

Debunking self-care myths with Ariel Belgrave, founder of Gym Hooky

When it comes to self-care, many people think of taking a break due to exhaustion or burnout. But the acts of self-care that make a real difference go beyond self-soothing, says Ariel Belgrave, an award-winning health and fitness expert, wellness consultant, and the founder of [Gym Hooky](#).

Belgrave challenges people to consider self-care as an investment in their future selves.

“The mindset shift I challenge folks to have is: thinking about the future version of you,” Belgrave says. “...The reality is: Taking care of yourself now could be the difference between your independence and being in a nursing home.”

This week on the Health Disparities podcast, host Dr. Tamara Huff and [Ariel Belgrave](#) debunk self-care myths and explore alternative approaches to prioritizing yourself using the P.A.U.S.E. method.

The transcript from today's episode has been lightly edited for clarity.

Ariel Belgrave: The mindset shift I challenge folks to have is: thinking about the future version of you, thinking about planning for your future. Because the things that you choose not to do now in your 20s, your 30s, your 40s, your 50s, you will some way feel it in your 60s, 70s, and 80s. And the reality is: Taking care of yourself now could be the difference between your independence and being in a nursing home.

Tamara Huff: You are listening to the Health Disparities Podcast -- a program of Movement is Life, being recorded live and in person at Movement is Life's annual health equity summit. Our theme this year is “Bridging the Health Equity Gap in Vulnerable Communities,” and as always we are convening with a wonderful community of participants, workshop leaders and speakers.

I'm Dr. Tamara Huff, I'm an orthopedic surgeon based in Georgia, and I am also a board member for Movement is Life.

It is my great pleasure to welcome Ariel Belgrave, an award-winning health and fitness expert, wellness consultant and the founder of Gym Hooky. She also has been my internet bestie, it feels like, for the last few years. She has been featured on Good Morning America. She is an Under Armour brand ambassador and trainer. She got me moving with her wonderful snippets and workout videos on Afrosoca on Women's Health magazine and also serves on their board of advisors now. So I want to give a huge warm welcome to Ariel. And she, also, before I let her talk, I have to tell one more part of the things that she does is: she does have a signature approach, the Lean method, that's empowered so many women, myself included, to adopt healthy habits for high performance. So let me let the burnout whisper Ariel Belgrave say hello.

Ariel Belgrave: Yes, I'm so excited. Thank you for the amazing intro. I appreciate you. Thank you for having me.

TH: We are so so happy to have you here. I guess to get started, we are just coming off for her tremendous plenary session where she talks about her own journey, Ariel, where you talk about your own journey for wellness and personal health. Can you share a little bit about like why burnout and preventing burnout is so important to you?

AB: Yeah, so I like to describe my story as taking a pain and turn it into a purpose. So before there was the Ari Gym Hooky, who's all in on fitness and wellness, there's Ari the HR corporate leader. And in that time of spending a decade in HR, while I achieved a lot of great things, I also burnt out because I was going going going and not taking pauses for myself. So while being in this environment, especially HR, where it's a human service role, I'd say, right? You're taking care of everyone else within the organization, I saw a lot of women around me dealing with the same. So in that time, I had to learn to heal and recover from burnout, but also redefine what success and self-care meant for me. And when I saw that being the case for a lot of women who were also in a similar place as myself, going up the corporate ladder, they were mainly focusing on success, but then their wellbeing was set aside, and I, in my heart felt absolutely called to do that work. So I jumped ship from corporate to go all in on helping women to take the best care of themselves. So the best way that I see it is like, I want to be the person in the audience who's looking at her client at the podium and saying, I'm the reason why she's there because she decided to take the best care of herself.

TH: I love that. And I think it was so powerful for those of us in the audience, for you to be vulnerable and tell us from where you came because many people feel isolated. I think one of the most powerful things when you were asking us like what does burnout mean? Like is it exhaustion? Is it overwhelm? Can you share some of the signs and symptoms that you might be experiencing some burnout?

AB: Yeah, so just like you mentioned, most people think exhaustion. So one thing I like to point out in general, when when you think of burnout, it is chronic stress over a long period of time. And oftentimes we're in this state for a long time. It could be a year of burnout, it could be two years and because our bodies are so used to being in fight or flight, we may be feeling those symptoms and just not paying attention to it or sweeping it under the rug, and it eventually catches up to us.

