

**EPISODE 1640**

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**FT:** So Money episode 1640. Unhappy at work? Ways to create more meaning and money in your career, with certified professional coach, Eliana Goldstein.

***EG:** What I always like to tell my clients ultimately when it comes to negotiation because as I'm sure you've discussed in-depth on this podcast is the fear and the insecurity that comes up during salary negotiations. So often I say it's not. It has nothing to do with the actual steps, right? Negotiating actually isn't that hard. It's very possible for everyone, but it's the mindset that gets in the way. The fear that gets in the way is really walking into your negotiation and thinking about it as a value exchange."*

[INTRO]

[00:01:10]

**FT:** Welcome to So Money, everybody. I'm Farnoosh Torabi. If you are dissatisfied at work or in your profession, you are not alone. Workplace satisfaction is at an all-time low. We can guess as to why. My guest today will help us dig into this and also provide practical solutions so that we can go back into our professions and actually find more meaning and more money.

Eliana Goldstein is a certified professional coach and speaker. She's the Founder of Eliana Goldstein Coaching, where she's supported thousands of individuals in both securing new roles and in building careers where they can genuinely look forward to Monday mornings, no more Sunday Scaries. Eliana serves as the resident career coach for CBS Morning News. She's been featured everywhere, including MSNBC, Fast Company. We talk about that dream job that seems to not exist but how to create it on your own terms, her hot takes on quiet quitting, and the wrong way we've been going about negotiating. Here's Eliana Goldstein.

[INTERVIEW]

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**FT:** Eliana Goldstein, welcome to So Money. Very excited to get your advice, as I know many of us in the audience are pivoting. Or we're entering the job market for the first time, and we want to make good money. But we also want to be happy. Is that possible? You say yes. Thank you in advance for all your advice.

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**EG:** Of course. Thank you for having me.

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**FT:** You are really in it. You're in it, helping largely Millennials and Gen Z find directionality and purpose and money in their professions. We want it all. This is not translating well in the workplace, our pursuit versus what we are actually experiencing in the workplace. There is a disconnect where many, if not a majority, of younger workers say they're dissatisfied at work. Can you tell us what are the driving forces behind that right now?

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**EG:** I think in the past, when we look at prior generations, work was really just that. It was work. You came in to do a job, to get your things done, and then you left. Now, we recognize, and there's so much of an emphasis on work-life balance and finding meaning in your life, that people want that same meaning, and they want that same impact from work. They want to be able to go in and get their job done but feel like it's having a larger purpose when they're doing that. They want to feel like the work that they're doing is being recognized. They want to feel like they actually have that mental well-being support and just feeling good about themselves in the workplace.

I would say there are some companies that are kind of catching on to that and trying to be supportive of that. There are some companies that probably completely disagree and feel like we should still kind of focus on the strict definition of work. All these thoughts are kind of almost

causing this awakening about how we think about work in general. I think the pandemic, too, which really put an emphasis on our lives and how we work has also brought all that into the spotlight. All of that is causing, call it, this dissatisfaction or at least this emphasis in thinking about how do we pursue and how do we really think about work going forward.

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**FT:** Compared to older generations, I'm Gen X, I'm on the border of Gen X, Gen Y, and, say, Boomers, were those older generations as dissatisfied? Why or why not?

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**EG:** It's an interesting question. I would say that they probably weren't as dissatisfied. But at the same time, there was just a different emphasis on work, right? There are so many other factors going on that led to, call it, higher satisfaction, just in terms of your job being able to produce enough income to be able to buy a house, right? So many other factors that, obviously, are more difficult for Millennials and Gen Zers right now.

I think that there was an attitude and there was an overall mentality of, okay, you go to work to make money, and that's it. Because we're now kind of questioning those things, people are thinking about it differently, right? At the same time, I do believe that there's something to be taken from those prior generations in terms of being able to have more of a distinction between work and life and being able to say, "You know what? A job is a job. It's not always going to be perfect. Some days are going to be great. Some days aren't going to be great. I can't fall and crumble and fall apart if I have a bad day at work," right?

