

## Ep #71: How to Get Unstuck



**Full Episode Transcript**

**With Your Host**

**Carrie Holland, MD, CPT**

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT

## Ep #71: How to Get Unstuck

You are listening to the *Strong as a Working Mom* podcast, Episode #71. If you feel stuck at work, in your fitness, or really anywhere in your life, here's how to fix it.

Welcome to the *Strong as a Working Mom* podcast. If you're balancing career, family, wellness, and some days sanity, you are in the right place. This is where high-achieving, busy, working moms get the tools they need to eat, move, and think. I'm your host, physician, personal trainer, and Certified Life Coach, Carrie Holland. Let's do this.

Hey, how are you? What's new, what's good? So, what's good here, we are going to talk about being stuck today. I'm going to share how to unstuck yourself. I'm still coming down off the high I had from the conference I attended last weekend. I walked away so inspired by so many of the people I met and the stories they told me that I just decided to run with it and create this episode about being stuck.

When I say stuck, it can be in relation to your career, your wellness, relationships, really anything. But at this conference, I had the opportunity to talk to loads of physicians about their careers, and what other career options are available to them in addition to clinical medicine, like coaching.

I talked to tons of really smart, extremely driven people who have creative ideas and passions, and they're looking for outlets. And no, this isn't a plot to take more doctors out of clinical medicine, but rather to show them that their medical degree can be used for more than seeing patients, if that's what they're looking for.

I've said it before, medical school trains you for one thing, to see patients. You have to decide fairly early on, like around your early 20s, that when you're applying to medical school this is what you're committing to do. At least, that's what it was when I was applying to medical school in 2002.

Most people go to medical school in order to take care of patients and help people, and that's what I wanted to do. I wanted to be a family doctor and take care of everyone from birth to death. "Womb to tomb" was the tagline

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT

## Ep #71: How to Get Unstuck

for Family Medicine. So, I did exactly that. I delivered babies, and then I took care of those babies. I still call them my babies. I have their pictures in a photo album. I also took care of their parents. I also took care of their grandparents, and saw some of them through the end of their lives.

I was doing exactly what I thought I wanted, but after a few short years of practicing Family Medicine full time, I realized that was not it. That was not the end for me. While seeing patients was fine, I just did not see myself doing that for the rest of my life.

Going to clinic every day, running from room to room like an ant marching, and never really seeing the light of day because I was shuttling back and forth between my two fluorescent lit rooms. That was just not enough. That was not my finish line.

To discover that, can be really unsettling when you spent well over a decade chasing a career you thought you wanted. At the same time, there was a huge stigma to deal with, as you might imagine. There were and still are opinions about physicians leaving clinical medicine.

You can bet I got an earful of opinions from friends, family, and even strangers about my decision to leave. Even within the medical community, there is still quite a bit of stigma and poopoo towards people who leave or transition out to do something different besides seeing patients.

Because most of us know that the day-to-day work of seeing patients is really one of the hardest parts of being a physician, in my opinion. You're seeing people who are sick. You're seeing people when they are hurting and at their lowest, and that can be really hard. And don't even get me started on all the administrative tasks like charting and health insurance and continuing education. The list goes on. It's not easy.

But I bring all of this up to share one key point, even though I had worked really, really hard to obtain my career, I felt totally and completely stuck. In fact, I felt more than stuck, I felt trapped. I convinced myself that there was

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT

## Ep #71: How to Get Unstuck

no way out. For years, I resigned to doing a job that I wanted to love but really didn't.

What it came down to was, I knew I was meant to do more. I knew that I was meant to be more. Here's where I kept getting tripped up. And for any of you listening, if you feel stuck, whether that's in your career, or in your current level of fitness, or in a relationship, see if this is true for you.

I decided that I was stuck because I had this doctor life that I created. I had this fancy title that I worked really hard for, and I felt awful because I got it and then I decided I didn't want it. I had worked so stinking hard to adopt the identity of a physician, only to realize it didn't fit me. That title didn't matter to me.

