**YGT episode 152**

You're listening to you've got this episode 152. Welcome to you've got this a weekly podcast for higher education professionals looking to increase their confidence and capacity for juggling the day-to-day demands of an academic life. I'm your host doctor Katie Linder. On this episode. I want to talk a little bit about some strategies for how to get unstuck.

And this is something that I have dealt with recently. I was feeling in a very stuck place about a particular issue that I was kind of trying to move forward. I've certainly experienced this with projects and recently I had someone in one of my writing groups say, how do I get unstuck with my writing?

So all of these questions were kind of. Around and I thought let me give this some thought let me think about how do I get unstuck and what are some things that can help when you're feeling like you're not moving forward. So first I want to talk about what being stuck can look like and feel like because basically I think for many people it's hard to even recognize that feeling of you know, you may feel frustrated.

You may feel bored. You may feel kind of these negative set of feelings and. It may not be clear that part of why you feel those things is because you feel stuck you feel constrained or you think you're not making progress and sometimes it's not making progress toward a bigger goal. It's not making progress on a project.

I think sometimes we feel like we're stuck because we don't have enough time to devote to a particular thing that we really wish we could and also I think sometimes feeling stuck can look like trying a lot of different methods, but they're not. Getting you know, you recognize the stuck feeling you're trying to come at it from a bunch of different angles and you're not able to move something forward.

So I have kind of two major strategies to consider. If you are in a stuck situation one is to go kind of macro go big and start to think about what is the larger goal or motivation here and let's just take writing as an example. Let's say you're working on an article and you're in a place where you feel really stuck in the.

Backing out of that to say what is my larger purpose here? What am I really trying to argue? What is the contribution? I'm trying to make to a larger body of literature that can help you to think about. Okay, maybe I'm moving in the wrong direction or maybe I've gotten kind of sidetracked with a particular thing that I'm writing and I don't need to include it now a good example I can think of and I probably talked about it before on the show is when I was working on my first book and I was redoing the introduction.

And I had to go through that introduction. I probably wrote seven or eight different full drafts of the introduction entirely different drafts because I just couldn't figure out how to frame the book in the way that I wanted and I ended up what really helped me get unstuck from that situation was I went back to my original notes.

I looked in my dissertation journal and I said, what was I trying to do? What was the ultimate goal that I had when I first started writing this dissertation and by looking at those notes and going back to my bigger goal? I was able to finally figure out what that introduction to look like. So sometimes backing out of a situation and saying what am I trying to accomplish here?

What is the bigger goal or what is kind of the larger motivation? I have to be pursuing this can be enough to get you unstuck and help you think about it from a different angle. The other thing I think that going macro can help with is often times. We need to strip some things away when we get stuck.

Sometimes it's because we have distractions around us or in the case of writing. We've layered it a bunch of stuff that doesn't need to be there and by figuring out that larger goal or motivation. It serves as a kind of momentum for stripping things away. That are cluttering the process or that are cluttering our thinking and so I could go into my introduction for example and say okay.

These are the things I've written in here that are not really part of my original goal. They're not really part of what I'm trying to communicate. Let me just take those out and put them to the side and start from a direction where I'm feeling a little bit more clarity around what it is that I'm actually trying to say.

Okay. So the first idea is to go macro take a step back think about the bigger picture and in particular think about your larger goals or motivation and how what how they relate to kind of this feeling of being stuck. Now the second option is to do the exact opposite and to go Mike Rowe and this is actually one of my favorite things to do when I'm feeling overwhelmed and I'm not sure how to move forward and oftentimes this is because my plate gets really full and so if you're feeling a stuck feeling that is similar to being paralyzed this will be something that might work for you and my favorite way to go micro is to do a granular to-do.

It's to go into like a deep dive of what exactly is it that I need to do to move this project forward or what exactly is missing right now that is not allowing me to make progress in this particular area of my life and by going granular and really trying to diagnose a particular issue often times that unlocks for me something that maybe I don't have enough information to pursue or I need to talk to someone else and kind of move a step forward.