I just think there were so many different factors that played that led to more overall fulfillment in your life overall versus kind of, call it, the bad hand that Millennials and Gen Zs feel that they've been dealt in certain ways.

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**FT:** Yes. I would say my guess is that the pressure to earn to be able to support your life is greater now.

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**EG:** One hundred percent.

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**FT:** Where 40 years ago, the cost of living relative to what we were earning, there was a closer match there. I think I want to hear from you sort of what are those pressures, financial pressures, I suppose, taking one element from this dream job equation, where the dream job, and I'm using air quotes, pays well, is satisfying. It's meaningful work. I'm making an impact. It's contributing to my wellness, all these things. Then later I want to ask about how realistic is that. But talk about some of the financial pressures that's really leading to this dissatisfaction. Are we just so underpaid as well?

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**EG:** A lot of people are definitely underpaid. Obviously, it's very industry-specific, and it's very role-specific. I think now especially, as we're seeing layoffs still continue to happen, not only are people getting paid a certain amount for the job that they're doing. Now, they're being expected to take on more responsibility. Right now, you have to account for the loss of headcount. Now, I'm doing two people's jobs, while still maintaining the same salary. There's a lot of pressure that people are feeling.

Again, obviously, with so many places, thinking about prior generations, I think in the past, it used to be more of a typical nine-to-five, right? Those were your hours. That's not really the case for a lot of places, right? You might be expected to be answering emails in the middle of the night or working till really late. People are feeling rightfully so. Well, if I'm going to be doing that, I want to be compensated for that, right?

I think a lot of those things are going into people's minds and feeling like there's always the question of could I be making more elsewhere. Is this just kind of the status quo? Or do I need to be smart and be considering other options where I could be getting compensated better? Those thoughts are always going through people's minds. They should be, right? You should always kind of be open to exploring options and seeing like, "Am I being paid my fair value right now?"

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**FT:** So much of your job is probably in the beginning when you're working with clients, like doing a level set, like a reality check-in because. This gets us back to this idea of what is a dream job. Does it really exist? How much of your work is walking your clients through that balance of like, okay, this is what's realistic, this is what's aspirational, and this is where you can really move the needle. What is the dream job in your view? How do you help your clients land on an equation of a job, a work-life balance that they feel good about and they can have for?

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**EG:** Well, I think, again, the dream job in air quotes meaning there is no perfect dream job. Whatever that looks like is different for every person. I think that's the beginning piece of it. I think a lot of the times, when we think about success in our careers, that is dictated by other people; by our parents, by society, by our friends around us. As a result, so many of us are pursuing this career path that once we actually achieve, it doesn't even feel good to us.

I know for myself I was always taught like, "Make as much money as you can. Save that money. That's what you need." I did that. I achieved that for a decade of my career, but it didn't feel good at all. It's really, first and foremost, thinking about what is important to me. Is it to be able to put away money so that I can save and hit certain milestones in the future? Or is it that I genuinely want freedom and flexibility? I want to be able to travel whenever I can. We have to really think about that, first and foremost, and what that definition looks like for us and then be able to almost reverse-engineer it and set the goals in motion to make that happen.

That's a lot of what I want to focus on with people, really figuring out, okay, what does that look like for me. If I am pursuing the money, is that really what I should be doing? Or is there kind of a balance that needs to happen? From there, I think a really big part of, again, the “dream job” is ultimately doing work that is enjoyable, that engages you. Again, I think people often think like, “Work is work. I'm not meant to enjoy it.” But if we're going to be spending a third of our lives working, I'm a big believer that we should be able to enjoy at least 70% of that, right? Again, not going to be perfect but my golden rule is kind of like 70% of what you're doing you should be enjoying.

