**YGT episode 223**

You're listening to, you've got this episode 223. Welcome to you. 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. So on this episode, so I wanted to talk a little bit about how we plan our time and the differences between three different kinds of terminology that I often hear people use.

And the first one is. The schedule is reasonable. The second is the schedule is doable. And the third that is that we have kind of an answer aspirational schedule of what we'd like to do. And I really have to credit to one of my coaching clients for this, because we kind of hammered out some of this language in one of our sessions.

And I have used it with several other clients, just that these concepts in other sessions, um, in really helpful ways. And so. Mainly what happened in this session is we started to realize that, um, it's really easy to create a schedule for yourself that isn't necessarily realistic. And we were able to identify kind of three levels of what that looks like.

Now the first level, um, maybe the highest level that we're calling aspirational is when you just kind of like throw a bunch of stuff on there for like what you want to do during a certain period of time. So it could be like, here's my to-do list for the day or here's my to-do list for the week or the month, or even like the recent creative retreat that I talked about in a previous episode.

Like here are all the projects that I want to work on. Now this can be applicable to a season like the summer, or it can be applicable to something like a sabbatical. I mean, like there's all different ways that we kind of throw together these ideas of what it is we think we can accomplish in a certain period of time.

And through talking with my client, what we kind of realized was that the aspirational schedule is almost like the delusional schedule. It's one where we are not on, in reality. Like we have all these like hopes and dreams of what we hope we're going to be able to get done. But when you really look at the list, you've really just kind of done a brain dump of all the things that you could do, not necessarily the things that you want to do, not necessarily the things that are even prioritized in any particular way.

You've just like thrown everything onto a list, but the, the challenge or the problem is, is that oftentimes that kind of brain dump list becomes like the list that we're working from. Instead of recognizing it as like the first step of just all the possibilities that we could be focused on during the time period, we just kind of say, okay, well, this is my list, and I'm going to work from it.

Now I see this happening at all different levels of scale. Like for some of my clients, this happens in your, your day-to-day to do lists. Like you just kind of look at the thing and maybe you've been collecting tasks over time and you don't even try to kind of prioritize or, or move things around or decide, you know, certain things can happen today.

Certain things can happen tomorrow. You have this approach of just like attacking the list. And, and you're just going to try to like plow through as many things as you possibly can. And so I think when we do that, it's when we have this kind of aspirational idea of maybe I'm going to be able to get all this stuff done, but it's kind of magical thinking because we haven't put in the variables that are maybe constraints, like other meetings.

We have that day fires that could come up, um, sick kids that could happen and maybe disrupt our schedules. I mean, all these different kinds of things that can be thrown into our lives. Okay. So that's level one is this kind of aspirational, a little bit delusional approach when we're looking at our schedules and our to-do lists the level after that is one that we called doable.

And this is a word that we came up with because the client that I was talking with, we would say we would kind of look at her schedule and we were planning some things out. And I would say, what do you think about, you know, how this looks? And she would kind of hesitate and say, well, I think it's doable.

And I kind of got to the point where I was like, what does that mean? Exactly? Like the way you say that word, you know, there's so much hesitation behind it. Like, what does it mean that it's doable? So we had a conversation about it and came to this, understanding that when something is doable, it's like it is within the realm of possibility.

So it's, it's moved out of the realm of being aspirational or delusional, but it's still in this. Kind of mode of you'd probably have to overwork or really push yourself hard in order to get that particular list done. So it's still a little bit unrealistic, you know, it's, it's not that it's not completely out of the possibility that you could get those things done on that list, but you probably still haven't whittled it down enough for it to be completely within the realm of possibility.

And what that means when you have a list or a schedule that's doable is one you're kind of constantly riding the line of. Not getting everything done because anything that happens that disrupts that list or schedule is going to throw it off. So if you have a meeting come up, even like a 30 minute meeting that wasn't expected, all of a sudden you can't get all the things done on your list, or if you run into like traffic on the way home from work, or, you know, like any little thing that's unexpected, all of a sudden your doable list becomes into the aspirational category.

