



slack

VARIETY PACK

Episode 26: Resilience Pack

Speaker 1: You are listening to the Slack ...

Speaker 2: Variety Pack.

Speaker 1: Brought to you by Slack.

Speaker 3: All kinds of people on all kinds of teams use Slack to do amazing things.

Speaker 1: Hi there, welcome to the Slack Variety Pack. We're going to hear some stories about people who face some tough challenges, met them head on and have the strength to keep going. We're calling this episode, the Resilience Pack. Like this family of daredevils and the way they overcome tragedy.

Rick Wallenda: The entire circus business shuttered under that, and our family responded by doing the show the next night.

Speaker 1: These chefs who tour with rock bands.

Chuck White: It's like a band of pirates, just going from city to city but keeping under control.

Speaker 1: The people who form communities using a new type of social health solution.

Giselle Kennedy: They heard me. They felt me. We'll start with your story and say, "Oh my God, that happened to me to."

Speaker 1: First up, we've all been there. Working with a group of people in a project isn't easy, but if we're going to get past the big obstacles to achieve success, we've got to deal with the team dynamic and figuring this out starts at a young age. We asked a group of kids about their experiences on group projects.

Speaker 4: Do you like working with other people?

kid: A little, but sometimes they yap at each other then I'm just left out doing nothing.

kid: I like. It's just really hard, when you get the point out, we don't all agree on this but we still have to fight through and we still have to fight through and we have to just try and solve the problem.

kid: No, not really.

Speaker 4: Why not?

kid: Because I like working on my own, and I feel like I don't get distracted as much when I'm working on my own.

Speaker 4: What kind of problems did you have when doing a project with other people?

kid: Like people yelling, not cooperating, and then at the end, you cooperate.

kid: Sometimes I feel like people don't speak up enough in this situation at the end. They're like, "But I didn't get to put out an idea," but they didn't actually speak up.

kid: Someone takes over things like they're the most important and they're the only one in the group.

Speaker 4: How did you resolve that issue?

kid: I say, "You didn't speak up, so your idea doesn't come into the idea pool."

kid: I don't go and scream, "I don't like it." I say, "Do you want to hear my idea? Maybe we can combine the both of them?"

Speaker 4: Really? That's a very mature approach.

kid: I think so too.

Speaker 4: What happens when you don't like someone else's ideas?

kid: I usually say, "I don't really like that idea. Can we try something else maybe?"

kid: You say, "Excuse me, I have another idea," and then they would listen, and then we would maybe do a vote. That's what we did for my project once.

kid: They get upset and whine a little bit, like, "I don't like your idea. We should do that," but I don't do majority wins or votes. I just think we should cooperate on one thing.

kid: The mature approach is saying, "We're doing my idea not yours."

Speaker 4: Just being rude like that?

kid: Yeah.

Speaker 1: Slack, your team's collective brain.

Speaker 7: Channel change, circus channel.

Speaker 1: While those kids learn about the best ways to work in groups, the kids who grew up in the family in our next story have teamwork built into their DNA. You've probably heard the expression going out on a wire without a net. Well, this family inspired that statement. When it comes to lessons in communication and trust and putting the customer first, we can learn a thing or two from them. Introducing the Flying Wallendas.

Speaker 9: I'm in Sarasota, Florida, driving. I'm headed for a place could Karl Wallenda Court named after the patriarch of the famous tightrope walking Wallendas.

Speaker 10: The most celebrated name in show business the Flying Wallendas.

Speaker 9: A family that has been dominating circus performing through ridiculously inventive and completely dangerous high wire stunts since the 1920. Karl may be long gone, but his legacy isn't. Today, I'm here to meet one of the people keeping the Wallenda name alive, his grandson, Rick.

Rick?

Rick Wallenda: Yeah.

Speaker 9: How are you sir?

Rick Wallenda: Come on in. Have a seat.

Speaker 9: We're in the middle of a bunch of small trailer homes in an area populated by circus people. This place is known to be the spot where big top performers go when they aren't slugging it out on the road.

Rick Wallenda: We own this whole complex here. It used to be a lot bigger, but the grandparents sold it off over the years. We used to own all the way out to the main road out there.

Speaker 9: Oh really?

Rick Wallenda: 22 acres.

Speaker 9: We settle in to a couple of plastic chairs on Rick's mother's porch. His mom is not here today, because right now, she is on the other side of the State performing on a sway pole which is 100-foot high pole that she rocks back and forth in the air. In case I forgot to mention it, she's 80 years old.

