

Say No to RTO

Sharon Hurley Hall 00:06

Welcome to the introvert sisters, the podcast by introverts for introverts hosted by Sharon and Lisa, to INFJs with a lot to see. Hi, I'm Sharon.

Lisa Hurley 00:23

I'm Lisa. And together, we're the introvert sisters. Welcome to the podcast.

Sharon Hurley Hall 00:30

You want to take it, Lisa?

Lisa Hurley 00:32

Well, yeah, today we're talking about introversion introverts as they return to work or return to office. I prefer the phrase return to office because it is more precise because we have been working. We have been working along all along at home. Right. And so I prefer RTO. And RTO means literally return to in person in person office work. And anybody who has been following me for a while, knows that I'm 100% team work from home. Oh, yes, right for forever. And so it's a topic that's near and dear to both our hearts. We recently both had the opportunity to be featured in Forbes, talking, well, I guess is it talking? Writing, being interviewed being interviewed in Forbes, by Dana Brownlee about this topic. About why introverts and especially black introverts don't want to return to work, return to the office,

Sharon Hurley Hall 01:36

We do not

Lisa Hurley 01:36

Yeah. And so yeah, why why? Why don't we want to return to office sis?

Sharon Hurley Hall 01:41

Because, frankly, we're doing so much better working from home. Right, there's so much trauma that you avoid, by not being in the office, you know, you don't have to deal with the microaggressions of all kinds, you don't have to deal with being stopped at the door, because the security guard who seen you every day in the last five years, never actually believes that you work there. Yeah, you know, you don't have to deal with being pulled out for the random searches. Or they know you, they vaguely know that you work there. But you think that they think that you have to be the most junior person, you know, or you're, yeah, you're not there in the role that you're actually there is no, you know, you you don't have to deal with people asking you to make the coffee or the tea or take the notes. Rather than lead the presentation. You don't have to deal as much with being talked over. You know, all of those, all of those little things, and you don't have to deal with the silly questions about, you know, where you come from? Or how articulate you are? Or, you know, I mean, you could still get that on Zoom. Admittedly, you can, you can, but it's minimized. Yeah, yeah. Minimize the reason it doesn't happen as much. Yeah. What

are some of the top microaggressions that you have experienced? That I know okay, the difference career wise, between you and I is that I've been in corporate, maybe longer than you have, or for more, more my career than you have. But we both, you know, worked in offices, you know, and you've been a professor, so that's not corporate, but that's still, you know, office. So what have you gone through and one of my early jobs, you know, there were questions about how I managed to get to England because, you know, clearly, you know, we didn't have planes, or that air, you know, in Barbados, you know, there were thought you swam over? Yes, they thought I left my tree house and swam over to be precise. From Jamaica. Because all of the Caribbean is Jamaica. Yes. Right. Right. Eye Roll, eye roll, eye roll, eye roll, eye roll, eye roll. Yeah. You know, you know, there's, you know, the usual questions. Oh, you're so articulate the surprise at your, your level of education. You know what, you have a degree. Wait, you have a bachelor's? Wait, you have two masters. You know, the surprise that you've traveled? Yes. You know, it's like,

Lisa Hurley 04:10

oh, my gosh, yes! I remember a few jobs ago, you know, just going randomly going out to lunch with a couple people on my team. And, you know, people were talking about traveling one person had been to Paris once and one person wanted to go, and I was like, Yeah, you know, the times I went to, skritch! like the conversation like screeched to a halt. You've been to Paris? Yes. You know, and I don't know why like, because it surprise you've ever done any done anything accomplished anything been anywhere? You know, especially if they haven't, and we know who we're talking about when we say that? Yes. Right. Majority minority population. Yeah. Right. And so yeah, just not having to deal with that silliness.

Sharon Hurley Hall 04:57

Exactly. There's a way in which when you're working from home and you're on a zoom call or a meet call or a team's call, or whatever it is, you know, people mostly cut to the chase it cuts down on the random chitchat. Yes. And therefore, there is less opportunity, I think, for the micro aggression there when you're walking in the office and people can swing by your cubicle, and hassle you. Yes. No drive bys? No, no, no, no, no drive bys. Nobody, you know, expressing surprise at any, you know, and, you know, here's the thing. Okay. And, you know, I, you know, we grew up in a place and, you know, this is one of the advantages sometimes of growing up in a place where black people are in the majority, which still has its problems, yes, still has its white supremacy issues. But excellence was expected, you know, and was the norm, you know, I, you know, we've done stuff. But, you know, that doesn't necessarily, you know, we're not we're not a specialist that no, you're not, I mean,

Lisa Hurley 05:56

I always say, I always say that, you know, I am the I am absolutely, you know, one of the under achievers in my circle, because everybody is fabulous and fantastic. Everybody, everybody has done stuff.

