**CC\_S3E7**

This episode of coach to coach is brought to you by my coach training program for academics and higher education professionals. I'll be the first to admit that I've never needed my coaching skills more than in this roller coaster of a year. An anchor for me during this time has been meeting with my coach, training participants each week to explore how we can hold space for clients, listen for things they care about most, and help them to achieve their goals through focused questioning activities and tools.

If you think that becoming a coach might be a fit for your professional development goals, you can learn more about the coach training program or sign up for a 30 minute Q and a session with me to ask all of your questions@drkatielinder.com backslash training. The next cohort starts June 20th and I'd love to have you join us.

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 who 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? I am good. And I am super excited. This is the last time that you will be coaching me in this season and I'm ready to dive in.

Awesome. So what are we bringing to the table for our topic today, Katie? Well, um, to kind of situate our listeners as we record this, we are, um, just past mid April. And, um, I have been, uh, working from home now working remotely for five full weeks. Uh, as I'm sure many of our listeners have been working remotely.

And, um, we, we kind of talked about a little bit in our bonus episode, this the sense of like, sometimes things are going okay and it's like hard to talk about that things are going okay. And so I want to raise in this episode that there were a lot of components of remote work that are really working for me.

I'm an introvert. I like my home. I'm very productive in my home. It's kind of hard for me to be around people all the time. It's very kind of energy sucking. And so there are definitely elements of this moment kind of out of time where we're, you know, working remotely and we have kind of different expectations and it's a very different experience.

And in some ways, expectations, I think are relaxed because we're trying to be kind to each other about, you know, what do we need? And all of that. And I have really embraced this time of like being at home. I have a new structure and schedule and diving into yoga. You know, like I'm getting a lot of work done.

I'm feeling incredibly productive and I feel a healthy sense of balance of, you know, being in this space, which brings me to the topic of this episode, which is I find myself in certain moments. Almost dreading the idea of going back, um, to kind of the normal work mode. And I think that the normal work mode, quote unquote normal, I can put air quotes around that.

I think it will change and shift. Um, and I think that part of what I'm remembering is that when I first started this job. I was having like literally 35 to 40 meetings a week, like I was back to back crunch all the time. Um, and that was challenging for its own reasons and particularly around my energy levels and things like that, which I think we addressed earlier in the season.

Like this was something that had come up. Mmm. So I guess I want to like explore around that, you know, like this, this idea of. Being in the moment and being able to enjoy this time, which feels like it will never happen again. I will have this kind of like experience, like I doubt we will live through another global pandemic in my lifetime.

Um, and so part of it is just kind of the unique experience of this and that there are silver linings, you know, even as horrible as it is, like there are certain things about it that are kind of working in my favor right now. Um. And also balancing out the guilt of like, this sucks for other people, you know, like, and, and not just in the sense of like the illness part, but like extroverts are like dying from the inside.

I mean, like this is a very difficult time for other people. But for people who are introverts and kind of with my personality type, it might be like this huge relief of this weight off your shoulders. So it's kind of a long way to say, um, I'm trying to be more in the moment. I'm trying not to dread.

Going back and I actually really liked my work. So it's not anything about that. It's just like this, I am already like grieving this sense of loss around having control over my time and space and just the relief it feels too have that control. Yeah. So I really hear three models happening right now.

There's the feeling of relief that you're having. There's, um, this feeling of guilt that's happening, thinking about other people, and there's a feeling of dread about the future. So let's dive into all three of those. One, this relief that you have. You've talked about having control over your time and space and a healthy sense of balance.

What you know right now, we know your circumstances. You're working remotely for five weeks. But you're choosing thoughts like, I have a healthy sense of balance and I have control over my time and space. Like that's the facts part of it.

I agree with that. And I would also layer in additionally, cause I think this might be helpful to know. So I've talked about in other places how I deal with anxiety and um, obviously this is an anxiety ridden time, but I feel like being at home allows me to really have more control over that and to kind of cope with it in ways that feel really comfortable for me.

And it makes it easier basically to deal with the anxiety. But another layer to that anxiety, which has kind of been a tinge to it the whole time I've had it, which has been like 10 years, is a little bit of a core phobia, which is basically like not wanting to be in big public spaces, not wanting to be in crowds.

There's some kind of social anxiety around it. And this is not really something I've talked about in other spaces, but I think it's really relevant here that where other people are like tired of being in their homes. They want to see other people, they have this desire to leave. I have like zero desire to leave.

Like we go out and get our groceries once a week and I'm like, great, I'm covered. I don't, I can get my library books. So my Kindle, like I don't, I don't need to go anywhere. You know? Like I don't feel that desire that other people feel. And I have talked about this in other spaces around like not really wanting to travel and like, I don't get that kind of.

Bug, and at least I haven't gotten it yet. I mean, it's, it's possible that if this goes on for another five weeks, I'm going to start to feel a little bit stir-crazy. But I think that's an important thing to note is like I'm someone who likes to settle in. I'm a home body. So this, this whole situation too.

I think that relief feeling and that feeling of like control and choice has a lot to do with me being in my home and feeling like that as a safe space. My partner is here, you know, like we are both healthy. We have kind of control over that right now. So there's definitely like a layer in there that has to do with kind of anxiety coping methods that have been, at least up to this point affective.