So what I like to share is different ways that burnout or chronic stress can manifest in our bodies. One, you have the physical that can look like gaining weight and struggling to lose it, having trouble falling asleep, your hair falling out. Pain, aches joints, migraines, you name it. Now, granted individually, this can happen. But it's more of when this happens over a long period of time regularly where it's like, it's not okay. There's also the emotional. So how are you treating the people around you? Are you easily overwhelmed? Are you feeling less motivated in the work that you feel excited and call to do at one point in time? There's the mental, do you find yourself being cynical and negative toward the people around you? Are you finding it hard to

focus and concentrate, maybe being very forgetful of things. And then there's the behavioral, social withdrawn is one of the top. Now I like to joke and say that, there are times when we just don't want to be around people. Okay? I'm an extroverted introvert, that's how I recharge is not being around people per se. But it's very different when you are just completely withdrawn from the people who you love for a long period of time. Or you may find that you're acting out in ways that you don't typically do so. So those are some, honestly the list is even longer under each of those. But those are some that I like to highlight.

TH: Yeah, I really liked that comment of a change in your behavior, because I definitely am that extroverted introvert. I will be in the corner to try to recharge after that. But when there are big changes, where I'm even more, that's kind of a warning sign for me. And getting out there and kind of normalizing the concept to have therapy and coaching available to help with those symptoms when you see those in yourself. Thinking back about okay, we're starting to learn, these are some of our signs or symptoms that we may be experiencing burnout and you can experience burnout, if you're a super high performer, or everyone can. Can you speak a little bit more about that? Because I think when we think about burnout, we only think about these top executives that experience it, but maybe we might sometimes downplay it in ourselves, if we don't see ourselves as those big, top earners and things, we don't, do even have the right to be burnt out?

AB: Yeah, burnout doesn't discriminate. We're all susceptible to it no matter where in the chain of command, I'd say, that you are. Ultimately, every person, we're all built differently in what we can handle, but one common thread is we need rest, right? So whether you are I mean, burnout can happen in high school, burnout can happen in college, and it absolutely does, right, it's when you're pushing yourself to the limit beyond what it can handle without taking a pause. So in human nature, that's all of us, from high... could be junior high too, depending on like the environment you grew up in and how hard academics is pushed, right? And resting may not be the norm that's discussed. But it affects everyone. I think oftentimes, we do see it on the leadership front, because it tends to be a lot of responsibility, which there is, but I never want to discredit what it can look like to, biting off more than you can chew, at any age.

TH: I actually, I love the fact that you brought it up all the way back to middle school, because it really is, we become, we have that pressure from our families from the different ways we grow up and our structure. That pressure is always there. You know? How do you positively handle that. And then as you move through those different stages of education or different stages of life, you have different stressors that kind of push us to be, just power through, to just be stronger and just to handle it and it becomes a more and more toxic example. I love your example you gave during your talk of this beautiful shiny apple that's perfect on the outside, but completely rotten on the inside.

AB: Yeah. So have you ever heard of gifted kid burnout syndrome? Okay, so a lot of the things that we may struggle with as adults tend to stem back to, way back to childhood. I mean, it's no secret, right? It's where a lot of healing that needs to happen as adults. And I bring up gifted kid

burnout syndrome, because that's something that and you can Google it, y'all it's a whole thing. It's something that I, once I understood what it was, I'm like, Ah, that's me.

So, gifted kid burnout syndrome, think of the children who growing up, they're high achievers, right? And these are the ones who are getting the straight A's, recognized in school by their teachers, and they're praised for it by their parents, and they're celebrated. And while that's a great thing, it almost sets the stage for how we want people to react to our achievements. And when we are not getting that, we are pushing the envelope, especially as adults, because the reality is, we may get even more praise as kids than when we get in the world where everyone is operating, where, I remember when I went to Boston College, I'm like, man, everyone's a valedictorian, or like, you may not be on the pedestal as it was before. But what happens as adults is we're working towards that, we may not admit it or realize it, but working towards what that sense of achievement looks like, to the point where we're burning out, to the point where we're often moving the goalposts like, it's never enough, or we're just going to keep on going until we feel that validation externally in some way. Even as adults, we still want to impress our parents in some way, we want to be validated, and what is it that we can do to make them feel, to give us that kind of love they did when we were getting straight A's in elementary school. So I want to bring that up, because that plays a part in how we move as adults. But it does start in the praise that we get when we're younger.

TH: So the gifted, okay, gifted kid burnout syndrome, I want to encourage many of our listeners, if not all of us to take a listen to that because as somebody that's in the medical profession, I can definitely say that you just, you made tingles, come up on some of the things that I've thought about over the years and challenges I've gone through. So you finally figure out that, I have issues with burnout, I, maybe I need to take some time off, maybe I actually do need to take the PTO that I never take. You finally realized that there's a problem. Can you share a little bit more with us about your framework, how you been able to move through it with the PAUSE method that you've been working on?

