**CC\_S3E5**

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 Kaitlin FOSS.

Caitlin is a certified weight and life coach who helps academics overcome their self sabotages of overeating and overdrinking. As a tenured psychology professor and department chair, she knows the unique demands of academic life. Now, onto the episode. Hi Caitlin, how are you? Great. Katie, how are you doing?

I am doing well, and I'm excited to be coached by you today. So where do you want to start? Yes. I'm so excited that we're, I'm coaching you. If you were one of my regular clients, we'd probably have a theme that we were diving back into. Like second session. We'd be talking about how notion was working out for you, but we have a different topic for today as we briefly discussed.

Before we hopped on this part of it. So, uh, tell us what you'd like to talk about today. Yeah. So I, this is kind of tied to the notion stuff I think that we talked about last time, but I've been thinking about, um, so as we record this, I have just wrapped up my fifth week with my new job. Um, if people have been following me in other spaces, they might know.

It's very busy there. I have lots of meetings and, um, my days are very full and so Nosha is helping with that in terms of kind of doing some planning. But we are also in a point in the term as we record this, we're kind of getting toward mid March, um, where, depending on where people are when they listen to this.

This is the time when covert 19 is kind of taking hold a little bit in the U S and um, institutions are really doing a lot of planning around what to do and trying to think about all the different avenues of where this can go. And my day job happens to be with online teaching and learning. So I am squarely in the midst of doing a lot of this planning and trying to really forecast what people will need, how we can be responsive depending on a number of scenarios that could happen.

And, uh, so what I was telling Katelyn as we came in today's call is I'm feeling a little planned out. I think I'm feeling kind of. Overwhelmed is probably not the word. It's, I think it's just fatigued because I'm trying to think through all these different scenarios with people. And, um, as you can imagine, emotions are running a little bit high.

People are feeling kind of stressed and nervous about the situation, and, um, that is kind of overflowing into other kinds of planning that I would typically do. And so I'm, I'm wanting to kind of coach, I think today around. Embracing this fatigue a little bit and like letting it happen and thinking about what does it mean to not be so planful.

If my planning energy has to be kind of funneled into this part of my work, that's okay to let it be funneled there. But I also don't want to get burnt out on trying to kind of have control over all the things. And I do feel like that is part of what planning. Stems from, for me, it's like having a plan, knowing where things are going to go, like being efficient.

And right now I just feel like that is taking me to a place that doesn't feel very positive. Like it's, it's feeling like constraining. It's feeling, um, fatiguing. Like it's just tiring for me to do it. Whereas in the past, this would have been very energizing work. So that's kind of where I'm landing as we come into today's session is.

Fatigue around the planning and trying to think about how do I kind of just go with the flow a little bit when this is a very kind of dynamic situation. Perfect. So if we put this into a model, we're thinking about the circumstance line. You are planning for online teaching and your job that is happening.

It's a fact and we know you're feeling fatigued, but in between there is the thought. What kind of thoughts are creating the fatigue? Hmm. I think part of the thoughts are around trying to figure out all the scenarios, and this is even something that at the end of last week I was talking with a group of people and I said, we're not going to be able to figure out all the scenarios like this is just not possible, and we won't know.

You know, like this is not a situation that we can handle perfectly. It's a situation that we can kind of. Go with the flow with and then learn from on the back end of it. Um, but I don't think we can have kind of super high expectations of, of how this is going to go. So part of that, I think is the opposite of how I would normally handle a situation.

And so I feel like part of the. Fatigue could be like, I'm, I'm doing a lot of mindset shifts for myself around, you know, putting the brakes on certain things that I would normally go kind of whole-hog into, um, with the planning, but trying to acknowledge that, um, that in itself is kind of a impossible task, um, that we have in front of us.

So I think part of it is that, um, and it may also be part of it is the fatigue is kind of coming from. Managing a lot of emotions of people around me. Um, right now, and as I'm sure people who are listening to this, depending on how far out it is from this situation or how much of it is still going on, um, there's a lot of stress and anxiety and concern, um, as we're still kind of trying to figure out what this is going to look like here in the U S.

And, um, so I think that there's definitely a part of that too, of just like being a calm presence in the midst of that means me being very attentive to that emotional intelligence piece, which is always something that's a little bit draining for me. Okay. So when you think we haven't, we have an impossible task in front of us that thought in particular probably creates fatigue for you.

Yeah, I mean, it's, there's fatigue and there's also a little bit of relief to it of just like, well, you know, like we, this is not something where I think we're spinning our wheels. You know, like, I think we can get some traction around this, but I also think that maybe I'm a word I would put out, is that I feel like I'm trying to be realistic about kind of what the potential is for us to have impact in the situation and that we.

Are trying to not, um, over-prepare and also prepare in the wrong directions cause we just don't have a lot of information. And, um. I think that there's a frantic newness to how I've seen some people kind of reacting in the higher ed space to the situation, which is understandable. I say that without any form of judgment.

Um, and I'm trying to not kind of give into that franticness because I think there's an energy suck there that, um, I'm trying to be kind of thoughtful about. Hmm. So I wonder if it's also like I'm managing other people's emotions, like you said, but I'm tired because I'm, I need to manage my emotions potentially.

