



**WellnessCast™ Conversation with Joe Bankman, Stanford Law Professor & Psychologist
and Sarah Weinstein, Lawyer & Psychotherapist**

Musical Opening: Ring the bells that still can ring. Forget your perfect offering. There is a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in. [Leonard Cohen, *Anthem*]

Joe Bankman: Welcome to the WellnessCast™ I'm Joe Bankman, a Stanford law professor and also a psychologist. My partner in this podcast is Sarah Weinstein, a lawyer and also a therapist. Today is a bittersweet podcast. Sarah, you're leaving to devote full-time to your private practice.

Sarah Weinstein: It certainly is bittersweet. You know, we're sitting here in my office together in Rockridge, and we recorded our first episode here in my office just about a year ago. This has been a wonderful opportunity for me, and it has been so much fun to work with you.

Joe Bankman: Departures are a big part of professional life and personal life, so Sarah and I thought we would focus on our departure today and interview each other, share our thoughts about wellness and the WellnessCast™ and say a little bit about where we're going.

Sarah, maybe you can start. Tell us a little bit about what excites you in your practice.

Sarah Weinstein: Sure, of course, I'm happy to talk about my work.

Before I get there, I want to say a few things about how I discerned that I needed to focus solely on my private practice. I really like to give my whole heart and mind to things that I do, and that includes work with my clients to do reading, studying, attending conferences. My private practice is very full right now.

I want to give that same whole heart and mind to the podcast, and I just really found that I didn't have the bandwidth to do both projects in the way that I like

to do things. Ultimately, I had to really do some soul-searching and, for me, what's most personally fulfilling is to do face-to-face work with clients.

Joe Bankman: Sarah, a lot of our lawyers are feeling overextended, and they've got one thing that's really exciting in their life. Maybe they have a family, I know you have a son, and they have some other things they're interested in, too, and the question is: "Can they do it all?" Sometimes, the answer is just, "No."

Sarah Weinstein: That's exactly right, Joe, and I think it's very challenging because, for a big decision, whether it's in the professional realm, such as this one, or with personal relationships, we want all the feelings to go in one direction, because that's how we think we know when we're making the "right" decision. But, unfortunately, often times, it's more about holding space for a lot of ambivalence, a lot of different feelings that come up and, ultimately, there's a loss and sometimes it's painful. In this situation, this was not an easy decision for me.

Sarah Weinstein Let me turn now to your question about what excites me in my private practice. What I really enjoy, what I think I have an aptitude for, is just sitting with someone in challenging moments and figuring out together, collaborating, about what is real for them in that moment, or in that period of their life. Getting to a little bit of what feels true to them and how they can stay true to themselves.

I read a quote I really liked recently by Harry Stack Sullivan, who is a Twentieth-Century psychiatrist, and it was something like, "We are all more simply human than otherwise." I think that really is what I love about my work, is just sitting with someone, having that relationship unfold.

I really ask people to sit with some of the uncertainty. A lot of lawyers come in, they want results very, very quickly and that's not really how life works. It's definitely not how therapy works, and so, sometimes you just have to live through something and sit with the uncertainty and wait for things to unfold. Admittedly, it's not always been a strength of mine, either, but it's something that I'm really trying to hone in myself and in my clients.

I've seen such wonder in my life and wonder does not always come in easy or neat packages. Wonder is not always positive, but I think what I mean by that is that things happen to us along the way. They can be challenging, they can be startling, they can be wonderful but, in the end, it all makes us who we are. I like to get to that part of someone and sit with them and figure out what is going on.

Joe Bankman: Sarah, I'm now going to ask you some questions about the podcast. What was the most exciting part of the podcast for you?

Sarah Weinstein: I think what has been most exciting for me is the ability to reach a larger audience with a message that is very important to me. And that is that, for lawyers, there should be no stigma in seeking help for a wellness issue, or a more serious mental health issue, or even just a transition in your life.