AB: Yeah, so what started for me was realizing that I needed to redefine, first, success. So what I like to talk about is my formula that I believed to be the best measure of success, which was you hustle, you work hard, it will make you successful. And again, I'm proud of the success I did have early on in my career. It got me the promotions, it got me the recognition, it got me the visibility. But then one day I woke up and I had no idea where I was, because I did not take breaks. So what I needed to do was take several seats, and several steps back, and, (a), redefine what success looked like for me, because a lot of my definition came from what I saw growing up and like, now we're just, we could be on now longer in different ways, right? We have technology, we have our phones, we can take our emails with us. It looks different than it may have looked like for our parents 20 years ago, 25 years ago. So, redefining what success looks like and the difference for me, while I'm gonna grind, while I'm gonna put in hard work, my work ethic is out of this world, in order for me to have sustainable success, I need to make sure that I have added in self-care. Now, we talk about self-care, I also needed to improve my relationship with just the word self-care, because I didn't grow up in an environment where I saw the women in my family taking the best care of themselves, it was always an afterthought. It was

always a thought that, I'm young, now I can handle it now. I don't have to take all the PTO now, I can get the recognition now. And I can enjoy this when I do maybe, PTO in like three, four months from now. So in this healing, I had to come to Jesus moments that ultimately led to better healing and better relationships, not feeling guilty for self-care, not feeling like self-care meant that I was weak, not feeling like self-care, was selfish. So fastforward, I created a pause framework to be more intentional about self-care. Because here's the reality: Most of us know what we need to do. People know they need to exercise, you know that you should be drinking more water, you know, you should eat a healthy meal, right? But why isn't that happening? So I like to talk about the mindset shifts, or even the 'how,' because oftentimes there is a blocker that's not getting you to a place where you are exercising more. So I want, I will share the pause framework now, which is a step by step, things that you should think about to get you steps closer to being intentional about self-care. Should I go through that? Should I go for it?

TH: Looking forward to it. Very excited. everybody, if you're listening, please get your pen and pencils ready because this is excellent.

AB: Okay. So the first, this is called the PAUSE framework. The P is planning your future. So oftentimes we are thinking of the now, right? We want to exercise now if we want to go on vacation and look good, or we have a wedding coming up, it's very short-term, versus thinking about the long game. It is easy to think that my body is younger now, I can handle it, I can rest when I retire, which is years out I'm sure for the most part. So the mindset shift I challenge folks to have is: thinking about the future version of you, thinking about planning for your future. Because the things that you choose not to do now in your 20s, your 30s, your 40s, your 50s, you will some way feel it in your 60s, 70s, and 80s. And the reality is: Taking care of yourself now could be the difference between your independence and being in a nursing home.

So whenever you think about the healthy eating, whenever you think about making sure you're reducing stress, whenever you're thinking about moving your body. Yes, it's for the version of you now who needs it, but what does it look like for prevention, later on in the road when you don't want to have to rely on people or you want to be able to run around with your grandkids.

TH: But I love the idea of being mindful about the things you do today, and how they're going to affect the future self. So, again, during your talk was really powerful when you had us say, at 80 years old, I will be or I am, and then there's a blank. And for me it was, I want to be fabulous. And I thought about that, writing that down is everything I want to do, whether it's making sure I'm well hydrated, so the melanin is poppin. Everything that I do, before getting out there and moving and staying healthy for my family, staying healthy for myself, is for that 80-year-old me.

AB: That will be fabulous!

TF: It's going to be on the Mediterranean, doing all those great things. So I really want to emphasize to our audience, too, the importance of thinking of that future version. And if you name her, I don't know, I haven't named mine yet. But whoever that future version of yourself,

it's great to have that mental picture because that's who you're doing this for, and I just love, I wanted to give you that shout out because I absolutely love that example. And that fabulous version of myself, that fabulous 80-year-old version of me.