Sharon Hurley Hall 06:08

You know, we have we have, you know, we know, people that have you, you know, discovered life saving therapies, we, you know, people that are leading countries, we know, people that are, you know, doctors, lawyers, accountants, financial controllers, you know, we know, all the, you know, we know,

people that have done stuff, we know, people that have traveled and lived abroad, we know people that have written books.

Lisa Hurley 06:29

and people, people that are successful entrepreneurs.

Sharon Hurley Hall 06:31

Yeah, we know, oh, you know, we know at least, you know, so, you know, we're just, we're just there in the mix. Yeah, you know, so it's kind of, you know, it's kind of hurtful when people expect to have such low expectations of us. Right. And so though, a lot of the microaggressions, centered around that, the expectations that black people will not have done anything will not have been anywhere will not have achieved anything will not be competent, yada, yada, yada.

Lisa Hurley 06:59

Yeah, I also believe, and I'm not sure exactly where it comes from, something I definitely struggle with is, it's almost like a communication thing. I don't know if it's cultural, or what, but I often feel like I'm, you know, I'm in a meeting. And it's like, just going around in circles. Yeah, is going around in circles. I find it can happen on Zoom, right, and in remote, you know, remote calls or whatever. But, you know, like, if you're, if you're in person, and your face has no filter, my face has no filter your input, and you're right, you're in person, the conversation is going around in circles, you're trying to make it make sense. You know, like there's less of a necessity to mask.

Sharon Hurley Hall 07:49

Yes!

Lisa Hurley 07:50

it's less of a necessity to mask. You can sort of be puzzled with your camera off. Right? You can throw a question in the chat. Yeah. Which hopefully they don't interpret your accent or your tone or your intonation. Hopefully. You're absolutely I know, my accent all the time. Yes. Right.

Sharon Hurley Hall 08:09

And so it does create a bit of a literal distance and a bit of a barrier. So that, you know, maybe you're perceived more positively or if not more positive, positively, less negatively, or more neutrally. Yes. And, you know, and you know, those microaggressions are all about us being black women, but there's the introversion factor as well. Absolutely. Is the fact that you are often required to fake extraversion. Yes, you know, and be much more happier and clappier and, you know, peppy than you would naturally feel and, you know, my my ability to fake peppiness does not actually have any bearing on my ability to do my work.

Lisa Hurley 08:53

No, right. I do not want to come to your happy hour, but if you would like some copy written, I am your girl. Yes, I'm your girl. So what working from home has helped accomplish is yeah, you know, you don't have that sort of in person peer pressure. There's still some right you know, working because virtual happy hours oh my gosh, just the worst. But, but even that, right, you can decline a meeting, it's easier

to decline remotely, it's easier to decline it remotely. So you know, if you're working in person and everybody's like, Oh, you know, we're going out to get a beer. You know, and then they gather around

Sharon Hurley Hall 09:33

expectedly

Lisa Hurley 09:34

gather around expectedly with coats on staring at you and you're there like a trapped deer. You know, and and then of course if you don't go if you don't attend then it's going to go to get against you that is coming up on your performance review. And everybody you know, it's so funny because a lot of non black and non POC people express surprise when many of us have said Oh, it comes up on your performance review. Yes, it does. This is our lived experience. And, you know, you and I are connected with a lot of people on LinkedIn. Yes. And, you know, black people, right. And many of us have have shared the same thing that you know, if you draw a boundary, yeah, it's coming up on your review. Right? This has happened to me, in every, every solitary job. Yeah. What!

Sharon Hurley Hall 10:24

No, if I Yeah. So you know, and then there's the fact that, you know, people will look for an excuse not to give you your do, I still recall, working in England, applying for promotion, which had a certain salary increase to go with it. And I got the promotion, but I got half the salary increase, and they made some excuse. The person who got hired before me was white got the full thing, the person after me, got the full thing. Right, so they weren't even trying to hide it. You know, and, and, you know, I got the promotion, but I got half the salary increase, and they made some excuse. The person who got hired before me was white got the full thing ahead after me, got the policy.

