**YGT episode 210**

You're listening to, you've got this episode 210. Welcome to you've. Got this, a weekly podcast for higher education professionals looking to increase their confidence and capacity for juggling the day to day demands of an academic life. I'm your host, dr. Katie Linder. Mmm. This episode, I want to talk about some strategies for crafting reasonable to do lists.

And I was inspired by somebody who reached out to me on Instagram and asked me some questions about this, because recently on Instagram, um, Over the past several months, I had kind of been doing a prioritize three things each day, kind of template that I got from Elise joy Cripe, who creates the get to work book.

I can link to that in the show notes. And then I kind of felt a lot of that because I felt like I, my productivity kind of picked up again and it was just harder for me to have three things a day. I had a lot more than that, that I was trying to check off. And so then I started using a template. Based on kind of the notes app in my phone that gives you check boxes next to things.

Um, and I was kind of just writing out what is my to do list for each day. And I've been doing this or probably a couple of weeks now that I've been posting my to do list in the morning and then offering some updates throughout the day with some timestamping of kind of when I'm able to get things done.

In these to do lists include, you know, actual to do items. They include my meetings for the day, you know, just to get people kind of a glimpse of what am I doing? Like, what am I actually working on each day and how am I getting some of the things done? And basically what I have found is that these to do lists for me are motivating because they're kind of keeping me on track with what I really care about.

And they're allowing me to kind of share some of the different highlights of my day and things like that. So somebody reached out to me on Instagram and said, how did you learn to be so accurate with how much you're getting done, despite writing down how long everything takes and getting better at it?

I'm still so off many days. And basically what people were commenting on is that I was checking every box on my, to do list. By the end of the day, I was kind of actually completing everything that I had on my list. And they were wondering like, how is it possible that you're able to do that? So I wanted to give some ideas for how to create a reasonable list that you're actually going to be able to check off everything that's on it by the end of the day.

So every morning I put together this list and sometimes I put it together the night before, it just kinda depends on, um, if I have time and energy the night before to do it, I start by looking at the things on my calendar that are kind of non-negotiables like, these are the meetings that involve other people that I know are going to happen.

And on some days, this is like six of my tattoos that I have like 16 meetings or I have, you know, last week it was a virtual conference. So it was attending a lot of sessions for that. So there's certain things that are on my list that I would say are not really, um, Uh, negotiable, you know, like they're, they're just on my calendar.

So I start with those and then I start to look at what is the kind of margin I have in between those things that would allow me to maybe throw in a load of laundry or, um, check, you know, uh, a box on a project that I'm working on. Maybe I'm trying to move something forward, um, or I need to be studying for my PMP exam or, you know, there's other things that I'm kind of trying to layer in and the, in between.

And so I start with just the non negotiables and then I look at the margin to try to figure out, well, how much time do I have. In the margins and some days it's not a lot. Yeah. I'll be honest. And on those days where it's not a lot, some of the extra to do's that might get put in there, like doing the dishes, which is going to take me like 10 minutes or folding and putting away a load of laundry, which is going to take me maybe 15 minutes, like really small things that I can kind of layer in that are things I want to get done, but that are not going to feel they're gonna feel kind of like a break in some ways.

Like I'm not going to be looking at a screen while I'm doing them. No on other days, I might have larger margin between those windows. I have an hour, I have a couple of hours and that might allow me to write a blog post or, you know, slightly extend my lunch breaks so that I can go check my PO box or drop something off at the bank, or, you know, other things that I might want to be doing in the middle of the day while work hours are happening.

Um, and so I check that margin. Now, the other thing that I always do is I try to underestimate every single day. So I don't try to cram in absolutely everything that I could possibly do. It's I actually kind of say, what would feel good for me to have done at the end of the day? And if I get any extra done, like that's great.

Um, but I don't have to try to check off, you know, absolutely every single thing that's on my list. And I often do refer to notion and the notes that I've taken in there about what I'm trying to do each day. When I'm building this list that I put on Instagram, because they're usually things that I've already kind of pre slotted in at the beginning of the week, I've looked at my margin.

I've tried to figure out what, when can I kind of layer in some of these other tasks that I want to do? And then the last thing I think that I do before I actually post this list to Instagram is I run through everything on it. And I asked myself, do I actually want to do these things? Because aside from the non negotiables, like the meetings.

