



slack

VARIETY PACK

Episode 11: Break Pack

Announcer: You are listening to the slack ...

Announcer: Variety Pack.

Announcer: A collection of stories about work

Announcer: Life

Announcer: And everything in between.

Announcer: Brought to you by Slack. If you don't know what Slack is, head over to [Slack.com](https://slack.com) and change your working life, forever. On this episode, having a snooze at work.

Woman: There's a sliding partition door. It opens up into this tiny-little room with two bunk beds.

Announcer: Ice cubes get the artisanal treatment.

Reporter 1: Yup. You heard that right. He cuts the ice with a chain saw.

Announcer: And turning online art theft into a win.

Kal Barteski: You don't have a right to use my work just because you saw it on Twitter. Right?

Announcer: But first. Meet the people who can't stop dropping their phones.

Man: Slack variety pack?

Reporter 1: Yeah.

Man: Cool. (laughter).

Man: Okay.

Announcer: Making work less work you.

Reporter 1: It's a 21st century epidemic.

Phone dropper: I think, at some point, I have broken the screen of every phone I have owned, so that's like four ...?

Phone dropper: Two so far.

Phone dropper: Oh, everyone of them?

Phone dropper: Ah, surprisingly, I've only had one shattered phone.

Reporter 1: I asked a bunch of these brave heroes their stories. And they all started out with some heartbreakingly preventable detail.

Phone dropper: I was wearing like, a button-up shirt, and it was in my front pocket.

Phone dropper: I saw it, I'll just take it out of the case.

Phone dropper: It was in my ear with the earbud, and it was hanging like a foot from the ground. And I was like, "Oh, thank God."

Reporter 1: And then the phone falls. And time slows down.

Phone dropper: And I reached down to pick it up, and it separated.

Slow-mo voice: No.

Phone dropper: And completely shattered.

Slow-mo voice: My phone.

Phone dropper: You know, when it hits the ground. That way you just go, Ah, that wasn't good.

Reporter 1: Or sometimes, they just did something dumb.

Phone dropper: I mocked being upset about something, and tossed my phone, which up to that point, had been indestructible.

Reporter 1: But they decided to keep their phones, in spite of how weird and janky they became.

Phone dropper: If I ran my thumb along it felt like it could slice me.

Phone dropper: Kept noticing my ear hurt, and it's because the glass is cutting my ear.

Phone dropper: The lock button would get stuck in sometimes, so it would just lock and then unlock, and I'd have to enter in the code to unlock it. And then it would lock immediately again, and the screen would turn- it was just really annoying.

Phone dropper: I can't read on it even worse now, because of the cracks that are mostly near the bottom of the phone, which is where all the new texts would be, but it still works.

Reporter 1: Hmm, not really. But what unites these people is their strong sense of loyalty.

Phone dropper: I kept this for like a year after.

Phone dropper: Five or six months now.

Reporter 1: Or maybe they're just stuck in a really long contract.

Phone dropper: I was using it for about two years, after it broke.

Reporter 1: So they make do.

Phone dropper: I carried around a piece of paper with phone numbers in it. For years. Because my phone screen was broken, once.

Phone dropper: All the other broken phones I've had pretty much I can use them.

Reporter 1: And some of them have discovered some ingenious ways of using their shattered phones.'

Phone dropper: The space button stopped working, and I had to send every text message with a period between every word. And everyone thought I was being very angry with them. Like, "Get.The.Car.Now."

Reporter 1: They don't care what other people say.

Phone dropper: Why don't you just get a new phone?

Phone dropper: Yeah, I get comments all the time to replace it.

Phone dropper: My boss, actually, just yesterday, was like, aw, you broke yours, too?

Phone dropper: Like, Oh, my God, what happened? And I'm like, what? What? Because I think something has happened you know, around us, and then they're just really referring to my phone screen.

Reporter 1: They're not going to replace their broken phones.

Phone dropper: It would probably have to be like, physically painful, for me to use it, in order for me to replace it.

Reporter 1: We salute you, for bravely holding on to your phones. After that one time, when you totally didn't.