Rick Wallenda: This is a world record. She's setting a world record tonight. There's no 80-year-old daredevils out there ever.

Speaker 9: I've seen video of what she's doing. She climbs up on what looks like to be a completely flimsy pole 100 feet in the air and then begins to rock it back and forth, sometimes hanging on with just one hand, which would be impressive for anyone let alone an 80-year-old, but that's not the trick that put the Wallenda family on the map.

Speaker 10: Over 50 years ago, the late great Karl Wallenda stunned audiences by accomplishing his life-long impossible dream of a 7-person pyramid. Tonight ...

Rick Wallenda: A 7-person pyramid is 4 men standing on the wire yoked together with 2 bars, and on each of those bars is standing another man or sometimes a woman, and those 2 on that level are also yoked together with a longer bar, and then on top of that is usually a girl on a chair.

Speaker 9: It's also worth adding here that they do all of this with no net. They're thinking is that having a net would only add a false sense of security. A net is still dangerous. People can bounce out of them and still hit the floor. I've been on some pretty dysfunctional team in my time but never one where each team member literally has everyone else's lives in their hands. Communication is a big part of teamwork, but how does communication even work when you're that high up in the air?

Rick Wallenda: Oh, you're stirring up some controversy now. In our troupe, communication is extremely important. My sister, being one of the girls who goes on the top of the bar, for us to be communicating, she knows that everything is okay. We say things like that, you okay? Yeah, I'm okay. Good. Good stand? Good, and then she'll say, "I'm going up to stand on the chair," and so we do communicate a lot. My cousin Tino, he has gotten away from that. He lives up the road here. He wants no communication in his act at all. I think it's strange and I think it undermines confidence of the rest of the people especially if you're up there with 7 people.

My grandmother told me a story about the guy in front of the pyramid and usually he didn't say very much and always very calm and monotone. He said to them one time, "We have to go in," which meant you got to go into the pedestal. She knew that if he said something like that it's time to go in, but what happened was a giant moth had landed right on the bridge of his nose and opened its wings, so he couldn't see, so he told them, "We have to go in." He didn't lose his cool and start shaking and try to ... He just said, "We have to go in," and everybody knew if Joe said that, we're going in to the pedestal.

Speaker 9: Rick and I have been chatting on his porch for about an hour when he takes me around the side of the house. This is the place they practice and train the next generation of wire walkers. They learn the values of strong teamwork that have kept the Wallenda family business going so strong for so long.

Rick Wallenda: In the back over here is where the beginners start, and you gradually work your way up to here into an actual show.

Speaker 9: They've got 3 setups back here. The first is their starter wire, which is only about 4 inches off the ground, not bad. Then there's the intermediate one at 3 feet high, and then there is the full shebang, which is currently rigged up at about 10 feet, but Rick tells me that right before our show he can raise it even higher to simulate the real thing.

Rick Wallenda: When we're heading towards doing a show 30 feet in the air, I do a lot of things to these kids. I throw things at you. I'd do things to try to distract you. I'll grab the wire and shake it, throw pine cones. We throw footballs. We yell, scream, and then

I've started a new thing. I'll take my hand and put it over their eyes like that so they can't see. Any condition that we create for you on the practice wire is never going to happen when you're in a show, hopefully never happen.

Speaker 9: Except, of course, when it does. In 1962, while performing at the Shrine Circus in Detroit, the 7-person pyramid collapsed. 35 feet in the air, the man in the front lost his footing and slipped, and what happened next was the stuff of circus nightmares. Photos of that night show a terrified Karl clinging to the wire for dear life.

Karl Wallenda: My niece was in my hand. My nephew below, my son-in-law below, and my son.

Speaker 9: 2 of the Flying Wallendas fell to their death, and another, Karl's son Mario was paralyzed. When something on a team goes so terribly wrong, how do you ever recover?

Rick Wallenda: When something like that happens, an accident, and you lose somebody, it impacts everything about you. There is not a single function that I'm involved in that these accidents have not impacted. It was a tragedy for the entire family, and not just our family, the entire circus business shuttered under that, and our family responded by doing the show the next night.

Speaker 12: Surmounting grief and tragedy, they carry on. The show must go on tradition of the entertainment world. We now give you those fearless exponents of the high wire, Jenny, Karl, Herman, Andy, and Gunther Wallenda.

