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Coach Approach Ministries Podcast

Episode 136: Breakthrough Past Burnout

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Brian Miller: Hi I'm Brian Miller, Strategic Director for Coach Approach Ministries, CAM for short. And this week we are going to feature an interview recorded for Christian Coaching Magazine by Michael Cheuk. In this interview Michael interviews Dr. Errin Weisman about her experience with burnout and how that led to a breakthrough to start a coaching practice that helps doctors and working moms to live their best. Errin was trained by Coach Approach Ministries, and we thought you might be interested in her thoughts on burnout, and also to see how she is using her coach training to gain the flexibility she desires as a working mom.

Brian Miller: Also as a note, if you're interested in subscribing to Christian Coaching Magazine, you can do so by going to Christiancoachingmag.com and paying $15.00 per year, which not only gives you access to amazing articles on coaching, but also helps to support Michael in bringing added value such as this interview. With no further ado, here is Michael Cheuk's interview with Dr. Errin Weisman.

Michael Cheuk: Hello. This is Michael Cheuk. I'm the Acquisition's Editor for Christian Coaching Magazine, and today I have the privilege of interviewing Errin Weisman. Errin and I have known each other, I don't know, for the last three years or so, and I have just followed her life a little bit, and she has gone through so many amazing breakthroughs, which I thought would be a wonderful contribution to the theme of our magazine this issue. So Errin, it is so good to see you and I'm so glad that we have a chance to just share, an opportunity for you to share what's going on in your life.

Errin Weisman: Absolutely! Thank you so much, Michael. It's great to get on here and yeah, see you face-to-face since we've done coaching training together, and talk with your audience about my unique situation, because I'm definitely an open book.

Michael Cheuk: Great, great. So yes! This is about breakthroughs. Tell me and tell the audience a little bit about your life and your work as a physician, and the challenges, and the kind of pivots and the breakthroughs that you have really stepped into very intentionally to be where you are right now.

Errin Weisman: Okay. It's big. So I will try to give you the Cliffs Notes version so we don't keep people here forever and ever.

Michael Cheuk: I'm bracing myself, okay.

Errin Weisman: I am a talker. So, yeah. In life I'm Errin. In work I'm Dr. Weisman. I am a family medicine trained osteopathic physician. I went through medical school and graduated in 2011, and then went through family medicine residency from '11 to '14, and then I got out into private practice. And during that time I had such a lack of self-awareness that it wasn't until I got into private practice that I realized that I was completely and utterly burned out. I always tell people I'm not evidently the smartest physician, but no one will ever outwork me. And that comes through in my life over and over again. I was the resident champion for so many projects. Not only did I take on residency and being a physician, I started motherhood very early, and I had two kids in residency. And what I always tell people is, you think you can do it all, and you try to do it all, and I literally did it all. I had two kids, and I had to make up about one month of residency. So I took off between both kids about seven weeks.

Michael Cheuk: Holy Moly.

Errin Weisman: So I was burned, I was just totally burned out. I had nothing left. Burnout we can identify in so many ways, but the definition that I cling to is an erosion of your soul. Back in 2014 my soul was fractured. I had gave, and gave, and gave, and spent, and spent, and spent, and tried to fulfill all of my roles. And then when I got out into private practice I started looking around and saying, "This is what I'm going to be doing for the next three decades of my life?" And just almost a feeling of distress, I think, is a good way to describe it. I live and work in rural Indiana, and I'm actually the only female physician in my county. And so you want to talk about feelings of alone. Not that my partners weren't great, but they were middle-aged men whose children were older. They hadn't just finished training. The training system's different now than what they had experienced through residency and starting a practice. Healthcare is so different. It's made so many changes in the last 10 years that as a new provider, there just wasn't anything else.

Errin Weisman: And so I started looking around, and I did what we tell all of our patients not to do, and I got on the Internet, and I found thousands of other doctors who felt the same way. And misery loves company, but yet I knew that there wasn't something internally wrong with me, because at that point in my life I was like looking around. I had summited that mountain. I had got through medical school. I had done all the milestones I thought that I was supposed to do. And at the top of the mountain I looked around, and I said, "Oh my God! I climbed the wrong mountain."

Michael Cheuk: Wow.

