**YGT episode 237**

You're listening to, you've got this episode 237. 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,

in this episode, I want to talk about the concept of creating margin. And this is something that came up recently a few weeks back in our Sunday planning session, we do a weekly planning session and prolific. And one of the questions I asked was about creating margin and someone said, what does that mean exactly to create margin?

And I thought that's a really good question because there's a lot of different ways that you can create margin in your schedule and your life. And so I thought I would talk about some of those strategies on this episode, because I've really been thinking about this lately. I don't think margin happens by accident.

I think our lives are just too busy and we need to be building this in intentionally. So I'm going to give you a bunch of different ways to potentially think about this. That might be helpful if you're wanting to plan and bring more margin into your life. So the first one that immediately came to mind for me and is one that I think a lot of us really struggle with is creating margin between meetings.

And this especially is true right now because we're going from zoom room to zoom room and we can actually book ourselves with less margin in between than we might've done when we were on our campuses. And we had to walk in between meetings. Because we have to go from one place directly to another, we can schedule right up to the hour, which means you might just be jumping from one meeting to another meeting all day long.

Now I have certainly had these kinds of days where it is really back to back. And it's really challenging to process the information, to prepare yourself for the next meeting. And especially if you're in the kind of job where you're doing a lot of different kinds of meetings with different kinds of people.

This is really tough. Now I also have been thinking about this as well with things like coaching sessions that I have, uh, in the evenings and on the weekends, because I often will do these back to back as well. And a couple of back-to-back usually works pretty well for me, but if I have three or four back-to-back, that gets a little more challenging.

So part of the strategy here is to take even like 15 minutes in between these meetings and try to give yourself a chance to get up, move around, go to the bathroom, grab some water. But really just giving your brain a bit of a break in between the meetings. And I've also found that for some of my clients, we've been talking about the strategy of coming up with a kind of baseline number of how many meetings you want to have in a day or a week.

And then using that number to help you decide when you need to start scheduling something further out. So you might say, I don't want more than like three or four meetings a day. And I don't want to have more than 20 meetings in a week now I'm just pulling these random numbers. Your numbers could be higher or lower than that.

Right? But then when your week hits that number or your day hits that number, then you can just tell the person you're scheduling with. I'm not available because I already have kind of booked the maximum number of meetings that I want to have during that time period. Now, of course, there's always emergencies and we can decide what those emergencies look like.

And when we might want to schedule a meeting, or if we can't get out of a particular meeting, But this is one of the most common things I hear from my clients is that they feel overwhelmed by how many meetings they're in. And this is just a reminder that we do have some control over that. We don't have to always schedule with people immediately.

If they make a request, I have to book out sometimes one to two weeks in advance, um, for various things, both in my coaching practice and in my day job, just because things are really packed. Now the other form of margin, that's kind of related to this is in your weekly schedule. So kind of taking a step back from the daily and looking at the weekly schedule.

And what I often recommend to my clients is that they consider having more margin on like the Thursday and Friday of their week and try to front load a lot of their meetings and things in the beginning of the week. Because oftentimes what will happen is we'll have kind of a buildup of tasks or other things that will come up and then we need more room on Thursday and Friday to catch up.

So rather than booking every, every day, kind of back to back, try to book more things in terms of tasks and meetings earlier in the week, and then let your Thursday and Friday be a bit of a catch all for if you need to do some catching up during that period. Now I also think it's really important to build in margin over the weekends.

And I think that this can be really challenging for some people because it's less time to work with. We only have a couple of days, so we're trying to really squeeze it as much as we can. And so that can mean, you know, trying to fit in a lot of errands or trying to fit in, you know, a lot of projects. Or other kinds of work that we want to get completed.

And I think it's really important to try to create some buffer time during the weekends so that you're not feeling like you're just rushing around and going from thing to thing. Now, sometimes this can work well in like the mornings of the weekend or the evenings of the weekend. Yeah. And that's kind of, what I try to do is I give myself a later start in the morning.

I don't typically start working with clients until nine or 10 in the morning on the weekend. And then I usually wrap up by six o'clock so that I can really make sure that I have some evening time to kind of wind down. Now, now that we're leading, um, these, uh, planning hours on Sundays, I don't wrap up until about seven o'clock at night, but then I'm really done for the evening and I'll read, or I'll relax.

Sometimes I'll even go to bed early to get a start on Monday, but I've also started to make sure that my Monday morning schedule is relatively open so that I have a really nice way of easing into the week. And I can get a sense of what's on my plate. I don't feel like I'm really rushed to go straight into meetings.

And that also feels really great. No on the weekdays as well. We can really think about building in margin into our evenings and into the mornings by thinking about what are the things that we just want to do that would feel kind of relaxing or that maybe would prepare us for the following day. If we're thinking about the evening routine.