And I have been able to. Um, feel that sense of control. I think because I am giving myself messages of like, this is a environment in which I do have control and which I can, um, to some degree, like control my schedule, control my routine, um, and feel like I have what I need in order to make healthy choices in the midst of a time that is feeling very stressful.

So it's easier when you're at home. Like home is our circumstance. To think this is an environment which I do have control. I heard clearly agree. Yes. Okay. Compared to like if you're at the airport. Yeah. I mean, I would say that, I mean, places that are more public, I definitely have like routines and things, but I cope in different ways.

You know, like if I'm in a space that is, um. Uh, with a lot of people around and things like that. And part of that is just the introversion of just like managing my energy in a different way. Um, but I think that we could probably all agree that being at home, wearing your comfortable clothes, having access to your kitchen at all times, I mean, like, it's just a different work environment than if you're in the office and you're kind of expected to be on, you know, all the time you're wearing your, your work clothes, which may not be as comfortable, you know, like there's just certain elements of that that I think.

When I associate remote work, it's very comfortable for me to do that. And in part two it's because I have enough discipline that I feel very comfortable kind of getting things done. Like it's not a struggle for me in any sense of the word to be working from home and I have a business in my home, which is maybe part of that, like I just, I'm used to being productive in the space.

So it's, it's that, that feeling of relief of just like, Oh, I don't have to worry about. Getting, you know, on those clothes in the morning and interacting with people throughout the day and making sure that I'm kind of caretaking people around me in the workplace. That expectation has also gone significantly down because when you're in person, you're doing a lot more of that emotional management, but when you have to set up zoom meetings, I feel like that's a little bit different.

So the expectations around how I interact with people have also really changed . Yeah. That's interesting to think about for you. You're able to feel comfortable because of all these thoughts that are so accessible to you, like this is easier. This is an environment which I do have control. I like being able to have not as many expectations and to show up for the zoom call, and some people are listening for sure.

They're like, yeah, it's that same circumstance that's driving me crazy. That makes me feel uncomfortable. Right, and for you it's like, yeah, of course I'm comfortable in this aren't. And I know you're not saying aren't other people, but in your head it's like, but of course I'm. Comfortable right now. Yeah. I definitely can realize why this is something that is a fit for me.

I have a lot of self knowledge around these issues where I'm like, yep, I can see why I'm just sinking right into this. I'm happy as a clam. Like this is, there's so many aspects of this that are really just a fit for my personality and you know, for what I, what I. When I go out into the world, there are certain things I do, and I've talked in other spaces around like emotional intelligence and you know, those kinds of things.

Those are hard. They're not natural for me, and yet I'm having to do them every day. So when I'm in this environment and all of that is relaxed and it's like, Nope, you don't have to do that effort anymore. You don't have to be like checking in with everyone to make sure how their day was. You don't have to, you know, like.

No. Could I be doing those things? Yes, but there's not an expectation that I'm going to be doing those things right now. And it's, it's interesting because. Because those expectations are relaxed. I am relaxing my own expectations. Like I think typically my expectations for myself when I'm out in the world are very high about, you know, being a little bit performative.

This is like my Enneagram number three of like performing a certain kind of management or leadership, or just like being a quote unquote worker, you know, in, in the public space. And I don't have to do a lot of that now. And it's. A huge relief, like it's a huge burden lifted. And in some ways I knew it and in other ways I really didn't.

And now that it's here and it's happening, it's like, wow. Like that was a lot of effort that I was putting out that I am no longer having to put out and. It is going to be a bumpy road when I have to go back. That's kind of what I keep thinking is like, this is going to be a really tough transition when I'm, when I have to go back into this environment.

And I think a lot of it is the emotional labor. I'm realizing that, um, I really don't have to do right now and I know I will have to go back and do it as I enter back into this space. Yeah. Which gives us insight for this dread model that's happening. Uh, but let's hang on to that. When you are comfortable in this space, this will relief feeling comfortable.

What shows up action wise for you? What's different compared to when you were, you know, having all of these other feelings and in the workplace and, um, caretaking people around you and doing the emotional piece? Now you're comfortable. How does that show up differently? That's a really good question. I mean, I think that there's definitely a shift in energy and a shift in productivity and a shift in creativity, but it's not the same as like an increase.

Like I wouldn't be like I'm more productive at home because at work I'm also very productive, but it feels like at work there's almost like a box around it. Whereas when I'm at home, it feels like there's. The, the boundaries are kind of a little more blurry. It's softer. It's, um, it's hard for me to describe, like, I feel like at work it feels like regimented, you know, like, and part of that is the scheduling piece, but I also have some of that scheduling.

Now, like I mentioned, I had 35 to 40 meetings before. Now I would say of like 25 to 30. So I, I'm still going to meetings pretty frequently and it's just on zoom. But I feel like there's this, um. The balance is very different. Like I can, everyone kind of knows. You can throw a load of laundry in between meetings.

Like I don't feel like I'm saving all of the home stuff for evenings and weekends, which I think is just one of the blessings of remote work. I mean, like you have this kind of flexibility around that, but I think that there's also the sense of like. I am performing at work like that, that is not something that I can get away from or I'm choosing not to get away from it.

Maybe. Um, and when I'm at home, I definitely feel less of that. And so that shifts the energy and the productivity and the creativity. Because I think I feel more like myself. You know, when I'm home and I remote working, I don't feel like I'm constantly on and, and trying to kind of be a certain kind of manager or leader or whatever that might look like.

