Kelly: Hi and welcome back to the Legal Nurse Podcast. This is your co-host, Kelly Campbell. Today we have Sharon Weinstein.

She educates and empowers others to achieve balance. She is the author of *B is for Balance: 12 Steps to Balance at Home and at Work*. Welcome and thanks for joining us today.

Sharon: I’m delighted to be here. Thank you.

Kelly: Okay, so tell us how did you end up getting into this field? We know you were a legal nurse consultant at one time. What made you make the change?

Sharon: I was a legal nurse consultant while I was practicing, and my practice involved infusion nursing. So, I had spent a considerable amount of time within that field and became a legal nurse consultant on infusion-related cases. And they involved everything from neonatal to people in the last transitions of life.

Kelly: Wow, okay. That’s a fascinating field.

Sharon: It is and there’s so much room for error, which is why I was so involved. You know risk is a huge problem, so yeah.

Kelly: Right. Okay, so talking about balance and work, what made you dive into this field?

Sharon: Okay, the balance piece came to me at about the same time that I decided to be a full-time professional speaker. And it came to me because at the time I was working two weeks out of every month for 12 years in the new independent states of the former Soviet Union or in Central and Eastern Europe. I worked three countries a week. My job was to create the healthcare infrastructure for those new 11 countries of the former Soviet Union. In doing so, I spent a lot of time and a lot of places and very little time at home, as you can imagine.
Kelly:  Oh, yes.

Sharon:  At one point, I was in Armenia, and I missed a lifestyle event that was very important to me. That event was going to be on Long Island, and I was in Europe, in Armenia near the Caucasus, near the Caspian Sea. And so, at that point the flight that I was supposed to be on had contraband on board, and the contraband was not drug-related, as I might have thought with my background in infusion therapy. Instead, it was butter and sausage, a pound of each. When that happened, we couldn’t leave the country for four days, and therefore I missed the lifestyle event, and at that point I said to myself, “Aha, this is your moment. You’ve got to get a life.”

As much as I loved what I did, I could no longer work those kinds of hours because I kept thinking, “Well, if there’s a marriage, there will be grandchildren. I’m not about to miss that.” And so, I switched gears, formed an LLC and a non-for-profit, and really transitioned 100 percent into the speaking field. I had a strong message that everybody needed to hear.

Kelly:  It was a lesson learned to really change your life.

Sharon:  Sometimes it takes that.

Kelly:  Yeah.

Sharon:  Right.

Kelly:  A big wonk on the head, right?

Sharon:  Exactly, exactly. Yeah.

Kelly:  Okay, so tell us some of these things. “B” for balance, what are some of the 12 steps?

Sharon:  The 12 steps are things like simplify your life, focus, eat, sleep, and be merry, like it is okay to have fun. As a matter of fact, it’s a good thing. Things like managing fatigue. And nurses, of course, are so involved with the whole concept of fatigue, whether it’s compassion fatigue or alarm fatigue or just plain your body is sending you a message, which is what was happening to me. So, there are so many steps in place that really involve rethinking who you are and what you want to be when
you grow up and deciding that it’s time perhaps to do that. So, a lot of it deals with taking the time for yourself, making things easier, knowing your purpose, and those sorts of things.

Kelly: Okay, so let’s take these step by step. “Taking the time for yourself,” it makes me think, “Okay, work/life balance.” An example, “Have you ever taken on too much and taken on more than you can handle just because you don’t know how to say, ‘No?’”

Sharon: We’ve all done that, Kelly. We’ve all done that. First, you’re only as good as you are balanced. If you don’t take the time for yourself, you cannot be the best that you can be. And we need to understand that self-care is not selfish. So, it is okay to say, “No” on occasion. It is okay not to fill your to-do list with things that are from here to eternity. And instead, perhaps pick five things that you want to get done today. I call those “The Must-Do List,” and as you cross them off, you feel a sense of accomplishment, and then you go on the next day and select five more. You don’t just keep changing the dates on your calendar because in doing so you’ll never get to the bottom of that list. Things will just keep on piling because you don’t know how to say, “No.”

Kelly: Now, how do you prioritize (because I don’t have children)? This is getting personal here.

Sharon: Okay.

Kelly: So, I don’t have children. I have precious nephews and a niece. So, our listeners have absolutely seen my precious niece pop in on a podcast because I could not say, “No” to my sister to babysit when I run my own business out of my home. So, what do you do there?

Sharon: That’s an interesting question because we’ve all seen that as well. Whether you’re a parent, whether you’re in a relationship, whether you’re a single parent, whether you have no kids but do have a plethora of nieces and nephews and others perhaps who are near and dear to your heart, you really want to be involved with them. Seeing them and seeing the smile on that face brings you great joy. It is okay to say, “I am really happy to help you. This is the block of time that I have available. Can we make that work?”
Everybody understands that you need to have a break. That break must be for work. It must be for your biological systems. It must be time for you. You need to be good to you before you can be good to others.