Lisa Hurley 10:51

Right, so they weren't even trying to hide it. You know, and, and, you know, So when you when you frame up things like that, right. I mean, I've had the experience, also of, you know, I've said, you know, we're all stressed revolt, we have all been stressed, we are all stressed. And sometimes the stress gets to be a lot, you know, and I've definitely asked for time and said, hey, you know, I need I need, you know, a moment I needed, you know, a little time to be able to breathe and recalibrate myself mentally, you know, I've been told, No, you can't do that. You have to attend all your meetings, and okay, fine. Well, that being the case, why am I spending my money to commute in and try and, you know, appear committed to companies that are not committed to you? That that's what I'm saying? Right, the question, question. And so I'm like, in your case, it's like, okay, well, you're there. You're excellent. I already know, I don't even have to ask, I already know that you are doubly and triply qualified and those other people, right? Yeah, I know. I don't have to ask. And so why are you then spending your money to commute in, go through the call? Because I know you're in England at the time. Right? And, you know, we have all we have, as you well know, we have all but you know, these northeast, winters are no joke, right?

Sharon Hurley Hall 12:07

Especially if you're coming from the Caribbean.

Lisa Hurley 12:09

You know, so you're the I remember, like getting off the train. You know, when you go through these wind tunnels, and the wind is like blasting you feel like, gosh, eyelashes are about to fall off.

Sharon Hurley Hall 12:18

My first job in England is, you know, I had to get before I had a car, I had to get up and get a 530 bus because I had to get to buses to get there by nine. First one was 530 in the morning, you imagine in winter in winter, right? And the wind would blow through that bus shelter and just go straight through my body. Like if I was not wearing any layers, yes, yes.

Lisa Hurley 12:38

And so and so. Like, you're doing all of that and getting into the office, right?

Sharon Hurley Hall 12:42

And you're being disrespected,

Lisa Hurley 12:44

you're being disrespected, you're being overlooked.

Sharon Hurley Hall 12:46

You're being underpaid, you're being diminished,

Lisa Hurley 12:48

you're being diminished. You're being treated inhumanely, you're being micro aggressed. And, but you have a computer at home, and you could do this in warmth and comfort. So like, what what, what is the point? What is being achieved,

Sharon Hurley Hall 13:03

there is less judgement as long as you deliver the work and you see what this whole experience has proved, is that most of us do not need to be in the office.

Lisa Hurley 13:12

Well you know, exactly what needs to be managed.

Sharon Hurley Hall 13:14

But that's, that's another person. You know, it begs the question, you know, why? Why are people insisting that you go back to the office? So it's all about patriarchy, and control? And white supremacy?

Lisa Hurley 13:27

Can you, can you expound a bit more on that please sis? Because that is a very, very interesting point.

Sharon Hurley Hall 13:33

You know, there's this, the whole system, the whole white supremacist and patriarchal system, is, is premised on the fact that some people are more worthy than others, and some people have more

control than others. And, you know, it's like all these people that say, Oh, we don't want people working from home, because you know, you might not be doing the work. But you know, we've proved that wrong. Yeah. Because we have had to work from home and we have continued to do the work. And some people have made mega profits, companies while people have been home doing their work. So that is not the issue. So the issue is, they want you there, so that they can have you under their control in their view, so they can micromanage and overlook everything that you're doing. So you will see your mentality. It's always good. I say white supremacy and patriarchy?

Lisa Hurley 14:21

You sure did!

Sharon Hurley Hall 14:22

Overseer mentality. Exactly. Exactly. And you know, where that comes from? Capitalism. You know, where that comes from? enslavement. Okay, that's all I'm gonna say. Because we don't have time to even get into that. All the dots have been connected.

Lisa Hurley 14:38

Right, the dots have been connected. Yeah, um, I think also there's okay. I have had I've been blessed to occasionally report to good strong leaders, has happened a couple of times in my life, not many. A couple of mean, like, literally two, maybe three. Okay, maybe three. But it's happened a couple of times in my life. But in general, right, and especially as people, you know, we are experienced this a lot. You report to people that you have to, that are mediocre. Right? Yeah.

Sharon Hurley Hall 15:17

Lisa is over here reading my lips, you know, because I was just about to say, mediocre, mediocre,

Lisa Hurley 15:21

right? Complete mediocrity. I don't hold a lack of experience against people, you can't tell what you know or don't know. But I don't understand why often our experience and education is held against us.