And. That's something I'm kind of wrestling with because I really would like to be. A genuine version of myself, but I'm also realizing there are huge constraints for introverts in the typical workplace. And this is really showing me that, and I knew this before, but it showed me in a different way. The world is really built for extroverts in a lot of ways.

Um, and this is something that Susan Cain talks about in her book. Quiet. I mean, like we have known this for quite a while, but it is like starkly clear to me now that. There are a lot of ways in which I am like constrained in the typical work environment because of what the expectations are, kind of quote unquote normal expectations of how I will act that are completely going against my nature of what I would prefer to do if I had all the choice in the world.

And right now, even in a time where we feel like we have zero choice about what's going on, I am actually feeling my sense of autonomy and agency expanding. You feel more like yourself now that you're comfortable cause you're thinking about, you have the control and you're talking about this being this shift in productivity and creativity and it's softer.

And I know you said it's hard to describe, but let's dive into that. Tell me some times when you know it's been softer and more like, not more, but just the shift in productivity and creativity. Well, I think part of it is, as I'm kind of thinking through it, I think part of it is I had to be a lot more rigidly scheduled with things like creative projects.

For example, I would do creative retreats, and this is something I've done for years. I've talked about it in other spaces and I had a plan to have a creative retreat quarterly in 2020 and it kind of got blown up by this whole situation. Um, and by moving and a lot of other things. But I feel like I had to kind of like schedule in.

This is when I will work on this creative project. You know, like I had to be kind of regimented about when it was going to happen to make it be a part of my life.

this current setting. I kind of took a break from a lot of creative stuff. Like I gave myself a lot of leeway, especially in the beginning of the situation because I was dealing with a lot of stress, a lot of anxiety. I was tired. I was fatigued, you know? And so I was just kind of like. Giving myself like, you're off the hook, you know, like, just do what you need to do.

Manage what you need to manage. It's okay. And I had a lot of increased work responsibilities during that period, but now that some of that has kind of started to settle down, I feel like we're in a little bit of a new rhythm. I'm seeing like little pockets pop up of these like creative moments where I'm like, Ooh, I'm like feeling a desire to do this creative project.

Maybe I'll take some notes on that. Or Ooh, I kind of want to read about this thing over here. Or like I'm starting to kind of feel a return to this creative desire of kind of starting to create things at the same time. I don't feel rushed about it. I don't feel pressured about it. I'm just kind of like noting it that it's happening.

It's kind of this like curiosity of like, Oh, that's interesting. Like let's take a note on that to kind of set it aside. But there isn't this sense of like pressure of like, Oh, if I don't do this right now, it's never going to happen. Which is, I think what I was feeling before is it's like I really had to kind of fit things in in a very specific way, or I wasn't going to be able to prioritize that in my life.

And so it was like definitely a very intentional kind of scheduling in of creative time, of nurturing that part of myself because I, that's a huge value for me is creativity. But now I feel like it's a little bit more, that's the balance. That's the softening is, it's not like, Oh my gosh, I have to schedule this and for Saturday, from three to five to make sure it's going to happen.

It's like I'm just going to let it slowly build on its own. Like it's a more natural process. It's a more, um. Kind of instinctual process of just like letting things happen as they're going to happen and it's a lot less pressure filled. It doesn't feel as high stakes and it feels a lot more integrated.

Like that would be a good word. There's an integration happening in my schedule that is like part of that relief feeling of not having to constantly be like moving the puzzle pieces around to make sure that the things I care about are getting in to the time. Of my day or my week or my mom. So how much of that was self-imposed of, it was scheduled for three to five.

Let's say something was scheduled for three to five. This is mine, this is my project. But then you were having thoughts like, I have to do it then, or this is my only time to do that. Now you don't think that. About, you know, it's like, Oh, I'm going to let it naturally evolve. It's interesting to me like this idea of, well, I'm going to let it naturally evolve.

Couldn't it happen pre Kovac for you?

To some degree, yes, but I think that, and I would say it's like not just pre covert. It's like even thinking about. Where I was in like late 2019 where I was like having a lot of pressure before we moved to like get certain things done and like it was, things felt like they needed to be very scheduled in order to like hit certain deadlines.

And some of that is definitely self-imposed because I have certain things I'm trying to launch, you know, for our business or things like that. And. Part of what's creating the space I think is definitely my actions of, I have pulled way back in terms of my own expectations. Um, and I am giving myself a lot of leeway.

And a good example of this would be, and this is related to Kaitlin, I need to be editing the episodes for this season. I've edited three and I have like more to do and I keep kind of putting it off cause I'm like, well, I don't have to do it right now. And I don't necessarily feel like doing it right now.

Or I have other things that I, I feel like I should be doing. And so I'm just going to kind of let that go. And no guilt, no pressure. It's just like, well I have time and I'm just going to like. Let it be what it is. And I think that there is this sense of like, because the world around me feels like that is okay.

You know? Like I feel like we're doing that for everyone. Like everyone's getting kind of a pass right now. Not everyone, but I think people know what I mean. Like they're there. It feels like there's this loosening in general of like expectations. We can all have a little more time. We can all have a little bit more understanding if we're kind of struggling.