AB: You know what I would suggest, so I think the word is a start. Now you can you can narrow that down for whatever, whoever's listening, if there's, when you think I'm 80, and for me, I will be 80 and dancing. So what you will do is, start with that word, fabulous. And, I'm a manifester. I'm also like, I believe in like visual encouragement, as well. So it's like, Okay, I'm gonna be fabulous. Where am I going to be fabulous? What do I look like? How am I going to be feeling? What are the emotions? Who am I surrounding myself with? What am I wearing? Because when you start to visualize fabulous, maybe you are still going to be in your bathing suit being confident. Well, cool. That means that you should be taking care of yourself and doing strength training, and working out and eating healthy. If you want to be traveling and you vision like the beach, right? Do you want to be happy? What would happiness look like for you, right? Maybe less wrinkles, like, you know, however it looks like with a melanin-poppin skin, but start there and then drill down because that's going to be your guiding light for what you focus on now.

TH: I again, I love that, the manifestation, the visualization, it's just so important to again, give yourself reasonable actionable, real life steps to actually achieve these things. So yes, you can go on to your 'A.'

AB: Yes, okay, so 'A' is affirming yourself daily. If anyone does my workouts, they know that I am giving constant reminders on how much we have to remind ourselves that we are it, we are enough, we are valuable, we belong. Oftentimes, we seek validation from other people. So the same way that we are given care and attention and love and maybe even complimenting our partner, our kids, our, our spouse, our colleagues, we have to do the same thing for ourselves because we deserve it. Self-sabotage is a real thing. We all oftentimes, it's easy to feel like you're not enough, or you're not doing enough, or you have to achieve something to feel like you're worthy of it. But no, we're gonna celebrate the progress for whatever that looks like, whether it's personal, professional, wellness, celebrate that along the way, and then just giving ourselves grace, because, again, it's so easy to think that we're not doing enough and we are guilty of moving the goalposts. So it's like we never get to the point of feeling like we've had success. We're also in a time of social media, where highlight reels are a thing. So I say, comparison is the thief of joy. So part of affirming yourself is also protecting your energy in that sense, where if you're following someone that may... there's a difference between someone being inspirational and someone making you feel bad about where you are, everyone's on their own journey. There's something and it's also, you can't judge a book by its cover when it comes to social. That's a whole nother thing. But I want to just emphasize the importance of forming yourself and being our biggest cheerleader.

TH: And again, I will take a pause to just shout you out again on your social especially on Instagram @gymhooky, because those workouts, you always have at least three or four affirmations. So while you have me holding that plank, I'm trying to breathe through and power through that, I feel very good about myself, even though I'm about to pass out on the floor. It's a

very affirmational place to be. And I think many times people who may not use affirmations, it can almost feel intimidating, but it can be as simple as saying, I am enough. So personally, I have a sticky note in the mirror on the mirror saying I am enough and that's just my mantra when I first come out in the morning, no matter what's ahead, I'm more than enough. So if you're not going to be your own best cheerleader, who is? You have to give yourself a shout out every morning. So, yes, if you need some motivation and a workout, @gymhooky, will have you right on both. Okay, move on to your next one.

AB: I got you. Okay, so let's get into the next 'U,' which is unlearning self-care. And this is one of my favorites because I often hear people say, girl, I know what self-care is. So this is where I challenge it and say, maybe not so much. So many of us will say we're practicing self-care, but in reality, we are self-soothing. And I'll give an example similar to that I share in the talk, right?

So, say you come in from work and you had a very stressful day, you're exhausted and you grab that glass of wine, or you're like, Oh, my goodness, I just I just need a plan, I'm just going to book time with a masseuse. Now granted, I'm using these examples, y'all. But there are so many ways that self care can be implemented. It's not just like the massages and the bubble baths, there's, there's far more. But using this as an example, this actually would be considered self-soothing. Yes, massage is self-soothing, because self-soothing is you reacting in the moment to stress, right? It is more of a survival mechanism, survival tactic, to almost put a bandaid on that feeling that you had for that day.

Self-care, I want you to think more of prevention, planning ahead, being proactive. So you are getting to a place where these things are in the calendar ahead of time. So I want you to think of a gas tank, right, and your fuel is on F. Ideally, that's where we want to be, reality is we may not always be there. However, many times we wait until we're on E or the car has been broken down before we start paying attention to building healthier habits or just eating healthier, moving our bodies more, taking that PTO, y'all take your PTO. But ultimately, we want to wait until we're halfway, we want to get to a point where halfway, where it's like, okay, I'm halfway, what are some things I could do to move that needle back over to full. So when I think about self-care, it is looking ahead on the calendar and maybe booking that massage again, as an example. once a quarter, it is making sure you are delegating tasks to your team because that's also self-care because it gives you time back to be able to lean into the things that creatively energize you in the work that you do. It is buying a bottle of water and making sure you have it at your desk and staying hydrated. It is meal prepping, it is so many things. So that is you being proactive, where the reality is, both happen. But I want you to focus on being... really practice self-care more, because yes, we have our moments of stress where like, Okay, I gotta take care of this in this moment. But I always want to share the difference. Because there's a big difference in how we approach it.

