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Welcome to coach to coach a podcast dedicated to showcasing the power of coaching. I'm your host, dr Katie Linder, and I offer coaching to academics and higher education professionals to bring more ease to their lives and work. Before you dive into this episode. Here's a quick introduction to the structure of the show.

In each season of coach to coach, a new guest coach will come on the show to demonstrate a range of coaching tools and strategies. The first episode will offer you an introduction to the guest coach. Then I'll coach the guest and they'll coach me for the next six episodes and always on real topics and issues we're dealing with in our own lives.

Each season we'll end with a debrief episode where we'll talk about how the season went. And offer any updates on the topics covered in earlier episodes. It might make the most sense to start each season in the beginning and listen to the episodes in order this season. I'm delighted to introduce you to dr ball.

He supposed specializes in helping ambitious, perfectionist get out of their own way so that they can experience greater joy and fulfillment in their careers. Now onto the episode.

He's of, Oh, I am so excited to coach with you today, and I'm, I'm wondering kind of what you can bring into the session. What do you want to talk about today? I would love to talk about academic writing actually. Okay. So this seems like a really great topic to be coaching with you about. And um, do you want me to give a bit of background sort of, well, what is it that's like top of mind for you today about this topic?

For sure. So. Uh, towards the end of my PhD. And then for several years after my PhD finished, finished back in 2012 I was, um, actively writing, not with hugely ambitious goals at all, but the goal was to continue to publish in peer review publications. And then, um. I'd say about maybe two years ago or one and a half years ago, boat coinciding.

When I started to work on my business, I stopped doing the academic writing. And, um, the most parts of my identity shift has. I've been fairly smooth, like meaning from ed developer into coach consulting. That is a part that I can tell every time it comes up. It's still like that. There's something about the fact that I'm not writing that bothers me and I'm having trouble.

So seeing what this is all about. Is it ego? Is it? Um, yeah. So that's a kind of, that's the, that's the broad topic. I would love to speak with you about. Okay. So now that I'm not actively writing, I'm obviously not completely at, at peace with the fact that I'm not writing yet. I'm not prepared to. Encroach on any free time.

I have to do the right thing. Okay. What are the in-betweens face to it. Okay. Um, so thinking about this topic by the end of today's session, what do you want to walk away with? What would help you to kind of have more clarity around this issue? I.

I mean, did to be able to think about coming to peace fully within, you know, the session is not probably where I'll get to, but to have further clarity about what is it that's, um, unsettling, not comfortable about this in between and possibly more clarity about. What I want to do with this topic, like do I want to reengage in it?

What are the costs? What are the benefits, that type of thing. Okay. And what makes this significant for you right now, kind of in your life and your business in your work? I think, uh, because I have not, because I still straddle the two worlds, meaning I'm still in academia as an ed developer where.

Academic writing is still in peer reviewed publications is still considered something of value because I'm still in academia and choosing at least for the last year and a half and not to do. Academic writing. Um, what makes it significant is the fact that, and I'm still in an environment where it's valued and I'm not doing it.

And that makes me really question okay. Choice. So, Isabelle, what I hear you saying about today is you want to make maybe some progress toward feeling more peaceful. I'm about this tension where you're in a. Field where this is something that's kind of highly regarded, but you're not currently choosing to engage in it.

And maybe looking for some further clarity about this unsettled feeling that you have around that and maybe even doing a little bit of a cost benefit analysis of what it would mean to age on this given kind of where you are currently. Correct. Does that make sense? Okay. So what does academic writing mean to you?

Uh, at present it means, uh, publishing in peer reviewed publications, journals specifically. And what would you describe as like your relationship with writing? I love writing. Uh, I don't love writing for peer reviewed publications. I love the kind of writing that I'm doing now with, uh. Blogging, LinkedIn articles, my newsletters, where I can be, where I feel much more free in terms of how I write and what I write about and the structure.

Um, the fact that I get feedback, meaning I hear back from people and that hasn't been the case. with the academic writing so you've mentioned kind of that there's something missing with the academic writing that you're not, you're not getting. Um, tell me more about that. What, what do you think is not fulfilling to you on the academic writing side?