**Kelly:** True, true. It was just my sister needed me at the very last minute and I guess I didn’t know what to do.

**Sharon:** I understand. I understand and it’s not like you can put the child in front of a device and hamper their upbringing in some way or contribute to poor habits. It’s not like that at all.

**Kelly:** No, she was four, you know.

**Sharon:** A four-year-old needs attention, so no, I totally get it. I think it’s a real challenge. In that case, I would reschedule something that’s work-related in order to meet the needs of a family member.

**Kelly:** Yes. So, like you said, putting something into a device or a child in front of a device. What is presenteeism?

**Sharon:** Presenteeism? Presenteeism is being present in the moment. It’s an important aspect. Nurses, especially those who work in hospitals, totally get it. They get it because, say you’re a nurse on an ICU and you have two patients assigned, and the school calls and says your child fell and broke his or her leg. Where is your mindset at that time? Is it how fast can I turf these two patients onto somebody else or off to somebody else while I get to the school, which is where my head is right now? And it’s where my heart is, and I know I belong. That’s presenteeism. It’s really being in the moment. And it’s when you’re not present in the moment, Kelly, that’s when accidents happen. That’s when risks occur. That’s when bad things occur that create work for the legal nurse consultant community. There’s no question in my mind, being present means that when your kids are talking to you or your family member is chatting with you, you are 100 percent engaged. They don’t hear you typing in the background. They don’t hear you shuffling papers and doing other things. They know that you are with them for that moment. And to carve out five minutes of time like that is more valuable than being half time or part time with those you need to manage.
Kelly: That is so true. So, it does come down to carving out and separating your personal life and your professional life. Do you have some tips, or do you have some suggestions for that?

Sharon: We often talk about our personal and professional lives as if they can be separated. You just asked the question, “Do I have tips for how to do that?” The truth is that you have one life to live, only one. The balance between work and life reflects the balance within you. So, work/life balance is like a barometer for wellbeing, for personal, professional, for a family, for community, and it’s really all about you. Being the be all things to all people leader, it doesn’t cut it anymore. Nobody can be all things to everyone, so it’s really about the separation between mind, body, spirit, and how those 12 steps lead people into balance.

“How do we separate them?”

For years, I didn’t think we did. I, like many of my colleagues, including the legal nurse consultants, thought that there were more than 24 hours in a day. I didn’t believe in 365 days a year. I could push into 24 hours what it would take other people perhaps 48 hours to do. So, my idea is: Step back, look at the big picture, look at what’s right in front of you and what you must do, and keep that perspective in mind as you help others to feel good about themselves while you feel good about being you.

I think that that’s the critical skill that’s allowed me to touch many lives and still feel whole, and still feel as if I have time for those near and dear to me. I’ll be honest, the reason that I’m in the DC area now, after 30 years in Chicago, is because I needed to be closer to family. I needed that connection. I was tired of saying no to the people most important to me. And as I got into balance and stopped working a hundred hours a week and limited my hours to 35 or 40, I realized I could have a life just like real people. It’s about getting that life.

Kelly: Right. Yeah.

Sharon: So, you do. You asked me what you do, you create a personal environment that sustains you, that makes you feel whole. When you work at home as you do and as I do, make it a comfortable environment. Don’t have your stuff scattered all over the house. Have
one space in which you work and keep your things there. Bounce back and don’t let minor setbacks hold you back and stay in the present and move forward. And I think the most important thing for you and for me and for all our peers, is to know when to ask for help and to just go for it. Ask for it.

**Kelly:** That’s so true. That’s so true. You just made, in one sentence, I think four such important statements. Have a home office or a dedicated space, not having papers in your kitchen, in your TV room, in your bedroom. I do have that home office. That is the only spot, and that has made a world of difference for me.

**Sharon:** So, I said really, I was talking about the fact that your daily life unfolds this space that you’ve created through your actions, your reactions, and your non-action. So, having that dedicated space allows you to have a focus and then bounce back as needed. If you have a minor setback, perhaps you have an accident when you go out, heaven forbid or something else happens, don’t let it hold you back. Look at it as perhaps a stopping point along the trail, but a journey that is ongoing and continual and that will end with happiness. And then stay in the present and just move forward. Don’t worry about what happened yesterday. You can’t relive it, you can’t fix it, so just let it go and move on.

One of the most important lessons my son taught me was, “Mom, let it go. If you don’t let it go, it will torment you from now until eternity and it’s not worth it. What do you get from it? Nothing.”

