**YGT episode 179**

You're listening to. You've got this episode one 79 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, dr Katie Linder. In this episode, I want to talk about a strategy that I recently shared with a coaching client of mine, and it's about adding meaning into your calendar.

In a way that allows you to see kind of the why behind when you're scheduling certain things. Now this aligns really well if you do something called time blocking, which is basically using your calendar, not just to schedule meetings and things that have a discreet kind of time where you're talking with someone else.

Um, but also if you're using your calendar to block out times where you're going to be trying to get certain projects done. Now, this is something that I started to do right after we moved to Kansas because I had days of time where I didn't really have a lot of appointments, but I had a lot of things I needed to get done.

And so what I ended up doing was looking at my calendar and saying, okay, from eight to 9:00 AM I'm going to focus on my newsletter. For this week from 9:00 AM to noon, I'm going to work on invoicing my clients for the month of January, and then from one o'clock to two o'clock I'm going to work on some social media posts and I would kind of block out that time, almost like adding in my to do list to my calendar.

So that I could kind of see when I was going to get certain things done. So rather than just have a big list in front of me and a whole day in front of me, which felt a little bit overwhelming, especially during this time of transition, I wanted to kind of have a schedule of what would look, what this would look like on my calendar.

Now I know that this doesn't work for everyone, and sometimes having that kind of schedule can feel a little bit confining. Um, but I think it works well if you have like really large blocks of open time, or if you have a really busy schedule and you're trying to figure out when certain things are going to get done in the midst of other things on your calendar.

So what happened with this particular client of mine, and this is actually been happening with several of my coaching clients. It's been a very popular topic of conversation as we're going into the new year and the new term for many of my clients, cause they're teaching and they're, they're researching.

Is they're having a hard time kind of holding space on their calendar for certain things. And part of this is because like fires are coming up and so they're having to move things around on their calendars quite a bit and they'll like try to time block and they'll try to reserve a certain space for something and then something else will come up and they'll feel like they have to move it and then they're not sure where to move it to.

They're not sure how to like, not lose track of that thing that they're trying to get done. And so there's been a lot of conversation with me about, um, how do you kind of manage your calendar when you're constantly like adjusting and, um, there's always this sense, I think from some of my clients of like guilt and failure that like, they're not doing something right because they're constantly having to move things around and they create a plan and they can't stick to the plan.

And so there's just been a lot of discussion about this. So recently I was talking with one of my clients and she was saying, how do I schedule something into my calendar that has a deadline to it, but I do, I can kind of work on it when I want to work on it. So there's a day that it's due, but I don't have like set times in my calendar that I'm trying to get it done.

And she had a deadline. So we looked at that deadline and the first step that I recommended was to start looking backward from that deadline to see kind of what was going on in the days previous to when she wanted to have it done. Well, in the case of this particular client, she had a family member coming into town in like the three days previous to the deadline.

And so we said, well, it looks like that deadline is not the actual deadline. We actually need to move it. You know, back several days because you don't want to be working on this while your family members here. So we moved the deadline to kind of accommodate that thing that was going on. And then we looked at the days kind of happening previous to, um, that new deadline and realize that like, she had a lot going on and there, there were things on our calendar that were going to not allow her to get this, this project on until we moved the deadline back a little bit more.

And she said, okay, well maybe I can work on this. You know, the day before the new deadline that we had set. And I said, well, it's kind of putting it to the last minute because what if something happens? You don't really have any time after that, even though it looks like you have like a week, you don't really have a week because of all these other things that you have going on.

So we kind of kept shifting back and shifting back and we had this discussion about how when you're moving things around in your calendar and you're kind of trying to plan ahead. You're not just looking for any time that something will fit, you're actually looking for the ideal time. So if it's something that's gonna take a lot of brain energy or it's something that's going to be, you know, needing a couple of hours to really be done effectively, you're not just looking to like slot it in in like a half an hour window.

You're looking for a couple hours where your brain is going to be pretty fresh and you can really devote time to thinking about how you're going to do that thing. So the other thing that came up as we were talking about this was she had mentioned how in the past it had been kind of a challenge when she would do this kind of stuff ahead of time.

Because like in her mind, she knew that the deadline was later and that she had a little bit of wiggle room and she would still tend to maybe procrastinate a little bit. Now I think we all can understand this and we all can have this sense of like, if like the project will stretch out to the amount of time that we have to give to it.