Plus, to make it worse, I had massive student loans to pay off. I had a mortgage and car payments and kids' college funds to fill, but instead of taking action and pursuing something else, once I realized that clinical medicine was not for me, I didn't. I held on to my fears and doubts and let them paralyze me.

The idea that I might try something new and different, and that I could very well bomb, that did not sit well with me at all. I was not used to failing. I did not get into medical school by failing. The idea of going outside of clinical medicine and trying something new, where I might not get an A+, that did not feel like a risk I wanted to take.

So, I didn't. I let this go on for years, like 10 years, way too long. It was agonizing. I chalked it up, decided I was stuck and this is just what it was going to be. I decided there was no way in hell I could change my career or change my life. I was resigned that I would keep showing up at clinic every day until our financial advisor told me it was okay to retire.

I stayed miserably comfortable, that awful space where you want something so very badly but you're too afraid to go after it. So, you stay right where you are. Because even though it's miserable, it's comfortable. It's what you know, and it really feels like hell.

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT

## Ep #71: How to Get Unstuck

What's worse, is that the only person doing it to you, the only person keeping you miserably comfortable, is you. You're standing in your own way. If you've ever been there, if you've ever felt stuck for long enough, maybe you know what I'm talking about.

Being stuck feels like tension. It is a serious, heavy-weighted pull in one direction. At the beginning, that tension and that stuckness only comes up every now and then and you can ignore it. Often, you're too busy and too stressed out to really pay attention to that tension. So, you just keep grinding.

But as time goes on, and with months, or in my case, years of inaction, that tension keeps coming up each time a little louder, a little harder, and a little less subtle. Over time, I got sick of it. I got sick of feeling stuck. Frankly, I got sick of myself. I got tired of wanting to change something so badly, but then constantly talking myself out of it. I was disempowering myself and that didn't feel good.

When I finally hit that point, and got really tired of my own b.s., that's when I decided to do something. There doesn't have to be an aha moment, when you suddenly decide to unstuck yourself. There wasn't one for me, anyway.

So many of the clients I've worked with, who have changed their careers or changed their approach to wellness or changed their relationships, the same is true for many of them. They didn't have that lightning bolt moment where they said, "Hey, it's time to do something." There was no flash, there was no 'come to Jesus' moment, there was just a tipping point.

It's the tipping point where the restlessness of inaction outweighs the restlessness of miserably comfortable, and then you finally do something. When I got to that tipping point, I got help. And with a lot of work, both in therapy and coaching, I finally came to the realization that the only reason I was stuck was because I kept telling myself I was stuck, really.

Here's what I want you to know. Here is why I am sharing all of this with you. If you feel stuck in any way, I want to make it crystal clear to you that

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT

## Ep #71: How to Get Unstuck

the reason you're stuck is not at all because of your title. It is not your student loans, no matter how enormous they are. It's not your mortgage, or your car, or your health insurance, etc.

All those things, at the risk of making you mad, it really isn't any of those things that are keeping you from changing your life. Okay? I'm shouting this out from the rooftops today, because I heard this over and over at the conference I was at. It was really interesting.

I had the opportunity to do many mentoring, or many coaching, sessions with conference attendees. Do you know how many times I had someone introduce themselves to me by saying, "My story is unique..." and then go on to explain why they thought they were stuck? I'm not even kidding.

The first few times I heard 'my story is unique,' I thought it was just coincidence. But then, maybe after about the 10th time someone started their story by saying that, I decided I had a research study and a paper on my hands. It was fascinating.

So, it is not your work or your loans or your degree or your prestige or your title or your lack of training to do something else, none of that is keeping you stuck. Your unique story is not what is keeping you stuck. This is not at all to minimize your life story, okay?

This is not to ignore or detract from the things that have happened to you, or to diminish your life experiences. They are unique and they are important, but they are not the reason you are stuck. I'm not going to sugarcoat it; you are not stuck because of your life circumstances.

Remember that circumstances, like your title or your loans or your mortgage, all of those are neutral. They are neither good nor bad circumstances, they just are. And it's not until you have thoughts about your circumstances that things become a problem.

