You're listening to, You've got this Episode 306. 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 the magic of uninterrupted time.

Now, last week I talked about breaking spells, and this week I'm talking about magic. So I am super on brand for Halloween, uh, here in the United States that we are gonna be celebrating this month. And part of why this is on my mind is because most days I have realized. I kind of live and die by my phone timer.

And I don't know if any of you have this experience, but I have a lot of meetings and scheduled events throughout the day. And if I try to do anything in between, even like 15 minutes, I need to set my timer to make sure I'm not forgetting to move on to the next thing. And now the good news is, Setting this timer means that I can sometimes get into a bit of a flow state, cuz I'm not worried about being reminded of the time.

So I, I can kind of do a deeper dive into whatever I'm working on. But the bad news is there's always just a little part of my attention that's going to the clock and what I need to be doing next. And it's just like a constant hamster wheel of, you know, meetings and events and all kinds of things that I need to be kind of always thinking about prepping myself for, you know, the next thing.

In the past year or so, and I probably have mentioned this at least once on the podcast or in the blog, I have realized that uninterrupted time is like my love language. It is something that I really can't get enough of, and as somebody who loves to get task done. Who loves to work on projects, who loves to check things off my list.

I just do so well with managing uninterrupted time, like big, big pockets of time. Now, I know that for some people this is more challenging, so I wanna acknowledge that and, and that some people really need more structure. But for me, my list is often the structure that I need. Like if I have, you know, uh, several hours strung together, I can look at my list and, and kind of organize my list in such a way that it helps me to understand what I need to be focusing on at any given time.

Now, you might be asking how am I defining uninterrupted time? And I do have a kind of a definition that I've worked out in my head. So for me, this is at least three to four hours of time. So like a half day is what I'm talking about here. Ideally it would be like six or seven hours, may maybe more like if I start working at like seven in the morning, um, like five hours until lunchtime, like that's, that's a good chunk of like, uninterrupted time and I could be pretty productive and even like two hours.

But I find it just goes by too fast. And especially when it, when I've been like a flow state or I really wanna make like a lot of progress on something, I often feel like two hours just ends too early. And when I think about this on the weekends, the other way that I kind of gauge this for myself is, could I take like a really relaxing nap and have time on either side of that margin?

And I can't really do that in two hours because like, I'm always worried about when the little timer's gonna go off to like stop me from my nap. But in like three to four hours where I have like, like lots of margin, I feel like I could do something like that. So in my head, this is kind of how I'm defining it now in my current season.

Admittedly, I don't get a lot of uninterrupted time, um, and especially at work. Uh, I don't think I've had a half day without meetings for at least a year. Um, there's just, even when I try to carve out time, I really have to be out of the office. Like I, I have to take the time off. And recently I actually have been doing this.

It's been harder for me to string together time off, um, even a couple of days at work. And so I, I've been taking like a Friday afternoon here or there, and that gives me a bunch of hours to work on things. And recently, if you've been following my annual goals, you know that I'm trying to visit all the library branche.

In, uh, the Denver area and I do that on these Friday afternoons that I take off because it gives me a lot of time to like drive around town. I bring my partner, we go to lunch and we see different parts of the city. And it is so like filling my cup to be spending that time with him, to be driving around the city, not worrying about where I need to be, not checking my email, like it just feels so.

So one of the things that I do with this uninterrupted time is sometimes like we run errands, like we, we we're out and about, we get things done. But for the most part, what I do when I have an uninterrupted half day or even a day, which is like so glorious when that happens, is I just like meander through my list and whatever direction I want, and sometimes I prioritize the most important things first.

Like there might be kind of like an eat the frog, like you need to get the thing done. That is really stressing me out. It's like, if I could get one thing done, I wanna get this thing done because it, it's the, the thing that is like most weighing on me or most needs to get completed, sometimes I start with small wins just to kind of get me motivated early in that, that period of work time.