Rick Wallenda: They did the show, and that's the way we have responded to these tragedy. My grandfather was killed 1978, I went back a year and a half later and completed the walk from building to building that he failed at. We don't allow the tragedy to keep us off the wire. Somebody in your family has a car accident and they're killed, you drive to the funeral. You don't let it keep you from getting behind the wheel. It might make you more careful, for a while at least, but you get behind the wheel and drive.

Speaker 9: Which is certainly an attitude that exists in the Wallenda Family even to this day, many of the family, like Rick, still perform. He really can't imagine doing anything else. His granddad Karl once famously said, "Life is on the wire, everything else is just waiting," and for Rick Wallenda, I have no doubt that's true.

Speaker 1: Slacks, working better together.

Speaker 7: Channel change, music, food, travel channel.

Speaker 1: In this episode of the Slack Variety Pack, we're talking about resilience. In the music world, it takes a whole lot of people to pull off a big music festival or outdoor concert. Among other things, the road crews of touring music bands set up the sound systems, build the stages, and keep the musicians in check, but how do you keep a road crew happy with weeks on the road. It's not the rock star glamour. The

secret is simple, food. Here's a look at the working life of chefs on the band circuit.

Speaker 8: You've always dreamed of being a rock star, hitting the highways and playing stadium concerts to the applause of your adoring fans, but you're tone deaf and can't play an instrument. You're one hell of a cook though. Maybe there is a place for you on the road after all. Welcome to the road of chefs on tour.

Chuck White: Hi, my name is Chuck White and I'm a personal and private chef. I did some restaurant consulting work. I had a close friend, he asked me if I wanted to come out and do a tour with John Mayer, Sheryl Crow. I said, "Absolutely, it sounds like a blast, mixing travel and seeing new things and cooking, that's 2 of my favorite things."

Anne Churchill: My name is Anne Churchill.

Speaker 8: We reached Anne on a spotty cellphone line on a tour break.

Anne Churchill: I sometimes refer to myself as a mercenary. I'm a chef for hire, did tour catering for 8 years. I toured mainly with Dave Matthews Band and one tour with Melissa Etheridge, and there was a show that, I don't know if it's on anymore, it was really big, called Glee, and they did a live show on summer and I worked on that.

Speaker 8: Anne and Chuck are veteran tour chefs and have lived the life of a touring rock band. From the perspective of the people who feed the band and crew. Although they have never worked together, their worse stories are pretty much the same. Like many jobs, theirs involve a lot of stress management, troubleshooting and a ton of patience.

Chuck White: It's like a traveling circus almost. I mean, it's just a constant go, go, go as far as you can go, and just sweat pouring and it's just really intense but at the same time it's a lot of fun.

Speaker 8: A tour chef usually works with a team of 2 to 5 other chefs. Depending on the size of the tour, they'll feed anywhere from 20 to 200 mouths or more, but before they're ready to feed their masses, the chefs have to do a lot of prep. Here's how they start their workday.

Chuck White: Normally, I would wake up anywhere 7, 8 o'clock. I would find where I was going to be for the day. There's no telling where I could find a footprint to fit all my equipment. That's where I would set up. I would coordinate that, and then I would find what's called as a runner to take me to the local market or fish place or where I researched the night before to see where we can go shopping.

Anne Churchill: Hopefully the runner is on time. Hopefully the runner is intelligent, has done the job before, has some clue about food, and hopefully is in a 16-person cargo van with the seats removed, because if the seats aren't removed that's problematic. There's a lot of wildcards as to how your day is going to go.