So, it's not until you decide that your student loans are a problem, and there's no way you can pay them unless you stay in your current job. That's

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT

## Ep #71: How to Get Unstuck

when you have a problem. You're not stuck because of your loans. The same idea applies for any of you trying to change up your lifestyle habits.

Maybe you're not looking to change your career. Instead, maybe you feel that your career or your schedule or your family schedule is keeping you from taking the best care of yourself. Maybe you've decided that you're stuck in your body and stuck at your current level of fitness or lack of fitness and stuck in your lifestyle habits because of your life situation.

But at the risk of making you mad, it's not your schedule or your kids after school activities or your household responsibilities or your dog who needs to go for a walk at least twice a day. It is exactly none of those things that are keeping you stuck. Really, none of those things are keeping you from changing your life.

Instead, it's your brain. It's your very powerful brain that is keeping you stuck by offering you the same thought on repeat over and over again, "I am stuck." I want to help you see what happens in your life when you decide that you are stuck. And I mean it, it really is deciding that you are stuck. You may get defensive when I say that.

I've had clients get upset with me when I tried to show them how they've decided they are stuck, but I stand by it. When you tell yourself and everyone else around you, "I am stuck," that's your thought. You get to choose whether to accept or reject that thought.

But when you accept it, and you make it your truth, that's a decision. It's a choice you have made. The decision that you are stuck in your career or your body or your relationship, thereby eliminating any possibility of another outcome, is a really icky place to be because feeling stuck gets you nowhere.

When you tell yourself the thought 'I am stuck' often enough, it becomes your belief. Because remember what your beliefs are; beliefs are your most practiced thoughts. It's a sentence you have decided is the truth. So, when you tell yourself over and over again, that you cannot change your status

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT



## Ep #71: How to Get Unstuck

quo, it's like you're reporting the news in your brain. It becomes fact. It becomes your truth.

From there, that belief becomes your filter. Your belief that you're stuck becomes the filter through which you view your world. What I mean by that is, with this belief permeating every part of your life, you will then go and look for all of the evidence to prove it true. Because remember, what you believe, you will make your reality. And when you find that evidence, it reinforces that belief even harder.

So, if you're in a job where you feel stuck, and 'I am stuck' is your filter, you will constantly look for all the reasons your job is keeping you stuck. Things like your loans, or the bills you have to pay, or the kind of car you drive, and your car payment that you're not sure how you're going to afford if you were to have a different job. You will use all of those as reasons to not look for another job.

Or you can decide that the job market is too competitive, and there's no way you can find your way out, and there's no way anyone will hire you. With that as your filter, you applied for one, maybe two jobs, and if you don't get them, you decide it's impossible and give up. What you've done is reinforced your belief that you're stuck.

The same is true for your fitness. If you decide that it's impossible to change your schedule to make time to cook and eat dinner at home, there's your filter. Then you will use that filter to find evidence in your life to back up that belief.

You'll take your last meeting, that runs half an hour over, as evidence that you can't make time to cook dinner. You'll take your kids basketball practice schedule and use it against yourself, and declare, "Well, there's no way I can make dinner at home, so McDonald's it is."

Or if you're trying to exercise but you feel stuck, you decide that because everyone has to be out of the house by 7:30 in the morning, including you, there is no way you can get up at 5:00 or even earlier to get a workout in

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT



## Ep #71: How to Get Unstuck

before the day starts. So, you have looked for and found the evidence to prove yourself correct.

These are all examples my clients have shared with me. Every single one of them is a slightly different shade of the same story, if deciding that you're stuck and then looking for all the reasons that it's true.

In order to change this, I would simply start by asking: What does that get you? What does it get you to believe that you are stuck? I'll tell you from my own personal experience, it gets you years of being miserable. It gets you years of no change.

Looking back on it now, I can see just how much time I wasted. I have no one to blame but myself. I could have taken action years ago. I could have changed my career years ago. This podcast could have come to fruition years ago. But I was too busy looking for all the reasons I was stuck and couldn't do anything, instead of looking for all the reasons I could do something.

