You're listening to, you've got this Episode 313. 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 some strategies to stay motivated.

Now, on my last episode, I talked a little bit about sometimes when you're not feeling motivated, that's okay. Like you can take a break, you can listen to your body, listen to your energy levels, and just kind of take some time. And that's what I did over the Thanksgiving retreat period that I had. But there's also those times when we have to kind of work through a lack of motivation.

Um, and sometimes it's just because of the, the end of the year, the end of the calendar year. I know this is the time of year when we have things like grading. Uh, we have like holiday shopping, maybe just like a long to-do list of miscellaneous items or even like a writing project. We're trying to get out the door at the end of the.

And so I thought it might be helpful to present some strategies and ideas that you could maybe experiment with to see if they positively impact your motivation. So I broke these into a few different categories. The first category is when you feel unmotivated to get your grading done. Now, admittedly, I don't grade a bunch in my current role, but I do remember back when I was grading, uh, that this is hard sometimes to kind of make ourselves sit down and.

So the first idea I have is to choose a letter of the alphabet randomly and grade the students who have the last name with that letter, just to kind of get yourself going, turn it into a bit of a game. I also used to set a timer for myself. That was like enough time to get through a few assignments, and then I would kind of race against the clock just to try to keep the time that I was giving to grading manageable.

And then of course, you can always put on like some energizing music in the background, just. Keep yourself motivated and alert as you're going through the grading. The next category that I was thinking of is when you feel overwhelmed and you don't know where to start. And so I have a few ideas for this as well, and I feel like this time of year, especially when we're tired, it's easy to just kind of throw our hands up and be like, I don't wanna do anything.

So the first idea is to look at your to-do list. Create some broad categories, at least like six categories. So it might be like grading, teaching prep. Projects around the house. I mean like whatever kind of broad categories you have in your list. And then roll a dice to see where you need to start. So if you're just trying to like figure out what do I tackle first?

Sometimes rolling a dice can be an easy way to do that. I think it's also helpful to ask someone else to choose an item from your to-do list. For you to do. Like if you're feeling overwhelmed, just like hand it to like a colleague or a partner and say like, okay, you pick something and then I just have to do it.

And then I think if you find you wanna do something other than what they choose, like you feel very resistant to what they chose, but you wanna do something else, great. At least it got you started. It's totally fine cuz it helped you decide a direction to, to move in. . Um, I also was thinking to put all of your, uh, items on your to-do list on separate pieces of paper and just draw them randomly out of container.

Now, I think this works best if they're all kind of equally important to get done. So this is really about like if you just feel overwhelmed and you're not sure what to do, but they're all kind of like on your plate and you need to move them forward. And then I was also thinking you could number your list and then use a random number generator from online to pick your first task, because those are really easy to find with like a quick Google search.

So it's basically like randomizing what you work on, um, which I think sometimes when you just have a really long list of things, it could be helpful. Okay, the next thing that I had as a category was when you are bored and you need something that's a little bit fun, so you aren't super motivated to get things done because they don't feel very fun to you.

So the first idea that I had was inspired by this Instagram game that I see people play where they offer, like basically they plan to like Instagram their day, but they offer options throughout the day and let their audience decide what will happen next. So the idea of this is, At various points throughout your day, you give yourself two paths and then you flip a coin to see which path you choose.

So for example, you might choose two different places where you could take yourself to lunch, and then you flip a coin and you go to the one that the coin says to go to. Or you choose two different tasks that you need to complete. Or you choose two different things that you've been meaning to read, like whatever it is.

But you kind of have like a choose your own adventure throughout the day by flipping a coin and like following what the coin is telling you. , you can repeat this at several points throughout the day to kind of keep yourself on your toes with your next tasks. Like you never quite know what you're gonna be devoting your time to.

And if you're on social media, you could definitely engage your audience in this as well of, of like having people choose what direction you go throughout the day. And then the, the fourth category that I was thinking about was when you need accountability or external support with getting tasks done.

And this is one that I think all of us can really. Be challenged by, especially if we're doing tasks that are more independent, like, or this time of year I found that campuses start to kind of empty out and like there's just not as many people around. And I will admit for an introvert like me sometimes, like a really quiet day in the office is just what I need to get things done.