I think. It's partly, I feel constrained by the structure of having to follow those yet follow a certain structure, have a certain tone. Um,

it's very, very lengthy from. Start to end, meaning start, you know, conceiving the idea, creating the argument to seeing it come in print.

there's the other factor is that I in the past was doing it on my time, you know, nuts. So meeting, it wasn't part of my work work time. Um, so evenings, weekends, mornings, and now that time is being. Taken by developing my business, do my coaching and I'm not prepared to add more work to my plate. Um, because I'm prioritizing my coaching practice.

What is the benefit to you of the academic writing. I'm having trouble, uh, really seeing a benefit outside of ego. So outside of, um, outside of myself and others feeling or saying or identifying me as a scholarly, intellectual person. I see little benefit because quite honestly, I've never had anybody reach out to me or very rarely, or I almost can't even think of a time where somebody reached out to me and said, you know, I used your ideas from this article and , you know, whatever.

Like I haven't thought that piece of scholarly writing in terms of making a contribution, um, is questionable. Okay, so the contribution part seems important to you? Yes, yes. I've had minimal evidence of that. I've had some. Okay, so what does it mean to you to be a scholar and an intellectual person? Um, okay.

I have been reflecting on this and there is something tied to. The knowing, the knowing, the literature, reading literature, contributing to the literature. That is built in to me, probably from grad studies, probably from living slash working in academia, that to be a scholar means to be engaged with the scholarly literature.

I've shared with a few people recently that the writing that I do for my business, for some reason, I put it in another category. I don't consider it. Um, I wouldn't label it intellectual work, whereas the academic writing, I, I, I've got this like false, I think distinction between the two, yet I'm still holding on to.

Okay.

Hmm?

What does that distinction in your mind, how do you define the two? I define the academic writing as the scholarly intellectual. Writing, I define the writing on my blogs, do use others, et cetera. As more the writing from emotion or, uh, self-expression. Um, or connecting with people. Okay. And fun. Okay. Yeah.

What parts of your identity you SIBO are tied to the academic writing? Um, my identity as a person with a PhD, my purse and my identity as, um, as an intellectual. My identity as an ed developer. Okay. And will you still be those things if you don't write academically? I think that's where, I'm not sure.

Right. Like am I still an intellectual? Am I, do I still have, um, that as much is there, I'm not saying it's probably, do I still define myself. As an intellectual if I'm an educational developer who does not, right? Yes. But maybe smaller. Smaller. Okay. Less so than if I were all that and I were contributing to by, by writing for peer reviewed publications.

What are other things that intellectuals do. When you think about that identity and that kind of person, aside from publishing, what else does an intellectual do? Um, things critically about ideas is able to articulate one's thoughts, questions about ideas stapled to, um, listen to other perspectives.

Like I already said, like engages in conversation. Those are, I think those are the big ones. Basically being curious in multiple ways and curiosity manifesting in many different. Okay. And what of those things do you see in kind of the business side and the coaching side of what you're doing now?

Pretty much everything.

and because the question you asked was at in addition or. Not in addition, that wasn't the word that you use, but kind of outside of writing, what are the character traits of an intellectual? Uh, I guess the scholar piece for me is a really tight to the writing

When you think about kind of the intellectual identity as like a pie, how big of the pie is the writing part? As compared to these other things that you were mentioning? When I think of the intellectual, or can you repeat the question? Yeah. When you think about the identity of an intellectual and how it's made up, if you were to visualize it as like a pie, how much of that ratio is given over to writing in your mind?

Hello? Any type of writing, primarily academic writing, if that's what you're associating with this identity

Well, now I'm starting to, uh, so I'm not sure, but when I'm wowed, I'm where my head is going is, um, is there a difference between that and intellectual? No. Skull? So, yeah. So I consider myself less scholarly than, uh, colleagues who are. Maybe less scholarly and less intellectual, I'm not sure, but definitely less scholarly.