TH: Again, I'm gonna pause there, additionally, because I love that concept of unlearning self-care, because when you google self-care, you're in the social media streets, it does, it feels like, oh, they just say they booked a massage. And that's all. If you're in a situation where you either don't have the money for or the resources to be able to do that, that doesn't mean that you can't

have a self-care mindset that's proactive. Maybe self-care for you could be making sure and prioritizing, if you're able to walk every day, before you get started or taking a break at lunch. And that is like, No, I am not talking to you all during 11 to 1130 because that's important time. Or if it's walking with a spouse, that's something that I do with my spouse, is we have our evening walks. And that is sacred time. We do not, we don't book stuff during that time. Yeah, so I really so I love that concept. Because many, many people feel that the only way I can do self-care is if it's something money oriented. Or if it's something like getting my brows done and getting my nails done. Yeah, that's terrific. But if you don't have that resources, it doesn't mean you're not worthy to have the mindset of taking care of yourself.

AB: And here's what I will say, oftentimes those consumerized version of self-care are not solving for the what's deep-rooted and needs to change in order to make sure those, you know, reaching burnout, stress happens again. Can I also actually would love to share some examples outside of the consumerize, so every, lately usually during this time of the year, I do like a self-care, a date, calendar challenge to remind busy professionals to just do one thing simple for themselves. I want to share what some of those can look like for you. If you're someone who are like I don't have time to go to the gym. Well, what is something simple that you can do? You can eat a healthy breakfast, take a social media break. Do something in general that makes you happy that doesn't involve costs or budget. Moving your body for 30 minutes. Reading for pleasure for 30 minutes, nothing that's work-related or that's related to your profession, something that you enjoy reading, starting your day with a to-do list, so you just feel more grounded and ready for the day ahead. Making your bed in the morning, studies do show that that sets the stage for having a productive day ahead. So those are some examples.

TH: Absolutely love that. And then, too, just one last one, as somebody who loves the arts is: sneaking over to your local museum, many times they have free days, and it is so peaceful there just to have a moment.

AB: Love that. Absolutely love it.

TH: All right, we're getting the 'S' I think.

AB: Yes, so 'S' is setting boundaries. This word is thrown around a lot. If there's anything that I want to leave you with, or at least remember is that boundaries are a blueprint for how you want people to treat you. It's more than just saying no. You set boundaries with your kids, you set boundaries with your partner, you set boundaries with your clients, your colleagues, it is your time to set expectations for how you want to be treated and communicating your desires and needs.

One of the questions I often get is, well, how do I know that it's time to set a boundary? And there's one word that I usually encourage, well, that I usually say. Think about those moments of resentment, bitterness, anger, think about the things that you complain about when you come home from work that your colleague did X, and you find that you're complaining about it a lot. A lot of the times y'all we are the villain, we have expectations for people, complaining that people

are sending emails in the workplace after hours. Well, do people even know what after hours is considered when it's been the norm for emails to go out 9 p.m. at night, or getting contacted by your client during the weekends, did you set those expectations? Probably not so well, if it's happening over and over again. So this is your time to think about those moments where you're like, Oh, this is so frustrating. They're doing it over and over again. Take a step back and think about where there's an opportunity to set a boundary. And setting a boundary isn't just saying no and moving on. Setting a boundary is having a solid conversation with the people who may be a part of whatever that change needs to happen. Do you need to have a conversation with your clients? Do you need to have a call or conversation with your partner where you're like, hey, this at this time, I will need your support with X. Is there boundaries that mom needs to set or dad needs to set with the kids? If the door's closed, that means mom is going to not be available for 10 minutes, or something like that. But I think it can vary. But really thinking about those moments where you're like, Oh, I'm so frustrated all the time. And that's a key word, all the time. That means change needs to happen.

TH: I love the fact that you go into: boundaries aren't just a negative thing. It's not just saying no, it's actually empowering. It actually helps people realize that you can take ownership of that. I love your phrase, am I the villain here? Not just that, you are also the hero of this whole thing, right? You can solve this problem for yourself. You don't have to wait till you your partner sets boundaries, or your boss sets boundaries, you can actually do this yourself. You can actually empower yourself to do this. So I think that's just so important when you're thinking about boundaries. Everyone always thinks, Oh, it's so easy. Why haven't you just said No? No, it's actually a whole way of empowering yourself that you can actually take ownership of this and be better yourself. And teach people how you want to be treated.