Mental health is really on a continuum, and there are always struggles along the way. There is always anxiety. And, as our theme song, the Leonard Cohen lyrics from *Anthem*, suggests there is really so much strength in vulnerability. If I can get any message across, that probably would be it.

What about for you?

Joe Bankman: You know, I get excited every time there's a guest. I just think this person is going to be terrific. When I'm talking to a guest, I can lose sight of everything else, the audience goes away. So, for me, the most exciting part is actually to get to know our guest.

What was the most surprising part of the whole experience for you?

Sarah Weinstein: I don't know if people listened to the Intro episode, but in that episode, I shared that I had a pretty significant stammer in my childhood, running really through now, but it's really not as much as it used to be. So what was surprising for me was how much I enjoyed the experience. And it was really a growing edge for me. I would really encourage people to take risks like this because it was not easy for me, but it pushed me into an area that was really challenging. That was very surprising and also rewarding.

What about for you? Was anything surprising for you? I know you're very used to reaching a larger audience at Stanford.

Joe Bankman: I tend to be a talking head every now and then for the media. But, you know, I never listen to myself. It's not my thing. So, this podcast was very difficult for me at first because I had to hear myself. But it was very interesting, and I think healthy, for me to listen to myself and see what I liked and didn't like.

Sarah Weinstein: That's wonderful. I'm glad to hear that.

Joe Bankman: What was the most frustrating thing about this?

Sarah Weinstein: The most frustrating for me were the technical aspects of it, because I'm a person who, I like to do things well. I'm a planner and, often there was some last-minute technical snafu, and I found it very stressful and very frustrating. I tried to roll with it as best I could, but it was uncomfortable for me.

Joe Bankman: And I threw it all on you.

Sarah Weinstein: Yeah. Well, that part was fine. I'm actually very grateful that I learned how to do it all.

What about for you? I would imagine dealing with my technical snafus was not too pleasant.

Joe Bankman: You know, there's an old Utah Phillips shtick that you can find on YouTube. I think the name of it is *Moose Turd Pie*, and the bottom line is, don't criticize unless you want to do it yourself. So every time you had a problem, Sarah, all I thought was, "There but for the grace of God...I'm not saying a word."

Sarah Weinstein: You were very gracious, very gracious.

Joe Bankman: Well, I knew what the alternative was. It was that I would start chipping in and I didn't want to do that.

Sarah Weinstein: Yes. Well, what else, Joe? Tell us a little bit about when you started the Wellness Project at Stanford, what were your thoughts about that? Where did this emanate from, and what are you hoping to gain from it?

Joe Bankman: Well, it seemed like such an unexplored issue in law, as in everywhere else, really.

Here we have people like me who have this incredible privilege of teaching these brilliant, brilliant students. We give them thousands of hours of X, and X being specialized knowledge and methodology with which to become a great lawyer, and they get really good at that. They were pretty good at it before they started law school. That's why they got in at a place like Stanford. But we don't give them any help about the rest of their life. I thought if they had problems, it's going to be in that other domain, including professional problems. So, I thought, "let's redraw that balance a little bit," and the Wellness Project can be a piece of that.

Sarah Weinstein: Yes, yes. That is so wonderful. I agree wholeheartedly and I'm so glad that you're interested in it. Where do you see things going from here in the Project, and the podcast, if you know?

Joe Bankman: Well, I'm listening to the master, Sarah, because one of your suggestions is the podcast might continue with a law student hosting it and rotating with different law students as a way to bring other people into the fold and give them kind of a stake in the process and give different voices, which would be lovely.

In terms of the Wellness Project, I think it's still up in the air. We had a terrific symposium, which we hosted, we being Stanford Law School and the Center for Legal Ethics, the other day on substance abuse. Some of our listeners may have read a chilling piece in the New York Times by Eileen Zimmerman about the death of her ex-husband, who is a partner in a local Silicon Valley law firm.

Sarah Weinstein: Yes, yes. That *was* a chilling piece.

Joe Bankman: Eileen was one of the panelists, and we had a huge audience there, so that leads me to think there's still a lot of interest.