**Kelly:** So true. You got to live and learn, right?

**Sharon:** Exactly and the last thing I said was, “Know when you need help.” So, if you need help yourself in terms of perhaps a virtual assistant to help you, I use a couple of interns for my non-for-profit in return for which I provide grades. That works well for me. They’re doing my research, they’re doing my data analysis, they’re doing all those things, and I’m providing value to them at the same time. When I need someone to create something, I’ll go to Fiverr or to Thumbtack or to Upwork or to any of the apps that are now available to simplify our lives. And I’ll outsource the kinds of things that I need that I don’t want to spend time on.
Would it be easier for me to create another website and use Kajabi to do it? Yes, but I have a marvelous remote IT person and webmaster who does all those things for me. And am I spending a little bit more money? Yes, I am, but am I saving my mind at the same time? Yes, I am.

**Kelly:** And saving time is more valuable.

**Sharon:** Time is valuable. What could I be doing that would be more productive than me creating content or moving something around or looking for photos or editing things, and I’m not very good at it? So, why not go to someone who does that well?

**Kelly:** Right, right. It’s all about balance.

**Sharon:** Exactly, exactly.

**Kelly:** It’s all about balance. “B is for Balance,” right?

**Sharon:** It certainly is. It is, there’s no question.

This is Pat Iyer. Before we continue with the show, I want to share a source of great information about stress management. I talk to too many LNCs who work all the time, are exhausted, and afraid of getting burned out.

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Let’s go back to the show.

Kelly: Okay, so we’ve covered (I’m trying to calculate now) maybe eight of your steps. What else do we have here? Finding your purpose.

Sharon: Yes. Okay, so finding your purpose is important. Many people don’t really understand what their purpose is all about. Without purpose, you have no reason for being. So, when you sit down and close your eyes and meditate and think about, “What is my purpose, why was I brought to this earth and why am I doing the work that I want to do? And it is critical, so it doesn’t equate to only our work lives. It equates to our home lives and our roles within the community and within our family. And it’s a combination of balance with all aspects of life tossed into one.
It’s something that creates fulfillment, what brings you joy. If you are doing work that does not bring you joy, chances are you should not be doing that work. If that work is only about a paycheck, that is not a reason for being. So, when you can identify what your purpose is, it gives meaning to each and everything that you do. It directs and it guides you. It provides a pathway, a GPS. It motivates you. Being on purpose means living your life with intention and that’s the way each of us should function each day.

Kelly: That’s a beautiful statement. That is a beautiful statement and you should be able to just add onto that. You should be able to look at legal nurse consulting or life care planning and know that you are doing valuable work for someone in addition to yourself.

Sharon: That’s very true. There’s an author named Grace Hansen who says, and I quote, “Don’t be afraid your life will end, be afraid that it will never begin.”

Kelly: I like that.

Sharon: I like it, too. Don’t be afraid that it will end because many people spend so much time looking for work or finding things to do, they don’t realize they have something right in front of them.

Kelly: Yes.

Sharon: They have something right in front of them. To grasp that, to identify it, to know it, to love it, to treasury it is such a treat. It’s such a gift.

Kelly: Right. I really like that. Who is the…who?

Sharon: Her name is Grace Hansen, H-A-N-S-E-N.

Kelly: Okay, I like that. So, another point we just briefly touched on before we went to record this. How do you recharge your body’s batteries, especially when you were working so many hours or so many cases? What do you suggest?

Sharon: Okay, I’m going to show you something. I’ll use a visual. Here’s my phone. What do you do when your phone has a low battery? You plug it in. That’s what the cord is for. Or if you have one of those phones that you can place on top of someone else’s, you get that instant
charge that they show on TV. You cannot do that with the body. Anything else, an app, a computer or something that is slow, you recharge, you reboot. Well, think about the concept of reboot because you can also reboot the human body.

“And how do you do that?”

You do that first by hydrating. You must hydrate. You must drink half of your body weight in ounces of water per day to keep your cells functioning, to keep your body organs functioning, to keep yourself healthy, to keep your mind quick. Many of us are spending too much of our time on a computer screen, and constant views of a computer screen with the blue light and everything else really does hamper cognition in many ways, and we don’t want that to happen.

So, first we’re going to hydrate. We want to make sure that we had a decent night’s sleep, and a decent night’s sleep might be for me what it might not be for you. I worked on perhaps that overtime mode if you will, thinking you could work 24 hours a day and continue for several days in a row and it would work. That only works, Kelly, when you’re 30, 35 and maybe as you push 40, but something happens when you hit that magic number and the system no longer works. Even in high school, we all did it at one time or another in college, but it does not work as you get beyond that 39, 40 mark. It just doesn’t work, so you need to get a decent night’s sleep. For me, a decent night’s sleep is about seven and a half hours, and I wake up refreshed and energized.