That really goes back to also understanding what is it that I actually enjoy, right? What are the projects? What are the tasks? What is the work that I'm doing that actually engages me and why, right? Once I have an understanding of that, how do I increase that? Or how do I pivot to decrease some of the work that I don't enjoy doing? It's like a lot of that exploratory work that we can then leverage to kind of make more tangible moves and pivots.

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**FT:** You're really putting the power in the hand of the worker, whereas earlier we were talking about how a lot of this or some of this, at least, is up to the employer to create that environment, to know what their employees really want and meet them where they're at. You hear a lot about quiet quitting and soft life. What are your hot takes on those trends, especially now where maybe a year ago, two years ago, when employers were scrambling to hire, you could sort of check out, and it wouldn't cost you? Now, I feel like you have to really show up and do the work. Otherwise, companies are being a lot shrewder these days.

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**EG:** Yes, yes. No matter what, again, depending on the industry that you're in, you're an employee, you're hired for a purpose, and you have to check certain boxes, right? That's never going away. I do think that it's not so much about – a lot of it, as I was saying, is about self-advocacy and being able to – part of the reason that I say figure out what it is that I'm good at, what is it that I want to do more of is because it's on you as an employee and as an individual to have an understanding of that so that you can bring that to your manager, so that you can bring

that to your employer and say, “Hey, I recognize these are the projects that I’m really engaged in, and this is what I really enjoy doing. I’d love to do more of that,” right?

That’s always going to be a big part of it, that self-advocacy that making yourself visible, not just necessarily doing whatever you can to not get fired, right? You do need to work on those strategies to be able to grow and mobilize. At the same time, employers need to also recognize based on my workforce and, again, what generation they’re a part of, what are kind of the main facets that are important to them, right? Is it recognition? Is it having an impact? Is it internal mobility and thinking about those larger themes and being able to support their employees from that perspective? Then, again, simultaneously making sure as an employee, you are always self-advocating for yourself and being able to voice what it is that’s important to you. It’s like a balance of those two things.

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**FT:** Yes. I love that advice. There was another piece of advice I got once. Actually, it was on this show. If you’ve been listening to So Money, maybe you heard it a while back. It was a woman who had many different careers. She was a Renaissance woman, I suppose. I asked her. How did she know what was the right next move for her? How did she approach the pivots? She said money is important, but the question she would always go back to was what is the impact that I want to make now, which evolves, right? You learn and grow, and your ambition towards what is the impact that you want to make in your career is – you’re allowed to change that.

I think that’s important. We sort of lose sight of the importance of being flexible. We are sometimes afraid to make pivots or try a new role or apply ourselves to something that we haven’t done before because we’re afraid of failure. We’re afraid of a setback. But what’s your advice? I’m sure clients come up with this all the time to you.

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**EG:** Like you said, it’s always evolving, right? That you can be in different phases of your life and career, where maybe there is a period of your life where you are going hard after the money because there’s some type of savings goal that you’re working towards, and that’s really

important to you. In that point, you're just going to kind of put your head down, really focus on, "Let me get a promotion. Let me get a raise."

Then maybe in another phase of your career, it is really more of like the impact-driven work and being able to work on a project that's really meaningful to you, even if it isn't necessarily a project that's really advancing your career. I think it's always kind of staying in tune with that part of yourself and really thinking about what is meaningful to me at this point in my career, and how do I align my goals, how do I align my actions with those specific things. Knowing that it's going to ebb and flow and that's completely fine, right? You got to do what feels best for you in the moment, absolutely.

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**FT:** You brought up money, so let's shift a little bit to negotiating and earning more. I covered a lot of this on the podcast in many episodes, just in the importance of doing your research, being data-driven in that conversation, not making it too emotional, knowing your value that is not your worth, right? That's an easy thing to mix up. Knowing your salary band, for example, at your job is also a critical piece of information because it can give you a sense of what is the potential for your role, your earnings in that role.

What else? What else are we not thinking about? What is sort of the trick or the hack or the advice that you love to give that you've seen work over and over again?