AB: And I think where you know that the boundary is one that solid you're ready, is being able to communicate it. Because sometimes I see boundaries set in very toxic ways, just not talking to a person, that's like avoidance behavior, versus having the conversation and communicating your needs. That's how you know that you're at a point where it's a solid boundary where you're giving the other person a chance. Now, one thing that I mentioned in my talk is it's not always going to be happy go lucky, like, I expect this from you. You may get pushback, you may have people who are in their feelings about the boundaries you set. The reality is the people who are the ones benefiting the most by you not having the boundaries are the ones who probably be in their most of their feelings when you're ready to communicate it. So also, I mean, using the word empowering is a big thing, because you know that it's about your expectation for other people, but it's also respect that you have for yourself.

TH: Yes. Oh, I couldn't. I couldn't say you better so close us out. We're at 'E.'

AB: Okay, E is examining your energy. Okay. How many of us are can say that our calendars are running our lives? We're all raising our hands in the room over here. We're very calendar-driven, and sometimes our calendar, or oftentimes our calendars look ick. There's no white space in our calendars. It's filled with meetings and personal obligations and social obligations and work obligations and what I will start off with saying is remembering that just because we

can do something doesn't mean we should, As someone who's a recovering people-pleaser -- now listen, I've been saying recovering people pleaser for the last two years, so let's just hope that it moves a little faster from recovering soon -- I'm someone who loves to say Yes to different opportunities and things like that. And I've had to personally take a step back on, not just managing my time. So we hear time management being like, the answer. It's like, Oh, you just got to manage your time better. Time is almost inevitable, right? Like, because we run our lives with our calendars, it's easy to, for someone to ask, if you have 30 minutes, and you look on your calendar, and technically you could have 30 minutes. But really, do you have the energy, if you have back to back meetings, and that's your only time to grab lunch, go for a walk, catch up with a friend, be by yourself and alone and just be in your thoughts?

So the question that I would challenge people to ask, especially if you find yourself with a calendar that's always filled, is, Do I have the energy for that? And that's an empowering question to ask. And how I want you to think about energy is currency. So think of it like money in your piggy bank, you earn it. So what are the things that you're doing to make sure you're filling up your cup? How are you spending it, and you got to think about that expense spreadsheet, right? Thinking of what the output is. When you're spending it is what you're giving to your job, your work your kids, your partner, your colleagues, that's spending it. And then you're saving it. We should always, in every way we can, make sure we're conserving our energy, so we're not always going to eat. So using that example, for that 30 minutes, it's being saved by saying, I actually don't have all the energy, what's left of me, if anything, I need to do something to fill it up, like eating or going for a walk, you're saving it. So that's kind of my spiel on just energy and thinking of it differently than just using our time as a measure of giving to others.

TH: I really liked that because I am so over the time management concept. Like we all have a finite amount of time. Energy management, I think is what we should be going with because it is, there's certain things, people that pour into you, and there are certain things and people that suck all of that energy back out of you. So being mindful of where your energy level is, and then building in time to actually replete that. So I really love that example you gave of that, like, oh, technically, I have time. But no, no, no, we're not talking about time, do I have the mental, physical energy to be able to do that to give you the best version of me? Or do I need to take that for myself.

AB: And you know what, there's something that you said that I want to mention, that I want to highlight here, which is almost like the person matters too, right? So if it is a 30-minute conversation with someone who may, energetically you're aligned, it's inspiring, you need the inspiration for the day versus something that's required were like, oh, this person is probably going to give an emotional dump that I can afford right now, like I have to save it. But if that conversation could be one that allows you to earn energy, where you're like, Oh, I love talking this person, I'm having a not so good day. But I just know that hearing this person's voice is just going to give me the energy I need to survive the rest of the day, then yes, that's a good example of looking at your energy. And that way the time is used to to meet the your own personal needs.

TH: Yeah, I love it. So again, we have just hit it with PAUSE. We got, we're going to plan our future, we're going to affirm ourselves daily, we're going to unlearn the self-care, this negative form of self care, we're going to set boundaries and we're going to examine our energy. Love it, love it. One of the things that you talked about in your talk, and we've kind of gotten into it, that, even though we all may not consider ourselves as leaders, like we may just say, oh, gosh, I'm just going to work, or I'm just going to in my community tried to help. We all kind of are leaders in our own little spheres. And you mentioned self leadership, which I thought was just so cool. I actually hadn't thought of that or heard of that before. Can you share with our audience a little bit about what self leadership is?