If there's something that I have on the list that I don't really want to do that day, then I probably won't do it. And so I move it to another day. So I really try to make sure that I'm in the right kind of head space and energy space to tackle the things that are on my, to do list each day. So I think that as my lists are getting longer, as I kind of move beyond this concept of doing.

Three priority things each day, as I feel like I'm yeah. Able to get back into what I consider to be more of kind of a pre COVID productivity mode. Um, and in some ways out of necessity, just because of everything that's going on at my work, um, it's allowing me to still keep a session. It's a prioritization that everything I'm putting on my list is things that I care about, things that are, um, pretty rooted in my values and the things that I want to be.

Um, Progressing forward that are helping me to kind of continue to learn and grow and to you feel like my days have meaning. I think that that is part of having a reasonable to do list is you put things on it that you actually care about and that you feel like you're able to it's a win, you know, like when you're checking that box that you got it done, it feels like a real win.

Now, there are definitely things that get added into my, to do list later in the day, you know, that maybe I wasn't expecting, or maybe I find that a meeting got canceled. And so I have some margin, um, or a meeting gets rescheduled. And so it gets taken off my list or something along those lines. And I always like to have things that I can kind of layer in really quickly and easily, um, that are kind of just like in my back pocket for when I have a time windfall.

Now, right now, the thing that is really easy for me to layer in is studying for my PMP exam, because I'm still working my way through reading the project management book of knowledge, which is about, I don't know, maybe six to 700 pages of information and it's in an ebook format. And so it's relatively easy for me to kind of skim through it and pick up what I need out of that.

And I have it open on my laptop so that I can just kind of, of pop over there. If I have, you know, 15 minutes or 30 minutes that I can read through like a chapter in this book of knowledge guide. So I think having something like that, that's kind of sitting in the wings that if you have a little bit of free time, you can pop over and do that.

Um, you certainly could, I could also easily see, you know, depending on your job and what you have on your plate, taking a few minutes to like, read something for fun or watch a quick YouTube video or do something that really is a little bit more distracting or more kind of an active recovery activity. I would say last week I had tons and tons of zoom meetings.

Um, I was definitely feeling fatigued, um, by the end of the week. And I took some time in the, the middle of the day on Friday to actually get out of my house. Get in the car, um, check my PO box, go by the bank, drop off something at FedEx. You know, like I went around and kind of just got some fresh air and it helped me to be really kind of revived for the rest of the afternoon.

So being able to pay attention to your energy levels as well, kind of throughout the week allows you to build a, to do list that feels a little bit more manageable for each day. So as I look ahead at the coming week, one of the things that I noted was my Tuesday is my heaviest day of the week right now in terms of meetings.

And there are other pockets of time throughout the rest of the week that feel a little bit lighter. I have a little bit more margin in between different meetings and things. So as I'm building up my schedule and as I'm building out my to do's, I'm going to be paying a lot of attention to that. Um, that's really different from the week I had last week, where Wednesday, Thursday, Friday were really heavy.

And so I, I had kind of a. Um, and ending of the week, that felt a lot more draining. Whereas this time I'm going to have more of an earlier part of the week. That's a little bit more draining and then I'll have some time to recover and be productive the week is closing out. So I hope this is helpful to think about how do you keep your to do list reasonable.

And the main things I really focus on is underestimating my tasks, making sure that I actually want to do the things that are on my list and having a kind of project in the margins or in the, in the side that I can pull in if I get some time windfalls right of the week. And that allows me to feel like I have a little bit of bonus productivity.

If I have a meeting get canceled or something along those lines. So I hope that this was helpful. I'd love to hear how you are managing your, to do list during this code period, because I know it's kind of different in terms of our schedules and how we're handling everything. You can always email me at hello at dr.

Katie Linder com you can tweet to me at Katie double underscore Linder. You can connect with me on Instagram at Katie underscore Linder. And if you are posting your to do list, I'd love to see them. Please feel free to tag me and let me know what they look like. And I think it is a great way to stay motivated and make sure that you are kind of doing the things on your list that feel really meaningful to you.

Thanks for listening. Thanks for listening to this episode of you've got this show notes and a transcript for this episode can be found at Katie linder.work/podcasts. If you found this episode helpful, please also consider rating and, or reviewing the show in iTunes. Thanks for listening. Mmm.