

The Langley Files: CIA's Podcast
File 011

How an Ops Officer and an Industry Expert Drove a New Focus on Wellbeing at CIA

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Walter: At CIA, we work around the clock and across the globe to help keep Americans and others around the world safe. Secrecy is often vital to our work.

Dee: But we're committed to sharing what we can when we can. So let us be your guides around the halls of Langley as we open our files and speak with those who have dedicated themselves to this mission.

Walter: These are their stories.

Walter and Dee: This is The Langley Files.

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Walter: Paul was a longtime CIA operations officer deployed to a warzone in the years after 9/11 when he and his colleagues were the target of a terrorist attack from the very group they were working to counter. The attack nearly ended Paul's life—and although he survived, it left him with lifelong injuries. But Paul didn't leave CIA. He continued working as an operations officer in the field, served in another active conflict zone, and rose to some of CIA's most senior positions. But to keep the endemic pain of his injuries at bay throughout it all, he had to keep moving—literally. His exercise regimen became an essential part of his daily routine. And as he prepared to retire from the Agency in recent years, he undertook a different kind of mission—one to find out what other CIA officers needed to maintain the wellbeing required to do their jobs, whether at Headquarters or across the world.

Dee: Dr. Jennifer Posa was a longtime industry expert in organizational health who was serving as the Global Head of Employee Mental Wellbeing and Workplace Effectiveness for Johnson & Johnson. With degrees in psychology, organizational psychology, and health fitness management, she had previously spent 17 years at the Mayo Clinic, and even taught a course in workplace health promotion at American University in Washington, DC. Then, one day in 2022, something unusual happened: she got a call from CIA. CIA Director Bill Burns was creating a new position, she was told, and the Agency's leadership wanted to know if she would be interested. She was, and in October of that year, Dr. Posa was sworn in as a new CIA officer, in a newly minted role spurred by advocacy like Paul's: that of CIA's first Chief Wellbeing Officer.

Walter: Paul and Dr. Posa's stories are a part of a larger one: that of the changing way CIA takes care of its people. It's an effort that Director Burns has called his greatest responsibility and made a top priority for CIA's leaders... and it's one that has evolved over decades of operations in hostile areas, and amid a time in which CIA officers remain in harm's way in various parts of the world.

Dee: And today on The Langley Files, we're going to sit down with both Paul and Dr. Posa, to hear about the surprising way in which their stories overlapped, how the Agency is fostering resiliency in a workforce with a mission unlike any other, and what anyone can do to build a bit of it in their own lives.

Dee: Welcome back to The Langley Files everybody. We are happy to sit down today with our Chief Wellbeing Officer, Dr. Posa, and a former colleague of ours here at the Agency, Paul, who are going to chat with us about wellbeing.

Walter: Yea, we are super excited. So thank both of you guys for sitting down with us today.

Dee: And Paul, you yourself have a story in in many ways reflects a lot of what several officers have gone through. You have experience working in the war zones, and we're just wondering if you could, and are able to, would you mind sharing a little bit about your career background here at the Agency while you were here?

Paul: My career background, for a DO, Director of Operations, case officer, operations officer, predominantly overseas, so we're the ones that are out there, meeting assets, recruiting assets, spies. That's what we do as an Agency - collecting intelligence. It's a job that's always on when you're overseas, when you're an ops officer. Uh, there is no off time. There's no downtime. And like a lot of folks after 9/11, I found myself serving out in a war zone and, and again, unfortunately, not unlike a lot of people found myself injured in a in a terrorist attack. And it was an attack where, we lost lives, and I'm I count myself as being extremely fortunate. Sustained traumatic injuries along with others for those who didn't perish. But um, and it's something I live with physically, you know, every day and talking to trauma surgeons afterwards, you know, look at me in the eye saying you're supposed to be dead. You should not be alive. You'll be lucky if you ever walk again.