Errin Weisman: And with that, like I said, I started looking, and I actually found a fellow physician, she was out in California, and she was running a program for doctor entrepreneurs. And I thought, "Well I've got that in me. Maybe I can do that." And the more I read her stuff, the more I realized it wasn't the external job that needed to be changed, it was the internal environment of myself that needed to be closely examined and gone through, because there was so many things in my life that I had just kind of put in a closet. Like I'll deal with that later, I'll deal with that later. And then the closet door just popped open one day and it all came out.

Errin Weisman: And so I started doing life coaching, personally, because I knew I wasn't depressed. I knew I didn't need to get admitted to the psychiatric ward. I knew that there had to be more, that it wasn't me that was broken. There had to be more and I needed to figure it out. So with working through with her, I realized I am like, "No! It was just you were burning your candle at both ends. You were not doing any self-care. You were giving a 110% as a physician because you were basing your worth off of your work." And then it was not being restorative. It was not being fulfilling in that.

Errin Weisman: And so with that, it was just such an amazing change, and as I kept working with her, I realized, I was like, "Where are all these doctor coaches? Damn it! There needs to be more of us out here." This is the stuff that we needed to learn in medical school to stay human as we take care of others. And I think that translates so well ministers, to teachers, any of the helping professions. I really think everyone needs to have a life coach in their back pocket. So it was so important to me that I went and got training, and kept up with my medical practice, and through that, not only do we go through training, we have to do the work ourselves so that then we can coach other people. And so by doing the work then, I realized that where I was at was not going to be sustainable, and I needed to make some changes.

Errin Weisman: And in doctor world, that can be huge. We sign some pretty hefty contracts, and part of my contract was a non-compete clause that essentially blocked me out of a 50-mile radius of where I lived, where my husband farms, where we had bought a home. And that was another sticking point that I had felt stuck. Like, "Oh my God! I can only do family medicine in an outpatient setting. And what do I do if I quit? Or where do I find another job?" So that spurred some more breakthroughs that I realized, I was like, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. This is like a small sliver in a huge spectrum of things that is now blacked out." And guess what? It only lasts a year. So I am proud to say as of last month, I celebrated the expiration of my non-compete. We didn't starve. We didn't lose our house. I'm still practicing medicine, just in a different form. And it took me getting outside of that, and also my husbands comment of, "Errin. There's a doctor shortage right now," to realize that I wasn't stuck.

Errin Weisman: So I took on a different role as an emergency room physician to wait out that non-compete. But now that it's over, that spectrum is wide open with every color imaginable in the rainbow of what I can do. And in addition to that, I have really hit the ground running with being a physician life coach. I specifically talk to who I was three years ago, and that our physician moms experiencing burnout for the first time, craving work/life balance that they know that they need and desire. And it doesn't mean that that doesn't apply to everybody, but like we were mentioning before, you've got to know who your message is for, and who you are championing to.

Errin Weisman: I think so many times when we talk about niching down, and I don't like saying niche (neesh). I'm not going to do that. It's nich people. I'm a biology major. My new nich down, instead of thinking like who is it ... The question I always tell people is, "Who are you a champion for?" That is your niche. Or the other question is, "Who are you three to five years ago?" That is your niche. So that is your message to that, and so whenever I'm sitting down and writing and blog, or I love to do videos on Facebook, that is the woman that I am talking to, Dr. Weisman five years ago. And so it's powerful. It's so powerful. I don't care what industry that you're in. Just as a whole, as a society, we need this. We need to know that no amount of degrees, no amount of time on call, no matter how many lives that I have saved, my worth is not based on that, and my life cannot be based on that.

Michael Cheuk: Man. That sounds like the major breakthrough, the major insight that you are now living fully into.

Errin Weisman: Yeah. Definitely leaning into that. That it's not always about the grind. It's not always about the misery. I think in medicine, there's kind of like an underlying curriculum of work harder, or sleep less, be miserable, because that means that you're the best physician. When in reality, and if you think about it as a patient, wouldn't you want a well-rested, well-adjusted, happy physician taking care of you and your loved ones? Someone that can truly say that they love their life, and that they are not on the verge or in the middle of burnout because of the issues that they're dealing with?

Errin Weisman: And it's not just our training. It's not just the subculture of medicine. There is a lot of hard stop blocks in medicine right now that I particularly help physicians work around. Like right now it's huge to say, like patient availability. As a doctor, you need to be available all the time. That is unrealistic. It's absolutely unrealistic. And I know that there are certain patients who want to have that. But flip the tables on that and say, "Would you want your doctor calling you at any time? Or answering text messages at any point? Or getting on the computer at any time of day to cater to you? And to bother you?" And the availability of resources is so much better now, that that's a big beef for me.