Phone dropper: I mean, it would have to be like, cutting my fingers. That's how bad it would have to be. It would have to actually be cutting me.

Reporter 1: Just make sure your tetanus shots are up to date.

Announcer: Slack. It just works.

Announcer: Channel change. Internet culture.

Reporter 2: Meet Kal Barteski, a visual artist who sees making art as more than her job.

Kal Barteski: Art is not my job. It's a way of life. The more art I do, I'm a better friend, I'm a better mom, I'm a better wife, I'm a better contributor to this earth when I do art. It's the only thing that keeps me going.

Reporter 2: Kal's form of art is known as illustrated typography. Which is like hand-rendered type, or hand-made letters.

Kal Barteski: My theory on why illustrated typography is so popular lately, is because we are inundated with machines, and email, and text, and letters are really impersonal on a computer. It's a bit magnetic to see things written by hand, and stuff that sort of has a soul.

Reporter 2: People say you can recognize her work from a mile away. Chances are, you might have already seen her work on the internet. You see, Kal didn't come to doing illustrated typography naturally. This is where her story begins.

Kal Barteski: About four, about six years ago, in 2009, I was blogging daily, and I was always looking for content, and it was easier for me to create art as content. So, one day I was waiting for someone to meet me for lunch, and I always have a paintbrush in my bag, and I quickly scripted the words "Be True to Who You Are" on the back of a napkin. I thought, oh, that would be good content. I could talk about that. I took it home, and I scanned it, and I put it on my blog, and wrote a little post, and then I completely forgot about it. Six months later, a friend of mine who lives in Vancouver called, and said, this is amazing! I just saw your work in one of these big, fancy shops in Grenell Island.

I said, wait a minute. I'm not selling any work in Grenell Island. Can you go back and take a photo? I don't understand what's happening, here. She went back, and she took a photo, and she actually bought the piece, and it was my Be True to Who You Are, and I ended up calling the shop, and dealing with the business owner who said, well we have a curator, and she curated this. I talked to her, who just said, Oh, I don't know. It was on Pinterest. And, this was sort of the dawn of Pinterest era as well. I also did a thing called Tiny, and it's a reverse image search. I put Be True to Who You Are, in the reverse image search, and sobbed when I saw the results. It was posted 6 million times on Myspace, a couple of million times on Tumblr, it was overlaid over [inaudible 00:07:25] videos.

It was used as profiles, it was being sold on apparel, it was on the covers of magazines in other countries. What was I to do? I decided that if people are willing to steal it, they might be willing to pay for it. At that point, I thought, I'm also going to do so much of this stuff at any time, anyone sees this weird brush-script style, they're going to think it's mine. At that point, I just started doing a ton of it. A lot of it, and it caught on, and I did campaigns, and work for all kinds of large organizations and professional things, and charities, and I grew to love

it. I grew to really respect the brush, respect the letter, and it's really just been a fascinating journey through all different kinds of genres. [inaudible 00:08:18] and really religious groups, just all kinds of things, and it's fascinating.

Reporter 2: Kal was able to turn her art theft, into a win. But truthfully, she has a love/ hate relationship with the internet and sees her success as a double-edged sword.

Kal Barteski: When I say I sprinkled these things all over the internet, whenever I would post them, it would be with a water mark, with a signature, with a very set structure on how my work was shared. I put a lot of time and energy into trying to educate people. I really, honestly believe that we're at a time where drag-and-drop from the desktop, or right-click to copy is sort of just how we live our lives. Every piece of art, every photograph, every word written, this doesn't just apply to visual arts. There's a person. There's probably several people behind there, and I think we completely forget that. You don't have a right to use my work, just because you saw it on Twitter. Right?

Reporter 2: One job that came out of her online art bombardment captured the meaning of her weird, and wonderful journey.