So to kind of have that told to you, and again, we've got other officers who confronted that same situation and who live with injuries every day. Uh, it was a very, you know, it was a motivating thing. And I'm like, I'm gonna overcome this and if not for being fit and then recovering, where I went to physical therapy and they said, "Yep, okay, you're good enough." Well, for me, that wasn't good enough. I wanted to run again, which they said, "Good luck with that." And so it was, you know, determination and a drive in my case to do it, but, and then with shrapnel and metal stuff stuck in my body and nerve damage that I will have till I die. Working out physically either running or in a gym lifting weights is part of my pain management. I hurt less. I've got, you know chronic pain, but moving whether walking. I had a treadmill desk here. I was always walking around in the bullpens talking to officers. I actually hurt less. So it's pain management. It's the, you know, constant rehab. It's the physical fitness. For me it's like breathing and, you know, hurting less, feeling better mentally. So it's just making resources and personnel available to address those things and do what you can to make life easier and more productive for everybody.

Dee: You yourself didn't stop after you were injured. Is that correct? Did you take other assignments overseas? Post injury? Before your departure?

Paul: I did. Yes, I somehow my my wife, God bless her, let me go back to a different war zone.

Dee: How did how did you prepare for that? Both physically, mentally, emotionally, knowing what happened before?

Paul: You know, I like I said, I recovered. And I continue to recover from the original injury. And again, I never not feel it. And I was at headquarters and get a little itchy. I had a great job here, but you know, I got the itch to go back overseas, and it was easier for me to go to a one-year unaccompanied war zone assignment. I got my fitness routine back up, you know, to to the extent that I could, and I was just motivated to go back out there and again and and perhaps a hokey way to have a great team out there and to show them that - listen we're out here. It's a slog. And especially in a war zone where you're living, working, sleeping all in the same place together it's communal living, and it can get really confining. Um, and so in a place like that, but not even just in the war zones, you know, taking time to hit the gym, uh to get out for a run, just stuff like that though was great for, you know, physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, there was some camaraderie.

Walter: Well, I was just gonna say, Paul, I saw you over the years so many times running, out running laps, and, uh, I knew just a bit about why, and it was one of the most just quietly moving reminders of the best of this place and the people that work here. So, uh, so I just want to say it's it's an honor to have you here. And thanks for sharing with us.

Paul: Appreciate it. Appreciate it. And we've got a lot of officers in this Agency who have, under, you know who have undergone a lot of the same hardships and and injuries and folks with a lot of hidden injuries that are out there. I know a bunch of these folks who have gone through a heck of a lot, so I'm I'm not unique in that way and again, in perhaps a hokey way, if I can give a voice of some credibility after three plus decades here, and I haven't been around the block a few times, and for me it was, it was it was an honor and a pleasure to give voice to, especially the junior officers, and that was the point of feeding information to you know, what's what's now become the you know, the Office of Chief Wellbeing.

Dee: Can we speak to that a little bit, actually, Paul? Like, what were those conversations that you're having? And what was the opportunities that you felt you could bring forward to leadership? And I know it wasn't just you having these conversations. There was other people that throughout the Agency were having similar conversations with our officers. But what was coming from those conversations that you felt good enough to bring forward to help impact change?

Paul: One of the biggest recurring themes was officers, you know, I would run into him at the gym here, you know, on the compound, the new gym that opened. And I would ask him I said, "Hey, how was your boss? You know, is your boss supporting this?" Uh and I would get you know more often than I would get this answer from the officer saying, well, my boss frowns upon this. My manager doesn't understand why I'm away. They don't, they don't get it. That's that is that's not the way it should be. And again I go back to - yes, we're here to work, but for those managers who are stuck in perhaps the old days or don't understand the benefit in multiple ways of allowing your officers, again within reason you know, we all have deadlines, and there are

things that you can't get away from, but find a way to accommodate what people want to do, what they need to do. What can we do for those folks overseas? Telemedicine. How can we enhance telemedicine from the mental the mental health part? So whatever they can do to enhance that presence, whether you know, in person or remotely, telemedicine, somebody having a consultation, that was a real big request from overseas. The other themes were make the information more easily accessible. Make it, you know, kind of a one stop shop, if you could. They actually, you know, I think people were pleasantly surprised when they heard about some of the resources, some of the staff they have here who are available.

Dee: So you were talking a lot about, um, just getting to know the resources and speaking with the Director and the Deputy Director. Towards the end of your career here, what was it about, um, wellbeing that made you want to take on this initiative of talking to folks and and learning and providing feedback to our leadership?