And so we came up with this idea of adding meaning into her calendar. Now she does the time blocking and she uses Google calendar, and so what we did was in addition to just writing in the the task that she was going to be working on at a particular time, we had her write, I'm doing this now so that I can be really engaging with my family member when they come into town later on.

Or you might say something like, I'm getting this done now because I know I have a heavy travel period coming up and I'm not going to want to do it later, or I'm getting this done now so that I can have a date night with my partner at the end of this week and I don't have to work during that time. Or I'm doing this now because it's cold and flu season, and I know my kids might get sick and that's really going to be disruptive to my schedule.

So I'm doing this now in the hope of putting some buffer time in to my calendar. So the idea of this is basically saying kind of what is the meaning behind what is the why behind doing something early so that you're kind of reminding yourself that you're not just doing it for no reason and your, your current self is actually trying to give your future self a little bit of a gift and your, your current self is planning ahead.

Um, knowing what your future self would prefer, which is for you to have all this stuff kind of wrapped up and ready to go so that you don't have to worry about it. Now, as I was talking about this with my client, I was thinking about how this is something I've actually been doing really instinctually, but also very purposefully as I'm starting my new job.

So for example, as I record this episode, this is the weekend before my job is going to start, and my goal is actually to record all of the episodes for February. In this weekend so that I can get them kind of ready to go and I not going to be spending kind of my creative energy in February. That probably is going to be pretty depleted by starting this new job.

I'm going to be able to kind of carve out extra space, um, for the, the cognitive work that I'm going to need to be doing this month as I'm meeting new people, as I'm processing a lot of new information. And part of that, I'll be honest, comes a little bit out of fear that it's, it's a lot to start a new job.

And so I'm, I'm kind of afraid of what that is going to take. But at the same time, I'm thinking ahead and saying, you know, am I going to want to at the last minute, have to throw together a podcast episode on a Tuesday night, which happens to be also when I run my coach training. So there's a lot going on anyway.

Um, I know I'm not going to want that. And so I need to be thinking ahead about, well, I can't do it Tuesday night. And I know that, you know, Monday nights are probably going to be kind of intense because I'm starting this new job. I'm going to be wanting to use some of my evenings to be kind of processing information.

Weekends are going to be probably recovery periods for me this month. So all of that means that I have to kind of shift my understanding of what I can get things done to quite a bit earlier, um, than, than what I've thought about. Now, the other piece of this, um, was really coming into play before my move because I had a lot of stuff happening in January in terms of the business and different program launches.

And the last couple of weeks of December, I was pushing really, really hard when I had the time to get all those things done because I knew that once we were on the road and in our new house and unpacking all of our stuff, I was going to have a hard time kind of shifting my mental energy and my emotional energy.

And my cognitive energy and my physical energy, all the energies. I was really going to be wanting to give that to the transition, and so I was really thoughtful and careful about what can I do now to save myself this time later. Now, you're not always going to be in a situation where you need to do this, but I think it works especially well if you're in a really busy time or if you know you have a travel period coming up or you know that there's just something that's going to be happening, it's going to be kind of sucking your time and energy away.

And for me, obviously the new job is a big part of that. But also just being in a new city and trying to manage, you know, a transition of a new town and a lot of new things and a lot of new people. I'm really thinking carefully about how I can add that meaning into my calendar. So when I'm writing down my to do's and when I'm thinking about when I want these things to be done, I'm thinking really consciously about my future self.

And how thankful she's going to be that I have gotten some of these things done ahead of time and I am going to express gratitude on those evenings when I get to sit in front of the TV and relax. I'm going to say to myself, I'm really glad that you're not doing other work right now, and that you're able to spend this time recovering and really thinking about, um, how to process all the information that's coming my way.

So I would love to hear if there are ways that you're adding meaning into your calendar, whether it's through time blocking or reminding yourself about your future self and what that person is going to be wanting from you right now in your current moment. You can always tweet to me at Katie double underscore lender.

You can connect with me on Instagram at Katie underscore lender. You can write me an email@helloatdrkatielinder.com. And you can also write me a letter at PO box 1973 in Manhattan, Kansas six six five Oh two any way you contact me, I always love to hear from you. And here's to adding a little bit more meaning into our calendars.

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