I actually really love when there's like, A partial snow day or something, um, here in the Denver area, cuz a lot of people will remote work and then I'll go into the office and they'll be really quiet. But for people who are like, oh, those quiet days just kill me. Like, it's hard for me to be motivated when I don't have other people around.

I have some ideas for you too. So the first one is, um, call a friend or maybe this is like a family member or your partner and sit in the same place or on the same call or in the same zoom. While you each work on something that you don't feel like doing. I don't know what exactly is magical about this, but it does really help me when I know that someone else is also like slogging through something that is not super fun and I'm slogging through something that's not super fun.

And then we both feel really good when we get to the other end of that task. So this is something that I find really helpful. I would even. For me, it's helpful when I have a supportive person in the space. This happens a lot with my partner, like if I'm working on something, he might not even be working, like he might be like reading a comic on his iPad or watching something on tv, but just like having someone else in my space that is generally supportive of me, , like as a person, helps me to like power through and, and get a few more things.

Another option here I think, is to choose something small that you want to use to reward yourself for getting the task done within a particular timeframe, and then assign purchasing that thing to someone else who needs to confirm that you completed the task. So this would work really well with like a family member or a partner.

Um, but basically it's like, what is like a little thing? Maybe for me it would probably be an ebook. Like what, what's a little thing that I. Purchase and then let the person, my partner know, um, and, and I have to like check in and show him that I did the thing before I get the. . And then the other idea that I had for accountability or external support was something that I see a lot of people doing and I love following along with this is when people share what they're working on through social media before they start and then update along the way.

And this is something that I have definitely done in the past. Um, I recently did leave Twitter, which is probably a topic for another day. I'm. Betting that some of you are not super active on that platform anymore either. Um, but I used to do this through Twitter, um, and other platforms where I would kind of update on my to-do list throughout the day and kind of let people know what I was working on and like check things off my list and, and show people that I was kind of working through things.

I think that this can actually be a really helpful form of accountability if that's something that you need is just to use social media in that way. So I will also say, um, I think that this works. I kind of design these experimental methods for like tasks, you know, like individual things that you're trying to get done that are not feeling super fun.

But I also think this kind of thing can work for like a day that you're not looking forward to. or like right now, I'm kind of in the midst of a week that I'll just admit has not been super fun. I, I have a lot of difficult meetings at work right now related to a, a project that I've been working on, and there are meetings that just take a lot of like, time, energy, and like we're.

Not everybody's super happy in these meetings and I, I think we've all kind of been involved in various things with our jobs where we kind of just look at our day and think, Ugh, this is gonna be a tough one, you know, to get through. And I think with these kinds of motivational ideas, the idea is just to try to give yourself something positive.

And so what I ended up doing this week is I basically designed so. Every day that I can look forward to at the end of the day. So, um, tonight, uh, I, I, as I'm recording this, this is actually the night before I will post because I'm a little behind on, on my working ahead with content, but, um, I went to dinner with my partner and that was like the thing that I was really looking forward to.

And last night we watched a new show, um, that I had wanted to watch that's like, based on this series of books that I read. And I was really interested in kind of seeing how they had. and later on this week, you know, I wanna carve out some time to like do some reading at the end of the day and like that's gonna be my reward.

But part of it is just kind of planning ahead so that I have something that I can kind of look forward to and that I feel like I'm, you know, I'm gonna get that little reward at the end of the day. And I don't think these things have to be complicated for me. It's like dedicated time with my partner.

Like running over to Chipotle and grabbing something to eat. Sometimes we go grocery shopping just to kind of like wander around the store together a little bit and have a little bit of time outside the house. Um, outside my office, like all those kinds of things are, are nice and I think that sometimes designing your week around that so that you know, you have some kind of bright spots to look forward to can be really help.

Full. So I have talked in a previous episode about the concept of bright spots, so I'm gonna link to that in the show notes in case that sounds interesting to you. But I just wanna say, if you're feeling not super motivated this time of year, I don't think you're alone. I've worked with several coaching clients lately who are kind of struggling with this.

I see it in myself, I see it in my colleagues. The closer we get to the end of the year, the more tired we get. There's just that feeling of like winding down and still a lot of things in our plates and, and that can be really tough. So I would also love to hear if you. Experimentation methods to stay motivated.

You can always email me at hello@drkatielinder.com. I always love to hear from you. Thanks for listening.

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