I let stuck be my filter. That was not the best choice of a filter for my world, I'm just going to say it. Using 'I'm stuck' as a filter is not a great way to approach your world. Okay? It stinks. So, if you feel stuck, what do you do to change that?

It starts with your thoughts, right? It always goes back to your thoughts, always; you knew it was coming. So, what if you decided that you are not stuck? What if you made a very conscious, deliberate decision that you will no longer accept stuck as an option? And if that sounds nice to you but you're wondering how to do it, let's talk about it.

One of the first things to do to get unstuck is to poke holes in your original assertion. While that sounds easy to do, I will say that it's often what takes the longest for many of my clients to accomplish. So, think about it. The beliefs that you have, they're your beliefs for a reason. You are holding on to being stuck with a very tight grip for a reason.

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT

## Ep #71: How to Get Unstuck

Holding on to that thought keeps you safe. Being married to the belief that you are stuck, it keeps you comfortable, it keeps you right where you are. While you may not love where you are, it's familiar, it's what you know, and it's secure. You know what living in 'I'm stuck' gets you.

And, I'll add an extra piece here. Often, when you're trying to make changes to your life, whether that's related to work, your fitness, your routine, any of it, often you will tell me what you can't do because you don't have a choice. You will swear up and down that you have no choice.

You can't change your work because you have to pay for X-Y-or Z. Or because you signed this contract, or because someone will think something of you, so you have no choice. But I will respectfully challenge you, and argue, that you do, in fact, always have a choice. Really. I know that sounds trite, but it's the truth.

As a human with free will, you have a choice. You can choose whether or not to show up for work. You can choose to take a pay cut as a tradeoff for a job that fills your passion, instead of drains your soul. You choose whether to sign your kids up for one sport or three sports in a season. You choose the kind of car you drive.

You choose to have someone clean your house, or do it yourself. You choose whether or not to eat the lunch you brought from home, or get pizza with your coworkers because that sounds more exciting. You choose to get up early and exercise, or sleep through your alarm another day.

Yes, of course, there are consequences to your choices. But at the end of the day, you always have a choice about what you do. Do not fool yourself or trap yourself into thinking you have no choice in your life, because that is the most disempowering place to be. It will lead you to live at the effect of your circumstances. You know what I'm talking about.

So, whether it's you, yourself, or a friend, or a coworker, I'm going to bet you know someone who lives day to day carried by her life. She has taken herself out of the equation entirely, and is going through the motions. She

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT

## Ep #71: How to Get Unstuck

lives as if none of her decisions are her own. She lives as if life is happening to her, therefore she doesn't have to take any responsibility for changing it.

The longer this goes on, the longer she lives her life unfulfilled, either personally or professionally... and that's just it. I just hit on it. But there is how you move through stuck. Being stuck for many of you is a habit. And what I mean, is that you've lived this way for so long that stuck is your default. There's hardly any thought behind it.

You don't take forward action. You don't question or even consider a different thought, because 'I'm stuck' is your normal. It's like white noise just operating in the background. In order to change that, and in order to stop being stuck, you have to come off autopilot. You have to be very intentional about both your thoughts and your actions.

You have to start by deciding that you are no longer stuck, and you do not accept stuck as an option. So, in order to go and shake that all up and move past feeling stuck, ask yourself some questions. Starting with: Is it really absolutely 100% true that you were stuck? In your career, is it the absolute truth that there's no way you could switch your job?

Is it 100% true that you wouldn't be able to pay your bills or have health benefits if you switched careers? Is it 100% true that you have to live the current lifestyle you have? Or could you make accommodations and give up some of the luxuries you've got for the opportunity to pursue something that may not pay as much but makes you happy?

What is really true here? I know that is not an easy or fun question to answer. Why? Because I'm asking you to prove yourself wrong, and most of us don't like to do that. Especially when we are very tightly married to our beliefs. It can feel very weird to purposely look for reasons that our long held beliefs might not be true.