AB: Yeah. So most of us know leadership is when you're leading others, right? In whatever capacity that looks like. Self-leadership, one of the things I had learned on my journey to burnout recovery, and just taking better care of myself is that before I can lead others, I have to lead myself. So what are the things that I'm doing to make sure that I'm able to bring my best to these environments as a leader? That could be self care, that could be, I mean, it can vary on what that looks like. But ultimately, what are you doing to take the best care of yourself? What are you doing to grow because self-care is one bucket. But then what does professional growth look like? We're not perfect. One of things I also mentioned when I was speaking is like considering therapy or executive wellness coach. There's always areas that we can improve and self-leadership is owning that you're in a place where you can use more growth, where you can be better. And like that level of awareness is where it starts. And it's the best domino effect. Because the moment you are in a place where you're, where you've implemented a routine, regularly, to practice self-leadership, then you're able to bring that to the people who are reporting to you, who are inspired by you. And that can impact the lives that they lead and the impact that they have in the work that you're a part of.

TH: I think that's something that really, I felt really powerful, was really powerful. That concept of you taking care of yourself, you demonstrating how to better be mindful of self-care as an individual. You're affecting everyone around you. You may, if you're a physician, you may be teaching your nursing team, you may be teaching like the people in your office what's going on, you may be meant you don't even realize it, but your mentee is seeing what you're doing. So if you're modeling negative behavior, they see that but look, if you actually take that step back and get the mental health support that you need, getting the coaching you need. That's a great way of leading as well.

AB: That's right. And it's so easy to, we do have to remember that when you're in a leadership position, you are an influencer, right? And people watch what you're doing, especially those that may be reporting to you or inspired by you. And when they see you doing something a certain way, they may feel like that's the right way. I've had conversations with people, like people are grown, they should know that they shouldn't like, send the emails that late. But it's like no, like that is actually, that's just the way the world works. People are inspired. You're setting the stage for the work environment to be a certain way. And because you have someone, have power and influence, people may believe that as the way that it's done no matter what. So for example, if

you're on PTO, and you are like just sending emails, you may not tell people that you don't have to send emails, but the message that's being sent because you're doing it is like oh, well, that means that I'm probably obligated to like at least check in on emails while I'm supposed to be on vacation in the Bahamas with my family?

TH: Well, again, it hit a little close to home. And I appreciate it, I believe being honest about that. I thought about it because I am one of those people that's very guilty of sending email because I catch up on my email on weekends, PTO time and things like that. And you may get the random email. So I love the fact when you were giving us ideas or ways of being better. So for instance, if you are a night person, it's okay to set, let's use technology to actually better humanity. Yes, let's set that email for 8 a.m. and not for 11 to 12 o'clock when you might be answering it, or setting that email to go out on Monday morning versus the Saturday midafternoon that you might actually be doing that. And that model is that great behavior for your team, but also for your family. Because your spouse knows that, yeah, she's not going to be on over there and working on this all day long, that we have protected time. So I just absolutely love that. Good stuff.

So we have just had such a great talking, you told us all about the PAUSE on purpose and all these things. And honestly, it's just been an amazing experience. So if you had to take a step back, since you've shared all this tremendous information with us, what are three things that we can take from you today that we can implement in our own lives like three, like, I guess the take-home messages that you could share with us?

AB: Yeah, so I talk a lot about needing to redefine success and self-care. So when I think about the first takeaway, it would be a reminder that your health and well being need to be a top priority on your journey to success and impact. And further on that is that it doesn't need to be complex. We tend to overthink what self-care, or just taking care of ourselves, looks like and reminder that the small things add up to having the biggest impact on our wellness and our mental health, our physical health and so forth. So that's one.

The second is taking intentional pauses are just very powerful. It can fuel your impact. It can help you find balance in the chaos and just unleash what your actual and full potential is. So pausing on purpose, think of that PAUSE framework and what that looks like. And even with pausing, what are small things you could do throughout your day, that can just give you the energy that you need to be your best, healthiest and happiest version of yourself.

And then last is the PAUSE framework itself. One thing I often say is, listen, I can hand you the shovel, but there's a difference between knowing and doing, which will be you digging the hole. So it is implementing what you learned for that framework. And it doesn't have to be all at once. You can focus on one thing at a time, but just make sure that you're being really intentional. There is no badge of honor for being burnt out. It ain't cute and burnout does not discriminate. You are not an exception. I'm sorry to break it to you. So just make sure that you're using that framework to build a foundation for your self-care routine.