Dan colleagues who are actively publishing . What's the impact of that being lesser than on your day to day life? I think it, it puts me into self doubt. It puts it like drains my energy because I'm, um. Very regularly revisiting this question. Well, like, should I be working more or should I be finding the time?

Should I, should I, should I, when it comes to academic brain so I'm not able to, it drains my energy. Yeah. What is the relationship for you between academic writing and confidence?

Yeah. I don't know. Um, what's relationship African for and confidence I haven't thought of that relationship in that way. I've thought of it more as, um,

maybe I haven't thought of it in the terms of confidence. I thought of it in terms of credibility.

It's to do with confidence. My intellectual abilities. I'm not sure. Hmm. I'm not sure. You had mentioned that not doing it puts you into kind of a cycle of self doubt. Yeah. So the, what is the opposite of self doubt?

Mmm. The opposite of self doubt is being okay. Truly a peace with my choice.

at peace content. Who are you without the writing? Without the academic writing.

I'm a practitioner.

What does it feel like to say that

it's something about, it doesn't feel, feel good because there seems to be, um. Yeah. A lack of alignment around my image of who I want to be and who I am.

what would bring you more alignment.

Either changing my image or changing my practice. Okay. It's as simple as that. So let's dive.

What about your image would need to change? Right. Um, I wouldn't need to, uh.

I would need to believe that without writing that I, and still I can, like I say it, I, I'm going to say it, but I'm like, it just feels so far from belief, um, that I'm still scholarly and intellectual in my practice of being an educational developer. Okay. Is that

okay. Well, hopefully look at my arms crossed Clint stuff. Yeah, we can let that sit for a minute. What would need to change about your practice to help this feel more aligned for you? Uh, I would need to write for peer reviewed publication . And how does that feel to say that. Uh, it automatically, the voice is like, yeah, when, yeah.

When would that happen?

in an ideal world, Isabel, when you have time, would you like to write for academic publications? Maybe not. No. Okay. So it's not just a question of time. I think I want them any result. Yeah. So your motivation is not there. Um,

I think, cause it hasn't been, either I'm remembering it wrong or it is just, it just feels like such a long drawn out process. What, if anything, do you like. About academic writing and publication. Uh, I have liked my collaborative pieces . So I love learning from other people. So when there is a collaborative writing project, then, um, it's great from a whole bunch of perspectives.

One is the learning piece. The other is the, the motivation, the being able to together be working towards a goal, the accountability, um, when, when we get. A harsh review or feedback. There is, uh, other people with whom to be able to, uh, discuss that. Does it go the pieces that I, that I like and then, and sorry was your question.

Can you say your question again? It was just around what do you like about academic writing in public? Yeah. And I love reading other articles to be able to feed into this too, the article that I'm writing. So there's a lot of learning that's involved that I, that I really like. when you think about your relationship to writing and particularly academic writing, how has it evolved over time?

Um, I think initially it started very much around, I've got this dissertation. I don't want it to sit gathering dust, you know, on a, on a shelf. And be shared with such a small number of people. And I've felt really committed to being able to want it to share the results from, from my dissertation. And, um, it was a personal goal also to publish from, from my dissertation.

So, uh, and I had a certain number of articles that I wanted to publish. So once those were done, then it was still okay. I want to be active in research. And publication was a part of that. Um, and then. It was about, I don't want to publish on that thing that I wrote my dissertation about. Like, no, thank you.

That is done and what do I want to publish on? What do I feel like I really have something that I want to say who, who I published with? So kind of went through this more. Um. I guess unclear phase, right? So from being really clear, what I was publishing, what I was publishing on to like, I don't know, um, I sorta want to do this thing, but I don't really know what I feel super excited and committed to sharing about to then, um, more around time priorities and still where do I find the energy.

What do I want to write about

and what has been the evolution with the writing that you do that's not academic writing. I, that was very much about, Oh my gosh, this feels really strange to be a stepping out of life. Identity as an educational developer and express my voice from my perspective is that bull in this new identity of, of coach.

And, um, it felt very nerve wracking at first and, and then has become a joy

what is the joy for you in academic writing?