Yeah. So you're feel, you're like, I want to be calm. How are you feeling about this process, Katie? Um, I would say that. Well, there's two sides of it. I mean, one is definitely the emotions that I'm attaching personally to the situation, which I am not always able to express, um, publicly. And then the other side would be kind of the emotions around the actual work itself, which this week, um, this past week, whereas actually a lot of urgent meetings and things that came up that had me rearranging my schedule multiple times to accommodate.

Kind of last minute tasks, some of them needing multiple hours. Um, and I think in past version of B would have been very freaked out by that. Like, I liked my routine. I like having stability in my calendar in the past five weeks. That's just not really been, you know, possible. And especially this past week really not possible.

So I think there's also me kind of. Acknowledging to myself, this is like a new reality that I'm in with my schedule. And we talked a little bit about this last time of like acknowledging any reality, um, and that I need to be open to that flexibility, um, because it's just part of. The reality of that I'm in.

Um, and I don't necessarily, I hesitate to say I have no control, but there are definitely situations where I feel like I have a lot less control in terms of being called into something, needing to attend, needing to move a bunch of other things around in order to make something happen, that kind of thing.

So when you're feeling fatigued, what do you do?

You know, it's interesting because my tendency with fatigue is to rest and to like take a moment. So if it's during the day, you know, I'd take a lunch break, I read something that's like not for work, I'll take a walk, you know, that kind of thing. At the end of the day, I will go to bed early. I will, um, try to take an evening off.

But the thing actually that was interesting this week is there was something at the very end of the day, basically on Friday that I got committed to, and it was like, we need this Monday morning. And I immediately was like. I really don't want this to go into my weekends. Like I've been working really hard to like leave work and go home and like not bring work home, not bring work home on the weekends.

And this was like I had to bring this home. So that day I ended up coming back to home and. Working for like two hours to just get this thing done, basically so that I could be through with it. And I remember when I left work, I had that kind of frantic feeling where I was like, okay, I've gotten sucked into this.

You know, like, I've got to get this thing done. This is my contribution. You know, all of these things. But once I was done with those two hours, I had kind of cleared the deck basically, and it was like, okay, now I can actually have my weekends because I didn't put this off. I just kind of got it done. And now it's over.

And I will have it for Monday morning. And it extended my Workday, obviously to do that. And I was feeling very fatigued by that point because it had been a long week. Lots of meetings, lots of things going on. Um, but sometimes I think kind of, uh. Paradoxically for me, working when I'm fatigued will actually make me feel better because it's like I can cross one more thing off and then it's, it's not a permission slip to relax, but it's kind of like this thing will stay on my mind until it's done.

And I'd rather have it off my mind and, and be able to kind of go about what I want to do on the weekend than to have it be kind of in the back of my mind. Worrying about it the whole time, but interestingly, you're fatigued right now. Yeah. All the way. I've taken a lot of time to rest this weekend. I think that the.

This is kind of like an accumulation, I would say, of the past five weeks, where it's like, it's kinda like when you start a new workout regimen and your body's like, Whoa, what's going on here? This is, there's kind of some buildup over time. I feel like the muscles that I'm building up, um, kind of the metaphorical muscles to deal with this new schedule are still.

Building, you know, like, I don't feel like I quite have them yet. Um, I do feel like it's getting better. I do feel like I'm shifting mindset to kind of make it happen. Um, and I was very, uh, intentional this weekend, for example, of like blocking out Saturday with solitude time to kind of have that recovery time.

But part of it too is like, um. And even as I say it, I'm kind of hesitating because I feel like we live these lives where it's like we're just waiting for that light at the end of the tunnel. Like, and we keep saying it's there and then we get there, and then there's another light at the end of the next tunnel.

So I hear this in what I'm saying, but I look ahead over the coming weeks and I, I think, you know, this is, it's going to be a little bit rough. Like there's just going to be things that are going to be happening that I can't control. And so part of me is kind of bracing for that. Um, and again. Trying not to prepare too far in advance, but just like the awareness of, you know, I'm going to go into this week and things could happen and I've already had to cancel some travel and some other things.

So there's just kind of this very fluid situation happening. Um, and part of that gives me a sense of, I can relax because like these are things I can't control anyway. But the other part of me is like that that's going to be really fatiguing to experience that situation and have to be dynamic and kind of fluid in the moment, and to uphold some sense of calm and some sense of professionalism when I'm also like tired and like trying to deal with all of these things as they're coming right.

Your brain's like, Hey, we've been tired and we were putting up with that for a while. But do you see on the horizon that there's more tired coming? can we gotta do something about this? Your brain is like trying to intervene at this moment. Let's figure this out. Because early on you said, I don't want to feel burnout.

Right. And I think that part of this is. I feel like there are certain areas, like I used to think this way too about like writing and research and when I counsel people in coaching around writing. There. Sometimes we talk about how like you only have a certain amount of energy for writing or research or something along those lines, and at the end of the day it'll get replenished once you go to sleep.

