You're listening to, you've got this episode 279. 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. On this episode, I want to talk about the concept of making something easier than we have made it in our.

Mines. And I think there are certain things in our lives that we feel like they have to be hard and it's like, they don't count unless they feel hard. Uh, this would be stuff like exercise, for example, like if you're not sweating, it's not real exercise. Or if you don't do it for a certain amount of time, it's not real exercise or even like habits or consistent behaviors that maybe in the past have felt hard.

And so we feel like if they don't feel hard anymore, Like, they're not working somehow or they're not right. Um, there might be goals that we have that we feel like those should feel hard to accomplish because it's like a big thing, like writing a book or, um, other kind of big things that should take a long time or a lot of effort.

And then also I think there there's some things that we, we like to have them feel hard because they feel like they should require some kind of sacrifice on our part. Um, and I think sometimes even like our, our jobs like this, this feels like it should be, you know, Working eight hours a day, we're sacrificing other things to do this work.

Um, it should feel hard. And I want to kind of push back on this a little bit to say, we get, make some of this stuff feel easier. Um, and I want to talk a little bit about how I think we can do this and maybe even some areas of my own life, where I'm actively working to make certain. I feel easier for myself, um, because I there's so much in life that is hard that we can't control.

And so the stuff that is in our control, like why are we making it easier? That's kind of the question I'm posing in this episode. So some of the components, I think of making something feel easier. One, I think we have to revisit our definitions. So if we, for example, say exercise equals one hour of activity and therefore if we don't do one hour, I'm not really exercising or I have to be, you know, sweating profusely or whatever it is.

Sometimes we just have to like, look at something that we're defining in a particular way. I'm not going to define it that way anymore. Um, and I would say, I am, I am very, um, this, this is a very common issue for me where I'll put something in like a time box and say, well, it's not really a true yoga session unless it's 30 minutes long.

Um, which is just my own definition of it. It, it has nothing to do with what's actually happening in terms of my own yoga practice. So I would say I am definitely guilty of this in terms of like defining something in a particular way and then holding myself to it even to a point where it doesn't mean.

Um, to have myself be held to that standard anymore. So I'm constantly doing this. I'm constantly kind of revisiting my definitions and trying to help myself understand that sometimes the frameworks that I've created are no longer working for me anymore and I can kind of rethink. Now for me, sometimes this actually means really thinking outside of the box or doing something very differently than I would normally do.

And I'm going to give some examples of this a little bit later on, but I think that part of it is just like, whenever we notice that something feels hard, it's really about dissection. Y. Um, so first we have to notice the stuff that's hard. Then we have to think about, is there a part of my day or week that feels more challenging?

Is there a particular activity that's feeling really challenging to me right now? Is there a time where I feel like I have less energy to do things, um, and then you decide, okay, well what would make it feel easier? But the more important thing is also being okay with it feeling easier. So it's not just the, the change that you're making, but also kind of the.

Readjustment of your own expectations that like it's okay to make this thing feel easier for me right now. And then trying to design around those challenging spaces to try to figure out what does that look like to make them easy. Now, I think there are certain parts of our lives where, um, this is probably more difficult to do.

Uh, it's easy to say less difficult to do. So I want to give a bunch of examples of how I'm kind of working through this in various parts of my life, because I think that this is something that, again, we have hard stuff that we can't really. Make it easier in some ways. Um, I think that certain world events that are happening right now, the pandemic has really taught us this as well.

So how can we take other smaller things that are maybe less consequential and make them feel easier for us? So one example of this that I've talked about in various other places is food. Um, I do a lot of bulk food prep, um, particularly on the weekends and lately what I've been doing is making like this big pot of soup that I eat all week for a number of different meals.

And I can make like this really big pot and get maybe like eight meals out of it, which is typically all of my lunches. Some of my dinners, I feel like it's pretty nutritious. It's got protein in it. It's got a bunch of vegetables in it. It tastes good. Yeah. And then I don't really have to think about what I'm grabbing on my way out the door to work in the morning.

I'm also, I'm saving myself time because I'm not having to go out at lunch and find something to eat. It's really easy to come in at the end of the day and grab something out of the fridge. You know, like all of those things make my life. Now there's also really, um, things that are easy for me to grab that are like healthy foods.

So I prep like raw red peppers. Like I'll cut up a bunch of red peppers and just have those available for me to snack on. Or I snack on a lot of nuts, which are like really easy to have at my office. They're easy to have at my home. Um, another thing that I've done in the past is have a bunch of stuff to assemble, like grain bowls.