Okay.

The, the pieces around reading, learning, um, and accomplishing finishing a piece. Yeah. So the learning and the collaborating is part of the process. Um, cause I am clear, I'm not interested in writing solo. If I were to work on anything, I would want it to be here. Wow. Once I changed my mind, I have seen it as a confirmation.

Yeah. What's the story that you're telling yourself right now about your relationship to academic writing? Um.

Has something to do. I'll tell you the words, cause I don't know that I could coherently tell the whole story, but it has elements of . Yeah. Okay. It's important, but is it worth it? What are the motivations for doing it? What's that about? Um, why can't I get my act together and write something? Um,

those are kind of the pieces that are coming that, that come to mind. Okay. Okay. I'd like to try a quick exercise with you, um, that hopefully can bring some clarity cause it sounds like you have these choices and you're battling back and forth between, if I did it this way, if I did it that way, and you kind of keep going back and forth, yes, we may do.

Okay. So are you up for an exercise? Totally. Okay. So it's a bit of a vision exercise. So go ahead and envision yourself, um, standing in a room. And you have two doors in front of you. They look the exact same, and when you walk through the door on the left, you open that door. You are actively engaged in academic writing.

You have a collaboration with someone. It's moving forward. You have faith that it's going to lead to a publication and an accomplishment that you can add to your CV. How does it feel to walk through that door?

It feels good, and as I was walking through the door, the question is like. Where am I finding the time to do this. Okay. But it feels good, like, okay. All right, so you're back in the room. You're going to walk through the door on the right, and as you walk through that door, you're letting the academic writing go.

You're focusing your energy on coaching and the business you're still reading. You're still talking with colleagues, you're still staying present with the scholarship, but you're not contributing through peer review, publication writing, and how does that feel.

Um, like as I stepped through the door, there was definitely some sadness, some sense of disappointment,

but it also . It felt okay. Okay. Like, I don't know about truly. Okay. But it felt okay. Okay. What does that feeling of, okay. Feel like? Describe that.

I think it's tied to at the Disap the disappointment feeling. Right. So. Why am I hanging onto these expectations that this is what a scholarly slash intellectual E ed developer, um, look like? Um, why am I so tied to that? Is it because of the environment in which I, I work? Or is it something bigger? Like, I guess, um.

Is it truly something I want or is it an expectation that I've internalized is really like, that is for me, like the ultimate question that I'm not, I have not so far been able to, um, yeah. To ascertain

what would help you to be able to distinguish between. Something you've internalized and something that you truly want.

I feel that based on who I am and like my experience, that most instances when I truly want something, I act upon it. Sometimes it takes a while, but I.

But typically I, I say there's action around that.

I'm also having a thought as I, as I speak with you. Um, so the. I would say since I started to train as a coach and embarked on this journey, which was December, 2017 or whenever they started to, um, to develop this, started to develop it. Um, it's been a push. It's been like, yeah, push, push, push, push. And then maybe about a month, six weeks ago.

I felt like I shifted and I really focused on the joy of having from this and and making it easier and really focusing on the pieces that that I love and not making it a, I push, push, push, and part of me wonders. I hadn't only, as we were talking, whether. Um, I just, with, with that kind of mentality that I had had until very recently, there was just no energy to be able to do anything else.

And whether it might be possible as I'm moving into this kind of what I feel like a later space, um, that perhaps I might be able to imagine having energy for, for the academic writing, which. I did not have for the past, you know, year and three quarters and that is not something I feel I can decide, but rather something that I will, um, experience and observe.

over the next few months, if you had to come up with a name for this kind of new season that you're entering into right now, what would you call it?

Um, I think I would call that

the word that came to mind is, is light, but not as like I see the light, but more a feeling of light.

See being lighter. And who do you need to be in this season of being lighter?

I have been thinking a lot about trust and really, um. intentionally, it came about trust. So I think I need to be a person who trusts trust. That clarity will come trust that, um, trusted things. Yeah. That, that, uh, that clarity will come.