Sharon Hurley Hall 15:35

Exactly. Right. And then the mediocre people's lack of education and experience is not held against them. Because they're your boss. Yeah, and they know less than you

Lisa Hurley 15:44

they know less, you have to you have to flipin train them, right? Yes.

Sharon Hurley Hall 15:48

And they're getting you know, they're getting 2,000k a year or more, right?

Lisa Hurley 15:52

For you to train them

Sharon Hurley Hall 15:53

for you train them. Make it make sense,

Lisa Hurley 15:56

make it make sense. And so again, you know, if you have to train, you know, these people or whatever, whatever, that's fine. But, you know, can I train you from home? Can I train you from home? Right? There's also that, how many managers do we need, really? No, I'm just saying, no, no, we

Sharon Hurley Hall 16:14

Do we need managers?

Lisa Hurley 16:16

We need I think we need managers to a degree, I don't think we need as many as we have. And I think that a lot of what's happening here is a lot of jobs are being forgetting my word right now justified,

Sharon Hurley Hall 16:28

right, by bringing people back into the office!

Lisa Hurley 16:30

Bringing people back into the office. Because all we have to do now we have to basically say, Okay, here's why we need all of these middle managers,

Sharon Hurley Hall 16:38

but we don't,

Lisa Hurley 16:38

but we actually don't, because we've been middle managing ourselves,

Sharon Hurley Hall 16:42

you know? Yeah. And, and people are scared that this system is going to be undermined. And that's why they are forcing people to go back into the office. Yeah,

Lisa Hurley 16:50

yeah. And to bring it back to the you know, the introversion thing, as well, the introversion thing and the black woman thing frequently. Okay, so I'm quiet, right? You know, a quiet person, unless I'm around someone like yourself that I actually enjoy being around, right? I'm all about work. Right? You hired me, I will do the work. Yes, I do not want to hang out with y'all. And I don't need to be managed to do the work. I don't I don't want to hang out with y'all. It is what it is, you know, and that comes from trauma, right? Of trying to fit in before trying to fake extroversion. But, you know, being told, I remember one person said, you know, I joined a group for a group lunch once, right? And only you know, this, you see really mysterious. I'm like really?

Sharon Hurley Hall 17:40

Mysterious?

Lisa Hurley 17:41

How am I mysterious? I mean, because you're not, you know, all up in my business. Because that's not being mysterious. That's having a boundary like, you know, reserved, just just being reserved. Did but did you get your copy? So, did you get your copy? Right?

Sharon Hurley Hall 17:56

So yes, being reserved, should not be held against you. Because there is, you know, here's the thing that I have learned from working in different contexts, is that when it no longer suits a company, they will let you go in a heartbeat. So I've been there we have been there. Yeah. So So you know, all this talk about you know, we're like family.

Lisa Hurley 18:16

No, they will walk you out not building like family. We're family, they're walking you out. We're family, we'll pack you a box and mail it to you. Yeah, we're a family but you're not getting any severance. Yeah, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. Right. So, you know, so

Sharon Hurley Hall 18:30

it's, the office has been a difficult place. Yes. For for many black people, for many black women, for many introverts. And if you happen to be a black woman introvert that it is difficult on several levels.

Lisa Hurley 18:42

Right level, it is all of those intersectionalities it is trauma. All of those intersections, yes. Right. And so you know what other people, some other people experience, as you know, a place to go and bond with others. And I don't want to bond with y'all. I do not want to bond. I want to do my work that I was hired to do. You hired me for a certain expertise. Let me bless you with the fruits of that expertise. And then leave me the F alone. Right? Seriously, just leave me alone. Let me do my stuff.

Sharon Hurley Hall 19:14

I was thinking about this the other day, because, you know, I've worked in a number of offices. And in every office, you know, offices with hundreds of people sometimes places that have 1000s of people I pick up one friend. Yeah. All right. out of the out of the 100 people. Yeah, right. Yeah. And out of those maybe two people 10 years later, I'm still in touch with Right. So, so

Lisa Hurley 19:36

Good for you! I'm not saying I don't have friends from work,

Sharon Hurley Hall 19:43

you know, all I'm saying is you know, if there are real friends to be made, the friends will be made but we can't force it. We can't force it by by the fake extraversion by the end for socializing. Yeah, you know, by the unhappy hours. Yes, right. The unhappy hours.

Lisa Hurley 19:58

No, no. And another layer for me is that not only am I you know, quite an introverted, I'm an HSP. So so I'm neurodivergent. So all of those things play into making and as I mentioned, I've mentioned before I have an eye issue, and some photophobia.