But you, you have a finite amount of that, and once it's gone and you've given it to like a project, it can be hard to have it. Anything left, like your cup is empty basically. And I feel like when it comes to planning, my planning cup is being kind of emptied out by the stuff that's going on at work. And I just want to acknowledge that because it's like, if the cup is empty, I don't want to be kind of.

Trying to get more out of the cup for my own planning and my own kind of strategy when it's like, okay, no, that cup is empty. Like I just want to kind of let it be empty and let it replenish, you know, the next day. But it's definitely making me feel intentionally that I need to like pull back on some of my own.

Planning strategy, even like on a day to day basis. Like I, I had was thinking earlier about the example of, you know, I like to prep food for the week and for me this weekend, that felt like a good kind of planning cause it has a very. Like tangible effect on the week and it saves me some time and it's relatively easy for me to do, and so I did that, but there's other kinds of planning like looking ahead to my schedule.

Then I'm like, I'm not sure that's worth it because I'm not sure what's going to happen with that schedule this week, and I like looking toward Wednesday. Doesn't really matter right now because you know, something could happen on Monday. That completely changes everything else that's coming. So I'm definitely feeling like it's almost a waste to do some of that planning right now, given all these other things that are going on and the cup being empty and the cup being empty.

Like I think that I try to be really. Aware of the cup, you know, in, in various areas of my life, whether it's planning energy or other kinds of energy, and sometimes your cup is empty and you just kind of have to deal with it. Like, I know that this is not always something like, I can't really take a vacation right now.

Like, that would not be a very smart choice for me. Um, but I think that I can still be aware that this is feeling depleted and. When I do have an opportunity to, you know, take, take an hour, go for a walk or do what I need to do, I can take that opportunity in the moment. So I'm trying to be very present, I think right now of like what, what am I feeling right now?

What do I need right now versus trying to think, what do I think I'm going to need two days from now when I don't know and I'm not going to be able to kind of forecast that. Are the things that replace the things that fill your planning cup? Also the same things that help with the fatigue? I would say I think they're probably related.

I don't know that I have like pins down consciously what they are. Um, but I think, for example, about, I think planning is often related for me to things like creativity. And, um, brainstorming and exploration, like those kinds of things. Those are things that are in there like in the Cub gets emptied when you're doing them, or things that replenish the cup.

Uh, I, it could be both, but I'm thinking more on the first part that these are the things that are. The kinds of skills and abilities that are kind of being spent when I'm doing that kind of activity. And right now I'm having to do a lot of creative problem solving at work. So that's, that makes sense to me as like why that cup is getting kind of depleted.

Um, and not that I don't do this all the time, but I think it's extra, there's kind of this extra layer of it right now and almost like a, I think about kind of like, almost like a. Maybe this isn't the right language, but the phrase that comes to mind is like fast and furious. You know, like this, this thought pattern that's like, okay, I have to think through all the options relatively quickly.

Make a decision, move forward with that decision. Prompt my team to do what they need to do. Write up the saying that I need to write up, you know, and move on to the next thing to kind of make the decision. Like it's a very kind of rapid fire, um, situation. Well, also trying to be thoughtful and purposeful, you know, as we're doing this.

But the speed at which we're having to move is, is a lot faster than, than a typical kind of, um, situation where we'd be making decisions. And so I think that the. It's kind of like when you're driving on the freeway, the gas in your car has been used more quickly than if you're just driving around in a neighborhood.

I feel like that's what's happening is the, the cup is being emptied a little bit more quickly because I'm revving that engine in my brain a little bit more in order to do this work. And this is not a level at which I'm used to doing this on a consistent basis, and I've been having to do it on a consistent basis.

So. The stuff that I think fills it back up is things like sleep, but it's also things that would give my brain arrest. And right now that is a little bit compromised because even when I'm waking up, I'm like, Oh, I gotta think about this thing. Like there's things that are on my mind that are not getting resolved at the end of the day, that are kind of continuing over time.

And that I think is also causing some challenge in terms of just. How do I let my brain recover what it's like even when I'm sleeping? It's like revving on this stuff, trying to solve some of these problems, which has happened into that burnout. Frantic energy. You're like, don't, let's not go down the frantic energy lane.

If I keep revving this up over and over again, I'm going to go too far. Yeah. I mean, I think, and I think that this is something I'm seeing around me as well, like in meetings like. The tenor is just more speedy. People are talking faster. There's just this kind of frenetic energy that's happening. Um, and I'm, I'm just trying to be very aware of it.

You know, that, that it's there, that people are kind of dealing with the strain of this in various ways, and what are the ways that I want to deal with that and how can I. Have recovery time. That probably involves solitude because for me, it usually does. Um, but also that, what can I do? Not to distract my brain, but just to give it a moment of like, okay, we can pause, we can pause and take a break.

And knowing that that is going to kind of be beneficial in the long run of dealing with the situation, which is probably not going to be over for several weeks. Which isn't even being able to say like, Hey, we're trying to rev up right now. Hey, brain, I know we're revving up. I know you think it's helpful to rev up and pay attention and get worked up right now, but I'm going to need you to save your energy right.

