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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 Linda, on this episode, I wanna talk about a concept called the gap and the gain. And this is based on a book I recently read.

I will link to it in the show notes, uh, of the same title, the gap and the gain. By Benjamin Hardy and Dan Sullivan. Now this is a book that I found to be incredibly fascinating. It is meant for high achievers, for people who are never quite satisfied with all the things that they're trying to get done.

And I definitely fall into that category. So let me first describe what the gap and the gain means, and then offer some examples of why I think this can be incredibly. For us to be thinking about. So, um, what the authors basically argue is when you are in your present moment, you are more likely to be focused on what they call the gap.

And that is the, uh, space between where you are right now and where you want to go. now, uh, I think this is true of so many of us because we have big goals and dreams. We're trying to get degrees. We're trying to publish books. We're trying to do things that take, you know, multiple years or a lot of investment to get done.

And we're, we're striving. We're kind of constantly striving towards those things. and what the authors argue is that when you are constantly striving like that, uh, unfortunately you're never satisfied because the goal keeps moving and you always have one more thing that you're trying to get done, uh, in front of you.

And so you can live a life where you're constantly feeling like it's never enough. Now on the other hand, what they recommend is you instead focus on what they call the gain. And this is how far you have come from where you started to where you are now. And it's kind of a celebration of the achievements that you've had over time.

and, uh, a bit of a recognition of what you're capable of doing as you move forward toward your next set of goals. So rather than constantly like berating yourself or having negative self talk about, oh, I'm never gonna get there. Or this is taking so long to get there or to finish this thing instead, they recommend that you say, um, well looking in the past, you know, Look at how far I've come look at how much I've accomplished.

I know I can continue to accomplish things based on my track record now where I found this to be especially interesting and helpful is I'm currently working with several different coaching clients who would consider themselves high achievers. And they. Struggle with this. I struggle with this of constantly feeling like you're just never gonna get to that feeling of satisfaction or enoughness.

And sometimes it's not even about achieving a thing. It's about achieving a thing in a specific timeframe.

Now, to be clear, I'm not arguing that we should not have dreams goals and, and that we shouldn't dream big for what we're looking for.

But what I am arguing, and I really appreciated the author's focus on this is that when we focus so much on that, we end up living a life that is pretty. Unsatisfying because we're never gonna be hitting those targets in quite the way that we think we should be. Now, I find this really interesting as I'm starting to set some goals for the end of the year, as I'm starting to think about what I wanna do in 2023.

And. The other, you know, thing that I think is really helpful as you think through this concept of the gap and the gain is we tend to, because we focus so much forward, we tend to forget all the things that we've done. We tend to not necessarily look backwards. We look forwards and I recently talked about this on a podcast episode where I talked about writing down what you got done over the summer season.

or over any recent season of your life to help your brain remember all the things that you got done, even if it wasn't what you had originally planned, you got a lot done. So as I'm looking forward, I'm still setting ambitious goals. I'm still thinking about what are my ideals in terms of timelines. But the other kind of cool thing about looking backward is I can use that data of the past, which actually happened to help me understand what I might be able to achieve in the future, which hasn't happened yet.

And this is the thing that's really tricky because when we look into the future, We might have really ambitious goals of what we think we can do that may not be rooted in our past experience of what we've actually done. So by looking into that past, and by using that as data, it allows us to really think about what is possible.

So, uh, for example, I can look into the past and say, you know, there are projects that I've taken on that took a certain amount of time, and these were the variables in my. When I took on those projects. Now I might look at the variables now and say, well, those variables have changed. I may not be able to do the same kind of timeline, but wasn't it great that I was able to do that at one time, let me celebrate that.

Let me kind of notice and affirm that accomplishment that I had, but then let me like take that data and apply it in a more reasonable way to what I might be able to do. now, this is really about being reasonable versus being like super, super optimistic, because we all know when we're super optimistic and then we don't hit our goals.

Well, we don't feel very good. We don't feel very good about ourselves. We don't feel very good about our projects or our goals. And it can really like, we can take a bit of a hit when we're so focused on doing something in a very particular kind of way. So I have to say this book got me thinking in all of these great directions about.

The kind of power of reflection, the power of documentation, which I'm always very focused on and wanting to enable in other people, uh, staff who work for me, my coaching clients, helping us all to kind of write down what have we actually done and how can we celebrate those things that we're working on so that we're not so focused on what is ahead of us to the detriment of.

Recognizing what the past can teach us. So I wanna offer kind of a very specific example of this as I think about, you know, the various things that I've done in my past from stuff that I've done in my business to stuff that I've done with my jobs. One of the things that I think we kind of forget is over time, we start to establish kind of new baselines of what we think we're capable of.

And part of that is kind of unconscious. I think, I think that as we learn new information, We start to kind of, um, pick up certain kinds of skills that we start to take for granted. And this is also a big reason why I love focusing on the gain because it reminds us of how much we've learned over time.

so one example of this is I'm about to embark on a second edition of one of my books. I've never done that before, but I have written multiple books in the past. And as I plan out this process with my co-author, who's gonna be helping me with the revision. I'm really trying to think about what do I know from my past that is going to help me do this thing in the future.

And I have kind of a rough timeline that I'm hoping to get this done, but I'm actually trying to keep it pretty loose because I'm not really sure how long this is gonna take. And I don't wanna put undue pressure on my co-author through this process as well. So when I look at my past, I think about, well, I've actually figured out the structure of multiple books in the past.

And now I feel pretty confident about my ability to do that. I've also written a lot of academic, uh, articles and books and other kinds of writing to where I feel really comfortable about doing things like literature reviews. Citing other people making sure I've really combed the literature to feel really good about what I'm putting in the book.

And maybe one of the most important things that I've done over time, because I've published a few different books over the years is that I know when I can stop the book project, I know that I can. Wrap it up and say, well, I'm not gonna get every single publication from like 20, 22 or 2023 that is maybe pertinent to this book.

But at some point you have to kind of stop wrap up the project and submit it to your publisher. All of those things I kind of can easily take for granted, I can think about like, well, I just, because I've done it before. Like, I, I just have this kind of tacit knowledge now of how this works. I know how to create a book index.

I know how to collaboratively write with someone else because I've done that too for book projects. And when I really think about it and I take a moment to say, what are all the things that are gonna be contributing to this book project to help make it a success? I've got a pretty long list and that helps me to go into the project feeling super confident about my abilities.

And even if I don't hit the ambitious timeline that I'm really thinking about for getting this done. I'm still gonna feel good about how I'm entering into the project, what I'm giving to it in terms of my time, my energy and my expertise and the kinds of outcomes that might come from this project in terms of helping my readers have the most up to date information about blended course design.

so I would encourage you to think about, are you kind of rooting yourself in the gap of, of always thinking about the future and what you haven't accomplished yet, or are you rooting yourself in the gain? The things that you've done before that can help you to feel more confident as you move forward? Of course, I would love to hear from you.

You can always email me at hello at Dr. Katie leonard.com to tell me what you think about this concept would highly recommend reading the book just because I. So interesting. And hopefully you can find different ways that you might be able to apply this to your own personal or professional life. Thanks for listen.

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