And I, I feel like I've really taken advantage of that in some ways and allowed given myself permission because it feels like the world has given us permission to kind of step back and release and relax a lot of that. Um, but also I think there are certain projects that I'm seeing, like clear evidence of that.

Like I started a project right when we moved here and I was like, well, it's not quite right. I'm just going to kind of set it aside. And recently I've picked it up again and I'm like, Oh, this is how it was supposed to be. Like it ended up being like I needed a different physical space in order to complete it, and, and that physical space just came together and I'm like, Oh, okay.

If I had tried to force it earlier, which wasn't my instinct, my instinct was like, okay, something's not quite right here. Let's just pause and kind of see what happens. And now it's kind of coming together and it's, it's kind of aligning with like. Two or three other things that I was like wanting to merge it with at some point.

I know that's talking in a lot of abstraction, but the idea is kind of, the timing is key in that I'm not, I'm not pushing anything. I'm not saying like, you know, I have to make it work in a box. I'm really starting to acknowledge like, Oh, that was a box that I created. Um, that is not real. And I get to like make changes to that box if I want to.

Yeah. What sets, which sets us up nicely to talk about this pressure that you feel and the dread for the future. We've got this clear idea of what the integrated comfortable being more of yourself model looks like of like, Oh, here's what I'm existing in right now and you've set us up so well for all the examples of what dread looks like, let with thinking it's going to be a rough transition.

As if you have to go back to that box world, you're going to have to, you're going to say statements again to yourself in let's say June, that are, that say, okay, uh, I have to do this. That you think that you're going to have to be back in that world.

Yeah. I mean, I think that there's. So what I'm realizing, actually I had this moment this week, right? I realized this and I'm like, this is kind of a common sense thing that I should have realized a long time ago, but I am part of our academic continuity efforts on our campus and I work in online learning as some people know.

And so I've been like deeply involved in trying to support faculty as they transition courses online. And basically what I have felt that that means I'm going to, I'm going to kind of couch it a little bit, cause I don't think this is purely fact. I think it's partly my own perception. But it feels like I have to be in the covert stuff kind of all the time.

Because we're talking about deadlines, we're talking about are we phasing back in in the fall? We're talking about, you know, how certain programs are impacted because we can't do on campus stuff in the summer. I mean like there's all these things that are like very much part of my job to know about decision making related to cov at 19 so my job is kind of requiring me in some ways to like be engaged in these conversations and I can't like check out and be like, okay.

Let me just take some time off from covert 19 at least in the workweek, it feels like this is like very much a part of what I have to think about and strategize around and that's what I mean asked to do, like as part of my job and I feel like there was this, I hadn't really realized that until this week of like, Oh, other people don't have to think about coven 19 in order to do their jobs.

Like they might able to just be able to do their jobs. Like there might be something completely unrelated to like this decision making. Now they might be thinking in the back of their minds, like, when do I have to go back to work? Or, or when do I get to go back to work? Depending on their perspectives.

And they might be kind of wondering about things, but it's not like actually a thing that they have to think about in order to strategize for their job. And I feel like that was something that I was like, Oh, like I, I'm not kind of getting. A break from that, and I'm constantly thinking about it and I think that that may be adding to the dread is because I'm constantly in these conversations about, well, when will we go back?

When will campus open? When will students be able to do this or that, or faculty and all these things. It's just planting it in my mind all the time of like, Oh, I will have to go back and I will have to like be in the office consistently and you know, engaging with people in a way that is. Hard or harder than what I'm currently doing right now.

And so I feel like that's part of the challenge for me is I don't feel like it's something that I can set aside because I'm constantly being reminded that, yes, this is eventually coming. I don't know when, I mean we don't have concrete timelines right in that, like many campuses right now. Um, but there is this sense of like, yes, I will have to kind of reintegrate myself back into a.

Office space of, of like normal, quote unquote normal work hours and eventually, yes, that will come. I don't know when, but in six months maybe or less like, yes. Eventually I will have to feel, feel, fill that out and kind of figure out what to do. Hmm. Which is interesting that you keep with that. It's like I have to, I will have to, but also you've used the word integrate.

I will have to reintegrate. When over in your other model of like, I feel integrated and I like the integration, you know, I feel this feeling, and over here it's like, well, I'm going to have to reintegrate it. Reintegrate into the workplace, but it's associated with the dread. Yeah, I mean there's definitely, when I think about that reintegration, like the word that comes to mind is grind.

Like, it's just going to be a grind and it's going to be like, you know, there's going to be tension internally, not externally. Like I think that I had about six or seven weeks on the job before all this went down. I think I was doing great. I mean, I don't think there was, I think it was fine. I think I was performing how I needed to perform.

I had that kind of new job energy, you know, that I was able to kind of throw into it. Um. And definitely part of this could be the fatigue of just dealing with stress, where I'm like, this is going to be hard, you know, just to kind of think about it ahead of time. Um, but I do think about like, it's, it's so hard, I think when you get kind of a stark picture of how something could be and you're like, Oh, like, it's like a veil has been lifted and then it's like, Nope, put the veil back on.

you think the veil has to go back on. Yeah. I mean, I think that part of it is like I do have to, if I, if I am to go back and, and we could use if language, but basically when I go back, this is kind of how I have to think about it. When I go back, I do feel like I have to tuck part of myself away. That's, that's what I feel like I'm doing now that I can see the difference now that I can see what it's like to be home and kind of in this comfortable space versus at work and in a space that is.