Paul: I knew I was gonna retire at the end of the year. So in about a six-month period, and that's where again the Director, the Deputy Director and others, you know, who were strongly supporting this and pushing for this and trying to enhance the program had asked me, you know, hey, listen, you know, while you're processing out, would you mind, you know, helping you know, provide input on this effort? And it was it was coincidental to an effort that was already started, you know, through the Directorate of Support. So this was something that was already, the train was already in motion, and I think just a way to provide input from my perspective, and as somebody you know from over, you know, that served overseas, and so just and and based on, you know, at least my tenure in the Agency, you know, about 30, 30 some odd years. So it was something they asked me to do. And what I mind helping out, which I again jumped at the opportunity. And again, if nothing else, to help shape the program. And among its, you know, broad parameters, you know, make sure that certain areas were addressed, and I've said over about the overseas part of it and doing more to encourage folks and, make sure that the that leaders and managers, you know, we're supporting the effort, though.

Walter: And then before you retired from the Agency, you passed your recommendations on to CIA's leadership, and I know other officers did too. How did they respond to it?

Paul: As I was collecting information and talking to, you know, again senior leaders stateside overseas, who were seeing their officers, but also talking to the officers here stateside and and various Directorates, you know, I had this note that just kept getting longer and longer - eight page, but I but I had it sort of bucketed in in these about four general themes and so, you know, shared it with Dr Posa, you know, shared shared the full note but also the condensed version.

Dee: And I think that's a good transition um, over to last year, when Director Burns for the first time decided that the Agency would benefit from having a Chief Wellbeing Officer and establishing an Office of the Chief of Wellbeing. Just curious in that in that transition time where you're doing research along with all of these other players that were also very invested in wellbeing at the Agency. What did you think of this Office of Chief of Wellbeing and bringing on somebody with, you know, Dr. Posa's experience to kind of lead the charge for this effort?

Paul: It was absolutely the right call and absolutely needed. And again, we've all you know we watched the news and we see that the corporate world got on board with this it seems, a while back. Call it maybe post 9/11 or just the high pace of activity, obviously more complex, dangerous world and having a workforce dealing with a lot more challenges, uh, stateside and overseas and realizing, you know, kind of cracking the code that, fitness, wellness resiliency is crucial. You've got a happier workforce more productive. And to have a Director and Deputy Director and senior leadership strongly supportive and advocating for this, uh, you can't go wrong, so it's, you know it's an exciting time.

Walter: Agreed. Dr. Posa, then, you know, your part of the story begins here. But you joined the Agency with a great deal of industry experience in the field of workplace wellbeing. Can you tell us a bit about your background and the path that ultimately brought you to CIA?

Dr. Posa: Sure. Yea, so, um I've been here since the fall of 2022, and previous to being here, I was with Johnson and Johnson for 6.5 years. I had a number of roles at Johnson and Johnson, but my most recent role, and, um, I think a reflection of kind of what this conversation is about, was really focused on mental health and wellbeing and supporting the workforce around the globe at J&J. And then prior to that, 17 years with Mayo Clinic. So, I've spent, you know, 25 plus years in the field of population health, and, to Paul's point, I think that, you know, employers have recognized over the years the value of wellbeing, and the importance of it.

But I do think in the last few years, it's come to a much different point where the business case is absolutely one that is intuitive to business leaders because what COVID did was it compromised business continuity in a way that employers have never experienced before and regardless of the type of employer. So I think the commitment to this and the recognition of wellbeing of your people is critical or else they cannot perform. They cannot be productive. They cannot even physically show up to work, right? Then you're compromising your success, whether it be for profit business success, or for us, our mission here at the Agency.

So, you know, my background has been to really focus on these practices and strategy for organizations throughout my career. And having the opportunity when CIA approached me and said, you know, would you come and join us and help us, again to Paul's point, take what were many different initiatives that were happening but build a comprehensive strategy, and then execute that strategy to meet the needs of our officers whether they be here in the States or overseas, was something I was incredibly excited to do for a number of reasons. Not only because I had not worked within the environment, and I was absolutely just as intrigued as everyone else outside of the CIA as to what really happens here. Um, but I also will tell you that it's one of the reasons that, you know, Paul literally exudes as an officer himself. I can't find a better way to take my expertise and support our country.