But please hear me when I say that it is worth it. It's worth it to dissect the beliefs you have about yourself when they are not moving you forward. In

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT

## Ep #71: How to Get Unstuck

fact, I think it's the only way out; it's through. Go through your limiting beliefs and question them, because that's how you tear them down. What this will do, by nature, is lead you to find reasons that the opposite of your belief might be true. This is my favorite step here.

So, when you've decided that there is no way on this earth that you can make time to exercise, for example, my question will be: Is there any evidence that the opposite might be true? Is there any way you might be able to make 10 minutes in your morning to do a yoga session? Or is there any way you can get up 20 to 30 minutes earlier to do an on demand exercise class at home before you get ready for work? Yes.

Is it possible that you could eat dinner at home on Friday instead of getting takeout, even though you're shuttling your kids to various sports practices? Yes. Is it possible that you could find a job that pays as well as the one you have, without all of the stress? Yes.

Do you see what we're doing here? We are looking for evidence that the opposite of your limiting belief might be true. We are trying to find reasons that your belief may not be the absolute truth. I really love doing this, because what it comes down to is thinking of what might be possible. It's a concept I've introduced before, thinking in terms of possibility.

I really love this concept because it's practical. When you are doing the work of getting yourself unstuck. Or when you're working to change any belief for that matter, it's not about thinking toxic positive thoughts and faking yourself out. Instead, thinking in terms of possibility aims to get very real and specific, in order to find answers that move you in the direction you want to go.

It's very intentional and deliberate. It's looking for what *is* possible, instead of looking for all the things that aren't possible. That's a big difference. So then, once you do this, once you poke holes in your belief that you're stuck, and then find evidence to the contrary, then what? Once you find evidence that you might not actually be stuck, then the next step is to practice new thoughts. You have to practice thinking.

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT

## Ep #71: How to Get Unstuck

You get to choose to believe a new thought, and you have to practice thinking it. Something like, “I am not stuck.” That works. Or “It is possible for me to find a career that I love, and that pays me appropriately. I will find work that fills me with purpose.” Whatever it is, try on some new thoughts.

I will be the first to admit this will feel uncomfortable. It will feel strange to tell yourself that you are not stuck after decades of telling yourself the opposite. Be prepared for that. Be ready for your brain to wig out on you, and offer you all the reasons you are stuck and why you should hang on to that tired belief. But don't fall for that trap.

Because remember, you know what believing ‘I'm stuck’ gets you? It gets you no change. It keeps you right where you are. Instead, when you practice thinking something new like, “It is possible for me to change my life,” you're telling your brain, “Hey, this is how things are going to be around here. I am no longer stuck. I'm taking charge sweeping up these unhelpful beliefs. We're taking the bull by the horns to make some changes around here.”

Be ready for the resistance, and do it anyway. Allow that resistance to rise up, because it's going to when you practice believing that you are not stuck in your career, or your body, or your current level of fitness, or in your relationship. There's going to be resistance. Allow the resistance, and let it feel uncomfortable. And know that it means you're doing something right. Okay?

Once you've chosen a new belief to practice thinking, go and prove it true. Take action, do something, anything, to move the needle in a different direction. This is key. This is the self-check right here. How do you know that you actually believe that you're capable of becoming unstuck? How do you know that you truly believe you can change your career?

You take action. You create a LinkedIn profile. You start networking. You have conversations with people doing cool things in their careers. You clean up your resume. You look for jobs.

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT

## Ep #71: How to Get Unstuck

How do you know that you truly believe you can change up your lifestyle? You take action. You buy fruit and veggies instead of chips and cookies at the grocery store. You pack a salad and protein for lunch instead of getting takeout. You set an alarm for your morning workout and you get it done.

How do you know that you believe you can change the relationship? You take action. You ask your partner out on a date. You put your phone down while you're talking. You show up engaged and present, and you take an interest in what your partner is saying.

Do you see a pattern here? That's why I decided to lump this all together. It doesn't really matter if we're talking about your career, wellness, relationships, any of it. Wherever you feel stuck, it is absolutely possible to become unstuck, and the process is the same.