With the help of you know, a collaborator or partner. So by going micro I'm able to kind of write down as much as I possibly can about what it is. I know I need to do in order to move forward and then I can step by step go through that list and say can I act on any of these things? And if not, why not?

What is it that I need to do to be able to move it forward? So I think going micro can help. If you're in a situation where you're feeling overwhelmed because you can kind of write everything down and an example that I can give for. This is I mentioned on the previous episode that I'm about to go through a business Rebrand and you could imagine that that is going to touch a lot of different things I have.

Things I've already created. I have newsletters websites. Social media all kinds of things that are going to need to be touched by that and it feels incredibly overwhelming to have to go through and kind of update all the things. I'm going to need to update but I'm going to start that process by creating a basically like a branding implementation plan and I'm going to create a checklist of all the things I need to touch and I'm going to slowly kind of figure out what are the phases in which I'm going to do that.

What is the timeline? And I'm going to create a list and I'm going to use that as a way to kind of get me moving forward so that I don't feel Paralyzed by that huge project because it's going to take time. It's not something I can do over an afternoon. It's going to take several kind of work sessions to get it to a place where I feel good about it.

So by going micro I can kind of not be paralyzed. I can see the steps that I need to do to move forward. Now another good example from that is I have a checklist that I found a branding checklist and I am going to be using that as a jumping off point. So I knew that I may be needed a little bit of help from a foundational level to think about what are all the things that I should be considering.

So I'm not just trying to come up with them off the top of my head. And so I was able to locate a branding checklist that I think will be really helpful as I'm moving forward with that project. So the other piece of going might macro or going micro is to know when you need to ask for help. If you're feeling really stuck.

It may be that you need to talk it out with someone or you need to talk with a collaborator or someone. A supervisor, you know somebody who's involved with the project or the thing that feels stuck for you so that you can really try to figure out maybe this is not something that you can do on your own and you need to work it out with someone else.

Now, of course that can also include people like a coach a therapist a doctor, you know other kinds of people that are coming alongside you from a kind of a professional capacity to help you out but the other kind of final tool that I want to offer if you're trying to work through a stuck place in a more private way is writing.

I think that writing can be a tool for both cognitive and affective processing and over the past three months as I was working through my own kind of stuck place. I was using my morning Pages, which I've been doing every morning now for about three months. I just write three pages of kind of stream of Consciousness.

What's on my mind from the day before what? I'm looking forward to for the day that's coming up. And what ended up happening was. I started to see patterns. I started to see certain things that I was kind of thinking through over and over again. It allowed me to see the places where I was feeling stuck and allowed me to have a place to kind of privately process what was going on what I was feeling.

Around list of places and to start to brainstorm and ask questions about what I needed to do to move forward. And one of the cool things I think about something like journaling or morning pages is that you can ask yourself a question and then try to answer it and you can ask yourself that question over a series of days.

You can ask yourself the same question and see if you get different responses. Over the course of several days of trying to kind of figure out some solutions and it in some ways acts as a kind of release valve of the pressure you might be feeling around being stuck and allows you to have a documented record of the way that you're exploring different possibilities of how to move forward.

So hopefully this offered a couple of ideas if you are feeling like you are in a stuck place and this can happen in so many ways. I think that we'd see it show up in writing. We see it show up in projects. We definitely can see it showing up in larger life decisions of you know, trying to figure out whether it's time to try for a new job or add to a family or you know, all kinds of other things but it's I think going macro or going.

Row asking for help using writing as that processing tool to kind of help you think about what you want to do next. All of those things are possible Avenues. So, of course, I would love to hear from you if you are thinking about getting unstuck and if you have other strategies you've been using that you found to be effective.

I would love to hear about them. You can always email me a contact to Katie Leonard artwork. You can tweet to me at Katie double underscore. You can connect with me on Instagram @ KD underscore lender, or you can write me a letter at Katie lender PO Box 1621 in Albany, Oregon 97321. I always love to hear from you.

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