Dee: So you're here and did get to peek behind the curtain. So, what were your first impressions of the world here at CIA? Whether it is in the wellbeing aspect or just in general, your general first impressions of CIA.

Dr. Posa: Yeah. So, general first impressions, and I'll say I expected the best of the best to be working here, but I feel like I then was able to touch, feel, and talk to all of them. And I will

double down on our expertise in the area of health and wellbeing. I sit within the Center for Global Health Services and the expertise that we have to support the workforce is incredible. So for me, I was even more excited because when I came behind the curtain and I said, what is the team I'm going to be able to work with? And then what are the individuals that support our organization? Because we sit within the Directorate of Support. You know, how can we enhance what is already being done? I just see tremendous opportunity.

And then I think the the other piece I would just share, Dee, is from my perspective and understanding - what are the best practices for an employer to execute and be successful in really touching lives in this area, you need the leadership support. Hands down. You need the funding and the resources - thank you, Congress. And you also need individuals throughout the organization that are ready to lean in and help to define what this looks like. And I think for me I was most excited and continue to be excited because I have had so many conversations with individual officers who have specific areas of wellbeing that they would like us to enhance, improve upon, or they actually just have an idea, a really innovative idea, that we are going to be able to execute within the strategy. Or leaders, to Paul's point, that are saying - how do I do this better? How do I make sure that I'm supporting my team in their wellbeing? It's what the officer can do, and then what those leaders can do. So it's truly a multifaceted strategy that we're looking to execute.

Walter: And Dr Posa, if we could ask, you know, you talked about building a more resilient, healthier workforce. Can you speak a bit about how that looks at CIA?

Dr. Posa: So I think a lot of it is our culture and bringing people to the point where it is safe and expected to take care of yourself and then take care of one another. So this is absolutely something that we want to guide and provide the support to do that. Some of those things are enabling factors that an organization needs to do. For example, we have a beautiful field house here in headquarters location. That is the organization's commitment to providing mindfulness classes and physical activity and, um, education on nutrition. Right? We can do that as an organization, but the individual actually has to go and attend those things or participate. So it's truly both the organization's support as well as the individuals taking advantage of.

But the organization, what we're doing in the Office of the Chief Wellbeing Officer is my team is really looking across the board at all of those locations, at all of our programs and services, and saying what matters most, what can impact even more greatly to an individual's life and then supporting that officer and their family. Because I think that's also something that, you know, Paul touched on, depending on the environment you're in. If you're in a war zone, you tend to have very close knit 24/7 community. There's a huge benefit to that as well, because you're really one team and often times, think about it, you know, we all have each other's back. When you're in any type of crisis, whether it be a situation as perhaps risk-oriented that our officers go through. But even regular individuals when you're working on a team and in a crisis, you get closer. That sense of community is tighter. You have the ability to get to know one another better and that social support is really there to drive the outcomes of what you're looking to overcome or achieve. So the last piece I would just say is we're looking at the type of work that we do, that the officers do, and then how do we actually support them organizationally to do that together.

Dee: So you're speaking a lot about your team as a whole, um, and looking across the board at what is needed at various facets within the Agency. Are there particular goals that you have as the Chief Wellbeing Officer, knowing that you've only been here for it's been seven months now, is that correct?

Dr. Posa: Mm hmm.

Dee: Um, are there particular goals that you have already set for wellbeing as a whole at the Agency for the outgoing year, or even to the future?

Dr. Posa: Yeah. So it's a great question, because I'm very much a goal-oriented person. Um, I think you can't achieve things if you don't know what those goals are. And I will tell you that the entire team has defined what our goals are and they sit within four different priority areas. The first area is work-life effectiveness. We talk a lot about the officer, but they also have a life outside of their work. And some, you know, have family members that they're also caring for right? And we really look at family very broadly in terms of the definition. So we're not only focused on officers that have a traditional family of 2.5 children, but we also are talking about our single officers, and officers that define family in different ways. But with our work-life effectiveness, we want to make sure that we prepare them because in the Agency, and as many people know, if you kind of explore a career at CIA, the beauty of this Agency is you have the ability to actually move into different roles throughout your entire career, so you're not necessarily in one career and job for, you know, 20-25 years. Which means you're transitioning a lot. We want to make sure that we're supporting the officer for all of those work-life effectiveness needs.