- Speaker 8: By the time the lead chef gets back to the concert venue with a van full of groceries, the rest of the cooking team should have breakfast on the go.
- Chuck White: It almost seem like almost half the time it was so hard to get power, and we have 2 or 3 ovens that we travel with, and the people on tour love bacon. We could not get any power, then the bacon doesn't get cooked. It was always stressful to try to find an electrician. That's the first thing we would do in the morning. If the bacon was late people will start freaking out a little bit.
- Speaker 8: Being able to go with the flow is a big part of the job, but the challenges don't end with breakfast. There are fires to put out throughout their workday, and Anne and Chuck along with their teams need to be able to adapt. One of the fires Anne had to deal with early on in her chef on tour career was no fire at all.
- Anne Churchill: You just have to really be mindful of how long things take, because time management becomes critical. I had a personal nightmare experience with tamales, where I was like, "Oh I make them all the time. It'll be great." It was my first year touring, the first leg, and we were up high so it was taking things longer to boil, and it's 3-burner Coleman stove and it runs on a propane tank. I didn't think to keep going out there and checking it to make sure that the propane tank was still on. It was off for a while so the tamales didn't cook. It was a complete nightmare and it was all my fault.
- Speaker 8: Anne learned from that experience. She has also learned that some challenges in her work environment are completely out of her control, like Mother Nature.
- Anne Churchill: This storm started, and they had us out on this, I guess, kind of a ledge, and we were trying to tarp it in and the wind was whipping around and blowing the road cases close. Road cases can maim you. They can probably come pretty close to taking a hand off, definitely a finger or 2.
- Speaker 8: Luckily Chef Anne and her team managed to keep enough fingers that day to call in for an extra large order of Caribbean takeout. For this kind of job, you definitely cannot let the bumps in the road slow you down. As the saying goes, the show must go on, and there are some definite upsides to the job.
- Chuck White: The whole reason I got into cooking food is to make people happy. To see people's faces light up and say, "Oh man, that was so good," or "That was so great. Thank you. Thank you." It's really cool to see that. It's very gratifying.
- Speaker 15: (Singing).
- Anne Churchill: Well, Dave Matthews and Melissa Etheridge, they had put us up in nice places, so we work very hard and then we might have a day off at a really nice hotel. It's really nice to play around at a nice pool. That really helps with the recharging.

- Speaker 8: Sheryl Crow is so impressed with Chef Chuck's food that she asked him to collaborate on a cookbook with her.
- Chuck White: I made a mouse out of avocados and chocolate. She'll talk about that all the time. She loves that to where she feel like she's cheating but not.
- Speaker 8: Cooking on the road also expanded Chef Anne's skillset.
- Anne Churchill: It's usually really amazing work, because working around other really talented people you learn so much more than in a restaurant because you're staying there watching each other cook. You're getting to see what to do and what not to do and developing your own idea about, "Well, I've never seen that way to chop an onion," or "Maybe that's not for me."
- Speaker 8: As chefs on tour, Chuck and Anne realize that their jobs may not seem mandatory to some people looking in from the outside. I mean, musicians can always eat out, but what their team of chefs provide to the overall tour team is something very valuable.
- Chuck White: When these bands go to different cities or different venues, you don't know what you're going to get. With a catering company, they know they're going to get a great menu, the crew knows that there's going to be different options and things that they need. It's an overall moral and consistency that's hard to put a price on, honestly.
- Anne Churchill: It's a total moral boost. You're a having a cruddy day, and you go in the dining room, you're like, "Oh, my life sucks, but I can make a cappuccino." Sitting around the table is such an important human interaction. We disseminate values. We share ideas. We come together around the meal. We break bread together. It's huge, but it's also the simplest thing.
- Speaker 8: The end of the workday for Anne and Chuck clocks in at around 10 o'clock, and then it starts all over again early the next day. Life on the road as a tour chef certainly is not for everyone, but if you're willing to embrace the challenges and the lifestyle, it's a pretty special experience to share with a great group of people.
- Chuck White: Being in a catering business, or any of that, takes a nice demented person to be able to do it because it's crazy. It's like a band of pirates, just going from city to city but keeping under control and executing. When problems arise, being able to adopt and adjust and make the day go as smooth as possible for everyone.
- Speaker 1: Slack Variety Pack, tweet us @SlackHQ.
- Speaker 7: Channel change, health channel.
- Speaker 1: When you have health challenges, your family and friends try hard to support you and they have the best of intentions, but they don't fully understand what you're

going through because you're not living it. There's a new app out there that takes the notion of support groups to a new level. It brings together communities who get what you're going through because they're going through it themselves.

Giselle Kennedy: I had a history of running up mountains every day with my dogs, eating healthy, never smoked, never drank, never did drugs, got an ideal weight, no history, no high blood pressure, like nothing, and at the age of 49, I developed this bizarre pain in my back and kept going to emergency, they kept sending me back. I think on the third try I finally got some attention, and they run a test and I was grossly positive with 80% blockage of the main artery in my heart.

Speaker 16: Giselle Kennedy will never forget the day she was diagnosed with heart disease. Now, a tiny straw called a stint holds one of her arteries open to prevent a heart attack.

Giselle Kennedy: They sent me home because they said your problem is fixed, go home. Technically speaking that was correct, but the psychological impact was so much bigger than I had ever anticipated.

Speaker 16: Giselle is frustrated with her treatment plan. She thinks doctors are treating her like a middle aged man rather than a woman.