So prepping like keenwah or brown rice or something like that at the beginning of the week. Pre baking, some tofu, having a bunch of veggies that I can add in and then some kind of sauce that it can add. So, um, one of the things you'll notice here is that I'm not doing a ton of variety. Like I might switch up what I'm doing on a weekly basis, but I often eat the same thing throughout the week, because for me that's just easier to do.

Now. Some of you might be thinking, I prepare food for my whole family. They are not going to eat the same thing, every single meal. I get that. Um, but I would also say that for your own meals, like breakfasts or lunches, Things that maybe you're not prepping for everyone in your household. This might be something to consider because it's a really easy thing to do.

And it makes it, um, to where I don't have to think about it. And I really approach. Okay. The other one that I've been really thinking about recently is exercise. And for me, what has made this really feel a lot easier is that I do it before I do anything else. Um, because once I get started, like, uh, reading a book or journaling or some of these other things, I end up, you know, having an excuse of like, oh, I've run out of time.

Or, you know, I need to get ready for work or whatever, especially because I exercise often in the morning. So I think. Pick something that I can do without any kind of equipment. I don't have to go anywhere. I don't even necessarily have to like put on special clothing to do this. And for me right now, this is yoga.

So I am basically walking downstairs. My mat is already rolled out and I immediately go into my yoga practice in the morning. Now this is really wonderful for me right now because I can ease into it relatively quickly. Also, I find that I am just incredibly stiff in the morning. Um, this is a part of my day probably where I feel that most of my aging, that, that my body is like stiff and tired.

So I really try to work on, um, poses in my yoga practice where I'm kind of opening up my hips a lot. I'm stretching out my back, my shoulders, really trying to kind of get all of that ready for the day. Um, and because I do this at roughly the same time every day, it's really starting to become more of a routine.

So this is something that I think in the past I had to kind of like motivate myself. But if I come down and I like immediately go into this practice, um, it is something that I can build into my day with a little bit more ease. Okay. The next couple of things I want to talk about are tasks and goals.

Because these are things that I think we often build in just like layers of difficulty that we don't necessarily need to build in. So for tasks, um, you all have heard me talk about this in so many different ways on so many different levels, but right now it's really working for me is putting them directly into my calendar to see what I actually have time for now.

Um, a couple of episodes back, I talked about my school. I'm blocked for a good part of the day in various meetings and things like that. And so it is really important for me to actually see what do I have margin for that I can actually get accomplished in the day. And I am often revisiting timelines deadlines to see what needs to be adjusted and really releasing my own expectations for myself of things that just feel unreasonable, that I'm not going to be able to get them done during a certain period of time.

Um, I have a lot of control over tasks that I have on my plate. Um, there are certain deadlines that I have to work within in terms of like meetings that I'm facilitating and things like that. But this really does help me to understand, um, when I feel like I'm overloading myself and when I feel like I have a more balanced.

Now in the same way. When I think about goals, I really want to revisit and revise them regularly. So if I have annual goals or monthly goals, or even weekly goals of what I'm trying to do, I'm really trying to notice when they get too stressful and then relax my expectations as needed. So one of the things that came up for me this year early in the year is I read 22 books in January.

And then in February, I was like, Ooh, let's try to read 22 books again. Um, it's a real push to read 22 books in a month. Some of you might be thinking, well, duh, like, of course it is. Um, but I'm a pretty avid reader. I do a lot of audio books, you know, I can get through quite a bit, but I was noticing that this goal was really starting to like stress me out.

Like it was getting in the way of other things I needed to spend time on like exercise or, you know, other things that I wanted to give my time to. So I had to kind of relax my expectations and basically just say like, yep, you can keep that goal. But if you don't hit it, it's not that big of a deal. Like I have to remind them.

But like, these are things that I'm setting for myself and I can pull back on those expectations when I need to, because I am a procrastinator, which means that I often do things ahead of schedule and I give myself a lot of buffer to get things done. That means I often have more time to get things done than I have told myself that I do.

So I have to, I have to revisit that I have to look at those timelines. I have to say, yeah, you wanted that done a week ahead of. Maybe it's only going to get done the day before and that's okay. Um, so for me, I often have to kind of have, um, time that I set aside to really reflect on this and try to figure out what tasks, what goals are really going to be.

Something that maybe I can move off my plate at least initially, so that I can have a little. Now the other thing that I think that really helps me to make things easy is routines. Um, because when you don't have a lot of brain space, I try to create routines as much as possible so that I'm not making decisions.

