You're listening to, you've got this episode 282. 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. I'm your host, Dr. Katie Linder on this episode, I want to encourage you to think about if this is a year that is asking a question or a year that is answering a question for you.

Now, this definitely was sparked by recently, I ran across a quote by Zora Neale Hurston. And she says there are years that ask questions and years that answer. And I definitely have found this to be so true. That quote resonated with me so much. And I have been trying to think through why this year in particular, for me feels more settled than previous years that I have had.

And when I read this quote, I thought, oh, because this year is an answer. It's not a question. And I thought that maybe this would be an interesting framework or a helpful framework for some of you as well. So one of the things that I think about when I think about a year, that is a question year is it would be a year that might feel a little bit unsettling.

Um, there might be some. There might be a need to kind of release expectations because you're not quite sure what's coming for some people that could actually feel really exciting or there could be a lot of anticipation about what's coming. I think that, um, sometimes when we have like a nervous feeling, we can trick ourselves into thinking it's an exciting feeling.

And that would be a good example of, of like a positive framing that you could offer for a year. That feels like a question. Um, and also because it's open to so many possibilities, there's all these pathways, there's all these opportunities. And sometimes we kind of limit ourselves when we're in that space.

We think that there's only like one or two options when really there's an infinite number of options of what we could potentially do. If we kind of open our minds to some other possible. So I definitely think, um, in the last couple of years I've had questionnaires where I was kind of trying to figure out what am I supposed to be doing with my career?

Um, what are some of the areas that I want to learn more? You know, I was going through kind of earning all those credentials and I was in this phase of just like taking in a lot of information and I wasn't always sure where it was going to lead. And, um, especially with like some of the yoga training than I did.

I just really didn't know. Why I was doing it necessarily like in the long-term in the short-term it made sense to me to do that, but in the longterm, I didn't necessarily know where it was going to lead. And, uh, and there were all these other kinds of skills and abilities that I was developing, and it was really kind of a way to fill the time of the pandemic and to be in kind of this waiting period of trying to figure out what was next.

And I've talked about this in a couple other spaces. When you have a question, you're I really feel like you're in this mode of awaiting further instructions, and that can be really. Uncomfortable and hard to be in that space. It can feel very impatient and you're not sure, you know what you're waiting for even.

You're not sure what signs you're looking for. You're not sure what information could be coming your way. Um, you're just kind of waiting for their instructions until something becomes more clear for you. Now, what I have noticed about those years, at least for me is they turn into being like striving yours and.

Pushing pushing, pushing to try to get to the next thing, to try to figure out what I'm supposed to be doing, because I like to have purpose, you know, that, that helps me to feel more settled. It helps me to feel like I'm being utilized and that my skills are being utilized in a good way. I like to be able to, um, help people, you know, through my skills and abilities.

And so when I'm in kind of a questioning year, I think sometimes. Um, sparked because I don't feel that I don't always feel like my purpose is being utilized to the fullest extent that it could be. Now I would imagine, as you're listening to this, you might be thinking that, you know, you're in a questioning year, but for totally different reasons, you know, I think that there are lots of different questions that we might ask ourselves that are kind of big life questions.

Um, like I think. Um, friends of mine who have asked themselves the question, should I expand my family? Um, should I have another child or should we adopt another child? That's a big, that's a big question that really impacts, you know, not just you, but your family and a big part of your life. And, um, and there's a lot of uncertainty for many people about whether they can do that or how that would look or how they would be able to accomplish something like that in a particular timeframe.

And so those kinds of questions, questions about, um, like, should I stay, or should I go questions? Whether that's in a job or in a relationship? I mean, like, these are the kinds of big questions that we often spend months and months, if not years, you know, really trying to figure out, like, where do we fit within, you know, these bigger life circumstances and context.

So that's, that's what I mean, what I say, is it a questioning year? Is it a year where you are kind of feeling unsettled? You're trying to figure something out. You feel like something is always in the back of your mind. Like you're just kind of, you know, worrying on it or you're, you're trying to kind of like, let it percolate to figure out what is going to be the answer to that question.

But then I think there are some years that provide answers per the Zora Neale Hurston quote. And I think that those years might feel a little bit fewer and far between. I would wager that most of us have more question years, years that ask us questions than we have years that we feel like they're providing answers.

And I think part of that is because. Oftentimes we stack questions on top of each other to get to like a much bigger answer about what we're trying to do. So I can think for example of years where my question was, you know, should I quit my job and go full-time into my business? And I've probably spent a couple different.