You decide that your old beliefs are not the absolute truth. You look for evidence that the opposite is true. You choose a new thought and decide to believe it. Then you take action to back up that new thought and prove it true. And taking action, while it may be hard, is also the most impactful step when you're getting unstuck.

When you take action, it sends a message to your brain that you're not messing around. It reinforces the new pathway in your brain. It helps your brain make the connection 'I am not stuck,' and then provide your brain with evidence to back it up. It helps to seal in the belief you are proving yourself correct.

What happens, the more you tell yourself 'I am not stuck,' the more you practice feeling into it and actually believing it, and the more action you take to prove that belief, the more it becomes your new and improved truth. The more you prove to yourself, I am not someone who's stuck. Alright?

So, I really hope this helps you see just how much control you've got in your life. That control starts with your thinking. I feel so strongly about this, and I feel so strongly about your capacity to change your life.

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT

## Ep #71: How to Get Unstuck

I was, once again, reminded of it at this conference I attended. I spent 10 years feeling stuck before I finally put the wheels in motion, changed my beliefs, and took action to clean up my life so I could have the career, the mind, the body, and the relationships I wanted. You can do the same.

If I can help you make those changes and feel unstuck in less time than it took me, then I'm doing my job and I will high-five myself. And, if I can help you do it with less drama and less overthinking, even better.

I was on the Peloton a couple days ago and I did a Rock Ride with Denis Mortin. I really like his rides, by the way. Anyway, somewhere through the ride he asked very matter of factly, "Do you prefer to have a wishbone or a backbone?" A wishbone or a backbone? For whatever reason, on that day, at that time and in that moment, those words sunk into my core.

Because I realized that for a long, long time, for too long, I was waiting for a wishbone. Maybe you're doing this, too. If you're wishing and wishing that you weren't stuck, and you wished that your career or your body or your schedule or something in your life was different, but you're not taking the action necessary to change it, then I would argue that you're waiting for a wishbone.

But instead of wasting so much time and energy wishing for something to happen, you can choose to have a backbone and make it happen. I don't mean simply standing up for yourself. No, in this case, I think of having a backbone as making intentional, purposeful decisions from a place of strength, from a place of responsibility, from a place of ownership.

Here's what this comes down to, it feels really good to live in control of your life instead of at the effect of it. Staying stuck leaves you powerless. Getting unstuck puts you back in control of your life. When you choose to do the work to get unstuck, you will stop spinning. You will stop wondering what if? You will stop imagining going off the grid and selling pineapples in Hawaii, like I did.

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT



## Ep #71: How to Get Unstuck

Instead, when you get tired of it and decide to get serious about getting unstuck, you will feel empowered. You will take action. You will create a new and different ending to your story, and that is a really awesome place to be.

If you want help with this, let's talk. If you feel stuck in your career, your body, your relationships, or anywhere else in your life, let's fix it. When you coach with me we will do the work to get you unstuck and put you back in control of your life, with the mindset tools to back it up. Check out my website. Go to [www.CarrieHollandMD.com/contact](http://www.CarrieHollandMD.com/contact) and let's get going

All right, thank you for hanging out with me, and I'll catch you again next week.

If you like what you've been hearing, please review the show. I would love to get your feedback and ideas. Your suggestions have inspired episodes and will help me make the show better for you. Share this podcast with a friend, text a show link, share a screenshot, or post a link to the show on your social media. Be sure to tag me @CarrieHollandMD on either Instagram or Facebook, so I can follow along and engage with you.

This is how we get the word out to other working moms who want to feel strong, inside and out. If you know someone who wants to feel better or eat and move differently but she is too tired or too busy, it is time to change things up. You know making that change starts with how you think, and that is what we do here on the *Strong as a Working Mom* podcast. I'll see you next week.

Thanks for listening to *Strong as a Working Mom*. If you want more information on how to eat, move, and think, so you can live in the body you want, with the mind to match, visit me at [CarrieHollandMD.com](http://CarrieHollandMD.com).

[Strong as a Working Mom](#), a podcast with Carrie Holland, MD, CPT