Kal Barteski: I was working for a company called [as-treh-loh down 00:09:32], which is [inaudible 00:09:33] Barcelona. They kept getting me to script this particular phrase over and over and in all different sort of dialects. After the job was done, I thought, Oh, my gosh. I should really figure out what the heck they're getting me to write. Because I don't speak Spanish. I Google translated it, and it said, When you love what you have, you have everything you need. I was just so touched by that, because that is just exactly the sort of the epitome of what I believe, and how I live. I believe that what you put out into the universe comes back, so I only script friendly, empowering, positive phrases.

Reporter 2: Follow Kal Barteski on Instagram, and check out her fine words.

Announcer: Channel change. Business channel.

Reporter 3: Ice, by any other name, is just frozen water. The only time we pay for it, is when we buy it by the bag. But did you know that some people are selling ice by the cube?

You can go to a farmer's market, and get artisan soap, artisan jewelry, even a cup of artisan joe. How much would you pay for an artisan ice cube? Meet Alex Gregg, the owner of the Moving Sidewalk, a bar in downtown Houston. He not only cuts his own ice by hand, he's made a business out of selling hand-cut ice.

Alex Gregg: A lot of machine ice is not [inaudible 00:11:13] at all, and it's super wet. If I were to make that drink on there, it'd already be watery down. The other thing is that most machine ice isn't clear like that. If you look at the ice-age ice, you can read the newspaper through it.

Reporter 3: Alex did some research online. He can make a mostly pure block of ice by putting a cooler full of tap water in the walk-in. It would freeze slowly enough that all the impurities would float to the top.

Alex Gregg: I made my first perfectly clear, hand-cut ice cube, and I made myself an old-fashioned, and a real part of me just wanted to call nonsense on it. But, the way I work is, I had to go through it. I had to make it, and see it, and hold it in order to make that decision. The first drink I put on it, I was hooked. This is the most beautiful thing, it was the best old-fashioned I'd had and, it's been off to the races from there.

Reporter 3: The cooler in the freezer method took up a lot of space, and it still kept some impurities. Alex set his sight on the best of the best. The ice machine that ice-sculptures use. It was \$60,000. Then the light bulb turned on.

Alex Gregg: Long story short, we wanted this machine, but it was too much for the bar. Then we're like, well, what if we offer it to other bars and restaurants and sell it. In a year, a bunch of bars are going to have great ice, I'd rather be the person supplying it to them.

Reporter 3: And that's how he started selling \$1 ice cubes to bars and restaurants all over Houston. Alex looked up instructions online to build a scaffolding system to slowly lift the giant block from the freezer. Too fast, and it might break.

Alex Gregg: You notice how this ice is clear, right now?

Reporter 3: Yeah.

Alex Gregg: It's been sitting out, we moved it from our deep freeze to the walk-in about three hours ago. You can't just cut it straight away. It has to, it's a process called tempering. And basically, it has to warm up. If I were to try to cut it, pull it straight out of the deep freeze, and try to cut it, it would shatter on me. Because there's that dermal shock, and the vibration. So first Sam is going to pick this block up.

Reporter 3: And then, the real work starts. He picks up a small saw.

Alex Gregg: From this side, we're going to measure five inches. This line that I'm creating, this is just my guideline, so when when I'm using the chain saw, I know where to cut. It can be ...

Reporter 3: Yup, you heard that right. He cuts the ice with a chainsaw. Once he chainsaws smaller blocks, he uses a smaller saw to cut prisms, and then cuts the prisms into cubes.

Alex Gregg: These cubes, we'll lay them out on trays, and then we'll put them in the deep freeze, so that they dry, and then we'll either package them for sale to clients, or move them into the storage area that we keep the ice for the bar.

Reporter 3: Back at the bar, Alex admits, \$1 ice cubes aren't for everybody.

Alex Gregg: Yeah, if they are nay-sayers, like, yeah, you're freezing water and selling it, it's like. Yeah, we are doing that, but a lot of work goes into it, as well. You know, the reality is, it is a luxury item. We can drink [inaudible 00:14:36] or not, or you can go to to a bar that sells beers that are nine or twelve dollars, and that's a personal decision. It doesn't really have anything to do with me. But what we found is most people really like it, and so they've kind of sought us out for it.

Reporter 3: And if you splurge on a really expensive whiskey, Gregg will rush to the back and hand cut you a perfectly spherical ice ball.