Maybe trust that I don't need to know an answer. What I wanted to know an answer. We'll make a decision. I want to make a decision.

Yeah. When you want the answer and you want the decision, what are you truly seeking?

Yeah. When I want the answer and the decision,

I'm seeking something or around, um, like a piece of my head having peace in my, in my being. Okay.

What gives you peace right now?

Well, a few different things. Be more gentle on myself. Definitely gives me peace. Okay. Similar layer, maybe it's exactly the same thing. I'm not pushing so hard all the time. Um, and the outdoors and, uh, yeah. Connecting with my partner and my teens. Yeah. Okay. All of those things gave me peace. Yeah. Basically trusting gives me peace when it comes to academic writing.

what are you gripping onto.

Uh, I am gripping on to a belief that

to be a, a good educational developer, I need not only to be a good practitioner. But also to be active researching and publishing.

And what does it look like for you to gently release that grip.

I think if I did not believe it was true, then I could release the grip, but it's because I still hold that as true that a grip is so tight.

So to gently release the grip, um. I feel like I can see it in my mind. I can see the, the grip loosening. Um, but it's still hovering, like it's not released thing and disappearing. It's there. So ready. That's okay.

Sometimes when we picture our hands gripping something so tightly, our knuckles are white with that grip, and sometimes we don't even realize it's that tight and we can still hold an idea, but we can hold it looser. Not with the white knuckled grip, but just holding it. It's still there. It's not going anywhere.

Yeah. It's maybe too much to let it go, but it's sitting in an open Palm

as an idea for you to reflect on and observe and look at and hold out in front of you. instead of being closed in that grip where it's harder for you to see it.

when you look at that in your open Palm, what questions do you want to ask? Um, why? Why are you so tight? Sorry. Hang on. So tamed. Why do you hurt. I'm looking at the grip. Is that right? why won't you let go of me? Could you do this another way? Those are the lines right now. Okay. But I would ask if I were holding it in my hand in my poem.

How are you feeling about academic writing now that we've had this conversation. I think like, right in this instance

right? In this instant, I feel more comfortable with, uh, not having to make a decision. Like, I entered into the conversation. Like, I, you know, I wanna make a decision. Am I going to do it? Am I gonna not get into it? Like put it to her, put it to rest? Um. Right at this moment, I feel more comfortable with saying that at this present time, at this moment, I am okay with not making a decision and also not engaging in a project like tomorrow, you know, not running out and trying to find something to write with somebody.

Um.

Yeah. So I know of a theory is APOE that I wonder photo if it would help with this. Can I share the the theory? Speaking of scholarship? Yes. So there's a man named William Bridges. You may know his work. He does work on transitions, both for individuals and organizations, and he talks about how when you're in transition, there's always a death an ending.

And then there's a nice, what he calls a neutral space, what I'd like to call the messy middle, where you don't really know what you're doing, and then there's a new beginning, something fresh, something you know, new and often very exciting. Where do you feel like you fall on this spectrum right now? To me at all?

Yeah. I wouldn't call it neutral. And when you're in a messy middle, and maybe you've been in this situation before in your life where you've kind of been in the middle of a transition, what are some of the things that you can do to feel rooted, to feel comforted even in the midst of something that can feel messy and uncertain.

I feel that when I put my energy towards the things I know that I enjoy, that helps me. Sometimes there's a piece, maybe not the whole piece, but a subsection of that, that I feel I can make a decision around

and that sometimes helps. And back to the trust thing.

trust that it'll work out in whatever way it's meant to. What will help you to trust yourself as you continue to explore this area. This isn't maybe related to trust, but more around, um, removing the pressure to have, to make a decision. . Like reminding myself that I can make a decision today can change this afternoon or tomorrow or next year, or whenever, whenever it needs to change.

Um, being clear on my choices. So what helps myself, me to trust myself is when.

Ah, I'm able to articulate to myself the reasons for a particular choice. Okay.

So the question was what helps me trust myself. Right? So, yeah. Mmm.

I guess trusting that I will.