Errin Weisman: Another one is the electronic medical records. It's turning doctors into secretaries rather than the healers that we are. We went into medicine because we love and we're deeply passionate about caring for people. And right now, there's a big computer screen sitting in front of every single one of us that we want to throw through the wall right now. So it's time to change, because unfortunately our legislatures and administrators have made our job very difficult because of that.

Michael Cheuk: So if I could just stop for a moment, because what I'm hearing is you want to practice human-based medicine instead of right now it seems like it's data-based, or financial bottom line based-

Errin Weisman: Absolutely.

Michael Cheuk: ... medicine.

Errin Weisman: Absolutely.

Michael Cheuk: As a person who has pastored in churches, I just hear so many echoes in the life and work of a pastor that moves us away from that human-based to much more of these metrics about having enough bodies, or budgets, or programs, and that's the criteria for how effective, or the worth of a pastor. I'm just kind of talking that back to see if you resonate with that a little.

Errin Weisman: Yeah. There's so much. There's so much that ... Because as humans, we want proof, right? We want to know that on paper this is how it looks. But I always say I take care of people. I don't take care of numbers. And it doesn't matter how many diabetic foot exams that I do, it doesn't matter how many patients I can turn and burn through the office. Did I make a difference in someone's life today? I really think that should be the measure. Unfortunately it's not right now. Money is the big driver. But that's where, as far as in healthcare, where the fight is. It's both an individual fight about being personally well, and I find people want to almost blame doctors who go through burnout.

Errin Weisman: First is an institutional who ... we're now ranking doctors on patient satisfaction, on who orders the most colonoscopies and their patients complete them. It's insane to me that that's how we are going to rank our doctors, we're going to rank our pastors, we're going to rank our teachers on metrics, because there's just some things that cannot be measured.

Michael Cheuk: Right. Right. So I suspect that this video is going to be seen about a lot of coaches, some pastors, some who are in some ministry field. And let's say that they are listening to you, but they're not physicians, but they are kind of experiencing some of the burnout, some of the stuckness. So what would you say to those folks, tapping upon your experience, some of the challenges, obstacles that you have to face in order to break through?

Errin Weisman: First one is you are not alone. Help is available for those who ask. It's so hard when you are on a pedestal, like a minister, like a doctor to admit, "I am human, and I am hurting right now, and I need help." That's the first breakthrough that any of us have to realize. Now with that, you don't have to air your dirty laundry with every single person that comes through the door. The person that you choose to talk with, they should earn your vulnerability. They should be someone who, like I said, who's a very trusted person that you can go to. And that's why I think physician life coaching is so important because as doctors and as ministers you can't just talk to everybody about the issues that are going on. In my world it's HIPAA. There's a lot of private things. I mean we ask people to get undressed in front of us and totally be vulnerable. So patients need that protection. And same thing in the ministry world. I mean so much vulnerabilities are unleashed that sometimes we feel like we can't talk about that.

Errin Weisman: But there's a phenomenon called the second victim syndrome. And what that is, it's actually trauma that is not inflicted ... from the first victim onto the caregiver. And so I find with life coaching that is a really good vector for people to word vomit, to just get it out in a safe environment with someone who can totally understand and relate. And why that is so important in healthcare is because as physicians in specific states in the United States, if you seek out mental health support, it will be reported to your state licensing board, whereas coaching is still, does not fall in that. I'm not a mandated reporter unless I feel like it's an unsafe situation. And so I think that's where it's a huge advantage for these type of protected roles to have a safe space to be vulnerable. So that's my first one, is number one, is you're not alone, and seek someone out who has earned your vulnerability.

Errin Weisman: And then the next one that I think is huge is that burnout is not a personal failing. And that's a huge one because it feels like it. Like I said, I felt broken. I felt like it was my fault. But in reality, whenever you have a flower that doesn't grow in the ground in the garden? You don't change the flower. You change where it's at. You change the environment. You change something about the environment. So whether your flower needs a little bit more water, or it just needs to be yanked out by the roots and planted somewhere else, that is what we need to know about burnout. It's one that, like I said, it's a fracturing of your soul. It is a spiritual issue.