Alex Gregg: Our lives are stressful. Now that we're attached to our phones, it's like 60-hour work weeks are more common for everybody. None of us are going to get a pension from who we work for. We all know this. Going out and having a nice drink is like, you should treat yourself, and reward yourself. People who get that, is kind of the demographic.

Reporter 3: I can drink to that.

Announcer: Share this story with friends. Go to soundcloud.com/slacksingleservings

Announcer: Channel change. Author channel.

Tori Allen: You had a big lunch, you go back to the office, and soon enough you've got the sleepies. What are our techniques for staying alert when you're in the mid-afternoon slump?

Reporter 4: What do you do when you hit that point in the afternoon, where you're just losing your energy and starting to fade?

Man: More coffee. Another cigarette. I don't know. A couple of glasses of water.

Woman: Box of chocolates.

Woman: Oh, I drink a boatload of caffeine.

Woman: Coffee. Anywhere. Find anywhere to get coffee anywhere.

Man: Two mochas.

Woman: I grab more coffee, and I think if I [inaudible 00:16:33] just suck it. Be here for work.

Reporter 4: Mid afternoon your energy is flagging, you're starting to fade. What do you do?

Man: I let myself day dream for a bit. Work in sprints. Let yourself have a bit of a time to zone out.

Woman: Walk around. Step outside. Talk to somebody.

Man: Stand up and go for a walk. Walk somewhere. Get a bit of breathing going, a bit of blood flow.

Reporter 4: Would you ever nap?

Woman: No.

Reporter 4: Would you ever have a nap at work?

Man: No.

Reporter 4: Would you ever nap at work?

Man: No, never.

Woman: No.

Woman: No.

Man: No. No, no, no naps at work. No.

Woman: Although I did when I was pregnant, fall asleep one time at work, yeah.

Man: But I feel like I'm too busy to take a nap. If that make- I would be like, it's nap time, and then I would freak out that I'm not getting what I need to get done.

Reporter 4: What if they installed a nap room?

Man: No, I don't think that's a good idea. No.

Woman: No, I don't have time to do that. You know? I don't have time to nap.

Woman: I guess when [inaudible 00:17:35] no time to even nap. I just keep going. There's hardly even enough time to have lunch.

Reporter 4: Would you ever take a nap in the office?

Woman: Yes, because my office is my house.

Reporter 4: So you have a nap room built in.

Woman: I do. A built a nap room right there.

Announcer: Those people may feel weird about napping in the office, but in some places, it's quite common. Tori Allen is a journalist who's lived in Seoul, South Korea, for the last three years. There, she stumbled into a workplace perk, that she'd always dreamed of.

Tori Allen: This Spring I took a temporary job as a TV news editor with a Korean broadcaster. I also happened to be in the second trimester of my first pregnancy. While I felt pretty good, there were days when the post-lunch slump and work coincided with a huge drop in my energy levels. One day, my colleague Kwan Jihye nonchalantly suggested that I go visit the nap room. The nap room? Are you kidding me?

Jihye: Oh, why wouldn't I think about this. We should have been [inaudible 00:18:47] room.

Tori Allen: Yes. So, what does it say on the door, Jihye?

Jihye: Sometimes uses for the people who do the K-pop thing ...

Tori Allen: Like a dressing room?

Jihye: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Not for our nap room.

Tori Allen: Yeah. Definitely in Korea. Jihye and I worked in the same department. She explained that she had used the women's nap room, there's a separate one for men, occasionally, when she was on the early shift. In Korea, it turns out that nap rooms, or areas, official or unofficial, are the norm at large companies. I asked Jihye why that is. Do Koreans value rest, or sleep more than North Americans?

Jihye: I think it's because we work longer hours. Because working over time is so frequent and so common here in Korea, so we need a place where it feels like home, maybe. Because we need to rest.

Tori Allen: You might also need to rest because in more traditional companies, strict hierarchies and bonding rituals make the workday even longer. You may be required to go drinking with your teammates after work, a practice known as hoesik. Or you may have to follow the unspoken rule of not leaving the office until your boss or team leader leaves for the day. Even if you're just twiddling your thumbs, and propping your eyelids open. In which case, nap room starts to make a lot of sense.