Uh, it just sounds so cheesy when the answer, but like, just trusting in the inner wisdom that I have and trusting that it will, that it shows up, that it's there, that it shows up, that it, um, that if I don't have clarity right now about something maybe I actually do have clarity for right now. And then I can let go of the big piece.

Um, for now so I'm clear right now, for example, that I'm not going to get off this call. Call and start, you know, drumming up something for peer reviewed complication, right? Like I cleared that for now. I, I'm here for today. We have to take a tech micro. I'm not interested in putting the energy into it and to trust that.

Um,

but that could change. And. Rolling before today. That is where my energy's at. it seems like this decision could be seasonal for you. It won't have finality. It's not a one and done. Yes. It's a, in this season of your life, what is the role that academic writing will play knowing that it could change in the next season?

Yeah.

Yeah. And I think I need to, um,

not associates towards season with like the whatever. I don't know even know what the right term is, but I think, you know what I mean? Right. That. Do you graphical? Who knows what terrain, like the academic year, the yes or the, you know, now it's spring, now it's summer, right? Yeah. Right. You had talked about a season of lightness and then going into a season of lightness and maybe once your season of lightness is evolving into a different kind of season, you will have a changing relationship to your academic writing, but you don't always know how long these seasons will last.

Yeah.

Okay. So our goal today was some clarity around being unsettled and feeling in this, in between space. How are you feeling as we're wrapping up this session

right now? I feel. Uh, I feel good. I think that the, um, meaning I feel more peace and I think me recognizing that the way I've been proceeding over the last, the way I've been using my energy and kind of the mentality that I've had around. The stress I put on myself, the pressure I put on myself to, to grow my business.

Really. Um, and then there was all the emotional stuff I around my daughter's poor health, like, but when I think of it at that where I'm like, yeah, of course there could possibly be any and her have been any energy for, for anything else. Um.

Because I do think I read really high expectations of myself that I have been criticizing myself, being hard on myself, or like other people can do it. Why the heck can you get your act together and do this? Um, so I think it's been helpful to call it definitely been helpful in me having additional insights and to what was going on.

And then the. Um, yeah, this, this idea of the seasons, and it may change or may not,

as you're talking to some others, a metaphor that just pops into my mind, what this could be compared to, can I share this with you in this metaphor? Um, so I think about, have you had a massage before? I certainly have. Okay. So there's a certain kind of massage, and I don't know what all of them are called, but like trigger point or something like that where they'll put pressure on and not, you know, like in your back or your shoulder, your neck.

But whenever they put that pressure on, it's only for a short period of time. And then they move around to make sure that they're not putting too much pressure on, and if the only thing they did in that entire massage was just push on the knot, it would not be a very enjoyable massage. They have to relieve that in order to kind of release the knot, they have to relieve the pressure, they have to poke at it, and then they have to come back.

If there's a rhythm to working out a not, and I think that. In this case, you're trying to work out this, not, you're trying to kind of figure out what this is, but it sounds like you were just pushing on it and really putting a lot of pressure there to try to release it, to try to kind of force it to figure itself out.

And. I want to encourage you to keep poking at it, to keep like thinking and reflecting, but also to pull back to give it that rest of working out. Any kind of not, you have to have those rhythms of doing the deep reflection and then pulling back. And saying, okay, let me get some perspective on this and let me let, actually the whole thing just rest in my brain, in my body and my emotions.

Let me let the situation rest to see what comes of the reflective work that I've done. awesome metaphor to rip cause I've had that kind of massage where like you're there, they're pressing on a point. It's just so darn painful. All I can wait for or is when they release it, right? Yeah, right. And there's such a relief in that there's such a, you know, a relief in not feeling that pain.

Yes. So let yourself be released, you know, periodically. Yeah. Just to kind of feel, you know, let it, let go and see what comes of that. Because sometimes when we push and push and push, it's not giving us the room and the space to actually let something unfold. And unknot itself in the way that it needs to.

Thank you. I definitely, definitely hold that image. All right. It was a pleasure to coach you today. You said no, thank you so much for the opportunity.

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