Sharon Hurley Hall 20:19

Oh, so you don't need the bright lights in the office right?

Lisa Hurley 20:22

The Office experience even taking the well not taking the people out of it. But you understand I understand what you're taking the interaction out of it just you just physically being in the office? Yes, is excruciating. Is that excruciating? Because it feels for me, it feels like I always walk through the world feel like, you know, there's one layer of skin missing, if you can imagine that. Right. So I feel everything. X times X Factors is more intensely. And so you know, when there's 10 people around me, each on, you know, not doing the sensible thing and going into a private room and having their conference call, but side note, right? So they're all on their site call sites on their conference calls around me. But all of it sounds like, cacophony, right? It's probably it probably sounds to me louder than is I don't know. I don't know what other people hear. This is how it sounds to me. So I'm hearing all this stuff. I cannot focus, I cannot concentrate. It is too cold. Yeah, because it's an Arctic,

Sharon Hurley Hall 21:26

I was going to mention that. Again, you know, coming from the Caribbean. People outside the Caribbean feel the cold too. But I think that when you have grown up in sunshine, you probably feel it more, you probably feel it more, or we feel it more, you know, you're in the office you're on, you're uncomfortable on so many levels are uncomfortable. And so you're not going to do your best work you actually do you do your best work, when you have the space that suits you when you have what need what nourishes you. And if you're an introvert, what nourishes you is a quiet place where you can think and reflect. Yeah, and if you are a black person, what nourishes you,

Lisa Hurley 22:02

is being, not being where you're microaggressed,

Sharon Hurley Hall 22:05

Yes. And if you're a woman, you get nourished by not being a place where you get sexually harassed. Yeah, right, because we didn't even talk about that

Lisa Hurley 22:13

Didn't even talk about that. But that's the point is that intersection there, there's an intersection,

Sharon Hurley Hall 22:17

there's an intersection there too, the guy that comes up to close to you in the coffee room, right with this kind of threatening presence. And you know, he may not actually touch you, but you know, you know, he knows that he's saying I could if I wanted to and you can't do anything about it, and some of them do, and some of them do. And some of them do. Yeah, right. We don't even have to go there. Yeah, so all I'm saying is say no, to RTO.

Lisa Hurley 22:38

say no, say no to RTO. I mean, and for me, you know, like you mentioned the lights are too much. The lights are too bright. There's too much noise. I don't want your flippin free lunch, right. I don't want the free lunch. I have lunch. Right I have food at home. I don't want your scooters.

Sharon Hurley Hall 22:58

I saw, I saw, I saw on on LinkedIn. Right some time when I said no, no, don't give me the free lunch pay me. Right. Right.

Lisa Hurley 23:07

Pay me so I can get my own lunch. I stay home I eat by myself. Exactly. You know, I want I don't I don't want that. You know? Even with that. I've had the experience of oh, you know, we're having a company wide free lunch. Well, guess what? There's nothing vegan here. So I still have to go and get something for myself. Yeah, was this inclusive? Yes. How are we? How are we in a in a metropolitan area? And you have not thought that maybe there are people that don't eat meat in the 2020's

Sharon 23:34

Yes. Also, there's a thing where say you're a contractor or a freelancer, you don't get to benefit from the free you don't get the benefits of the free lunch but your white fellow contractors and freelancers will go and help themselves with a free lunch but you know, you cannot do that as a black because you stand out because you stand out you will be judged and somebody will be held against you

Lisa Hurley 23:55

Girl. They will snatch you lunch from you, they will start to eat lunch from you, you will get spoken to and I have, I have literally been in that situation. literally been in that situation. And so like, you know, you know, you can't you can't go and snag an apple. You can't? No, you know, no, but like you said, you know the white contractors go I'm getting a full fruit basket every morning. You know? Yeah. Yeah, just sayin.

Sharon Hurley Hall 24:21

Exactly. So you know, so no, we're not we're not fans.

Lisa Hurley 24:24

We are not fans. We are quiet, introverted, black women, that just, you know who are excellent. And we want to just stay home. We love to do our work excellently and not have to go into uncomfortable office and be microaregressed.

Sharon Hurley Hall 24:42

And I think that's that on that. Yes. So thank you for listening. You've been listening to the introvert sisters, and we will catch you on the next episode. Bye.

Lisa Hurley 24:57

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