TH: I just I love what you said, because they're all about small, actionable steps, right that anybody can do. And it doesn't discriminate, just as burnout doesn't discriminate in who it affects, it also can be solved with steps that we all can take. We may still have people that have been listening this wondering why in the world, we talking about burnout on a health equity podcast. But this is hard work. And when we allow ourselves to be burnt out, that can contribute to a lot of the health inequities that we see, the rates of Alzheimer's of all kinds of dementia and things are affected by the stress we put on ourselves.

There's a very recent study that just came out in JAMA talking about, out of all when we look at racial inequities with hypertension, it's in women, in other groups, outside of African American women, it's actually protective to have education to have higher socioeconomic status, it's actually the opposite for Black women, we actually do worse with higher incomes, higher levels of education, because of, they surmise that, the reason behind that is because of the stress that we're facing, because of that additional exposure to burnout. So it's real sis, it really is something that's really important that and what we've talked about today with Ari, these are things that are just life or death in many of our communities. So this is, burnout is a health equity issue, overcoming in and embracing self-care, it's just important and the center of like movement is life in the center of what our purpose is.

AB: Yeah. And even along the lines of health equity. I mean, I started this work, doing community-driven work. So what I don't share as much as I should is, when I first became a fitness instructor in New York, I became an instructor because I felt like the community that I was a part of, there was this belief that you had to have gym memberships. Hence gym hooky was this notion about skipping the gym. But there wasn't access to quality or even fun fitness and wellness. So I started my career in like, in the, I'd say like deep in like churches and community centers. And just hearing the stories of these women, there's one story that one woman, she started taking my class coming to community center, and she was like, today, I was able to walk my daughter to the to the bus stop, like and not be out of breath and actually make it the full way. And these are things where, that speaks to their not being enough resources, but then even education on what wellness can look like because we see what we see on TV. And when we feel like it's out of reach, especially in the communities that lack resources, then we feel like we're not good enough or it'd be a bit for us to get there. It's very exclusive, especially fitness. So I definitely wanted to mention that because when I think of one of, something I hope for, it's more like education in our communities, because I think it could go a long way in what it looks like to show up for ourselves while we hustle and grind.

TH: Yeah, again, like movement is such an important part of self-care and having access to that, it really is a democracy when it comes to, well, it needs to be a democracy when it comes for movement. And again, I will continuously plug at @gymhooky on Instagram because she does have, Ari has exercises and programs that are out there that where she does the dances with you that has very diverse music, whether you're you're doing salsa, or if you're just jamming to Beyonce. And that's something you can do, and it's all different fitness levels. Right. And also for our communities out there, we have Operation Changed with, if you visit our website, you can see some of the different programs because in Operation Change, we focus on the

importance of movement as a form of self-care, as a way of bettering yourself and then bringing that energy bringing that now that you're filled up back to your community.

So that's really the whole core value of what we do in Movement Is Life and what we do with Operation Change. So I just really enjoyed talking with you and we talk about what gives you energy and what energy and people and opportunities to pour into you. Ari, you poured into me today. I don't know if you know, and you all cannot see but we even match today, our energy was so intact, so in sync that without even planning it, we had the same poppin red. This opportunity is pour it into my entire spirit. I appreciate you.

AB: Thank you and thank you for creating this space for these conversations. Also for me to be able to, I'd say, preach the wellness gospel. I think it's podcasts like this that allow for that space, it is events like the summit that can just get many of us thinking, even when we're in this work. I think there's a lot of assumptions made like, oh in the medical field, you know, it's like no, no exception. All of us can use a reminder and think of it differently, that can help us be the best version of ourselves.

I absolutely love it. Love it, love it, love it. And yes, we have to take care of ourselves so we can take care of everybody else. So you went through your amazing framework. And we've talked a lot about all the great work you do. Can you direct us to a resource online where we may be able to find out more information about you and what the good work you're doing?

AB: I'm all about spreading wellness education. If you go to my website, www.gymhooky.com, you'll be able to join my mailing list where every Monday I dropped wellness gems that can help you be 1% better on your wellness journey. I also, when you join the mailing list, you'll get a free guide on the things that you can do to take the best care of yourself. And I am a woman of surprises. So once you're on my mailing list, I'll make sure that you have the resources that you need to take care of you.

TH: Well, this has been an absolutely amazing conversation. Ari, thank you again for coming. So thanks to my guest today Ariel Belgrave from Gym Hooky. And thanks to all of our listeners for joining us on America's leading health equity podcast. Until next time, be safe and be well.