The second priority area is health and wellbeing support. We talked a little bit about it before, which is the importance of looking at this holistically. There's many different areas of wellbeing that we're looking at – physical, mental, emotional, social, financial, spiritual. And so as we think about those things, how do we support them? Not only with an expertise in terms of if you needed a diagnosis and treatment, but also with preventive health officers who are focused on resilience, energy management, and some of those things that really enable us to build that level of performance to be ready for whatever that challenge is.

The third area is, um, workplace flexibility. And this is an area that is tricky for us because we have a lot of work that needs to be underneath, if you will, classification. So there are some restrictions in that regard, but we are really looking at how do we embrace that flexibility and build that into our workplaces as well as our work design with the work that we're doing. And then last would be organizational support. And this is an area I think that I am very excited about, because this is where the best practice evidence base comes in, which is what's the organization going to do to support the officers? And I feel that that's what Director Burns has really committed to the workforce to do. And those would be looking at our policies, understanding our environment, making sure that we've got incentives driving leaders to support those officers, as well as officers being recognized when, again, they are supporting their wellbeing. So we do have our four priority areas, Dee. I'm very excited and proud of the team for that. We will continue to focus on those for priorities moving forward. I don't necessarily think they're going to change a lot over the next few years, but what we will continue to evolve is

we're really talking to the workforce to make sure we at the OCWO, Office of the Chief Wellbeing Officer, we understand what those needs are.

And then I'll just use a term that I use all the time every day, which is - what matters most, because I think in this world we, no matter what job you're in, you have 500 priorities it feels like every day, right? We need to focus on what matters most and then double down on those things. And then we'll identify what those short-term goals are and then the long-term, and that's what we'll build our five-year plan. Wellbeing is not a nice to have. It's a must have, and we are approaching it that way at the Agency.

Walter: Paul, what's what's your reaction to those priorities that Dr. Posa laid out?

Paul: My reaction is I think they're spot on. And I would say first and foremost is the plan, the strategy is very achievable, and I'm very encouraged. I think number one again - to give a shout out to the Director and Deputy, I think, emphatically supportive of this. And so that's that's that's the key right there and having them message that down the chain to the senior leadership and across the workforce. A real big, I think, component here is the grassroots participation. Again, don't get me wrong -we're here to work. You know, it's a workplace, we've got a mission to do. But there is a way to do this and and balance it and get that done with a much more you know with with a healthier and more motivated workforce. I think the fact that the workforce is really looking to participate, uh, you know, so I think you've got a lot of force multipliers out there, so I think it's super encouraging.

Walter: So, Paul, you've spoken to sort of the importance of being able to seek mental health support. And this is something that, you know, reducing the stigma around I feel like is a focus, really globally, but including at CIA. Dr. Posa, could you speak a little bit about that here at the Agency?

Dr. Posa: So for me, I think about it on a continuum, when I think about health and wellbeing. On the left-hand side of the continuum you have wellbeing and resilience. And on the right-hand side you have something like diagnosis, treatment care, right? So if we think about this individually and we apply it to mental health and wellbeing, when you are well and you're fine, you might want to look at building that resilience, continuing to make sure that that level of performance is very high, and you might reach out to support in that regard. But when you start kind of going to the right side of the continuum, and I used to use this graphic where it's like the red zone - it's almost like when you start to see your engine light in your car and it starts to overheat.

We know this as human beings as individuals, we start to feel that. When you start to feel it, reach out for support because that actually shows a very strong sense of responsibility. It shows a lot of intelligence in many ways because you don't want to compromise the work that you're doing, which is very important here, right? And it also, you know, what we have to do as an organization is enable that there's the number to call. And then we will not be judging them in the wrong reasons for doing that right? It would be the same as - hey, look, I just tripped on the sidewalk, twisted my ankle, and I need some care. Who do I call? You wouldn't go try to wrap that up in your office by yourself and then go walk on it, you know, 100 ft, right? So my point in

saying that is we're really trying to reduce the stigma in that way, make sure that awareness of resources is there, access is easy, and then the quality care is behind that.