Sarah Weinstein: One of the reasons I brought up to you that I thought it may be interesting to have a student co-host the WellnessCast™ with you, each time a different student, is just to bring more student voices in and to hear what would actually be helpful for people. Because I know in my private practice, a lot of lawyers, there's still such a great need. That's why my practice is so full and I have to leave the Wellness Project!

So, if you are interested, please write to Joe and let him know, maybe whether you want to co-host the show one month if you're at Stanford, or if you have any ideas for where you'd like to see the project go in the future.

Do you want to give your email information, Joe?

Joe Bankman: Absolutely. It's jbankman@stanford.edu. If you type in Bankman and Stanford, you'll get my webpage at the law school right away, and you get the email.

Sarah Weinstein: Yes. If anyone would like to find me, I have a website for my private practice, www.sarahweinsteinterapy.com. I have a private practice in Rockridge, in Berkeley, and I see primarily lawyers, law students and physicians.

Joe Bankman: Well, I'm glad you said that because I'm kind of thinking too bad for us, but great news for your clients.

Sarah Weinstein: Thank you, Joe. As I started with, this has been such a great opportunity for me. I feel like you really took a chance on an idea that I had to do this podcast, and you said “yes” to it. I found that very inspiring, and I really appreciate your willingness to go into an area that really neither of us knew anything about.

Joe Bankman: It's been lovely having you. You know, we always end these podcasts with something that works. What are you going to do in the here and now to have a good weekend?

Sarah Weinstein: I have an acronym that I share with my clients. I'm not actually a big fan of acronyms at all, but this one is useful for me. It's SWYMR. The S is for Sleep; and the W is for Water or good nutrition or both, hopefully; the Y is Yoga, that's the form of exercise I do, but I ask people to substitute something else if it works better for them; the M is Meditation, but it can also be Music or some other contemplative practice; and the R is Relationships.

So when you asked me about my weekend, I recently had a death in my family. My aunt passed away. She was 93. It was a little bit on the sudden side and it's hit me a little bit hard, I have to say. We have a very, very small family and her

being gone, it really feels like an important loss. So, I've been not doing too well on the S for sleep lately, and I haven't been doing well on the Y for yoga, and so, I really am going to recommit this weekend to getting more rest and getting more exercise.

What I tell my clients is that it's really hard to do all five, but to check in with yourself. How many are you doing? If you're doing three, or even two, that's good. In terms of the R for Relationships, I'm going home now after we record this to spend time with my eight-year-old son, and that's just about my favorite activity in the world.

How about for you, Joe? What are you doing in the here and now to have a good weekend?

Joe Bankman: Well, after we close today, I'm going to visit one of my sons who has a startup in Berkeley. It's a business and my father was a businessman. While I'm not quite a businessman, evidently, I feel my father jumping into my skin a little bit and appreciating the intricacies of the business he's built, so that's satisfying for me in an unusual way.

Sarah Weinstein: That is lovely.

I do have one more question, and I know we've often ended with a wellness technique. Do you have a wellness technique that you would like to offer for our last show?

Joe Bankman: You know, Sarah, I'm an extrovert, and if you're an extrovert, you get energy from being with people. I think even if you're an introvert, being with people and social connections are so central to well-being. If I have a technique that makes me happy, it's if I can put communities in there and friends that I find a meaningful connection with, that's my wellness go-to.

Sarah Weinstein: I love that technique. Thank you, Joe.

Joe Bankman: And thank all of you. We're going to close this chapter, really, of the WellnessCast™ and say goodbye to Sarah.

Sarah Weinstein: Thank you.

Joe Bankman: I'm a little emotional as you can see

Sarah Weinstein: Oh, thank you, Joe.

Joe Bankman: And I'm looking forward to hearing from our listeners about what our next chapter ought to look like.

Sarah Weinstein:

I just want to thank all of the listeners who have appreciated the podcast and our guests. I do hope that people will write in to Joe and help him as he explores what the next chapter is for the podcast.

Thank you so much for listening. It's been such a pleasure, and we wish Joe luck as he goes forward.