And I try to, um, like just. Get a few little things done and then that kind of eases me into other things I wanna get done. Um, sometimes I multitask by making like a batch of soup while I'm doing other things, and then the timing of the soup like impacts the task that I decide to pair with it. I kind of just do whatever I want and it feels so amazing to have that interrupted time.

Now, uh, as I record this, this is, I'm recording this on a Sunday. Last night I had a bunch of these hours strung together. My last client wrapped up at around four o'clock in the afternoon and my partner and I had like an errand to run. We did that. We went to grab dinner, but we got home I think by easily, you know, like 5 30, 6 o'clock and um, I had like several hours that I could string.

And what I ended up doing was I took a long walk on my treadmill for like 90 minutes. It felt so great, and while I was doing that, I caught up on YouTube videos, which I haven't done in a long time. Now. This is something that is super fun for me to do, like when I have an interrupted time. because I, I subscribe to a bunch of different channels on a bunch of different topics, and one of my favorite things to do is like meander through these different topical videos that I'm interested for, like a number of different reasons.

So for example, I have some YouTube videos on like project management. And it, or like work related stuff, stuff that's related to like effectively using goo Google calendar or you know, like different tools and reviews that people have done that are around like project stuff. I also have YouTube videos that are like book tubers, talking about book reviews, doing like book reading vlogs of like how they.

You know, read three books in two days or whatever. That I love watching. Um, I've got some recipe channels that I follow. Um, I've got channels of women who talk about, like, things like doing a reset day and they do like a vlog about how they're resetting after having like a really stressful period in their lives.

Like, there's so many different topics that I follow, and of course I watch cleaning videos because they are, the most satisfying thing to watch on YouTube is somebody cleaning their house. So I, I just kind of like popped back and forth between these different videos. And last night I probably watched. I don't know, 15 of these videos, like they're, they're relatively short.

I probably spent like three hours just popping around watching these videos and it was so satisfying, like, first of all to check off my list and kind of narrow down what I have left to watch on this watch leader list. I keep on YouTube, but also just to feel like I really don't have anything else that I need to be doing.

Right. , I can completely relax. I can watch these videos that are really for fun more than anything else. Like they're, they're not necessarily like progressing other than to like maybe teach me something new or, you know, something along those lines. But like, it's not checking an item off my to-do list.

Like, there there other things that I, you know, could be spending my time on. But like, no, I'm, I'm choosing to like, To be kind of lazy and like watch these videos and not worry about where I need to be or what else I need to be doing, and it was so satisfying to spend that time doing that. Now, I also find with uninterrupted time, and I'm sure all of you have experienced this at some point, sometimes you can get something done faster or better if you have a few hours to devote to it, rather than doing like little bits in between meetings.

Now I think that in some cases I like those little bits of time. Like when I'm, uh, coaching clients on the weekends, for example, sometimes like if I have a little break in between, I'll like throw a load of laundry into the, the laundry machine and like I'll get a bunch of laundry washed throughout the day, and then at the end of the day, you know, I'll, I'll fold everything and put it away.

So I get that there are definitely ways to be like efficient with using like these little pockets of time, but sometimes I really just wanna have like a bunch of hours from together so that I'm not constantly looking at the clock and I'm not constantly thinking about, okay, I'm racing the clock to get something done cuz I'm gonna run out of time.

I'm gonna have to move on to something else. And that's what I think is really the magic of uninterrupted time is you're not in a. You're not trying to get something done by a certain time because you know you can just spend the time that that thing needs to get it done. And that's my favorite thing when there's something on my list and I can just spend the time that I know it needs and I don't have to feel like I'm like cutting corners or I'm trying to find efficiencies, like I'm just doing the thing and giving it its time.

And that is like the best feeling in the world to me. The magic of uninterrupted time. I'm gonna find ways to build more of this into my schedule because every time I have it, I just find that it's so, so helpful. And I would love to hear how you are managing uninterrupted time. Like are you finding that you have enough of it?

Are you finding that it's hard when you have interrupted time to use it, you know, in the way that you want to? Um, you can always email me at hello@drkatieleonard.com. I would love to hear about your relationship with uninterrupted. Thanks for listening.

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