Paul: And I think it's important for those that are listening who don't know the Agency well, we're typically we're a culture, very much a can-do, you know, hard charging culture. And it doesn't matter what job you've got. What what's your Directorate, whether you're support, analyst, operations, overseas or stateside. We've got a whole bunch of people in the Agency that have endured, you know, physical, you know, injury. We've had, you know, lost officers in the line of duty. But then there's the mental stress that we've got, people who are watching disturbing videos and really stressful jobs across the board who really needed that help, though, so it's it's very timely.

Walter: I feel like Dee and I, in our own careers, have already seen a shift in the way that the Agency handles this. I know Paul referenced offices that sort of have officers that have to look at disturbing materials. I know those kinds of offices now have proactive services that are offered.

Dr. Posa: The other thing too, Walter, is that, um there's a generational shift. So I think the expectation of individuals coming into the Agency at an early career, like in their twenties. I have a daughter who's 21. She has an expectation that when she works for an employer, that her mental and emotional wellbeing is something that will be supported. I think, to Paul's point, old school, you know, I'm older too, Paul. You know, we didn't have those expectations when we had our first job out of college or maybe even our first few jobs, right? Although you've been here forever. But I've had a few other employers. Um, so with that you know, I think the expectations of the workforce are changing, and we have to adapt with that. And I think every employer does. So again from my personal experience working in this field for many years, the more you have those conversations, the more you normalize it, and the more you educate leaders to enable that conversation to happen so that the leader knows the resources and can direct the person to the resources, you are really going to build that, where again, it's it's not a nice to have, it's a it's a must have. And we look at that holistically to support one another.

Dee: Dr. Posa, we've heard that you're the one that walks the walk around here on leading by example. When you're at work just speaking to that, you mentioned that, you know, emotional, physical, mental, financial, all of that is wellbeing to you. Um, is there anything you do while you're at work that, you know, typifies that example or brings it to light for others to to kind of mimic?

Dr. Posa: So I think an example would be to give yourself flexibility. And I think I try to do that because it enables me to plan my schedule and prioritize what needs to be prioritized. So I think that's a that's an example. And then the other example I would use is from yesterday because I feel like I do this each day. Um, and I think that's given me the ability to again achieve what I'd like to achieve in my own life, right? But also for our mission here, um, and another example from yesterday was I saw that I had, you know, a 30-minute break at lunchtime. I could have chosen to grab my salad and, um, eat it at my desk while I was looking at my emails, because I'm always, you know, everybody's always behind. But I actually looked around our office and I saw that a couple other folks were doing the same and I said - Hey, let's go back to the table. And it was awesome.

Dee: I mean, I think we could keep talking on this topic for quite a while. You guys are excellent guests here. You keep mentioning holistic. Um, so and maybe to wrap up our segment here, holistically speaking, is there anything that you could relay to our listeners here? Tips, tricks, on just general wellbeing either things that you implement in your own lives or things that you would recommend folks outside of the CIA, outside of this mission-heavy work, to take on into their own lives?

Paul: It's a lot of what I've already said, and I think first and foremost people taking ownership of their you know, their destiny in a way from a from a wellbeing standpoint, whether it's, you know, putting their hand up and seeking assistance. You know, whether swallow your pride or your fear in some cases, and don't be afraid to ask for help. And then again, I think just doing what you can to set yourself up to stack the odds in your favor.

Dee: Dr. Posa, posing the same question to you. Any tips that you could give our listeners either from a holistic approach to wellbeing or just general mindfulness that they can take on into their daily lives?

Dr. Posa: Yeah so I think I'll take it from the from the perspective of high performance. Because I think we all want to be the best person we can be each day in our work in our life. And I think for me, what I found to be very successful and certainly I think is demonstrated in the evidence is, you know, taking a step back and looking at, to your point Dee, what is holistic wellbeing look like for you? Some people defined it as again a heavy focus on physical. Others might do a heavy focus on social, right? Or even mental and emotional. Whatever that is for you. It's okay. There's not a perfect. So I think my first tip is - don't aim for perfection. Look inside yourself and define that for yourself.