Right. That language. Yeah. Which your awareness, like you interrupt your own models, Katie, of like you feel fatigued. It doesn't play out for you. And now I'm lashing out at this person and I don't know why you're like, I'm fatigued, so I know I need to go take action to just let myself be fatigued and deal with it.

Right. So you, you interrupt those for sure. Um, and then take proactive action. But you're talking about like, I want to be present. I want to be present in these moments. And what other ways can you do that? Hmm.

This is tough. This is hard for me to think through. Um, I think in part because I've been noticing a lot this past week in particular, how very little margin there is. And I thought about, this is kind of to give you a sense of my thought process coming into this session, I thought about like, Oh, we can talk about margin, we can talk about like building and more margin.

But then I was like, but sometimes you can't build in more margin and maybe it's more helpful for me to talk about that, about you know, situations when. You know, this is not about me getting more efficient. This is not about me planning better. I don't think that would be a solution here, which is why I didn't take the session in that direction.

I think that sometimes, and maybe some of our listeners can identify with this, it's not about that, and I feel like the systems I have are fine. I'm not feeling. Dissatisfied with choices that I'm making or directions that I'm kind of choosing to go. But I am in a reality right now where I have very little margin and I'm, I'm literally going from meeting to meeting to meeting, and I've had conversations with my admin, with a couple admins who scheduled for me.

Basically saying, I need, I need more margin. Like, this is something that we need to work on. Scheduling as an art and a science. You know, like I have learned that a lot in this past few weeks, but because of the nature of this situation, which is kind of a crisis situation, it's not really something that I can demand.

Um, and I'm, I'm willing to kind of go with the flow a little bit more, be disrupted, allow these meetings to take place, because I think that's part of what. Is required in this moment. So that's the part that I feel like is me being present is saying, this is what is necessitated right now and I'm allowing it to happen.

Like I don't have to allow it, but I'm choosing to allow it to happen and that I have agency in this situation. And it's also me kind of choosing this fatigue and that, you know, like I have chosen to have a job like this. I have chosen to be, you know, embarking on this committee work and doing these other things.

And even sometimes giving suggestions that mean more work for me because I know the greater good would benefit from those suggestions. But that is the reality of the present moment. So it's not. Going in the direction of like, Oh, I should meditate in the middle of the day, or, Oh, I should, like, it's not that kind of present moment experience to me.

Um, I feel like it's more just kind of acknowledging the reality is part of what is helping me to be present and the emotions of, Oh look, here's what's happening with these people. Here's how they're experiencing their stress. Oh, here's my fatigue. Here's my stress that may come up from time to time.

What other feelings have you been dealing with in addition to fatigue?

There's definitely been a little bit of overwhelm. I don't feel like it's the overarching feeling, but there's, there are moments where I'm like, okay, this is a lot. And, and we're, we're needing to deal with a lot of things in a very quick amount of time. Um. I am feeling a lot of empathy for people for a range of reasons.

Um, as I watched colleagues really struggle to figure out what to do, there's a lot of empathy for that. As I watched colleagues struggle to handle fear in the workplace, cause there's a lot of fear right now. Um, and just wanting to kind of just sit with them and let them have that. Experience, and we can't always do that just based on what's going on.

Um, I would say I'm also feeling some pressure, just time pressure of. Right now, it kind of feels like the clock is running out a little bit. Like we have this period of time in which we can be planning, and then that period of time will be gone, and then we'll just be in it and it's just going to be what it is, you know?

Like, it's like we know something's coming, but we don't know how bad it's going to be. So there's this kind of, um, feeling of time running out a little bit. And I think that's also why I was so. Feeling strongly about this weekend and having this weekend because I'm trying not to let that feeling control how I'm living my life.

Even though there is a perception that this time is running out. I could have spent all 48 hours of my weekend, you know, working on this stuff and I don't know that it would have made a ton of difference. You know, like it's just, it is what it is and we all need to be kind of prepared and ready in a personal way.

To manage our own health, to manage your own mental health. And all of those kinds of things is the situation is happening. So, I mean, I would say there's a lot of feelings in there. Um, but also I saw this, uh, post hunky internet the other day, and it just rang so true to me. Somebody was like, yep, we're all feeling a little crazy right now.

And yet it's also springtime. And it's warm and, and flowers are blooming. And I was like, there is that feeling that I have right now too. It's warm right now. And it hasn't been warm in a long time. And so the weather is really beautiful and there is this sense of like wanting to enjoy that and not be completely distracted by all these other things that are happening right now.

So there's a lot of, I think. I won't say like battling emotions, but maybe like conflicting emotions where you're getting pulled in kind of a bunch of different directions, which could be contributing to the fatigue potentially. Yes. Back and forth. Back and forth. Yeah. So what's going to happen this week for you?

I don't know. I, uh, but I was asked to clear my schedule already for Monday morning, so I have to reschedule three meetings. Um, I, my admin is out of the office, uh, this week, and this is our spring break week. So, um, things should slow down, at least on campus, but probably not with this preparation work that's happening.

And we have a kind of important meeting happening Monday morning that would allow for a lot of decisions later in the week to be made. Um, so it's kinda like I, I'll get through the first half of Monday and then I'll probably have a bit more of a, uh, an idea of what's, I don't hesitate to say a plan for the rest of the week, but an idea of what is going to happen potentially in the rest of the week and what the priorities will be.

