You're listening to, You've got this episode number 305. 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 wanna talk about this concept of breaking the spell.

Now I'm gonna explain what I mean in just a minute. Um, but this is the perfect time of year to use this kind of metaphor because of the season of Halloween. And I also feel like this is the time of year when things can start to feel really overwhelming. Fast. You know, we're in a new academic term, you probably have a batch of grading that's piling up.

You have conferences to prep for committee meetings that are requiring your time. And in the midst of all of that, you may have fallen off some key routines or habits. And so when we do this, and believe me, this happens to me all the time, I often refer to this in my own mind as. Falling off the wagon or getting off track.

And I don't know that, that's always helpful to use that kind of language. So I recently, I, I had this kind of like metaphor in my mind of like, I'm under a spell and I need to break the spell. And of course, this is just perfect for this Halloween season. So on this episode, I wanna talk about how do you break the spell of not being, in this habit or routine, or basically how do you ease yourself back into an old habit or routine after being away from it, even for a short period of time?

It kind of builds up in our minds as being incredibly challenging to get back to something like this. And so I want to encourage a couple of strategies here. One is just to focus on. The first step, like what is the one thing that I can do to step back toward what I wanna be doing? And that can be the thing that breaks the spell.

It's not getting back into like five days of doing this habit. It's just taking the first step. So here's some examples of this that have worked for me. So if I'm off my walking routine, if I get back on my treadmill and walk for even just a few minutes, which always turns into more than just a few minutes, it makes it easier for me to do it the next.

Now I want you to notice that I'm not. Uh, like I'm putting my, my tennis shoes on, which is what people often say about like, the first step is just put on your shoes. I'm actually saying going a little bit further than that, like, actually do the thing you wanna be doing, because that to me is what breaks the bell.

It's not putting on the shoes that breaks the bell, it's doing the walking that breaks the bell. If I'm feeling generally kind of unhealthy, if I feel like I haven't been, you know, eating really great, or I've been eating a lot of sugar, The thing that often breaks this bell for me is I start with hydration and I get up in the morning and I'll drink a big glass of water and a couple of cups of like herbal tea, and that always feels like a reset to me.

I mean, that's just like getting more hydrated helps me to feel healthier. That's my step of breaking that bell. If I'm struggling to get back to early morning, wake up, I go to bed extra early the night. Uh, getting myself a little bit of extra sleep usually helps me to break that spell and I can set an alarm and feel like I'm pretty rested and I can get up.

And if I'm not practicing yoga consistently, I start with just what is that one pose that fits what my body needs right now? So is it something that's stretching my lower back, which would be like a forward fold? Is it something that allows me to stretch my. Like a pigeon pose or something like that.

What is the thing that my body is kind of craving and I give it just that pose for now. That's just the the one step that allows me to kind of break that spell. So this concept of breaking the spell is kind of like you're waking up to the reality of what you really want for yourself. Like the spell that you're under is kind of this, you know.

I don't know. It's like this state of being where you're not really operating at your best. Like other things have encroached, whether it's encroaching on your time or your priorities, and we need to get back. We need to get back to like, how do I really wanna be operating in this season? How do I really wanna be setting up my life to be doing the habits and routines that I know are best for me, even if these other things are kind of getting in.

Now another way, a second option I think for this, if that kind of taking the first step doesn't feel right. The other way that I like to approach this is to use a tool that I often use in coaching called Start Stop. More or less, and I've talked about this before on the podcast, but when I have a client who wants to like reboot their habits or routines, or they wanna like reset their morning routine or reset their evening routine, I will often start with this.

And in this tool, you basically ask yourself four questions. What do I want to stop doing? , what do I want to start doing? What do I want to do more of? And what do I want to do less of? Now, the cool thing about this tool is it's so simple. It can be applied in a number of different ways. So you might decide, I wanna apply this tool just to my writing routines.

Like, what do I wanna stop doing with my writing routines? Start doing, do more of, do less of. You could apply it to exercise routines, but you could also apply it to like your entire morning routine or your entire evening. Like there could be things you wanna like reset with, like how you're engaging with your family or how you're structuring your weekends.

Like this can be kind of broadly applicable or more like on a micro level to specific things. So you can kind of scale it up and back depending on what you need. So sometimes I like to ask myself these questions just as a form of kind of like reflection and check in. And so when I asked myself these questions, when I was thinking about this podcast episode, my answers were something like the follow.

I want to stop ignoring my energy levels and not force myself to do things when my energy is feeling low. Like if my energy is feeling low, it's low for a reason and I need to pay attention to that and not just kind of like push myself through it, which is something. In the past I've done quite a bit. I want to start pairing my walking with audio books again because that always motivates me to get moving when I have a good audio book that I'm listening to.

And, um, this is something that I've been doing a lot of walking at work for, like meetings and things, which means I don't always do a lot of walking like at home on my treadmill. Um, and so audio books are a great way for me to. , I want to do more yoga even in small amounts each day, and I'm gonna go back to specific poses and probably some more guided yoga practice of like videos and things that I really enjoy, um, to help me kind of ease back into that practice.

And then I want to do less of sitting in front of screens at work. like this is killing me. I, you know, I'm not on Zoom as much anymore, but I'm still sitting at my desk a lot. I don't have a standing desk at work, although I do have one at home, which is great. Um, and I, I wanna schedule more face to face or walking meetings when I can so that I can keep my energy up throughout the day.

I do feel more comfortable in walking meetings just because I can be outside and, um, I do feel more comfortable taking off my mask. I am still masking at work. Um, when I am not alone in my office. When I'm in meetings or in in conference rooms and things like that, I still am wearing a mask. So, um, it's nice to be able to take that off and, and engage with people outside in some kind of walking meeting.

Or I just go outside for my meeting. There's a nice little patio that's outside my building and I can meet people out there. And that's been really nice too. So it's like all of these things are like kind of in different categories. Like they are about like energy and movement and, and things like that, but they kind of allow you to look at these different things from very different.

So what I want to encourage you to do is to be kind to yourself about whatever it is that you're feeling like you've fallen off. You know the track of what you wanna do, and maybe think about it instead, as you're breaking the spell, you're under a spell. What is that spell that you're under? And how exactly do you want to.

And again, there's a couple of ways of doing this. One is to think about just the first step. What is that one thing that might help you to break the spell and that would allow you to ease back into a habit or routine with intention. Or you can ask these questions of what you want to stop, start. Doing and what do you want to do more of and what do you want to do less of?

So of course I would always love to hear if you are under a spell. If you're trying to break that spell, you can always email me at hello@drkatieleonard.com and just know if you're in that season where things are feeling totally crazy, you may not be able to break the spell immediately, but the time is coming when things will slow down, when you'll have a moment to take a breath and get back into that habit or routine, that's really healthy and wonderful for.

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