Errin Weisman: And I think we are starting to acknowledge that in healthcare more, because we're realizing that physician are not burning out because of the work load. Because let me tell you, we work our asses off and we can do it seven days a week. It is actually from the unfulfillment of our calling and our purpose. When you have a purpose of healing and taking care of people, but you have a system in which you cannot do that, it causes all this middle ground that fractures. And so I think that's the same for ministers as well, and for teachers. When you have such a desire to help people, but you're in such a place that that cannot take place, you just have this internal turmoil, fracturing, whatever you want to call it that happens.

Errin Weisman: So that's when it's really important, first to take care of your internal environment, and then secondly to get healthy enough to look at your external environment and say, "I will tolerate this no more. These are the changes that need to happen." And actually I work a lot with female physicians on negotiation, on changing their practice well, and even in helping prepare them to leave from a practice to a more sustainable practice, because it's those things that you're not taught. You're just ... You're supposed to get out of school, go through training, put your shingle out, and there you stay forever and ever, but you don't realize. And it's the same thing with churches. You don't realize truly what the environment is until you're in it.

Errin Weisman: And sometimes things can be changed for the better, and that's wonderful when that can happen, but sometimes you need to know that it's time to pull up the roots and move on, and that it's not a personal failing. The one mantra that I have been hanging onto a lot lately is falling forward. Failing forward. I am failing forward each time. And I have to remind myself that even that mantra is not true because it's not failing. It's life, and it's taking that next best step forward, whatever it is.

Michael Cheuk: Right. So I think we have a couple of minutes left.

Errin Weisman: Sure.

Michael Cheuk: Any kind of final takeaway that you would like for our subscribers to hear?

Errin Weisman: I just think everybody needs to know that what you're doing is absolutely worthwhile because when you're coaching like I do, I'm a department of one in my business, that sometimes you just sit there and you're like, "Gosh! Is this worth it?" But then what I encourage everybody to do is to make a list of, where has your coaching been impactful? And so mine's on like a little notebook piece of paper, and I pull it out and I'm like, "I helped that doctor get to a practice that she wants." Or, "I helped that doctor talk to her boss at a meeting that she needed to state her truth, and she needed to ask for things for her life." And that's when you know, even if it's just a few small things, or even if you haven't had any clients yet, you have self-coached yourself, and you need to go back and see the changes that you have made with that.

Michael Cheuk: So focus on progress, and celebrate those milestones.

Errin Weisman: You absolutely have to, because we get so busy in life that we're just like, "Okay. Check mark. Next. Check mark. Next." That if you don't take the intentional time, that's like it was kind of silly. I had a non-compete party when that expired. But it was so important to me because that was such a roadblock in my life, that I was so terrified of, that when it was over it was like, "We need to have a party about this to celebrate the accomplishment!" Because what are you doing if you are just back in the grind of next, next, next. There's nothing more sad than a burned out life coach. Let me tell you that. It's sad to be a burned out doctor, but we kind of know a little bit better about the work we ought to be doing, and that's why it's so important to yourself have coaching as well.

Michael Cheuk: Right, right. Well good! Well, I'm going to share my computer screen so that people will see your website, and so yeah. Tell me more about how people can contact you, if they-

Errin Weisman: Sure! So I initially started what I call Truth Prescriptions. It's a little quippy off of the physician theme, but I had started making social media squares with just little quotes that I thought were important. And as I developed my coaching business, Truth Prescriptions has kind of what I've kept it. So you can find me at Truthrxs.com. This that you're seeing on the screen is the about page, and that is my beautiful family there. That's the three Weisman children -

Michael Cheuk: The three wise men!

Errin Weisman: Yeah. And when asked if I'm going to have more, and I was like, "Nope. Three wise men in the Bible? We are good!" And that tells a little bit about who I am. If you want to know more about my story, there's more in there. I try to show it very authentic. And I know there's a lot of physicians that are very worried about being on the Internet and social media. I feel like that's what people want. They don't want the white coat. They want the person under the white coat. And so that's who I aspire to show up as. So you can do ... My husband’s even started to jump in on some videos since-

Michael Cheuk: There he is right there.