Um. And that's the other piece I think I'm trying to keep in mind. It's just what are the priorities? Because if we can't be kind of perfect and how we're responding to all of these things, there may be certain things we're prioritizing over other things and what are those things look like? So, but yeah, there's just so much unknown.

I mean, I'm sure as people are kind of, um, listening to this, you may remember back to this period of time when. We are basically starting to have outbreaks in the U S but not in all States. Like right now. As far as I know, we don't have any cases in Kansas, but I imagine it will be everywhere soon. So we're working in this kind of very strange, liminal space.

Some of us are, some of us are not, but some of us are, and I am in that more liminal space right now. Feeling all the feelings. Yeah. Yeah. So where's the settling with you right now in this call? Hmm.

I think I'm, I'm sitting in the discomfort of not having control over the situation. Um, and that may be the other metaphor I'm kind of thinking about is like when you have your phone. And you're like, your wireless is on, but it can't find a signal and it's just draining your battery. Cause it's like it's out there seeking, trying to find this thing and it can't find the thing.

That's what this feels like a little bit to me as I'm kind of seeking that control unconsciously, I think. And it's just not there. Um, and so I have to kind of. Be aware of that, to almost flip that switch, turn that part off so that I'm not seeking that right now so that I can put my energy in the direction of where it needs to go.

Um, and I'm not kind of unconsciously trying to kind of grapple with getting back that control when it's just not possible. Uh, is the voice, it's like a scared version of just kind of like, I can help. I can help. What do you want me to do here, Katie? What do you want me to do? I don't think it, it doesn't feel like fear.

It's possible that it is, but I, for what it feels like to me is more like, that is my normal state of being. So maybe I'm just living in fear all the time, but it's more, and I think I can even acknowledge in a bigger way that when I talk about having control, I understand there are a lot of things I don't have control over.

And. And I actually feel like there are many areas of my life where I am kind of going with the flow because I don't have a way of doing something differently than that. So in this case, I think it's more about routine. It's more about structure. It's more about kind of being in a mental state that feels more, um.

Not so overloaded with these other pieces. And like my plate was kind of full as it was, and this is just kind of dumped way more stuff on it. So I think that when I think about being in control, it's more just like going back to a more normal state of engaging with the world, where it kind of. Things will happen as I expect them to happen.

I'm not going to have a disrupted calendar every day of the week. I'm not going to be disrupting other people's schedules because I keep having to move mine around, you know, like, it feels just like there isn't a stability there that I'm used to having some semblance of that. Um, and that's, you know, a place of privilege to, to have that kind of sense of stability.

So. I'm kind of also recognizing that, um, as we're in the situation of dealing with a lot of instability, that the fact that I often feel more stable is not, is a rare thing for other people. So yeah, I don't know that it's coming from a place of fear. I feel like it's just more, this is not normal, and that is feeling a little unsettling.

Yeah, unsettling. Uncomfortable. You said sitting in the discomfort, right? It's like, Oh, I'm uncomfortable right now. The brain's kinda like, can we get out of this a little bit? Cause we could, we'd like to feel comfortable again, especially because we've been tired. Yeah. Well, and I think when you have that feeling of, it's like when you're feeling very fatigued and you know, you just need a very good deep nap and you go to lay down.

And the sleep is just not very satisfying. Like that's kind of what this feels like right now is that there isn't a place of deep rest. Um, because part of my brain is kind of engaged in this other thing, and it may be that way for a little while, and that's okay. Like that's just part of, I think, what needs to be happening right now.

But it does mean managing other things and kind of, I, I talked to this week on my blog about what do you put on the back burner. When you're in this kind of situation. I mean, it does mean downshifting intentionally in other areas because things are taking up that space, you know, and, and you can't just kind of keep dividing that pie.

You know, you, I think at some point you just call it and say, okay, so I'm not going to worry about this thing over here right now because I'm going to put my energy elsewhere. Has that been clearly defined for you? It was more clearly defined when I wrote the blog post because I, it was on my mind and I was really thinking about like, what am I doing routine wise?

Um, and this is why, again, I decided not to focus on kind of efficiency and systems and all of that because. In a lot of ways, like I'm still working out. I'm still food prepping, still having my date night with my partner. You know, like still doing a lot of things, getting pretty decent sleep, you know, things that are helping me to feel well and that I am kind of prioritizing my own care in the midst of this stuff.

Um. I think I would feel very differently if like I had been really disrupted and all of those routines had fallen off. Um, but they haven't. So it's like, okay, I'm still in a mode where I feel like I'm functioning quite well and I'm acknowledging this other stuff that's kind of impacting, um, my schedule, my energy levels, you know, and the fatigue that's coming in.

So what is going on the back burner for you. Um, right now it is definitely some of the creative projects and thinking I talked about, you know, not, um, building new business products right now. Um, and speaking of our last episode, like talking about notion more publicly, a lot of people have been saying like, are you going to build a course on notion or are you going to do something for a notion?