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**EG:** We've been talking about kind of how the workforce has changed and how we can be flexible about how we see things. We can get creative about how we see our careers and our roles. Some advice I always like to give people is the fact that when we think about salary negotiations, it's not limited to just compensation and salary, right? Especially when we're thinking about benefits and well-being and all those things and really going back to that notion of focusing on what is important to you in your life at that moment.



My rule of thumb is if it's listed as a benefit on the company website, then it's negotiable, right? Maybe that's some type of a stipend towards learning and development. Maybe there's a course or certification that you've been dying to get, and you would love support in being able to pay for that. Maybe you talk to them about, "Hey, can I –" It's really thinking about what are the benefits that are going to be important to me.

Sometimes, you'll be at a standstill with a company, and maybe they've kind of hit their limit in terms of what they can give you from a compensation standpoint. But you feel like there's more that you want to derive from that, so really thinking about what are other benefits that I can negotiate on that might be important to me. Like I said, whether it's learning and development, whether it's your healthcare benefits, whether it's vacation days, right? Really thinking through all those different types of benefits and being able to bring those into the conversation and aligning that with the values that are important to you and your career is a really big one.

Then something else you mentioned before, kind of the difference between your value and your worth. I think that's a really important one to think about. What I always like to tell my clients, ultimately, when it comes to negotiation because as I'm sure you've discussed in-depth on this podcast is the fear and the insecurity that comes up during salary negotiations. So often I say it has nothing to do with the actual steps, right?

Negotiating actually isn't that hard. It's very possible for everyone, but it's the mindset that gets in the way. The fear that gets in the way is really walking into your negotiation and thinking about it as a value exchange, right? I'm not just going in arbitrarily asking them to give me more money and being like, "Hey, give me another 15k," right? Ultimately, you're saying, "I'm looking for more compensation in exchange for this additional value that I am bringing you." If you are clear on what that value is and you really see it tangibly, it makes it a lot easier to have that conversation and be able to describe in detail like, "Hey, this is exactly what I can do. This is the ROI you're going to see when you invest more in me," right? Those are the things that I like to remind people of and being super clear on what their physical and specific value is.

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**FT:** TikTok is full of bad advice, and I'm sure you have come across some bad career advice. I've seen things like – well, quiet quitting, obviously, is a little controversial because it comes down to who can afford to do that. It's not safe advice to give that to somebody, and then they do it, and then it backfires. What have you seen online that you really want to – it's like a myth you want to dispel, or it's advice that you want to clarify because you feel like it's really being misunderstood or misconstrued, which we're talking about our careers here. There's high stakes we're talking about.

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**EG:** Yes, very high stakes. I would say the most typical advice that I see, and like you said, there's a whole lot of, call it, bad advice out there, but as we've been talking about fulfillment and finding engagement and satisfaction in your career, one of the common things that we always hear is chase your passion, right? If you work in your passion, you'll be happy. All your problems will be solved. Everything will be perfect. I'm a big believer that is just not the case. There's a lot of reasons that that's just inaccurate and not fair.

I often like to tell people, imagine you're a foodie, right? You're obsessed with food, and you're like, "If I could just work in the food industry, I will so happy. Pursue my passions. All my problems will be solved." Let's just say you hypothetically get that job. But then your manager is horrible, and you're not able to be creative in the role, and you have no work-life balance, and 70% of what you're doing you hate anyways. It doesn't matter how passionate you are about it if you're going to be miserable.

A lot of the times, it doesn't come down to the passion. It comes down to a variety of other factors. But one of the things that I think is most important is actually your values, right? What are your career values that are most important to you? Is it creativity? Is it autonomy? Is it collaboration? Is it flexibility? Is it leisure, right? Think about what are the values that are core to me. Being able to find roles, companies, industries that align with those values is always going to lead to more satisfaction than just the straight-up passion, right? If you can somehow interweave your passion, too, that's great. But it is not the solution to everything. That's a big one that I hear all the time.

