You're listening to, You've got this episode number 307. 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 10 day sweet spot.

Now, in a previous episode, I mentioned creating a stress buster list of a bunch of things that I had piled up and that were bothering me since I felt a little behind. Um, this was around the time that I got my, uh, covid booster shot, and I had to kind of like give up a weekend to recovering from that. At the end of the weekend, I just felt super, super stressed because there was a lot of stuff that I had wanted to get done.

Lately, I feel like I've actually been pretty good about like adjusting my expectations, moving things around on my list, my calendar. But sometimes, and especially this time of year, there's just a lot going on and I feel like I can't hold it all in my brain. Like I have to write it down on a list, um, on a piece of paper or in a sauna or like wherever I'm keeping this thing.

And then make a plan, like use the list to make a plan of like, how am I actually gonna get all this stuff done? . And I would imagine that you may have some of this, uh, happening in your world too. Like you have too much to hold in your brain and you're trying to even figure out like, can I get all this done, let alone when am I gonna get all this done?

So I had a list kind of like that. and while I usually make lists on like a week or a month timeline, this one was like 10 days since that's about how long I had to get to the end of the month and it ended up being a really perfect timeframe. And as I'm kind of recording this, I'm reminded of an episode I did a while back about creating kind of an end of the month list of like things that I was trying to check off.

Now this was kind of similar to that because by around the time that I made this list, I had about 10 days left in the month. And so I definitely had, um, Like that same kind of feeling of like, can I wrap some of this stuff up before the end of the month? But it was more about like what is feeling super stressful to me than it was about kind of the timeframe.

But what I realized was the 10 day period, it's not too long that I could procrastinate things cuz I had to kind of make a plan. I was gonna run outta time of those 10 days. But it also wasn't so short that I felt pressured to get it all done at. And since I had some things that were on the list that needed more than one day to complete, I could then look at my schedule and see where certain things could get done.

Now, because I made this list on like a Sunday night, I was going into a week and then I had, you know, like a weekend and a little bit of the following week to kind of look through and see where I could get these things done. And it allowed me also, I. Even just like writing these things down, I felt less pressure.

I felt like I had, you know, I, I had a container for like where all these things were gonna be, and as I like, thought of things, if I had like forgotten something or whatever, I just added this to the list and this is something that I've actually started to do now. Like, I basically put things down on my list.

It's specifically the things that are stressing me out and to date, I only have one thing left on this stress meter to-do list and, and partially cuz I realized the thing wasn't due until like middle of October. I thought it was due at the end of September and I had a little more time. that I could work on it, but some of the kinds of things that I put on this list, just to kind of give you a sense of, you know, what would belong on kind of the stress buster list.

One was to complete like an article review report for a journal. Like we all get these revised and resubmits and they're like, Give it back to me in 30 days or 45 days, or whatever the timeline is. I, I, like many of you probably procrastinate these kinds of tasks. I'm not the person who like gets assigned this thing and I do it like the same day.

I always just kind of add it to my list and like figure out what's the deadline and I'll get it done at some point before the deadline. But then it stresses me out that I have this thing that I've agreed to do that, you know, like I don't necessarily want to do. Like how many of us like to do these article reviews?

It's such an important contribution to the field, but it's also one of those, like when your plate already feels. , you don't feel like you wanna add even more to your plate. So that was on my list. Similarly, I also had a manuscript from a publisher that they wanted me to review and give feedback on, and it was one of those things where they had the full manuscript and it was like, Should we publish this or not?

Like what's missing from the manuscript is this manuscript, you know, a valid representation of the work in this area? And I had to read the entire manuscript. Like I knew it was gonna take me some time to read like this 300 page manuscript and then give my kind of substantive feedback on it. So that went on the list.

a lot of these things were, were things that I felt like they would take a certain amount of time. Like I felt like I needed to carve out like maybe one to two hours to get them done. So another good example of that is I had somebody in my coach training program who was getting ready to graduate the program.

And this is always so exciting to celebrate this with someone. And part of what people need to do is they give me a graduation recording, and I have to assess that recording. The PCC level, which is kind of the mid level. Um, when you graduate my program, it means that you can kind of operate as a coach at the PCC level.