It feels in some ways a natural. Um, and I, I want to clarify so much, like how my workspace, it, like all of this is coming internally from me. Like my coworkers are great. My, I mean, like there's so many things that are like very positive. So this is not in any way. You know, I hope people can understand how I'm kind of explaining this.

This is very much about kind of my personality, my introversion, my slight agoraphobia. You know, all of these things that are kind of working together, um, that, yeah, I mean, like, it's just going to be, I think, harder now that I know what this could be like because I've never in my entire life had an experience where I've been able to remote work for this length of time.

And especially. You know, even if I, I can think of one summer before grad school that I, I took off basically because we've moved and I was starting grad school, but I wasn't working and I was in my like early twenties and I didn't understand anything about kind of who I am now and my personality and all these things.

So now that I'm in a place where I feel slightly more evolved, I feel like I have more self knowledge. I feel like I have a good sense of kind of what I need, you know, to be kind of my best functioning self. Who that's hard. It's hard to have an exposure to something that's like, wow, it would be so great if I could have this all the time.

And then to realize like, but no, university work is not set up like that. We're not, we're not really set up to do remote work all the time. Yeah. So that's where I'm going to push back and be like, but what if it could be like right now the two pictures we painted of the circumstance of remote work at home.

And circumstance. Going back to university life, you think you have to think in certain ways to deal with those situations like, well, in one, I get to be myself when I'm remote working. I get to think like I'm in control of this situation and here are all the external piece of of it that make that true.

And then over in your university life, it's like, Oh, but now this is going to be a rough transition. I kind of have to feel dread or the pressure or the high stakes and put a piece of myself away. But what if you don't, even with the circumstance of university life and back in the office. So as you're saying that, I feel so much internal resistance, I'm just going to be like very brutally honest about what I'm feeling.

Plea, cause what, and this is my own perception, but I, I want to be like completely honest. I feel like what we do in our jobs, not just in higher ed. I mean I think this applies to a lot of other places. There are external expectations about what it looks like to be successful and about what it means to be successful.

If I choose to want to be successful with, which is a choice. If I choose to kind of be in a situation where I am kind of like checking the boxes of what people think that looks like. I don't think I can have what we've described here. Like I think that there is a clear tension between kind of what it takes to be a successful leader in these spaces.

At least the models we have for that. I'm open to the idea that there are other models and that there is like a, a road to pave when it comes to what does it mean to be an introverted leader in these spaces. But I also feel like, um, part of the challenge of this whole situation is it is pushing me into a more public role.

And that's maybe not a challenge. One of the situations that's happening, I won't even, it's not a challenge to me. It's just a thing that's happening is I'm being in a more public role and that will not change, I don't think, when we kind of come back to campus and there's just stuff, there's stuff that comes along with that and and in, in certain.

Ways I can see how I've chosen that life. Like this is something that I think I was really aware of when I started kind of working my way up in terms of leadership roles. Um, but I would also say in 2019 there was a concentrated effort that I made within my business and within kind of my own time to come like more into myself and to be a little bit more quiet.

Like I stopped taking as many speaking engagements. I stopped. Putting myself out there in like certain ways that I had done before because I really felt the need to kind of just come, come in word and like root again because I was making these big life changes and I wanted to really make sure that I was making those changes in the right direction and like that took a lot of kind of internal focus and work to kind of make sure that that was happening.

Then I feel like I was like, okay, now I'm back out in the world again. Like I'm, I'm doing this work. You know? I'm trying, I'm trying to kind of do it from a coaching perspective, which we talked about in season two, and I'm trying to kind of balance this a little bit more so it's not like I'm completely out in the world, or I'm completely not out in the world.

Like I'm trying to kind of have this middle ground. But then I got thrown back into this like complete internal space that it's like, Oh yes, this is more comfortable. This is the nest. This is the space that I would really prefer to be in a hundred percent of the time. Um, or maybe like 95% of the time.

And it's, there's just this like wrestling with that of like, Oh, okay, so this hasn't gone away. Like this is something that is like a deep desire to be able to kind of be. Not, you know, performing in these ways. Um, and part of it is also kind of this, um, I feel like this is the slight rebel in me that's like, can't I just do what I want all the time?

Like, why can't I just like, you know, you could Katie. I know, but you think that it's tied to like, you having a public role then means you have to think a certain way, feel a certain way, show up in a different way, put part of yourself away. And like you mentioned it earlier, if you're open, like I'm open to other models, I can pave the way.

If you were thinking that about the future, you'd be in a very different space than where you are right now of. It's going to be a rough transition feeling, the dread that is true because let's play this out. You're going to feel dread and you're going to be like, this is a stark contrast. Here we go back to work and now I got to put.

Well, part of my self away. How does that show up in your actions? Okay, so this, this layers into this other hope I have that I feel like I've been kind of afraid to articulate. Okay. Which is we have this kind of talk in the news and in kind of larger spaces around like postcode that will be different.

Like things will change necessarily. Things will have to change. And part of me is like, okay, things could be different. I could say I have these needs, I would prefer this or that, which I plan to do. Like this is an action I plan to take to say like, I would like to remote work at least part of the time because this has been hugely helpful for me and I don't know what that looks like, but let's talk about it.