And it's, it's just not going to happen. And I think that for many of us, this is what we do every day. We create the thing that is like so tightly scheduled. And so, um, kind of dependent on everything, working out just the way we want it to. And then if something doesn't work out, we kind of feel guilt and negative and maybe negative self-talk towards ourselves that we weren't able to get all of these things done.

So it was such an interesting conversation to have with this client, because what we realized was we had to back off even from the doable schedule and that the doable schedule, um, in her situation was often just not. Workable for her because it meant working more hours than she was able to. It meant, um, relying on just like perfect things happening in terms of like childcare and, you know, other kinds of variables in her life that weren't always within her control.

And I think that's the thing that it really comes down to when we're thinking about a doable, um, schedule is because you're always writing that line. You're kind of forgetting that there's a lot of variables that just aren't in your control. And the, you know, things will happen that will disrupt your schedule.

You'll be asked to take on a new project. Um, maybe your child gets sick and stays up all night and you don't get any sleep. Um, I mean, there's just all kinds of things that can happen that really are disruptive to that. So I hope at this point, you're like, give me the answer. What is the actual schedule that works here?

Because if you are like me, you're realizing that oftentimes you're in this doable aspirational kind of mode and really what that leads to is the sense of like chronic overwork and a delusional sense of what we can actually get done. In a constant state of guilt over like what is actually not getting done from our lists.

So what we came up with this client of mine and I, we came up with this concept of the reasonable schedule and this is a really powered down version of what a lot of us are doing. So I'm going to warn you about that ahead of time, but it's basically this idea of what would it mean to build in margin?

Into your schedule that allows for unexpected occurrences that allows for you to be rested when you're doing your work. And some of you may, or maybe even laughing out loud right now about this concept of feeling rested when you're doing your work. But this is, this is what it means to have a reasonable to do list and something that is actually, um, something that at the end of the day, like you feel pretty good about what you've been able to do.

Now, here are the things that I think go into creating this kind of reasonable schedule and not too long ago. I also did an episode on creating a reasonable to do list, and I can link to that in the show notes. And some of these things are kind of overlapping, but I think the main thing that I think about when I'm thinking about a reasonable schedule is I try to plug in.

The things into my schedule that involve other people and also the things that are not kind of within my control. And then I noticed the things that are within my control that I might be able to change those variables around. So if I've assigned myself deadlines for something, for example, I can maybe move those deadlines.

Like maybe those are deadlines that are personal for me, and they don't really depend on other people or. It's not like a hard and fast deadline. I was just kind of setting one out there that is easily modified or changed. So in a reasonable schedule, you are kind of prioritizing having room for extra things that could come up having margin for the kind of self care tasks that are really important in your life, like sleep and, um, Being in relationship like with your family and friends and, and also the basic wellness tasks, uh, which I guess I would put sleep in that category as well, but things like staying hydrated, eating good meals, exercising, those kinds of things, those become in some ways the cornerstones of your schedule.

And then you layer in the work on top of them. So it's using a little bit of a kind of big rocks, um, concept where you put the big rocks into a bucket first, and then you fill in the pebbles and the sand afterwards, um, to make sure everything kind of fits and sifts down into the container in our schedules, in order for them to be reasonable, we have to rethink what our big rocks are.

And I think for many of us, including a lot of my clients, including myself, we put in our work as the big rocks first, and then we layer in everything else. And then we're kind of like shocked and surprised at the end of the day when we haven't gotten everything done that we were hoping to. So I want to kind of challenge you to think about this as you're heading into this new year and looking at your schedule and try to figure out.

You know how you're going to fit everything in and what your life practices are going to be and how you're going to prioritize your schedule, consider what your true big rocks are. What is going to help you to feel rested? What are the things that are really connected to your values and how can you be putting those things into your schedule first and then layering in some of this other stuff?

So I hope that this delineation between an aspirational schedule, a doable schedule and a more reasonable schedule is helpful for you as you're thinking about your own work in the coming year. And I would love to hear what you think about this. You can always email me at hello at Dr. Katie linder.com.

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