So we're going to open the door.

Jihye: I don't think anyone's here now.

Tori Allen: So you open the door and you come into this little front room, and it's got four leatherish club chairs, and then there's a sliding partition door. It opens up into this tiny little room with two bunk beds, and each, so that's four beds in total. Each bed has a mat, like a blanket, and a pillow. It's all in pink and white.

I know what you're thinking. First, ew. Who else has used that pink and white bedding? Second, sleeping in close quarters with strangers? Jihye does explain that they launder the bedding regularly, but ...

Jihye: It is disturbing. It is disturbing. By the time I come here, I'm super tired, so I just sacrifice the environment I want for having a nap. It's just worth it to just sleep in a random bed with random people, very close to me. It's just worth it, sometimes.

Tori Allen: If you're a germaphobe, this is definitely not going to work for you, but I have to agree with Jihye. It is just totally worth it, sometimes. I did chicken out on my first visit because I was shocked to find three people already in there, and the only bed open was on the top bunk. I wasn't about to haul myself up there. I've since gotten over the close quarters and the used bedding. And I've power-napped successfully on my lunch hour a number of times. It just made the rest of the afternoon so much better. And so much more productive. This is the scenario I have dreamed of during my decade with a large media organization back home. And these days it does seem that some North American companies are slowly catching on to the benefits of an office nap room. Google, Nike, Zappos, and Huffington post, to name a few. I was still curious about how napping works and why it was so acceptable in Korean companies, so I compared notes with another foreigner who's a veteran in the Korean corporate world.

Todd: My name is Todd [inaudible 00:22:24] and I am originally from the United States, and have lived in Korea for 20 years.

Tori Allen: Todd's spent eight of those 20 years at two high profile government organizations. And, in particular, he told me about how napping worked during his years at Kepco, the country's national power company.

Todd: Each of the floors had a lounge. If you went to the lounge from between 8am and 9am, or 930am, it would be quite dark and people would be sleeping inside. They would go to a desk, turn off their computer, hang up their jacket, and then they'd go for a nap. It's not really a lot of shame or embarrassment about using the sleeping room. Generally, it's been wildly accepted. On some days, the room is pretty full, on some days there might be just one or two people.

Tori Allen: And what about Todd? Did he ever use the lounge for sleeping purposes?

Todd: Ah, no, no. I never used the nap rooms, as the only foreign employee at the companies where I was working, obviously you tend to stand out, so I personally

feel that it's not so professional to sleep at the office. When I'm at work, I want to work, and I want to finish the day and go home.

Tori Allen: I see Todd's point. The presence of nap rooms or sleeping areas isn't necessarily a sign of foreign thinking corporate culture in Korea. I know a lot of Korean friends who'd prefer to have shorter workdays and more personal time, to having managers turn a blind eye to sleeping on the job. In my case, as one of the few foreigners in my department, and a pregnant foreigner at that, I was exempt from, or just simply ignorant of a lot of the rules that apply to my Korean workmates. I wasn't willing to give up a rare chance for productivity-boosting, work-sanctioned siesta.

So, I'm going to take this opportunity, now that Jihye has left to start her shift, to actually have a power nap myself. I'm going to pull these sliding doors shut, and I'm going to get on a bottom bunk, and not think about who else has used this pillow this week. And just lie down. Good night.

Announcer: Slack. Working better.

Announcer: Channel change. Fresh-air channel.

Announcer: Foggy brain? Creative rut? If you can't nap, here's another solution.

Reporter 5: What do George Orwell, Charles Dickens, Virginia Wolf, and Henry David Thoreau all have in common? Well, yeah, they were all super famous writers. But they were all creative people who walked a lot. They were all creative people who walked a lot. Hmm, this doesn't feel right.

They were all creative people who walked a lot, and I guess what I want to know is, what can walking do for your creativity?

