**YGT episode 181**

You're listening to. You've got this episode one 81 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 wanted to talk about a really powerful principle that I came across in James clears book atomic habits.

Now this book is a New York times bestseller. Um, so I would not be surprised if you have already heard about it. And I followed James clears work for a while. He has a newsletter that he puts out. And, um, I have to say, when I started hearing kind of all the hype about this book on habits, I was skeptical.

And I thought, you know, it's another book on habits. You know, I, I doubt it's as great as everybody says it is. And it took me a while to pick it up, even though I had several coaching clients who said, you would love this book and people were recommending it to me. And so I decided to include it in our, um, prolific reading group list.

Um, for 20, 20. And prolific is my online community focused on meaningful productivity. And, um, every month or so we'll read a book. And, um, so I put atomic habits on that list as a way to kind of force myself to read this book. So I've been dipping in and out of it, and I am here to tell you that. The hype is completely justified.

I love this book. It is so practical. There are so many good takeaways and I am immediately implementing so many different things from, um, the different, uh, areas of this book where James clear is really breaking down the concept of habit building and how to both establish and maintain good habits over time.

But there was a couple of things that he talked about that really stuck with me that I thought would be helpful to share on this episode, and they were related to finding your next easiest action. Now, one of the things that James clear differentiates between is the difference between motion. And action.

And this was something that was really like eye opening for me. I felt like my, um, it really kind of helped me to understand for myself, but also for my coaching clients, why some people are kind of feeling like they're taking action, but they're not actually making progress. And so he gives examples of when you're in motion, you might be.

Thinking about something, or you might be researching something now as academics and higher ed professionals, they should all sound very familiar where we will like look into something for a while or we'll kind of ask ourselves, should I do this or should I do that? And in this kind of thinking stage where we're having motion around a particular issue, but we're not actually taking action.

And so this is something that I thought was really interesting to differentiate between, because I work with a lot of people in my coaching practice who like to think about things and they like to process something before they will actually move forward with it. And it's not to say that that is bad or wrong because some people, that is just how they function and it can actually be really helpful to reflect on something and think about it and make sure it's the right way forward.

But. The thing I appreciated about what James clear points out is if you're making a lot of motion, it can give you a false sense that you're actually taking action when you're not really taking action. You just have a lot of motion around a particular project. So I love this idea of trying to separate out in my own mind where are the things in my life where I have motion and I need to start taking action.

And are there areas where I kind of feel like I'm making progress, but I'm not. Actually making progress. So one of these areas that I've definitely talked about in the past is starting a yoga practice. And this is an area where I have a lot of emotion and not a lot of action. And even though I know the actions to take, it's just like it's something that I prefer to stay in motion with and I'm not shifting into that action mode.

So James clear talks about a few things about finding your next easiest action when you're in this mode of motion. How do you kind of break out of that and start to actually take action on a project? So one of the things he talks about is finding something that you can do in two minutes or less. And you don't necessarily have to keep going after that two minutes, but it's like a small kind of micro action that you could take that would be related to that thing.

They are trying to move forward and it's actually doing something related to that thing. Once you have that kind of two minutes or less action. He also talks about trying to stack easy actions on each other so that you're kind of doing a sequence of the easy actions. Because sometimes what keeps us from shifting from motion to action is something feels too hard.

And so we look at that thing and we think, well, it's so. Big, it's so, you know, like for me, starting a yoga practice is like, well, six months down the line after I've been practicing yoga a few times a week, that's when I'm really gonna feel like I have a yoga practice, but I can't just have a yoga practice after like one 30 minute session.

Like, and there's something about that that feels very demotivating to me. And the idea that I have to be kind of like really sticking with these habits over time in order to see the progress from them. So once you start to kind of stack these easier actions together, it allows you to see that the bigger thing that you were trying to do is actually not that big.

So for example, instead of me saying. I need to have a yoga practice that involves at least three sessions of yoga week and they need to be at least 30 minutes each in order to quote unquote count as a session. Maybe instead, I start my morning with one sun salutation and that's all I do. I don't go through a full yoga session.

I don't even have to look at a video on YouTube. You know, I know enough about how to do a sun salutation and that's how I start my day. You know, I can start to do those kinds of micro actions, and then maybe I decided to add on to that send salutation, or maybe I do a different kind of yoga sequence at the end of the day to kind of close things out.

But the idea is to really break something down into much smaller components than what we have in our heads so that we can start to think about something that is a little bit easier for our brains to handle in terms of actually taking on that habit. Now, one thing that I think is really helpful to kind of layer in to this process of finding an easy action that's two minutes or less and starting to do that is to actually say in my mind, say to myself, Oh, that's easy to do.

Because I think sometimes when we've associated difficulty with a particular project for a long time, everything about it takes on that mindset of difficulty. It doesn't matter if there's a little step that is actually very easy in our heads. We're thinking, Oh, it's so difficult. So I think about, for example, if I was going to launch like a new committee at work, and I felt very overwhelmed by this concept of launching a new committee, maybe one of the first things I do is send out an email to someone to ask about their opinion about who should be on the committee.

Well. Sending that email is a relatively easy thing for me to do. I could say to myself, that's easy to do. So what I'm always looking for when I'm trying to differentiate between motion and action and I'm trying to trigger some kind of action as it relates to a project, is a task that's small enough that I can say to myself that's easy to do and that is going to take like two minutes or less.

I think that that kind of internal self-talk helps us to shift our mindset so that we don't think of something as being overall just incredibly difficult, but we start to understand that there are actually elements of it that are made up of really easy things. Now, I could also apply this to something like a book project.

Writing a book feels incredibly hard and challenging, but writing a sentence. That's easy to do. Or, you know, looking up, uh, some books on Amazon that are related to my topic that's easy to do. Like there's certain elements that I can kind of pull out of the bigger challenge and say, I can do that. I have the skill set to do that.

I've maybe done it in the past, and so it's comes easier to me than some of the other parts of the project. But it's about kind of like digging in to a particular thing that feels hard and saying, where is the ease within this thing? And how can I find something that feels easy to do and tell myself that it's easy to do that thing so that I can start to shift my mindset around a really challenging project.

So I can definitely recommend, uh, atomic habits. I do think that there's a lot in there that I have immediately been able to practice. One of the things actually, um, that he talks about is, is kind of tying habits to identity in some interesting ways. There are a lot of, um, kind of larger principles that he's starting to explore.

And I can also say that since reading that book, one of the habits I've been working on, one of the bad habits that I've been working on. Is, um, I often kind of pick at my cuticles and, um, and this is like a nervous habit that I've had. It's also something I do when I'm bored. And I can tell you that since reading that book and implementing what James clear is talking about for the past two weeks, I have not picked at my cuticles at all.

Um, this is. Like something I've been doing for years, if not decades. So there's a lot of power in atomic habits and I will link to it in the show notes in case you want to take a look. Um, I was also able to locate it very easily from my library, so that's something you can check into as well. But this is also one of those books that I think, um, I'll, I'll buy a copy of, because it's one that I'll want to dip back into and remind myself of some of the principles of what James clear is talking about.

So I hope this helps you to think about fighting your next easiest action and shifting from motion to action with a particular project. If you've been hesitating on that, and if you have, um, taken some action, I would love to hear about it. You can always tweet to me. At Katie. Double underscore Linder.

You can connect with me on Instagram at Katie underscore lender. You can always write me an email@helloatdrkatielinder.com and of course you can also write me a letter at PO box 1973 in Manhattan, Kansas, six six five zero two. Any way you contact me. I always love to hear from you. Thanks for listening.

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