You know, like percolating on that question, really trying to understand if it was what I wanted. Um, I have had other years where I was like, ah, I'm not sure this is the job for me, or what's my next step? Or, um, what do I want to learn this year? What book do I want to write this year? Those kinds of questions.

Um, because I'm someone who is very focused on like achievement and goal setting. I'm always looking for that next thing. But this year, I found myself feeling way more settled and almost to the degree where I didn't feel, um, a strong urge to like set a bunch of goals. Um, you may have seen this, you know, I just talked about my quarter one, uh, goals.

Check-in and I didn't feel like the goals that I set this year. Like there wasn't anything that felt like huge. It was more like continuing with them routines, you know, poking around with some stuff that felt like interesting or curious to me. Um, we're in past years, I've, I've really gone big, you know, on some of the goals I've tried to hit.

And I feel like now I'm kind of into this space where I'm feeling a little bit more settled in. So I've really been trying to think about why. And I do feel like a big part of that is that I've, I've landed in a job where I feel very activated in terms of my unique contributions and my skills and abilities.

And they're being used like every day, multiple times a day. And I also feel like I'm at a really nice place when you think about like flow states and things like that, where you're kind of at the peak of your capacity, where you're at a learning curve and you're being challenged, but you're also really like, um, doing a deeper dive into what you know, how to do in a particular situation or a set of circumstances.

That's very much how I feel in my job right now, where I'm being kind of pushed to do some things that I haven't done before, but that I feel prepared to do. And then I feel like I have the skills to do, but I get to try things out in a new way. Um, and I get to like test my abilities in new directions.

And that feels pretty cool to be able to do that. It's been a while since I've been in a job where I really felt that kind of push and for me, um, and I don't know if this is something you know, that you can relate to, but for me, that push has to be pretty extreme. Like. It's not like one new thing gets added to my plate.

It's like, I like a lot of challenge and a lot of different puzzle pieces. So one way to think about this is like, it's like a 2000 piece puzzle, not a 500 piece puzzle like that. That's what I'm really wanting to kind of like chew on and dive into in my work. And so this is like a, a good example of like, uh, there was a period of about five years where I wrote like five books in five years.

Now I didn't set out to do that. But like, I was just in a mode where I was really kind of cranking out a lot of information. I was doing a lot of writing that felt really good to me. And so I tend to do deeper dives into those kinds of areas. So right now for me, what that looks like is a lot around leadership, a lot around change management, cultural change, organizational development, really trying to think about some bigger puzzle pieces, you know, within my area of the institution that needed to be coming together.

And that is feeling really great to be able to have that and to be able to kind of settle into it and to know that a lot of the things that are on my plate are like multi-year projects. And in past situations, when those, when those kinds of projects didn't feel challenging, that's when I would start to feel kind of itchy of like, oh no, Stuck.

Like, I, I feel like I'm not sure that this is right for me, which is a very different feeling than a year. That's providing an answer where that answer for me is, oh, you just needed like way more challenge. Um, and now that you have it, it feels very satisfying and you feel like you can kind of stick around and, and really settle into an institution and a job because there's a lot here to work on.

And I think there's a lot. We have different phases of our careers in terms of what we want to focus on and do. And I've kind of entered into a different phase than what I was doing earlier in my career. That was very focused on kind of my own publication record and like building up my accomplishments.

And now I'm way more invested in kind of what a team can do in what I can contribute to kind of a larger mission and vision. And I'm assuming that's some kind of career maturity that many of us eventually get to. Um, but I'm starting to kind of ease into that. And it feels very different than other years where I've really had a lot of questions about where I was supposed to fit.

So I would encourage you to think about, is this a year that is asking a question or is this a year that is providing an answer? And now that we're at the end of quarter, one beginning of quarter two, I bet you might have a sense of this for yourself. And it could be that in certain parts of your life, it's one way.

And in other parts, it's a different way. Like maybe it's a year of question for career, but it's a year of answer for like your family or your relationships. But I love this concept of kind of trying to categorize and think through where. Sitting in a particular point in my life in career. Um, and I've talked about this most recently in a couple of episodes, because I think defining that can really help us to think about, um, what is next or what are the kinds of things we want to prioritize and really focus on.

So I'd love to hear if this is a year, that's asking a question or providing an answer for you. You can always email me at hello at Dr. Katie linder.com. And I always love to hear from you. Thanks for 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.

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