Geoff Nicholson: Particularly when I'm writing novels, you know, I get stuck. Or I don't know what a character is going to do, or I don't know what a character is going to say. And I consider my desk for hours at a time, and I don't solve the problem that needs solving.

Reporter 5: That's Geoff Nicholson. He's the author of more than a dozen novels and nonfiction books, including *The Lost Art of Walking*.

Geoff Nicholson: Sometimes, for example, I've got a character in my book, and I don't know what he's going to say next. Well, the risk is I'm like a complete lunatic. Sometimes as I walk, I will hear this character's voice in my head. It'll solve the problem in that way.

Reporter 5: I like the sound of that. And not just because everything sounds so much better with a British accent. I'm just really into this notion that you can have a brilliant idea just by taking a walk. Sure would be nice to have some evidence, though.

Marilyn Oppezzo: This idea is not new. That, walking improves creativity. Aristotle came up with it.

Reporter 5: That's Marilyn Oppezzo. While she was a PhD student at Stanford, she ran a series of studies to find a link between walking and creativity.

Marilyn Oppezzo: There's lots of types of creativity, and creative thinking. What we specifically tested was brainstorming.

Reporter 5: In one of these studies they asked people to come up with as many different uses for a list of objects as possible. They only counted the answers that were novel and appropriate. Novel meaning, nobody else came up with that answer. And appropriate meaning, well, appropriate.

Marilyn Oppezzo: So, lighter fluid in a soup is a novel ingredient, but not appropriate.

Reporter 5: The result was that if you took the test while sitting down, your score went up enormously if you took it again while walking. That may be predictable, but it even worked on a treadmill. And the cool thing was that the positive effect of the walking lasted after the walk was over. If you took the test while sitting down after walking, you generally scored better than people who never walked, at all.

Marilyn Oppezzo: So, to us that says, that's good. If you can't do a walking brainstorming meeting, you can at least go for a walk while thinking about it, and then come back and have the brainstorming meeting, and ostensibly, you will be better.

Reporter 5: But before you decide to give up your boardroom and hold all your meetings on the side walk, first of all, you should see the looks I'm getting. And second of all, there's more than one type of thinking to consider.

Marilyn Oppezzo: We also tested this other type of thinking, which is called convergent thinking, where there's one right answer. We didn't see walking helped that at all. Walking wasn't a global win for every type of thinking.

Reporter 5: Walking also isn't a global win for recording voice over. But say you want to try walking to solve a problem. Here's a little advice.

Geoff Nicholson: We're not getting too zen about it. Happy enough to get zen. The walks you're about to do, that's the important walk.

Reporter 5: So keep your phone in your pocket, take your headphones off, and pay attention to the walk itself.

Geoff Nicholson: Certainly, if I'm doing a long walk, it starts out that way. I'm very sort of thoughtful, and I'm looking where I'm walking. I'm observing things. If you walk long enough and far enough, by the end of it, you're not really thinking at all, you're just kind of putting one foot in front of another. You're not thinking

about walking, you're just walking, and that seems to me a rather wonderful thing.

Reporter 5: And now I guess it's time to put down the microphone, because if I want to be like George Orwell, or Charles Dickens, I'm going to have to shut my mouth, so I can hear myself think.

Announcer: You've been listening to episode 11 of the Slack Variety Pack.

Announcer: Next episode.

Announcer: How to turn the weirdest job descriptions into the best Halloween costumes.

Announcer: Human resources rockstar. Spreadsheet wizard. Code ninja.

Announcer: Quitting your job and travelling around the world? It isn't all lazy days and gorgeous instagram pics.

World traveler: Even though we have had some tough times scrubbing toilets and cleaning chicken coops, we've been able to do things on our term.

Announcer: Next time you're travelling to San Francisco, why book a hotel when you can stay overnight in the offices of a real tech-start up?

Startup CEO: It would be great to be on like, lists when they say, unusual places to stay in different parts of the world. I saw one where you could stay in a ski jump in Norway, and you can stay in Tree House in Portland. You should stay at startup in San Francisco. It makes sense.

Announcer: The detail.

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Announcer: Slack.

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