day and part of why this is on my mind is because I'm just coming off of taking a couple of sick days myself because I caught a virus and I really needed the time at home.

I was super low energy and just obviously needed to rest and heal but like many of you maybe you have the same issue that I do. There's always that question of should I take the sick day or should I just power through it and. Anyway to work and especially when it's kind of borderline and you're not sure, you know, if you can make it through the day or not and you're trying to kind of make these decisions.

I always kind of run through a series of questions in my head and it helps me to make the decision of whether or not I'm going to cancel all those meetings that I know I'm going to have to reschedule later or rearrange my plans, you know, all those things that are pretty inconvenient to do especially when you're coming off of being sick, but here are the questions that I.

Ask myself in case you need a little rubric for your own situation if you're trying to decide if you should go to work when you're not feeling well. So the first question that I ask myself is am I contagious because I am one of those people that I hate when people come to work and they're obviously ill and I don't think they should be there.

I work in an office environment that is relatively close contact with a lot of different people. We have a shared kitchen and I don't want to spread my germs to all of my co-workers. That's my number one concern and especially my staff. It's just not a nice thing to do. I want to know for example, am I running a fever and a fever is pretty much an automatic stay home situation.

But also if I have a cold or something like that and I'm really coughing a lot or blowing my nose a lot or something like that that's often a decision for me to stay home. So in this case this week, I was running a fever. So that was kind of an automatic like okay. I need to take a couple of days here.

I also want to know am I going to be able to effectively do my job? So let's say I don't feel like I'm contagious but I may be struggling for example with mental Clarity and this is especially true if I'm on a bunch of different cold meds, or I'm trying to just kind of come back from not feeling well and you feel really low.

Energy, and you're distracted by that like is your kind of wondering should I be here? Should I not be here? You just don't feel well, you know, so if I ask myself am I going to be distracted by the fact that I am still not really feeling very well, and I'm not going to be able to effectively do my.

So that's another question that I ask myself. I also ask myself once I'm kind of starting to think about going back to work or even just going at all. Do I feel like I have enough energy to make it through the day and this is often a question. I will ask if I have a really important meeting or something that I just really don't want to reschedule or there's something just important going on where I need to be there.

And this is a pretty rare occasion that something like this would overlap with me not feeling well, but I. Want to make sure that again I'm able to effectively do my job. And even if I can't make it through an entire day. Maybe I'll go in for like a morning or something like that. But if you don't have the energy to make it through the day your body is trying to tell you that you probably should be in bed.

So this is another question that often leads me to make that decision to stay home. I also ask myself the really important question of will I make myself more sick, but going to work rather than staying in bed. And often times I think especially when we're just coming out of being sick. We will go back to work too early.

We will try to power through will kind of get to the point where we're like barely on our feet and we'll go back to work and this is something that I think is not good. I think we need to be careful that we are going back to work when one we're not contagious to we can do effectively do our jobs three we have enough energy to do that work well, but also that we're not going to cause ourselves to like.

Laps and this is something that I've seen with some of my co-workers where they try to come back to work and then they just get sick again. And certainly I've had this experience myself over the years where I've tried to come back for whatever reason and I end up back in bed for a couple of days.

So I always want to know am I going to make myself more sick if I try to go back to early? Now once I have made the decision to stay home, I also asked myself. What on my calendar can be rescheduled and I immediately start emailing out to people to let them know, you know, I'm not going to be there and I need to reschedule the meetings.

And of course everyone is always So Graceful about this just like I would be with them because we have no control often times over our health like this. But I also try for things that maybe can't be rescheduled if I can see if I can attend them remotely. So in this case for this week, I actually had a meeting that I did not want to reschedule.

It was with a large group. I felt like I needed to be there. And I decided to attend via zoom and it was lucky for me that it was in the late afternoon of one of the later days that I had stayed home. So I felt like I had kind of the energy to attend that meeting I certainly was sitting down for that meeting.

I didn't have to travel anywhere. I didn't have to go to campus. I didn't have to walk to the building. You know, I was able to reserve a lot of my energy, but I wanted to make sure that I attended that so there's also a think now so much better technology if you do feel. Like you need to be present for a certain kind of meeting or phone call that you can actually take that and and not reschedule.

Now that said I did have a couple other virtual meetings that I did reschedule this week just because I needed to I didn't want to be constantly worrying about sleeping through one of those meetings because I was napping a lot. I didn't want to have to set my alarm to be reminding myself of you know, when I needed to be in these meetings.

I didn't feel like I had the mental Clarity to be in those meetings and be my kind of full present self. So I was able to reschedule quite a few things. The other question that I ask myself especially if I have to take more than one day off is if I need to ask for extensions for anything and there are deadlines that come up all the time in my work.

Sometimes it's writing projects. Sometimes it's reviewing for conferences. I mean, there's all kinds of things and so I look at my calendar a few days ahead and just make sure that all the things that got kind of shuffled around nothing is kind of impinging upon a deadline that I need to contact.

And let them know that I'm going to be late for something. Now. This is also a big reason why I try to work ahead with pretty much everything so that I have a lot of buffer in case something like this happens because again, we don't have control over it and I want to make sure that I'm not feeling super stressed out on top of feeling not physically well, so I will reach out to people and ask for extensions if you need to.

So I think that the main kind of thing that I'm trying to give you permission to do is basically like send the emails cancel things and go back to bed. I think that we are often just not kind enough to ourselves when we're not feeling well and I to be honest felt this one coming for about a week. I knew I had just finished traveling.

I had been fighting it for a few days and at took me down on like a Friday evening all. Long Monday Tuesday, and so it just kind of is what it is. And I think that we need to call it when we know we're not going to be able to be our best selves and that will help us to heal all the quicker. So I hope some of these questions are helpful to you.

The other one that I think is a big one to ask and early on if you can is do you need to go to the doctor depending on what your symptoms? Might be this is something that especially last summer. I got pretty sick when I was traveling and I really needed prescription medication to get through that period of sickness and I probably waited a little too long.

I was trying to recover just on my own and I eventually needed to go and get some some help from my doctor. So this is something that I think you should also be asking pretty early on depending on what your symptoms are. And of course, I'm not a medical doctor but in. Experience often times we kind of try to power through the healing process as well and if stuff is lingering, it's always a good idea just to check and make sure and especially this flu season.

I know here in the US. It's not been great this year. So. Anyway, take care of yourself. If you're not feeling well, I hope that you are taking the time you need to heal. And if you have other questions that you ask yourself to help you decide whether or not you're going to stay home for a sick day.

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