And then when you do identify areas that you want to improve upon, I think my second tip would be - there's a lot of research on how do you integrate new habits into your day? And where I find a lot of people challenged is I don't have 30 minutes. I don't have 45 minutes. I don't have two hours in my day. I'm really busy. Well, don't look for two hours then. Look for five or 10 minutes, and then you can look at that cumulatively over time or build on that success. So start small and demonstrate the momentum that you can bring into your day. And for me, sometimes what that looks like, and actually, there's a lot of evidence around habit stacking and and putting a habit connected to another habit. If I wanna floss my teeth, but I don't floss my teeth regularly, I should floss them after I brush my teeth because I do brush my teeth regularly. So that's another tip where it's like, make that habit small that you want, and then link it to something else that you do every day.

And then third, I would say I want to double down on something Paul said, which is the social connectedness. And I think this is just my reflection. Someone asked me over a year ago, what do you think the biggest impact that Covid has had on individuals, and what I think it did is it forced individuals to connect in different ways and recognize how important social connectedness is for us as human beings. We are human beings and we need that level of connection. We need to feel part of something bigger. We need to feel connected to others. So

those would probably be my three tips, Dee, that I think I consistently lean into, especially when I'm feeling as though I am getting into a red zone, if you will.

Dee: I think Walter and I can both say that it was an honor sitting down with both of you today. Greatly appreciate hearing your story, Paul, um, your interest in, you know, making CIA a better place for all of our officers here. And our thanks to Dr. Posa for her willingness to step in and take on this initiative. And really thank you both for just being here and and sharing some insights with us today. We do appreciate your time.

Paul: No, it was a lot of fun. And and again, it's as you know, we think we both have a ton of passion for the for the issue, for the topic. So thanks to you guys for, you know, further echoing the, uh, the topic and the issue out there. So over to your doc.

Dr. Posa: Yeah. Well, Paul, you're coming back, right? This is a road show, isn't it?

Paul: You know, you know where to find me. So again, I in all seriousness, I'm happy to help in any way. And it's again, it's something I I do. And I've been practicing forever. Uh, and again, it's, it means a lot to me, though, so I appreciate it.

Walter: Thanks to you both.

Dr. Posa: Thank you, Dee. Thank you, Walter. Um, I love the podcast, and I'm really excited for you guys to continue the great work you're doing for us. So thank you.

Dee: Well thank you for that.

Walter: Thanks to you both.

Walter: Well, what an interesting conversation hearing the two of them talking about this subject.

Dee: What an important subject it is.

Walter: Yea, indeed. So let's keep the momentum going on the topic of wellbeing, in this case emotional wellbeing, many would say, by talking travel trivia.

Dee: Sounds good to me. I mean, travel and trivia are always good for emotional wellbeing.

Walter: I couldn't agree more. And on our last episode we asked a question about summer travel plans. As many of our listeners are probably going to be headed to a beach, or for some more specifically, an island beach, our question was whether our listeners could name the top five largest islands on planet Earth. And extra credit if you could get all ten. So here we go with the answer in descending order: Greenland, New Guinea, Borneo, Madagascar, Baffin Island. And rounding out the top 10 are: Sumatra, Honshu, Victoria Island, Great Britain, of course, and Ellesmere Island.

Dee: I love thinking about islands, and vacation in general, Walter.

Walter: Oh, don't we all? So with that in mind, let's do another trivia question.

Dee: Sounds good.

(music)

Dee: Here we go. In the quiet natural surroundings of CIA's Headquarters here in Langley, Virginia, Agency officers can take a stroll to enjoy some much-needed fresh air and soothing scenery. There are times, however, where our officers are not alone in their wandering. There happens to be a particular woodland animal that frequents the grounds here and often seems quite at home amongst the buildings and the people. In fact, this known creature has become somewhat of an unofficial mascot of the CIA. So our question is – which type of animal are we talking about?

Walter: Now we know there could be many answers to this question. But this particular animal tends to be a sly one, mischievously scurrying between buildings and darting between vehicles.

Dee: Regardless of the mischief, Agency officers have actually given this animal a very fitting nickname. So we will have to see who can guess this one.

Walter: Yea, that one is not in CIA's World Factbook.

Dee: They cannot just look that up.

Walter: No. So that's it for today's episode. Thanks as always for tuning in everyone.

(music begins)

Dee: Until next time ... we'll be seeing you.

Dee: I feel like we should do some kind of wellbeing exercise. Maybe go for a run?

Walter: I've been meditating through this trivia question.

Dee: Harsh, Walter.

Both: Laughing.

(music ends)