I like to try to create margin in my week and in my days, by trying to think ahead about the kinds of things that I might need. So for example, about once a week, I bulk prep, what I eat for breakfast. And so when I get up most days for breakfast, it's already ready to go. I just have to heat it up. And I really love having a warm breakfast in the morning.

So it's nice to be able to just have everything ready to go. Um, I Brown the potatoes that I eat on the stove. I, uh, Microwave, the tofu scramble that I've, pre-prepared, everything's kind of chopped up and ready to go, and then it's super easy to do so that makes my morning routine feel more spacious. I feel like I'm not rushing around to try to get a bunch of stuff prepped.

And so that creates margin during that period for me. Now the other part of margin that I wanted to talk about is this concept of thinking about margin in your year. So taking a step even further back from the day planning or the week planning to thinking about annually, how you are thinking about the space and time that you might be leaving open for the possibility of something coming your way.

No. I've really been thinking about that because this year I feel like I really front-loaded 20, 21. I have a lot of things that I'm committing to in the beginning part of the year, in terms of like, Speaking engagements. And, um, the, the meditation, yoga teacher training that I'm involved in right now, I have a lot of goals that are, are kind of, um, being pushed on pretty hard in this first half of the year.

And then they're going to be achieved. And then I have the second half of the year and I've left it kind of open. I haven't, you know, booked any trainings for myself. I haven't booked a lot of speaking engagements for myself. I'm starting to kind of think about what I want to spend my time doing. And part of me is thinking it could just be a period of rest where I'm really pulling back a little bit on some of these other engagements and trying to create some margin after what will, by that point be like almost a year and a half of pretty consistent push.

Now this also coincides with this post vaccine period that I talked about on the last podcast episode. And that I think a lot of people are thinking about for the second half of the year that their, their lifestyle might change a little bit. They might be willing to travel or, um, see family members or things like that.

And so I think sometimes, you know, and especially this year, it can be helpful to think about how are you creating margin in the second half of the year? No. I think that oftentimes here in the, the Northern hemisphere, we think about the summer period as kind of a rest period, but not everybody. Some people really do a hard push during the summer to get their writing done, to really focus on projects.

And then you end up going into the fall feeling kind of depleted. So for me, I often try to think about, you know, the quarters of the year and I try to theme them and have an understanding of the kind of energy that I'm putting out during that period of time. Is it a lot of creative energy? Am I trying to create some kind of research output or some other kind of creative project, or is it a period of time where I'm really kind of pulling back and there's a bit of a lull and I'm taking advantage of that lull to rest, recover, reset, and be ready for whatever next project might come my way.

Now, the last piece I wanted to talk about in terms of creating margin is in this concept of when we talk about goal setting. And I think sometimes it's helpful to create some flexibility within our goal setting. So that there's a little bit of margin and room to kind of move around in terms of when things are going to be due or the timeline for completing particular goals so that we're not holding ourselves to a standard that feels unreasonable.

Now, this is kind of tied to an earlier episode where I talked about the difference between having an aspirational schedule, having a workable schedule and having a realistic schedule. So I will link that in the show notes, but it's kind of the same where sometimes we have these aspirational goals that we're pushing, pushing, pushing really hard.

And then we have workable goals where it's like, if everything aligned, it would, it would work out in the way that we think. And then we have things that are more reasonable, where we've taken into account various constraints that we might have, or other kinds of priorities that are competing for our time with particular goals.

So I think it's really helpful to think about our goal setting in broad ways so that we have time and space to work towards things without feeling a lot of pressure. Now for me this year, there are quite a few goals that I set as annual goals, knowing that I would probably complete them at some point throughout the year that wasn't like on December 31st, but I didn't want to give myself a lot of pressure of thinking about, you know, which one I had to do first, or was there one that I really wanted to prioritize.

I wanted to be able to kind of think about in the moment. How I was feeling about those goals. And I wanted to give myself some freedom to kind of move around within my list of goals for the year, uh, which I can post in the show notes. I have 21 that I'm working toward so that I felt motivated. And I felt like I was giving the right kind of energy to those goals.

So I think that we can also create some margin in our goal setting as well. I would love to hear if you are building in margin to your schedule, to your life in different ways that are helping you to have some flexibility during this period. And I always love to hear really creative strategies around this.

So if you want to share, feel free to email me at hello at Dr. Katie linder.com. And I would love to hear some of your strategies. I hope that you are finding time for some margin to rest and reset in your schedule. And if you haven't already, maybe you can build some in later this week. 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 Dr. Katie linder.com/podcast. If you found this episode helpful, please also consider rating and or reviewing the show in iTunes. Thanks for that.