But when I review a graduation recording, usually those recordings are at least an hour long, so I have to spend at least an hour, and sometimes I have to pause and write notes, and there's a rubric involved and it just takes me some time, usually an hour to 90 minutes to listen to one of these recordings.

I also spend that time, I mean, not to get kind of like too sentimental, but I spend a little bit of that time thinking about that person and like the growth that they've had as a coach and what I want to express to them about their journey in that graduation kind of final meeting because, um, that's their closure of the program.

And it's many of the folks who've come through my program, I've worked with them for at least a year, if not longer. And it's special. It's special for them to kind of be at this point. So I like to give that task the time that it. . I also had a couple of podcast episodes that I wanted to record and get scheduled and do all the prep work for that.

I had some coach training assignments that I needed to. Um, I had to add some like kind of project managey things into a sauna, like just kind of get some notes organized for some things that I was working on. Um, so there were a lot of things related to just kind of getting organized. And then, um, because it was getting close to the end of the month, I also had a couple of books that were on my TBR pile that were longer that I wanted to finish.

So, um, a lot of the books that I've been reading this year are, I don't know why I'm making these choices other than like, I'm excited about reading these books, but they're like five, 600 pages and, and at this point in my reading life, like this doesn't intimidate me at all. I've read so many books this year that are over 500 pages, but they do take time and I, I acknowledge that they do take time.

There were also some things, uh, around our house that I added to this list. So, for example, we had ordered, um, and it, it has been delivered a new mattress and box spring for a queen size bed that we have in our guest room. And especially as we were going into the fall, both my partner and I, even though we have been vaccinated and boosted to.

The highest degree when we haven't had covid yet. We're both nervous about going into this fall. We know that Covid could spike in various places and we wanted to have a quarantine space, and we didn't really have a place to do that in our house other than like a couch in the basement, which didn't feel like.

The best option. So we wanted to outfit our guest room and kind of get that ready just in case, you know, one of us needs to quarantine. And so we had these box springs delivered that were like sitting downstairs that we had to like walk upstairs. We had to, they're not heavy, but it's like, it would take both of us to kind of put these things upstairs, um, and you know, make the bed and get it set up and, you know, just like little things.

They don't take a ton of time necessarily, but they do take a bit of coordination with my partner of like, when are we gonna do this? When are we gonna get it? . And then of course I had to wash the new sheets for the queen size bed. Um, you know, like all, all the little things, all the little things that kind of build up in your life that it's like at some point it's kind of like the straw that broke the camel's back where you're like, If I have one more thing, then I have to like, keep in my brain.

It's, it's feeling like, just super overwhelming. So what I have found is this 10 day sweet spot is wonderful. It gives you enough margin to have some flexibility in your schedule, which I think we all want When we have a list that we're kind of staring down and there's stuff on that list that maybe some, some of it we want to do, we just can't find the time.

But usually, inevitably there's something on that list that we don't really want to do and we're gonna kind of procrastinate it or we're gonna try to get other things done first. We're going to, um, basically work to procrastinate from the things we don't wanna. , it's really nice to have 10 days to work with and to not feel like you have to get everything done by like Friday night when you're closing your laptop, um, that you could use some of your weekend time or that you can use some of your evening time to kind of work through this list.

And I have to say, every single thing I checked off this list felt so satisfying. and because I knew that I had specifically designed this list to kind of be a stress buster list, I was more motivated to cross things off. Like I was like looking for opportunities of like, when can I cross one more thing off this list?

And it really allowed me to plan my days with more intention. And to feel like I was actively chipping away at the stuff that was going to make me feel so much less stressed over time. So, um, if you are feeling that, if you are feeling the sense of overwhelm, I would really encourage you to take a moment and write down the list of like, what are the things that are really, really on your shoulders, like the weight that you feel like you're caring right now?

And then, Is it 10 days? Is it a month? Is it six weeks? Like, what is the time period that's gonna allow you to start to chip away at some of these things? And if any of the tasks feel too big, break them down, you know, make them manageable. Because it really did help, It helped my mental and emotional health, um, to really have this written down and feel like I had a bit of a plan.

So I would always love to hear your feedback on this concept of the 10 day sweet spot or on the stress buster list. Feel free to email me at hello@drkatieleonard.com and I always love to hear if these strategies are helpful for you or they allow you to have just a little bit less stress in your own life.

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