You need to give your body some form of movement or motion. For me, it’s the gym in the morning. For you, it might be a brisk walk. It might be deep breathing. It might be meditation. It might be something that gets your body and your mind thinking in the right direction, and keeps you focused. I think that other things you can do are, besides knowing your purpose, besides eating well, and that doesn’t mean a lot of carbs and a lot of this and fad diets because it’s not an added fat or whatever it is of the day. It’s a constant focus on keeping your body in its best shape possible, so that it will work for you the way that you wanted to work for you and produce what you want.
The next thing perhaps for me is allowing a little bit of humor in the workplace. It’s okay to smile. It’s okay to laugh. My kids for years told me that I had a 40 to 50 percent sense of humor. And at one point about six years ago I hit 80 and now I’m close to 90. So, I’m excited about the opportunity to recognize the fact that I can tell a good joke. And it’s hard for me because a lot of my cousins are involved in humor. They’re very involved in entertainment and in that industry, and they’re naturally funny. I’m not, but my timing is getting so much better.

Surround yourself with things that make you happy. Maybe it’s a mobile in your office. Maybe it’s something that plays soft music. Maybe it’s some happiness spread around you. Flowers on your desk, a plant, something that makes you feel good, makes you take a deep breath occasionally and makes you really appreciate your environment.

I think that something else is the whole concept of knowing how to negotiate. Negotiation is something that you and I do each day. We’ve done it for years. Maybe it’s buying a car, maybe it’s signing a lease. Maybe it’s buying a home. Maybe it’s choosing the right childcare provider. Maybe it’s choosing the right spouse or the right life partner.

Each of us negotiates one time or another. You can negotiate within the work setting as well. You can negotiate with yourself if you’re your own boss, and you can negotiate with that law firm or with whomever has brought you on or that health system or the representation for the patient. You can negotiate what you can do and what you cannot do.

And if you think about each of those aspects as you go about your daily life, you realize that there can be time at the end of the day just for you. That you can sit down and put your feet up and take a deep breath and say, “Wow, I really contributed so much to the lives of others today.” Because you know, Kelly, in the healthcare business, it’s a commodity like any other business, isn’t it?

The difference is that commodities with which we deal are human lives and human happiness, neither of which can ever be compromised. As legal nurse consultants, when our peers advise on risk or on malpractice or on alleged malpractice or on something that
didn’t quite go right, and we’ve all seen it one time or another, both on the plaintiff and on the defendant’s side, when we’re doing that, we want to be whole. We want to be true to ourselves and true to the process. We want to be the best that we can be and focus entirely on that case, so that we bring the best value to the client who has brought us on. That is what will produce a great outcome. It’s not only at the bedside, it’s beyond the bedside in the aftercare.

Kelly: So true, true. So, how do we get in touch with you? How do we get this *B is for Balance*? How can we continue to grow in our balance?

Sharon: Okay, so first, we can continue the dialogue. I’m happy to connect with anyone who’s connected to you. My book, *B is for Balance, Second Edition*, has a dedicated website, thanks to the publisher, and that dedicated website is bisforbalance.com. I blog on that every month and they maintain the website. All I need to do is blog. The book itself is available both from Nursing Knowledge International, which is the publishing arm of the Nursing National Honor Society, Sigma Theta Tau, or of course on Amazon, where all good things are located. I’m obviously aware of the fact that you can buy anything on Amazon. I went searching yesterday and the things that I found were unbelievable. Anything is on Amazon.

My speaker website is sharonmweinstein.com. Don’t forget the middle initial “M”. And my consulting site is just simply “S” for Sharon, “M” for Mary, but that’s not my name, “W” for Weinstein groupllc.com, so smwgroupllc.com. And the best way to remember that is so many ways, SMW, Group, LLC.com. There are so many ways that you and I, and our colleagues can achieve balance in our lives.

Kelly: Wonderful. Well, thanks so much for your time today. It was so informative.

Sharon: It’s been my pleasure, thanks. Thank you for having me and don’t be afraid to say, “No” when the kids need to be watched, once they know within timeframes.

Kelly: That’s so true.

Sharon: I know it brings you joy. I can see the smile on your face and the gleam in your eye when you talk about them.
Kelly: I love them, so.

Sharon: But make it quality time, okay.

Kelly: You know what, that is true.

Sharon: Yeah.

Kelly: Quality time.

Sharon: Thank you, I enjoyed it. Take care.

Kelly: All right, all right listeners, tune in next week and don’t forget to like us. Bye-bye.

Sharon: Thank you.

Pat Iyer again with one last mention of Instant Stress Busters, the training that shares methods to handle your stress so that you can have a correct work life balance. You’ll be able to order this using the “learn more” button in the show notes for this podcast at podcast.legalnursebusiness.com. Or if you are listening to our podcast using our new mobile app, called biz.edu, you’ll see the show notes on your phone. Get our app at legalnursebusiness.com/bizedu.

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