Errin Weisman: Ah, yeah. Since I do physicians moms, I think it's so important for our non-physician spouses to kind of be in the conversation, because the day that I came home and told him, "Honey. I can no longer do this. I'm quitting my job." He looked at me and said, "We have $200,000.00 in debt Errin. We're going to need to have a little bit time to figure this out." So I try to bring him into the equation too, because through all of my transitions in working through burnout, and everything that I'm doing, he has been a stable entity in that. So you can find me at my website. I'm also a Millennial as you can tell. Whoop, whoop! So I love hanging out on social media. You can find me Truth Prescriptions at the same thing, Truthrxs. That's the page that I run. There's my personal site on there, but I'll be honest. I probably hang out more on my business site.

Errin Weisman: And then also I started ... I'm big into groups as well, because I feel like that's the best means of communication through Facebook. I just started one that's called Mother Doctor Badass. And I named it after myself, and it is for professional moms who are seeking work/life balance. And I'll be first and foremost honest, there's no such thing as balance. It's always a give and take. But it's learning to know what to take, and then what to give away. And so we talk about that a lot in the group. And actually I am organizing a retreat in May. We're going to call it Mom VaCa 2019. And so I am looking forward to doing a retreat with my group down in the sunny Keys of Florida.

Michael Cheuk: Oh wow!

Errin Weisman: So hang out with me there. I'm also on LinkedIn, because I think it's really important as professionals to be talking about this in a professional arena. No more is this woo woo voodoo type stuff. This is real life changing and life altering things. So you can find me at ErrinWeismanDO on LinkedIn. And then I'm on Instagram. That's where I post a lot of fun pictures of my family, what we're doing, any kind of new products. I love making eBooks, so I've actually launched a couple of them. One of them*, Is It Depression, Or Is It Burnout*? And the other one I'm gearing to launch in October, or actually I think it's out now, but I'm going to do a webinar in October. It's called *Asking for What You Want At Work, A Guide To Difficult Conversations*. And so you can get any of those on the website, or through any of my links through Facebook or LinkedIn.

Errin Weisman: And I would just love to hang out with any other coaches. I think it's so important that we support one another, because the road is hard, and it's extremely difficult to market yourself when you can't say, "Hey. I sell widget X." Or, "I can treat your pneumonia." Instead we have to tell people about the results that they *will* have by working with us. Not that they can't get to it on their own, but by working with a coach, they need to be reminded that you will get there a lot better with a sidekick by your side, with as much encourage that you need. And so I know that's hard for a lot of coaches is the promotion of themselves. But you have to remember, who are you talking to? That person you were three to five years ago, and wouldn't you have loved to have you sitting across Zoom or on the phone helping you guide it through? Absolutely.

Michael Cheuk: Well, my goodness. Thank you so much. And you are a bundle of energy.

Errin Weisman: You know it. I haven't even had any coffee yet this morning. Just wait until I get caffeinated.

Michael Cheuk: Right. So just for the record, we started recording this at 10:00 in the morning Eastern time, and you're in Indiana.

Errin Weisman: I am.

Michael Cheuk: Yep, yep. Well Errin, thank you so much for this time and just-

Errin Weisman: Absolutely.

Michael Cheuk: ... to share your story. And I am really glad that we have had this time together. And blessings to you as you continue in this journey, and may you continue to experience breakthroughs, but as you also help so many others to have those kinds of breakthroughs in their life, to a much fuller and a life that fulfills their purpose and calling.

Errin Weisman: Absolutely. And I can't wait to see who all responds to this. I want you to drop me line, and if you've watched it to say, "Hey," and let's connect.

Michael Cheuk: Absolutely. Absolutely. All right. Well, I am going to sign off on this interview. And once again, I want to thank Dr. Errin Weisman for this interview. All right. Thanks Errin!

Errin Weisman: Bye, guys.

Michael Cheuk: Bye, bye.

Brian Miller: Thanks for listening to this week’s podcast. Coach Approach Ministries is a nonprofit coach training school with over 15 years of experience training more than 2000 coaches. Let us know how we can help you start or further your coaching career by visiting us at Coachapproachministries.org or email me at Bmiller@ca-ministries.com. See you next week.

Brian Miller: A community of coaches exist who have the same heart and same struggles that you have. They love seeing people get their Aha!, and they hate the idea of marketing themselves to get clients. We want to invite you into this community. This is a group of practicing coaches working on all aspects of building a coaching practice. They have full access to each other, and to the CAM leadership team. New members are only welcomed twice a year, one week in January, and another week in September. An open window is coming soon. If you'd like more information about the community, or to sign up for our waiting list, go to Coachapproachministries.org/membership. There is nothing like belonging to a like-minded community. Coachapproachministries.org/membership.