Another career – I don't even know if I call this advice, but something that people are always continuing to do, even though it just doesn't work is just sending out tons of job applications, right? Especially in this job market right now which is – while on the surface it seems like things are getting better. If you actually talk to jobseekers, it still feels incredibly competitive. Spending your time sending tens, hundreds of applications per day, per week is just not an efficient use of your time.

It's always going to go back to the old-school tactics of who do you know, what referrals do you have, who is in your network, how do you develop and build your network. Really focusing on that, as opposed to some hack that people think is going to break – help you get past the ATS. All of a sudden, you're going to get your resume seen by a hundred people. Don't focus on that. Don't put your time and energy there. Focus on your network always.

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**FT:** Gosh, nothing like having a name goes straight up to the pile, especially these days with AI and so much of, at least, the preliminary vetting process being done through these spots. When you're in the interview and you want to get clues and you want to get information about whether or not the culture there is the right fit, whether or not the things that you are passionate about will be accessible to you at this company, what are some questions you can ask? What are some even red flags you might spot?

A friend of mine was going in for a job interview, and she thought it was a little unusual that they said that the person who left before her whose role she was filling left on good terms. They wanted to make that clear, which I feel like is a red flag. You don't say that unless there's a story there.

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**EG:** Yes, 100%.

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**FT:** Or you want to get ahead of something.

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**EG:** I think there's a few things. One thing I would say is I'm actually not a big believer. Yes, you should ask those questions on the interview. But I'm a big believer in pre-vetting prior to the interview because what happens is often, once you're already in the interview process and, call it, you're one of maybe three to five candidates that they're interviewing, while you hope that they're going to be honest and they should be, they're oftentimes trying to sell you in the same way that you're selling yourself, right? You don't always get that full, honest, authentic answer.

I'm a really big believer, and this is where it goes back to networking, in speaking with people, building relationships with people at those companies, so you can do some of your own internal vetting and ask those hard-hitting questions to someone that you know is going to be more honest, right? Really thinking about pre-vetting before the interview process. Then when you're having those conversations, being able to candidly say like, "Be honest with me. What do you like about working at this company? What do you not like about working at this company? Talk to me about company culture. These are some of the things that are important to me. How much of this is mirrored here," right?

Then you can kind of have those more real conversations and not feel like you have to, to an extent, mute yourself or make your questions sound a little bit nicer than they are. Sometimes, another thing, too, is talking to people who maybe recently left the company and really finding out why they left the company. That's another thing that you can think about as well and asking about things like retention. What does retention look like? What does employee turnover look like? Talk to me about senior leadership. Has it been the same leadership for a long time? Is there a lot of turnover from a leadership perspective?

All those things are going to be very telling of culture, and being able to ask it to the right people in the right part of the job search process is going to be really key in terms of the types of answers that you get and how authentic they are.

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**FT:** Sleuthing this on LinkedIn is probably not that hard, right? You can look up –

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**EG:** Oh, yes.

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**FT:** Tell me if I'm wrong. You can look up where people have worked. You look up the company, and then you see who's worked there. Then you see their timeline. Were they there for six months? Is that a pattern, at least maybe within your department? What else can we use LinkedIn for as far as the investigation before we go on the job interview?

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**EG:** A hundred percent. Yes, you can always see prior companies that the person has worked at and, yes, how recently did they leave. How long were they there? All those different types of things. I mean, LinkedIn is really the best social media tool out there. I'm such a believer in that. It's so comprehensive, and I think people often – I hear from clients who go on, and they're like, "Oh, my God. LinkedIn has changed so much." It's really worth kind of exploring all the tools that are available to you. Anytime you do a search for a company, you can filter by a million different things in terms of seniority level and job title and certain keywords in their profile and all those various things. It's worth exploring all those different types of things.