Like I'd like to kind of open that conversation. So that's an action I plan to take. That's a very obvious one to me. That's coming from a different space though than the dread. You're not, that's just like, yeah. Yeah. And that's just kind of an acknowledgement of like, it would be silly if I didn't make that request.

Now that we all understand that remote work is entirely possible, I mean, like that is a postcode shift of like, now we've all done this and we know what it's like. And you know, it's, it's a different world in that perspective. And I have this other side of me that's kind of like, okay, I want to be a realist.

I want to understand we're all human beings. And. People. It's really hard to change. It's really hard, and I'm talking about this in terms of like, people are like, Oh, we won't shake hands anymore. I'm like, really? Really? We won't shake hands anymore. I just don't think that's true. I think we have these muscle memory ingrained things.

It's like this is normal for us to connect and communicate and like physically touch each other in professional ways. You know, like this is just like. Part of how we've always done things and to expect that a six month period of social distancing is going to completely change that I find a little bit, I'm skeptical, like I'm skeptical about, so I definitely see kind of this opening where I'm like, okay, I feel like there's a possibility here, but then this other skepticals item he has like.

This could go completely back to quote unquote normal, you know, once we get a little distance from this, people are just going to forget. Like they're, they're just gonna, they're gonna kind of like talk about trauma away and be like, I want to go back to things as they were. And things as they were, are completely built for extroverted people.

So I'm like, there's this kind of. There's a tension there for me of like, I think part of it is like managing my own expectations of like don't hope for too much because we're all humans and we don't necessarily want to be open to these changes. Now what this is not taking into account is the personalities I work with and the people who are above me who are very understanding.

And so I think that there are definitely kind of negotiations that could happen around this, but I think it is really going to be. It's going to be different. I mean, like, it's, it's in the sense of like, I'm going to be asking for things that now it's like, how can you really say no? You know, now that we know that this is possible, um, and it's asking people to reimagine their definitions of the workplace, and it's asking people to associate.

These kinds of requests, not with a form of trauma or not with a form of like, I need it because I, I can't function. It's like, no, this is just a normal part of what I need in order to thrive. Like, I, I'm not associating it with Kobe. I'm just saying, this is part of who I am, that before this opportunity didn't seem available and now it does.

So can we kind of open this wider to have these conversations? Um. It feels very fledgling to me. I mean, like I feel like a year from now we could have this conversation again and I'll be like, I'm the trailblazer for leadership and like to them, but right now it's like there's that grind, there's that like, Ooh, this is like feeling very uncomfortable.

This is feeling very unsupported in my own mind, not by the people around me, but unsupported in my own mind as a pathway of how to move forward. And it just seems like. It would be very hard to align it with the current understanding of higher ed, at least in positions like mine. I mean, I feel like we can think about this for like adjunct workers that, you know, they are working from home and it's a very different sense of like privilege and power.

And you know, like a lot of people say that as like not a good thing, that they don't have equipment or they don't have kind of the support they need. So I feel like we talk about it in certain spaces. But not in kind of the way that I'm trying to approach it, which is basically like everybody needs to have this possibility and we need to associate it with, equity is maybe not the right word, but like across the board for different positions, we can show up in different waves and still be effective and still kind of get the job done that we need to do.

But it feels like pushing against a massive current in order to kind of start communicating some of that. Right now, I don't know that I feel like I have the energy to do it, but at some point it may have to happen just because of my own. Health, like of like putting this out there because the future world where you go back to work and you believe that this is a grind and a rough transition and that you have to put yourself away, you will be, you will put the box on yourself.

You will trap yourself back into a pattern of like, then it's not like Katie lender's really going to say this, but it will show up in subtle ways of like, I'm not, I'm not. Letting my superpower shine, like I'm not shining and I'm not. I'm doing everything I could be like, maybe it isn't as much energy as you think it is because it really isn't a wall.

It was the box you put around yourself.

Yeah. I feel like this conversation is helping me to connect. Ideas I already know, but kind of a new ways about superpowers and how they show up, but also about how, like I talk with clients about this a lot, that this so much of the work of our lives that is like meaningful, like internal work, external work.

It's never one and done. It's never like you figure it out, boom, you're done. You don't have to work on that anymore. And I feel like what this is showing me is. Even on like, I can think about this maybe 10 poorly as a way to make it concrete is like, even on a day to day basis, I might show up in different ways, you know, like, and, and maybe one of those ways I show up is in front of a crowd giving a keynote and it's effective and it's meaningful to me.

But that doesn't mean the following day, that's what I want or how I want to show up or what my superpower would look like in that moment. And so there's this kind of flexibility that I think. Is like ingrained in what I'm talking about. Part of what is the relief to me is I have some flexibility where if I'm having a day where it's like, today feels good, good energy, you know, like I can like use the margins in my day to like push a bunch of stuff forward.

I have a lot of flexibility around that. If I'm having a day that's like, wow, today doesn't feel very good, like this is a tough one. I could use those margins to like rest or do something that feels kind of rejuvenating or, you know, like there's, there's kind of this flow and this ebb and flow of what I can do and scaling that out to all the actions I take.

You know, like in accepting a new keynote and accepting, you know, a new project on my plate or a new client or whatever that might be. Or, you know, I can't really apply this sometimes to work cause it's like things just are given to you. So it's not always that I accept things. It's like they're just put on my plate at work.