And I was like, not right now. Like, I just don't have the bandwidth for that. So that's been pulled back. Um, definitely like some more domestic tasks have been pulled back. Um, there have been some things around, like, I'm not watching television pretty much at all right now. Like just things, more entertainment things.

I'm doing a lot more reading and kind of quiet, solitude time. Um, then kind of. Watching things that are just more of a distraction. I think in general, I've pulled back on any kind of input other than the reading, just because I'm, and I do some podcasts listening and things like that, but it's way more for entertainment than anything else.

So I'm, I'm reading and listening to things right now that are very fun and like very, uh, they don't take a lot of processing power for me to pull in that information. So I think that those are areas where. I've really tried to prioritize the base, what I consider to be basic wellness around, you know, the workouts and eating well and sleeping well and being hydrated and like those kinds of things.

Interacting with my partner. And then a lot of the other stuff is for now, just kind of paused. Yeah. So as your brain might start to like feel more fatigued or just kind of like, Oh, like we're still doing this, we're not getting our deep breasts, what's going on here? What are techniques you'll use to manage that if we assume this is continuing the way it's continuing?

I would definitely think that. At some point I'm going to feel comfortable taking like an afternoon off or like a morning off. Um, and this is actually something that I've been tracking or I will be tracking is how many vacation days I'm taking. Cause this is something I plan to do more, um, than I have in the past.

So that is something that I think will happen. Um, and I think it will happen almost out of just necessity of like needing to just like have a moment and take a break. Um. I also think that I've really, I'm relaxing my expectations of other projects I'm working on right now at work because of this other thing that's happening.

And so I'm not trying to do everything. Like at the same speed there. There are things that work that have also been kind of back-burnered for right now as this other situation is kind of evolving. Um, which is a little bit, you know, challenging I think because the world has to keep turning even as this is happening.

But I also think everyone kind of understands that this is a bit of a special situation. So I think that's part of it too, is kind of having realistic expectations of what can actually get done. Um. I definitely, I had an unstructured day this weekend. I just didn't have, um, client sessions and the way that I normally do.

And that felt like a huge refilling of the cup of just like not having meetings that I had to be at. Because I think that part of what's challenging is have meetings all week and then to have meetings on the weekends where I'm like watching the clock to make sure I'm kind of getting through things.

So to have a day that was like none of that. Um. I think I need to be working not in maybe a couple of times a month. So that was a really helpful thing to see. Um, but this is also an area where I'm really feeling like I can't plan that either. You know, like it's going to kind of. Evolve as it evolves.

And I definitely don't want to get to a point where I'm like hitting a wall, having that burnout feeling and I, I'm like forced to stop, you know, like because I get sick or something like that. Like that's not, I'm not saying it's gonna. I'm not waiting for that, or I'm not planning to kind of wait for that.

At the same time, I part of this kind of pull back from like more intense planning is just awareness of like, what do I need right now in this moment? So even if I were to say for example. Like I had a couple of books waiting for me at the library on hold this week, and I was like, Oh, Friday after work I can go get those and I'll enjoy that.

But then I got to Friday and I thought, it's actually going to make me feel more stressed to have two more books to read. Like right now, in this moment that does not feel relaxing to me, that feels more stressful. So I'm going to just let them sit. Until next week and I'll go pick them up later. Like those kinds of things like I can plan and think it's going to feel good and then I get in the moment and I'm like, Oh, actually this is not what I feel like I need right now.

So that kind of decision making is also happening at this point too. It's interesting that you could see the burnout could be on the horizon for you, but your awareness and that you are being in the moment, moment to moment, the future planning. You know, and the library books, for example, it's like you're, you will say, you will hint at burnouts on the horizon, or it could be, but then everything else you talk about is like, Oh, but I'd be managing that even if it was coming.

I hope so. I mean, I think that as someone who revs at a pretty high level, you know, a good chunk of the time, um, this to me is just kind of like. Like there are times when I would choose this kind of energy suck. Like when I go do a creative retreat, for example, I would feel the same kind of fatigue, but it would be something that I was choosing and it would be, uh, an outlet that felt really meaningful for me.

This is, I think less of that. Um, it's still work that I believe in and I'm happy to be a part of, but it's not necessarily something I feel like I'm choosing right now. I'm just kind of being carried along with the current a little bit. Um, and that's OK. So it's, it's not like I've never felt this feeling before, and I also don't totally associate it with a negative feeling.

It's just more like. Awareness, like you said, like this is happening. I feel this feeling and I want to make sure that I'm not pushing myself, given that I know this feeling is there. I think that's the part that I'm, I'm relaxing my expectations significantly, and that includes the planning because of the energy that that can take and the copy and empty right.

Yes. That makes sense. When was the last time you were burnt out? I would say.

Okay.

I'm trying to think, cause I don't take that word lightly and I know some people who are listening to this may even be feeling this right now, so I don't want to, I don't want to be kind of flippant in my response. I would say probably last summer. Um, so as we record this almost a year ago, and, um, it took me several months to come out of that period.

Um, and I was also kind of very intentionally aware of it at that time. And that was probably one of a very few times I can probably count on one hand the number of times I felt that level of burnout. Um. The time previous to that was probably several years before, but both very associated with kind of like professional life and getting to a place where work was feeling strained and, and kind of challenging.

