You're listening to, you've got this episode 253. 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. In this episode, I want to talk about some strategies for managing overwhelm, because this is the time of year where I think we're all feeling it at least a little bit.

And I first want to point you back to a podcast episode from almost exactly two years ago. Overcoming overwhelm, where I listed some strategies and I'm going to link to this in the show notes. This was episode 1 58, and I'm going to start by just kind of revisiting a couple of those strategies, but then talk about some additional strategies that I am certainly using right now, as I'm managing a lot of information, a lot of deadlines, some changing circumstances.

Uh, and I think we're all also managing a bit of the unknown as we continue in. The pandemic. So first I'll point you back to that episode, again, it was 1 58. And in that episode I talked about, of course, starting by making a list, basically getting everything out of your head, doing a bit of a data dump, and then using that list to really kind of categorize and figure out what you want to do next.

I still think that is an excellent strategy. I also talk about talking it out with somebody that you trust or that you live with, or that's a friend of yours. Verbalize things. I think sometimes for people who are verbal processors, this really helps with overwhelm. And then the other strategy I talk about is decluttering, or just curating to remove extra decision-making in your life.

And again, these are all strategies that I completely stand by. I actually went back and listened to this episode, which is kind of rare for me to do, but I wanted to see what I said so that I could make sure that I was offering different strategies when I revisited this. So, of course, this is on my mind because I have recently started a new job as I record this I'm in week five.

So the first month is already wrapped up. Um, but there's a lot of information coming my way. And, um, as I'm going back to working in an office environment, that's also, uh, causing some overwhelm for me too. I've got to change up my schedule. I've got to figure out how I'm prepping for the week. You know, there's just all kinds of things that are on my.

And, um, so I thought I would kind of just talk through some of the things that I'm doing that are helping me to manage this overwhelm. And hopefully some of these strategies might be useful for you as. Of course, I am always happy to have you share strategies that are working for you with me if they are not mentioned here.

Cause I always want to try out new things in this area. So first I thought I would talk about how to manage overwhelm when you're just managing a lot of information. So if you're feeling overwhelmed because you have a lot coming at you at once, um, what I'm really focusing on right now, Taking a lot of notes, but making sure that I'm processing those notes and then categorizing them in ways that make sense to me so that I know that I can kind of set the notes that I took aside and that I got the most important information out of them.

So it's kind of like when you like squeezed juice out of a lemon or something like that, like you want to make it sure that it's completely squeezed out. Like everything has been squeezed out of the notes and then you can move on. So some of the ways that I'm processing this right now is I do have an assistant and this person is managing my calendar, which has been a huge, uh, amazing thing that I'm very grateful for during this period, because I've just had dozens and dozens and dozens of meetings.

And about 80% of her full-time job is basically managing my calendar, which, which feels kind of crazy, but is also absolutely, uh, what she is doing right now. Been really helpful. So basically what happens is a couple of times a day, she will pop into my office and I will process with her things that are coming out of my notes that require additional meetings.

And that's something that she is kind of taking on for me and, um, making sure that those get scheduled and that. You know, following up on those items. So that's one area of processing that I'm working on. The other area of processing is if I am seeing additional to do items coming out of my notes, I have an area in click up, and this is the management system I'm using right now for my tasks where it listed all of the projects that I'm currently working on at my.

And in these projects, I have a place to list, follow up items. I also have a list of people that I meet with on a regular basis. So if there are tasks that are coming out of my meetings of things, I need to talk to certain people about like my boss or colleagues or other leads. You know, as I'm kind of thinking through different projects and ideas, I am able to kind of put those things in very specific places where I know that I'm going to look there the next time I have a one-on-one with that person.

I can kind of look in my notes and know that I'm following up on those specific things. So basically I'm taking. But I'm processing them by putting them into categories, whether that's meetings or tasks that I need to be thinking about. And then I'm also going back and reading through my notes on a pretty regular basis.

I filled up a couple of legal pads at this point, and I'm just kind of making sure that the information that I need to know and kind of get cemented in my head about like organizational structure and, um, you know, who reports to who and all those kinds of things that I'm actually kind of getting those things locked up.