What I really like to focus on specifically when going on LinkedIn is focus on, first, the company that you're interested in, right? I like to go from company level, not a person level because you might know a lot of people. But if none of those people work at companies you're interested in, then they're not really helpful to you, right? Start with the company that you're most interested in. Then I just start playing around with who has job titles that sound interesting to me, right? Hopefully, at this point, you already have a sense of the direction that you want to go, and you've niched down a little bit.

But then find people who have those titles that are the most interesting sounding to you and start reaching out to people. You don't have to be connected with them. The best people to go after are cold connections who you don't know and just lean into flattery. It came across your profile. I was really interested in this project that you listed. I was super impressed by this work that you've done. I was curious if you'd be open to having a conversation where I could learn a little bit about your career growth. Then from there, you can really just go in on asking the types of questions that are most important to you. There are a whole lot of different features that LinkedIn now has that people often overlook, for sure.

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**FT:** Yes. I used to be not very active on LinkedIn, and I'm somewhat active now. But the reason I wasn't was because I assumed that, and maybe I was right at the time. I think it's evolved, as you said. It wasn't quite a place for entrepreneurs to sort of network and connect. But I think that if you're a creator and you want brand partnerships and you want speaking opportunities. Now, creators are going in-house at companies. I think it's kind of become this great melting pot of all types of professions, whether you work at a company or independently. It's pretty cool. I recommend to everyone to just spend some time on LinkedIn. This is not a free ad for LinkedIn by any means. But I think, to your point, it can be a really great resource tool.

All right, you have a special offer for our listeners, and I want you to talk a little bit about the Career Upgrade program that is your signature course. I guess it's a self-paced course as you – there's only one Eliana Goldstein, so you can't work with everybody. This is the way to get to work with you on your own speed, at your own speed.

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**EG:** Yes, yes, yes. The Career Upgrade course is my signature course that walks you through my four-part job search process, who I say both find and land a well-paid career you love, well-paid being key, right? That's what we've been talking about today. It's that balance. I'm a big believer, especially in the job market right now, that we need to have a methodology in terms of how we approach our job search, to be thoughtful about the companies that we're thinking

about, to be thoughtful about how we're getting in front of people and making sure that we're getting in front of the right people, asking the right questions.

Like I mentioned before, that pre-vetting process before you get into the interview. Whether fortunately or unfortunately, there are a lot of things to think about as you approach your job search these days because things have changed tremendously. This is my signature four-step process that walks you through all of those steps. It's like the same bread-and-butter process that I use with my one-on-one clients and that I use in my group coaching program. I believe in the offer today we're, for anybody who wants to enroll, \$100 off the course and would love to support you in that.

Like you mentioned before, as you become a business owner, there are like a lot of other things that you have to focus on. Unfortunately, I don't get to do as much in-the-weeds coaching as I used to. But if anybody does want to focus on more one-on-one or handholding-type programs, you can always connect with me on Instagram. We can figure out ways that we can support you.

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**FT:** Fantastic. Thank you for that offer. Yes. I think there's a lot of us in the audience who would be curious to know what else is out there and what might be a better fit. I know a lot of us coming out of the pandemic especially, we're in all various transition phases. Maybe we're coming back into the workplace after taking some time off. Or we're just realizing, okay, what? What am I doing? Really, that soul-searching became a constant exploration during the pandemic and since. I think it's good. I think it's all good. It's great to know that there are people like you out there that can help us and get us creating a road map, which is – we need it so bad.

Eliana Goldstein, thank you so much for giving us all this wonderful advice and insights into the workplace. It's always much needed, especially now. Thank you.

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**EG:** Yes. Yes, absolutely. No, thank you so much for having me. I appreciate it.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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**FT:** Thanks so much to Eliana Goldstein. To check out her signature course, the Career Upgrade program, follow the link in our show notes. Use the code So Money for \$100 off the program. I'll see you back here on Friday for Ask Farnoosh. I hope your day is So Money.

[END]