Um, so I think that now I definitely am not feeling that, but I know what it is and I know what it can turn into. So yeah. That's, you know, it's definitely on my mind of trying to make sure that I don't have expectations for myself, especially with a new job. Cause I think that that just kind of comes with the territory that I don't have expectations that feel like they're too much.

Like even if I knew that I could do them, that doesn't mean that I should. So if you were burnout last summer and you were intentionally aware that it was happening, did you have the awareness that you have? Like right now that it was coming, if we view it as this like tangible thing that was like there and it was coming for you?

I definitely do not think I knew that it was coming. Um, and I, I, so I see kind of a very big difference in how I see it now. I also think that. When you're in it, it can be very difficult to understand what's happening. Um, and, and I had a lot of reflection, like I was doing deep reflection in like, may and June of last year, trying to kind of figure out what was going on.

Um, and eventually realizing that I was probably feeling some burnout. And I think the challenge of it is that sometimes burnout comes from things like overwork, but sometimes it comes from other things too. And when you. Or not feeling like you're overworking, then it's like, wait, but what is this? Um, so I think that there's kind of different, uh, ways of understanding burnout, and I'm still coming to understand what that, what that is and what it means.

Um, so in this situation, I think there's definitely. Also just kind of mental and emotional fatigue that, I mean, there's burnout, but then there's also other things that I'm kind of juggling around anxiety and other kinds of things that I might be feeling that I recognize that probably even more so than a burnout feeling.

But I think they're connected and I think they can be, um, kind of rooted in the same issues. Yeah. Where's the anxiety coming for you? Well, it doesn't always come from a direction. That's the problem I've talked about in other spaces, how I have generalized anxiety disorder, which can just give you a general sense of anxiety.

And it doesn't always have to have a reason. Um, but I do think that situations like a pandemic, um, certainly don't help. Um, but I also feel like right now I, I'm feeling. Thankfully, very strong in the routines that I have. That helped me to manage that around working out my diet, medication that I take.

You know, I feel very strong kind of right now at least. Um, so I don't feel like that anxiety is as present as that fatigue feeling. Um, but definitely things like, you know, managing emotions in the workplace and, you know, like. Of course I have emotions about the situation that when you're in a certain level of leadership, you don't necessarily show, um, to, to different people.

And I think that that's just part of, you know, like the role that I'm in right now is having to manage that both personally and as I'm managing it for other people around me. Where do you manage that? Mostly at home. There's a couple people at work that I can talk to about it. Um, but I think that it's primarily something that I'm kind of dealing with on my own, or with my partner, or, you know, with family members, that kind of thing.

Or friends. Um, but I actually don't feel like, you know, the, the work stuff I'll admit, has been a pretty big distraction, even though it's tied to the same topic of this, that I don't have a lot of time to think about it, to be honest. Um, there's just, my brain is taken up with all these other things, and for now that's okay.

I don't really feel like it would help to think about it all that much. It might actually create more anxiety around it, so I'm kind of allowing that to happen too. Yeah. Yeah. It was interesting that you had like, that was probably the first time that you said anxiety in this whole conversation. Right.

Dancing around very similar terms, and it was like anxiety here at the end, but yeah. Yeah. It does not feel front and center for me right now. In other times it has felt very front center, and I would say last summer it felt very front and center and it was, it was clearly part of the burnout situation.

Um, and now that's just not. Not what this is. Um, well, at least right now, that's not how I feel like what it is. But that's part of the evolving situation too, is like I realized I could wake up tomorrow and be really struggling with that. I mean like that it could, it could change, you know, kind of at a moment's notice.

But I feel like my energy, and this is probably why I'm feeling more fatigued and drained, is it's going outward way more than it's going inward. I'm not trying to manage my own concerns. I'm trying to deal with and manage a lot of other people's concerns and issues and, um, that has its own level of like energy of trying to figure out what those things are and how to respond in a way that is meaningful for people.

Um. So the energy definitely feels more like it's going out and I have to reserve some of it if I do need it to go inward as well. Which is related to your structure of this is a bigger team than that you've led than in your previous position. I mean, yes and no. I actually think that the bigger issue is when I'm on a committee that's planning for like an entire university issue.

It's not just my team. It's like we're, we're kind of doing university level strategy. And that to me is affecting like all of the students, all of the faculty, all of the leadership. You know, like, so I think the. The feeling of responsibility is not just kind of internally to my unit. It's, it's a lot more outward facing toward the university and even the community in some ways, because this is something where we're trying to.

Be responsive in a way that is allowing for continuity in a very disruptive time. And that affects, I think, even larger than the university community, which is another word to hang on to responsibility that you haven't said yet either. Yeah, there's definitely, I feel responsible for things. Yeah.

Responsible, um, for that wider community and for the students. Bigger picture, more responsibility than you've had this time last year maybe. I mean, what's interesting as we're kind of talking about this is part of what I'm feeling and we're going to be working on a project related to this this week, and I'm not sure if it's going to go anywhere, but I'm feeling even responsibility to like the broader academic community that is like flailing right now.