And that's helping me as I'm managing, you know, all of this information coming in, but going through and processing that each day, or even a couple of times a day, if I have a break, like during lunch has been really helpful because I know that I'm kind of squeezing every last drop out of those notes before I'm kind of setting them aside and moving onto the next.

Now I'm also managing quite a few deadlines right now. And some of the deadlines are pretty quick turnarounds. Um, I do report into the provost of our institution, which also means that I have sometimes requests that are coming from our chancellor. So I have requests from my boss, from the chancellor, from other people.

I got pulled into a, a grant writing group. Um, there's just kind of a lot of things that are all happening with. And one of the things that actually really works against me in terms of managing deadlines is that I tend to procrastinate, which basically means I like to work ahead on a lot of things to help feel like I'm a little bit more in control of those projects, but it also means I, I often give myself a lot of buffer time.

That I don't necessarily need to have, but it's just a nice to have. So the way that I'm kind of dealing with a lot of these deadlines is I'm actually looking at my list each day of the things that I had assigned to myself, and then I'm moving them around as needed and basically like intentionally procrastinating.

What I know I have more buffer time and I can move things around. So a good example of this is this week on Monday, I had planned to write up kind of a monthly report for my boss, because it had been a full month that I'd been on the job to give him a sense of like what I had done and to be able to kind of, um, accumulate all those things into one place and talk about kind of the meetings, the things that had been able to accomplish.

And, uh, I had planned to do that on. Well, I looked at my Monday list and the time that I had in the meetings on my calendar, and I was like, this is just not going to happen, but I didn't actually meet with my boss this week until Thursday. So I didn't really need to do it on Monday. I could do it on Tuesday or Wednesday or even Thursday morning.

It wouldn't have been that big of a deal. So, what I ended up doing, um, is as I I'm recording this, this is actually Tuesday, this, this episode is going to come out tomorrow. You can sense my overwhelmed by how far I am not ahead in terms of my podcast recording. Um, but I ended up doing that today. I had a little bit of extra time in between meetings and I was able to move it to today.

But I could have moved it to even later in the weekend, it would have been fine. So sometimes those little things of just prepping for a meeting or, you know, working on a writing deadline or something like that, I can actually move them around quite a bit. And I think that managing deadlines as a great way to manage overwhelm also because you can always reach out to people, get extensions.

It's very rare that a lot of the deadlines we have are really, um, kind of. Holding fast to, to what the original deadline was. I would say with the exception of grants, which are usually a little bit more strict, um, I have a lot of room to kind of renegotiate these deadlines. So that's something that's been really.

Now the other thing that I've really been managing, uh, overwhelm around is changing circumstances. So, um, you all know that I recently moved to start this new job. And so my partner and I are in a new house, we're in a new city, I'm in a new job. I have a new office that there's all kinds of things. I have a new commute, which I talked about in a recent episode.

And so with all of these changing circumstances, you know, that can also cause a lot of overwhelm because there isn't necessarily. That familiarity of like knowing exactly where everything is at all times. We're definitely still unpacking in our house. And like just yesterday I unpacked the box with our stamps so that we could send off some mail.

Um, so I think that this is an area that I'm also really paying attention to. Now the thing that I found here, that's been really helpful for me in terms of managing changing circumstances is really trying to find the familiar and then lean into that as much as I can. So I'm really trying to think about like, are there things that will help me to feel more comfortable, even in the midst of a lot of change now for me and this isn't going to surprise you at all.

Um, I've been checking out a lot of books at the light. And I've been doing a lot of reading because this is an area that is really in my comfort zone. Um, the other thing that I've been doing is just kind of getting back to watching things on TV with my partner, you know, things that we were watching before the move and kind of getting us back to a familiar pattern of how we're spending our time and that's also helping as well.

So I think that if you're managing a lot of changing circumstances, finding the familiar is really going to help. And then the last one that I wanted to talk about is this concept of just managing the unknown. And there are so many things that we could all be worrying about right now. And with good reason, I think that's part of the challenge of setting aside.