Um, but the balancing act of that and like trying to figure out how am I showing up? How am I shining? How am I, you know, making a unique contribution. It is a constant negotiation. That is what I'm taking away. Um, part of what I'm taking away. There's a lot of things I'm taking away, but this idea of you're never just picking like, Oh, like this new job will be the bright fit.

Like it just doesn't, it doesn't work that way. It never has worked that way for me. Um, I am constantly in this negotiation of how am I leveraging. My own skills within the environment that I'm in, to try to create a situation in which I feel like I'm making a unique contribution and that the work is meaningful because otherwise I'm just not motivated to do it.

Um, and that's what I need in order to be effective. So that's an interesting thing for me to consider as like the negotiation is never done, which in some ways it's hopeful and other ways feels exhausting to me right now, to be honest. Yeah. And that this comfortable piece only comes from how we think about it and the pressure only comes from how we think about it.

This box of your margins, the margins example, I think shows that it is how you're thinking about those margins in the day to day. Even on a daily basis. I'm like, Oh, now I have space to be able to do what I want and I have space to like. Let it be a bad day or let it be a good day. Now I have some flexibility like that was all self made up like you created that those margins are yours.

Yeah. I think part of the contrast in my own mind is I felt very little margin for a six to seven week period before this all started. Um, and, and I have this conversation with my partner all the time where he's like, you have control over your schedule. And I'm like. Do I, you know, when I have three other people managing my calendar, I can say, don't schedule me for more than 35 meetings a week, which I did at one point.

I was like, okay, once we hit 35 you've got to start moving people to the next week. Like that's just, you know, I was starting to set those boundaries, but then it was like, Oh, there's an emergency meeting happening. That's like meeting number 36 okay. It's an emergency meeting. I mean like, so I feel like there is this sense of like.

You can try to put those boundaries around it. And part of it, I think for me is also figuring out what kind of job allows you to do that when you're in a leadership position and when you're managing a lot of other people like it. There's just stuff. There's stuff that comes into that of just, you know, that management piece that is different from the leadership piece.

And. It's definitely something that can to keep thinking about, you know, like, I don't want to close it off and I'm not one of, I try not to be one of those people. And I appreciate you kind of poking at this Caitlin, of like, well, if this is just how it is, you know, like I don't want to have that kind of mindset around this and I'm also a realist and I want to not have expectations that are completely outside of what is possible when I'm just like.

That is me putting something on like an institution or an organization that is asking something that they're not willing to do. So it's like there is this kind of dance of like, what do I have control over in my sphere of influence? And. When am I kind of going outside of that and expecting something that, I'm not going to say it's impossible, but it's highly unlikely, you know, that certain things would happen, but like an entire industry would shift overnight, which is basically what this would be, you know?

So I think that there's, there's a balance there of trying to create space in which I have more of the influence where I can kind of navigate something in a way that feels good to me. Where I'm not depending on this other thing to making me to be making these choices or to be like allowing something to happen.

It's like I need to create this space where I get to allow that to happen, which is the whole like I get to create this space. I think it ties to your guilt that we briefly mentioned in the beginning of thinking, this sucks for other people. This is part of you being a leader and being in that public role.

How are you. Coping and dealing with that guilt right now? Well, the interesting thing that it's raising for me that it's, it's surprising is I have never thought of myself as somebody who manages other people's emotions because. It's not in my nature to do that because of the low emotional intelligence and, and like, I don't have kids.

I don't like, this is just like, you know, this is something that in in many ways I've actively avoided. Um, but what I'm realizing now is how much I was doing it in the workplace and especially around, and I, I can tie it to kind of the introversion, extroversion. And even now I have certain people that I engage with.

That are like lonely, and there's this feeling of like, well, we need to help them because they're lonely. And I'm like, but wait, nobody helped me when I was overwhelmed and feeling cognitively overloaded and emotionally overloaded from having all these, you know, like there's this interesting kind of imbalance there to me of like caretaking the people who are kind of struggling right now because of the lack of social.

But not caretaking the people who get overwhelmed by that. Um. And there's just this like childlike toddler, like that's not fair. You know, in me right now that's like, Whoa, like I'm just kind of like struggling with that. And it's, that's also what's kind of giving me that like stark, like, Oh yeah, the world is built in a certain way and it's not really built for me, you know, in, in ways that are kind of nurturing.

So I feel like with the guilt piece, you know, it's, it's me trying to fight against that toddler of like, I can feel empathy, I can feel empathy for people who are struggling. And especially when I see it in my clients and it's like, you know, like it is, it is hard all around to go through this experience.

And, and this one small slice of what I'm talking about here is amplified in so many ways for other people in other ways, you know, like, and, and so, I don't want to lose sight of that. So I think that part of it too is just me. The guilt is in some ways me trying to have empathy and it's coming out as guilt and maybe there are other ways that it can come out.

But because I, I'm like already struggling with that emotional management. I think like guilt is just what's happening. Like I, I don't know that, I don't know what other emotions to feel about it. Maybe it's a way to put it, like, cause I feel like I'm. In the, like the fledgling word again, like this feels very fledgling to me to kind of try to figure this out cause it's not a strength of mine.

And so the guilt is kind of what seeps out. And I don't, I don't know another model for what that can be. Uh, when you use the language of fighting with the toddler. I often recommend what if we met that toddler where it is the toddler wants to say, this is like primitive brain is like, this isn't fair.