Giselle Kennedy: The thing with heart diseases, all the studies that they have done on heart disease mainly involve men of a certain age above 50. They have not done a lot of research on women that are pre-menopausal. That's significant because I still have a period. After stints, you put on blood thinners, so I bleed a lot. The problems with that is my hemoglobin drops, iron drops, but the cardiologist doesn't care about that. He only cares about my heart.

Speaker 16: On top of all of this, Giselle felt isolated. Sure, her family was supportive and sympathetic, but they didn't really understand what she was going through. She needed more.

Giselle Kennedy: Yeah. I was a hot mess. Even though I had all that support with my family, I still felt alone because these emotions are all new for me. I wasn't used to being afraid. Being connected with other people who were also afraid is very helpful and that helps you deal with those fears.

Lynda: I'm Lynda Brown-Ganzert, and I'm the Founder and CEO of Curatio. One of our users called it a positive Tinder for cancer patients, which sounds kind of funny but is the experience we were looking for, right?

Speaker 16: Curatio is a matching app for patients with a number of different health challenges.

Lynda: Curatio is a type of social health prescription.

Speaker 16: The users of the app conform support circles with their matches where they can

chat, vent, and cheerlead each other on. It's much more specific than a traditional support groups at community and health centers.

Lynda: Decades of research have show us the people of social support have much better health outcomes. They are better able to manage their disease, have greater adherence, and have better overall quality of life.

Speaker 16: Lynda has been in the technology industry for years. About 2 and a half years ago, she started to hone in on mobile health. She pitched her idea for Curatio to her good friend Ryan Layback. Turns out, he was a lot more than a sounding board. He became a guinea pig. 2 weeks after she pitched him, he had a heart attack.

Lynda: He was my first use case working through his recovery and talking to him about the experience.

Speaker 16: Ryan was in his early 40s when he had his heart attack.

Lynda: He has made some wonderful contacts through his support group, but many of them are in their 70s, 80s, 90s, very different lifestyle, and he would've really appreciated meeting someone that was going through what he was going through at his life stage.

Speaker 16: Lynda introduced Giselle to Curatio 8 months after her diagnosis. Curatio opened up a whole new type of social network for her.

Giselle Kennedy: They heard me. They felt me. We'll start with your story and you connect with that person and say, "Oh my God, that happened to me to," or "Oh, that sounds really frightening. What else happened? Did your doctor tell you X, Y, Zed?" All the people, everyone adding their own questions and experiences and empathy.

Speaker 16: Curatio also offers users curated research on their research on their conditions from reputable medical sources. This helps level the playing field between patient and doctor. Giselle believes that Curatio is part of a greater change in the way we approach healthcare.

Lynda: Shit gets real when it's your life on the line. This is our bodies. Back in the day, doctors made all the decisions about our health. Now, a doctor is a coworker. It's our bodies. We have to take control of our health and the doctor is supposed to be there to help you. Technology will also be there to help you because the future is taking us in that direction.

Speaker 16: Curatio's Lynda Brown-Ganzert believes that knowledge and support equals a sense of empowerment for patients.

Lynda: You look at the increasing burden on health professionals and their work hours or case loads, I mean, it's just growing. I think we serve a really urgent need to help empower and engage patients in new ways that helps to potentially improve and

strengthen their relationships with healthcare providers.

- Speaker 16: Armed with personal knowledge and a whole community of patients who understand, users get another helpful shot in the arm. Curatio will track your symptoms and treatment so you can see where you're at.
- Lynda: Maybe you've changed a protocol or a treatment and your doctor is saying, "Okay, how did that go?" You might not remember how the last 30, 60, 90 days were, but you can pull up your dashboard and go, "Oh okay, I seem to be feeling a lot better," or "Maybe not so much."
- Speaker 16: About 2 months ago, Giselle's pain in her lower back returned. She had to get a second stint in her artery. Now, she's on a new rehabilitation journey, but this time around, she can make better sense of it and know where to turn.
- Giselle Kennedy: Oh yes, sir, they're involved. They know everything that's going on. I definitely needed this group of women. This came for me at the right time in my life. It was something that I was craving and I didn't realize I needed until I had it, and now I really love it.
- Speaker 1: That's a wrap for episode 26 of the Slack Variety Pack. For more information about this podcast, go to slack.com/varietypack. Subscribe to this podcast on iTunes or Stitcher. Rate us on iTunes, or let us know what you think @SlackHQ. Thank you for listening.
- Speaker 2: Slack Variety Pack.
- Speaker 3: All kinds of teams use Slack to do amazing things.