Our worry is that, um, there are. Problems in the world that are, you know, very much taking up our time and attention. It can be real distractions for us. And basically what I have decided to do about this is I basically set aside my worry for a period of time. And I will say, I'm going to set aside this worry right now, and then plan to check back with it at a later point.

So what this helps me to do. Basically like give my worry a period of time in which it gets my like full focused attention, but that it's not just kind of like underlying all of my interactions with. Now a good example of this is I was talking with my partner and, you know, he said, don't you ever just get kind of nervous when you're back in the office and you're, you're masked and everyone is vaccinated, but like, it's just hard to be kind of back out in the world again, on a regular basis.

And I take the train into work. Sometimes I'm walking around downtown and there's a lot more people around there. And what I basically told him was, you know, I just can't think. 'cause if I thought about it too much, I would be really nervous about it. And it, it would really bother me. And I was like, you know, I can't do that.

I have to just kind of like do my work and focus on what I'm trying to do and know that I'm, I'm being as safe as I can, you know, within the circumstances and probably being overly cautious in some cases wearing my mask. Um, even outside when I'm walking around, like just trying to be. As safe as I can be in there also kind of events going on in the world where I will set aside, you know, specific time to read the news about those events or to really dig into advocacy for certain events that are happening in the world.

And that's my time. That's my time to kind of look at it and research it and figure out what I want to do. If I want to take it out. But I can't just let it be like under the surface all the rest of the time. Cause I, I just wouldn't be able to get anything done. So for me, with managing the unknown, I really do try to set aside a specific time and place to decide what it is I want to learn about it.

And if there's something that I actually feel like I can take action on. And for the things that I can't take action on, I think those are the ones that are. Um, and I really just kind of try to set them aside until a future time. What I do feel like maybe I can take action. And part of it is because sometimes we just don't have enough information and we're waiting to, to get information and facts so that we can decide what we want to do.

And I think that, um, for those things, I mean, I could literally even put on my calendar, like swing back around to this issue and see if you have kind of more information on it so that you can move it from. I think for some of us, this is the case with things like travel. Uh we're we're trying to plan a trip or we're trying to think about a conference or something, and we're just not sure timing wise if it's going to work out.

And that's the kind of thing that I would just say. If I don't know right now, I'm not going to focus on it. I'm just going to swing back around to it later and decide what I want. So I, these are kind of some of the things that I'm focused on as I'm kind of managing information and deadlines and all these changing circumstances, there is a ton going on.

Um, but what I will say is I'm actually. Part of part of my brain really enjoys having a lot of things to think about, even if all of those things that I'm thinking about are, you know, some of them are pretty challenging and maybe even a little bit scary, but my brain likes to be active. And right now, Is there is so much going on at my work and so many different people that I'm meeting.

And I feel very kind of energized by that. When I end the day, it feels very positive to me to be engaging in all of these things. But I definitely have set up some systems that are helping me to do this in a way that feels good to me and where I don't feel completely overwhelmed at the end of. So, I guess I'll just add in one more tip here, which is basically if you're feeling overwhelmed, it's okay to take a pause.

And I think sometimes we, we kind of think we need to push through it and we need to keep going, going, going to, to kind of get those items checked off our list. But even tonight I was thinking, you know, oh, I got to go home. I got to record this podcast episode to get this out for tomorrow. And I ended up deciding to go to dinner with my partner first, you know, we needed to process our day.

We needed to talk with each other. I wanted to hear about appointments that he had had today. He wanted to hear about meetings that I had had today, and it was great. We had dinner, we were laughing together and just had a really good time. And that energized me to come home and kind of do this last task of the night.

So I think that part of what we need to do is listen to our limits and know when we need to kind of take a break and take a rest and then come back. It's always going to be there when we come back to it and it's okay to come back a little bit more energized and ready. So, of course I would love to hear if you have some ideas for managing overwhelm in your own life, you can always email me at hello at Dr.

Katie linder.com. I would love to hear from you, and I hope if you are feeling overwhelmed, you're able to find just small moments of joy, even just taking a few deep breaths, to bring yourself back to a centered space, knowing that you can handle it. Whatever is in front of you. You've got this. 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 listening.