What if instead of disagreeing we said, yeah, this isn't fair. Yeah, that's, that's definitely more positive. I mean, I think that this is so like fun to have, be on the other side of this, Caitlin. Cause I talk with my clients about this all the time of like, we should not fight our inner selves. Like we listen, we, you know, especially we're on fear.

This is something I talk about a lot with the fear. Emotion is like meet fear where it's at. Like it's, it's okay to feel the fear. You can be friend with fear. And I think that, um, there's definitely part of me that's like. Feeling the toddler should be more evolved, where it's like, just, you know, this is how the world works.

Like there's this acceptance of like, or evolution of just like, this is it just, you know, it's okay. Deal with it. Kind of situation. And I think that anytime, especially right now in the midst of Koba where we're telling ourselves to deal with it, who like that's maybe not the right response. Um, and it wasn't even clear to me that that's what I was saying.

Basically like that the fighting is, the toddler is basically saying, deal with it. And, um. You're right. It's okay to say like, no, this is, this is not a good feeling, and I can recognize that this is not a good feeling. And what is it? The root of that, you know, like that curiosity and especially the non-judgment piece, I think is really huge.

Yeah, this isn't fair. I hear you. What's that? You'll like yourself better on the other side, if in this moment, adult brain is comforting the toddler in you. Rather than being like, deal with it. See you later. Totally makes sense. Yeah. So we've talked about the comfortable, the dread, the skill piece of it.

Where are you headed next? Like where are you taking this? I mean, I think that part of like the feeling that's coming to me right now is just, it's sadness. Like I have this deep sadness of like. Wow. This is something to wrestle with. Like I'm just kind of sitting with it and feeling the feelings of like, I don't think I knew how much of this was under the surface.

Like just talking about it and reflecting on it is like really clarifying for me. Like, this has been very challenging for me to think about this and I think it actually goes back, um. To just roots of like my entire work life, you know, of like, trying to make things work, trying to kind of show up in a certain way, trying to, you know, as we advance, you know, through our careers or we'd move up the ladder, whatever that might look like.

Just the sense of like how you mold yourself to do that in ways that, um. Sometimes they're not your nature. Um, and, and those are choices we make, but that to me right now, like there's just a sadness there of like, Oh, like it's a gut punch a little bit. And partly I think because I do want to have hope that like there are different paths to pave here of what this can look like.

And part of me is also, I think in a really deep, like lizard brain kind of way. It's like, Oh, this is like a reminder of an area I don't fit. And like that can feel. Bad. Like that can just be a bad feeling to, and I, I'm actually in the process right now of reading a book, um, by an artist and I'll link to it in the show notes.

Um, cause I'm not remembering the title right now, but basically it's about finding your artistic voice. And one of the things she talks about is how finding your artistic voice is not about conformity. It's about differentiation, which I completely agree with. And it is a really hard thing to be like, Oh, I'm different.

I need different things. I show up in different ways. I may not be understood by other people. People may not be able to see me in the way that I want to be seen because I'm showing up in this way that looks different. Like that feeling is just like, that's a tough one, and I think it shows up in our lives, you know?

That's like the adolescent in me that's like, I just want to belong and I've bought for this, and now it's like of stark. Billboard reminder, like right in front of me, that's like, yeah, you've been trying for this, but no, your true nature is actually this other thing. So yeah, there's a, it doesn't, it doesn't have to be put away.

Yeah. And there, but there's a resigned feeling there. There's kind of a disappointed feeling there when you've like worked for something for a long time, and then you're like, Oh yeah, so that's not actually going to happen. Um, yeah. So I mean, I, but I feel like that. It's a grieving, you know, and I think that that's not always negative.

Like the, I don't, I don't say like sad and resigned and grieving as like negative feelings. I'm just describing the feelings, like I feel like they're necessary feelings for me right now. Um, and it's just giving me a lot to think about. Yeah. Do you know where those are in your body, those feelings? Um.

Well, it's hard for me to say cause I've been doing a lot of yoga practicing and my shoulders are feeling it. So right now it feels like they were in my shoulders. Like it's a weight that I'm carrying. But that may not be true. Um, that could just be like physical sensations. I mean, I feel like there's definitely,

I mean, I would say it's in my heart. The feelings are in my heart more than they're in my head. I feel like, you know, the, the negotiation and the analysis and all that is very much in my head, but kind of the sad feelings and the, the resigned feelings are like, I mean, this is a, my words for the year were deeply rooted and this is like a deeply rooted kind of knowing.

It's like, okay, come back to yourself. And in some ways like deal with the consequences coming back into yourself. Yeah. It's not easy consequences. Yeah. Well, and I know feeling the sadness, it's not easy. This is the thing that people are like, Oh yeah, radical self trust. You know? Like you figure it out and it's like, no, you don't.

You're just constantly deepen the practice. And. It is not easy. Like I've had people come through that program and you've come through that program, Caitlyn, and some people are like, yeah, this is really not as easy as I thought it would be. And I'm like, no. Radical self trust is really hard. And that's what this is like.

That's what you're hearing is me wrestling with like I know these things, like these are some of the deepest things of my knowing and having to wrestle with it is, it's challenging. Well, what an honor for all of us to witness the wrestling and to see the true you, Katie. Thank you, Katelyn. This was really helpful.

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