And I have a lot of empathy around that. And just. That people are like throwing things out on listservs and like, here's a link and here's a link and here's a resource. And like, everybody's grappling with it. And I don't feel like we have a way to bring people together around that. Um, and. I think one of the things that I naturally do is like build community.

Like when I see a need, I'm like, well, let's all come together. Like, why should we be kind of suffering in silence around me? Things like we can be helping each other. Um, and I don't see that happening yet. So part of the things that I'm suggesting and kind of leading go even beyond our, our institutional community and to how we can be bringing people together around these issues.

Um, and even this conversation is helping me to think about. How I can manage that work. Um, because it definitely is not something I can do alone, nor do I plan to do it alone, but I need to be kind of thoughtful about what does it mean to do that kind of emotional labor at scale because it is emotional labor.

It's, it's other kinds of labor too. It's intellectual labor. It's helping people to have resources, but it's also managing the emotions that can come up in a space like that and is managing that emotional labor or labor. Similar to the planning cup? I think so, yeah. Yeah, I think so because this. The stuff we're working on and kind of this project that I'm getting pulled into is similar in a lot of ways to things I've done in the past.

Um, and so it's pulling, I think, from very similar energy stores. Um, it's surprising in some ways to me cause I'm like, huh, like I am the person to do this because I have this knowledge from other parts of my world, like my business and other things that I can bring to bear here. Um, and. It'll be interesting to kind of see how it comes about, but yeah, I definitely think it's coming from the same energy stores.

Something to keep in mind as you're dealing with the feelings of fatigue. Yeah. Yeah. And all the uncomfortable feelings. Yeah. And it's interesting though, because I do think, I'm glad you brought it back around to that, because this project is an area that feels more familiar to me. So I'm like, Oh, I could do that.

Like, that could be my contribution, because I know all the things in that area. Like that's relatively easy for me to do. Um, it still takes work, but in terms of like the, the cognitive channels to do that, I'm like, Oh, that's very familiar to me. Like I, and I can kind of lead that project and I know what that will look like.

Um, so that I think is, I am almost carving out a familiar space for myself, even though it feels like I'm giving myself more work. I'm also kind of creating this little Avenue that's like, Oh, this is, this is more comfortable and this does feel familiar. And that was not something I had realized until just now.

So that's interesting. Well, now I'll get really crazy and say, is it a strength or a superpower? Definitely there's something like that embedded in there. I mean, strategy and systems and all that is definitely a strength, but I think that my super power is when I execute vision, and this was one of those things where it was like thunder Thunderbolt, here's the vision already in my head, a hundred percent there.

I can see it. You know, I can see it right now. I can see it two weeks from now. I can see it a year from now. Like I know exactly what this will look like and I know how to execute it. I know how to scale it like, like it came to me fully formed and I don't ignore those things when they happen. Like I've just learned not to do that.

So I pitched it in kind of an informal way and people kind of picked up on it and they were like, that's interesting. And then Monday's meeting will kind of help us to know if we're actually doing it and what it will look like. But, and if we don't, honestly, I'm kind of okay with it. If we do, it'll be fine too.

You know, like I'm kind of open to what people want to do, but it is one of those things that it's like, yes, this is, this is part of why I've come to this position is because I can do things like this and I'm kind of uniquely positioned both with my network and my creative skillsets to do this. And I think I'm also in a position where.

I'm surrounded by people who can see that and who will just kind of let me execute. We will see in about 24 hours, well, no more, which is so great about this, as we'll talk about and wrap up of like, Oh, and then we get the coaching, and then something happens right after. Right, exactly. Just everything.

Exactly. Yeah. So you will hear more about this in the debrief, whatever it ends up being, but yeah, that's an interesting thing for me to consider because I do think that. There's kind of the, in times of crisis or disruption, there's the things that everybody can do, and there's the things that just you can do and.

That is a helpful way for me to, to think about this is what are the contributions that I can make right now that are unique to me and my superpowers, and that will have the biggest impact because of that versus just, you know, trying to kind of keep everything afloat, you know, which I think there's definitely that process going on.

And it also is a good reminder to ask the question of. You know, can things be moved? You know, like, let's, let's open up this week on my calendar. Like, it's okay to do that. It's okay to shift things around to create space for whatever this is and what it's going to turn out to be. And other things can be delayed.

You know, like, it's just, we can kind of give permission there. Giving yourself permission to have flexibility. Not do more planning and have it all planned out. Right, exactly. And sometimes I think that means not going through the motions of like, well, it's on my calendar, therefore I have to do it. It's like, that's not true.

You know, like we have, we have control, we have autonomy, we have agency around some of these decisions, despite the fact that other people are managing what's going on in my schedule. I think that there are, there are things I've kind of already made decisions on for this month of like removing some meetings or not meeting as frequently, or really just trying to kind of clear that space by not traveling and, you know, that kind of thing.

So it's happening. Sometimes I think we, it's hard for me to always realize that it's kind of, I'm doing it, you know, um. And that's helpful too, to reflect on . Bigger picture. Yeah. Excellent. Well, we'll wrap up our session there. Katie, thanks so much for letting me coach you. Thank you, Katelyn. This was really helpful.

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