And I know exactly what it is I need to focus on. Um, as you've already kind of heard me say, I'm eating the same thing I'm doing roughly the same kind of exercise. Um, I also wear a pretty limited amount of outfits. Um, Close at a certain limited number of colors. And really, I only swap them out based on season and weather.

So those kinds of things really helped me to kind of keep all of that. Uh, decision-making into a relatively small part of my day because I have all of these different routines. One of the things that I think is helpful to keep in mind is that you can have routines even for a short period. I think sometimes people think of routines as like life choices that you're making in the routines or things you do forever.

But I've actually found them to be really helpful in short periods of time. So I might say like, I'm putting a routine into place for this month because it's really busy and then I'll revisit that routine at a later time. So it doesn't always have to be forever when you pick some of these routines.

Okay. So a few other things that I think about in terms of making things easier. One of them is removing things. Now this is probably the most important part. What can you take off your plate? How can you limit the choices you're making, simplify wherever you can. Um, often with this looks like for me is moving projects to later in the year or later in the month, if I need to so that they're not taking up my brain space and really actively scheduling them at a later point so that I know what I'm going to come back to it.

I know it doesn't have to be on my plate. Right. And so often removing, um, decluttering, all those kinds of things helped me to feel like, uh, I'm making things easier for myself. The other thing I often will do is break things up, um, chunking tasks into smaller pieces so that I can slowly chip away at something over time.

So one example of this, and this is also kind of a example of. Doing something differently than I would typically do is lately I've been trying to work through star Trek movies with my partner. This was one of my annual goals to watch these star Trek movies and. What I have found is if we watch it during the weekday, I get home from work.

We have dinner, we sit down to this movie. I kept maybe halfway in and I am falling asleep. Um, this is just kind of how I am in my life right now. It's I, I'm tired from like long days in the office. I have a lot of cognitive creative work I'm doing. Um, and I just can't. And I'm sure some of you can relate to this.

And so what we've ended up doing is watching these movies in two parts. Like we watched the first half and then like a couple days later, we'll come back and finish the second half. Now this is not ideal, especially for someone like my partner who loves movie watching. And he would love to watch the whole thing through, but I just do not have the ability to do that.

And if, if we want to kind of watch these movies and have me actually paying attention and knowing what's going on, I have to break it up. Like I don't have a lot of time where it can sit down and. Two-plus hours and watch this all at one time. So I think that it's an example of how I'm breaking something up, doing something a little bit differently, still getting to the goal of what I want to do, but maybe not in the ideal way, but it's still easier.

It's still easier for me to do that rather than trying to carve out the time, which I don't feel like I have right now. I'm still able to make progress, uh, in this particular area. So the other thing I would say is, uh, when you're making things easier, It's really important to notice what you care about and what you don't care about and the stuff you don't care about.

Try to let it go. Like, it's just, it's not something you need to prioritize right now, but the stuff that you do care about and that fills your life with ease and in any particular way you can prioritize. So one example of this for me is I love coming down to my kitchen in the morning and having. Fleet.

And so one of the things that I've been prioritizing lately is doing a load of dishes every night before we go to bed. So that I come down to a clean kitchen in the morning. And really this just helps me to feel like my day is not starting out with. Clutter and extra tasks that I need to do. Like, I would much rather do this at the end of the day at night when I'm I'm tired, but I can still, you know, unload, unloaded a load of dishes.

Like this is not a big deal. Um, and so I think that I would rather do that at a certain time of day than in the morning. And so noticing kind of what you want to be doing with your schedule, what helps you to come into the day in a way that feels, um, where easeful, these are all things that I'm kind of paying attention to right now.

Uh, using my time accordingly to make sure those things are. So I hope this offers you some examples of how we can try to make things easier for ourselves. And I hope you also noticed that a lot of the examples I gave in this episode, super small, like these are, these are very much tied to like day to day activities and tasks.

And hopefully this can kind of create more ease when other parts of life are starting to encroach and feel very difficult and challenging. How can we give ourselves a break? How can we relax expectations a little bit? And really this is about kind of kindness to ourselves. It's a great way to focus in on what we need at any given time and to adjust our lives in certain directions that make things feel a little bit easy, uh, when we need them to be.

So hopefully this gave you some ideas and inspiration. I'd love to hear how you're building in more, ease into your life and work. You can always email me at hello at Dr. Katie linder.com. I always love to hear from you. Thanks for that. Thanks for listening to this episode of you've got this show notes and a transcript for this episode can be found at Dr.

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