You are listening to, you've got this episode 334. 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 thought I would share a little bit of some of the methods that I recently used to prioritize some tasks.

I get this question like all the time from people who often feel like overwhelmed by their task list. And on a recent weekend, I actually went through kind. Steps to prioritize what I had in front of me cuz I was feeling a little overwhelmed. And so I decided to kind of document and then talk about some of the things that I did and how I kind of thought through that in case it might be helpful for you.

This time of year can be so chaotic in higher ed as we're like ending an academic term, um, at least here in North America with the timing of how we do that. And, and there can be so much going on and it can feel, it's just easy to feel like super overwhelmed and stressed. So, um, I think that there's also just a lot of different ways that tasks can be prioritized and it's helpful to talk through what some of these different methodologies are other than just the deadline default, which is typically what we do.

We look at our list of to-do items and say, well, what is due first, I'm gonna tackle that. So, um, I thought I would just talk through this. So recently I've had some more open time on the weekends and um, this is something I've blocked a little bit more for myself, just to give myself a little more margin to get things done.

And I often like to use that time to get ahead on tasks that I have on my plate. So I'm just gonna talk through how I set up this task list and a recent weekend and the decisions that I made when I was executing it. So first, what I've done recently, sometimes I take a weekend task list and I'll do it on like a piece of paper.

Um, but recently I've been doing this on my. And I break it up between what I wanna get done pre weekend. Um, and sometimes these are things I do on like a Friday evening just to get a jumpstart. Sometimes it's like throughout the week the things I wanna get done and then what I wanna get done split between Saturday and Sunday, and dividing up these tasks into larger time chunks of what I wanna do on each day helps me see like the scale and the scope of the tasks and the projects that I wanna make progress on, and just kind of have it all in front.

So most recently I had kind of this open weekend and I actually had a ton that I wanted to do, and it made me feel really overwhelmed. I, I kind of looked at this weekend list on my phone and it was a combination of tasks for my day job that I needed, like a little extra uninterrupted time to complete tasks for my side business.

This was like content creation and some admin tasks I needed to do, and also like some personal tasks like food prep, exercise, self-care, all of these kinds of things. Combining themselves, um, to overwhelm me with all the things I wanted to get. So here are some of the strategies that I work through to decide on execution.

Um, when I was having that overwhelmed feeling, so first I looked at the task to see which were the ones that were making me feel the most stressed out. Um, and I had a couple of things on my list that I had been procrastinating and that were making me feel overwhelmed, even though the rest of my list was.

Pretty manageable and kind of related to that stress check-in, I also started to think about what my future self would really appreciate me completing. So, um, for instance, if I have something that I wanna complete by a particular deadline and I don't get it done on the weekend, then it automatically gets moved to like a weekday, evening task.

And, If I don't feel motivated to do it on the weekend, I know I'm gonna feel even less motivated to do it in the evening on a weekday. And I know I really wanna have that time for recovery during the week because my, my days at work are often quite long. I'm interacting with a lot of people. I'm often really tired, you know, by the end of the day.

And so I really like to have my evenings be kind of quiet and, and not like high expectations of what I need to get done after my workday is. I also thought about the things on my list that I wanted to do or that I felt like doing. And what I'll often do is start with those tasks with, um, With tasks that that actually feel good to me.

They feel positive. Like there's something that I've been looking forward to doing, I just haven't had the time to do, and that gives me some kind of momentum when I'm starting to tackle other things on my list. So I also wanna make sure that like one task on my list that I'm not really enjoying or that I'm not looking forward to, doesn't like bleed over to make everything on my list feel more negative.

So it's actually nice to kind of go through and say like, what feels good here? Like what are the things that I'm actually looking forward to, or that I think would. Okay. Then I look at the tasks to see which ones can get completed in the shortest amount of time. Now, sometimes we build things up in our heads and they actually don't take very long, but, but in our minds, it feels like there's just like a really big task.

Um, but when you sit down and do it, it's, it's like a few minutes. So I look at the things to really understand like, how much time is this gonna take once I just sit down to, to actually get it done. And then I like to intersperse the shorter tasks with longer ones so that I can kind of keep my energy up and feel like things are actually getting checked off, you know, on my list throughout the day.

Then I also review my list to see what tasks I might be able to do simultaneously. Now, this is a real trick for me. So, for example, I often put on my list, and these are examples of tasks that I really look forward to finishing up a book or finishing up like an audio book. And, um, partially this is because I set really ambitious reading goals for myself throughout the month.

Um, if you followed me for a while, you know, I, I document this on YouTube. I'm often reading several books a week. Um, and many of these are on audio. So I will kind of check in with myself of like, what am I trying to finish over the weekend? Weekends are a great reading time for me cause I often have more time to do that.

Now I can do an audiobook while I'm also like doing the dishes, folding laundry, completing food prep for the week. And that allows me to check like four things off my list when I can combine the timing of those tasks. So I will often string together the tasks that I can do while I'm listening to an audiobook.

Because they don't take a lot of mental energy. Now, if I'm like drafting emails and things like that, that's too distracting. I can't listen to an audiobook and follow along with it and be also, um, listening to or, and like completing these tasks. Um, but if I have stuff like cleaning, easy, easy to do. So once I've done all of that reflection on the tasks in front of me, I might make a more concrete plan of what I actually want to do.

So I have an open couple of hours of work time on a Saturday morning, often before I need to shower and get ready to see clients. And so I'll take that block and I'll figure out like what's gonna happen in that two hour block. And, um, I'll treat it like a sprint, you know, like what are all the things I'm trying to get done?

And then I kind of take a break. I get ready, I see some clients. And then I reorient myself in the afternoon to what I wanna do next, uh, on my. Now, one important thing I do when I'm tackling my list is I create a space that I call future. And this is kind of at the bottom of the list. And this basically means I still need to do the task, but it might not get done immediately.

It's just kind of on my radar. It's on the landscape of things I need to be doing. And these tasks often have a date, um, affiliated with them. So for example, content that I need to create in the future for the podcast or the blog has like specific dates that it needs to be posted. And as I work through the tasks in front of me, I'm also really like reevaluating my list kind of constantly to see what I might move to the future.

If it doesn't have a hard upcoming deadline and I'm just like not getting to it, you know, with other things that are, that are going on that I am checking off, um, I, I often can kind of shift that to the future. Now this is the benefit of being a procrastinator. Um, I work ahead quite a bit and so this means I often have margin to make those kinds of decisions.

Now, not always, I do procrastinate sometimes and, and then it kind of, I have some pressure, I've gotta get something done, but for the most part, I have the flexibility to kind of move some things around if I want to. Um, and that's helpful because it, it gives me some choice and kind of autonomy throughout my weekend of what I actually want to kind of, uh, keep moving.

Now the other thing I often do, um, and I've mentioned this before in my retreat settings as well, is I also add any extra tasks that I do to my list, even if they weren't like originally on my list, so that I can track the full picture of what I'm getting done in a particular period of time. And this is something that often comes up on the weekends, like I'll plan ahead of what I wanna get done.

But that doesn't mean that I've thought through the full picture of everything that I'm gonna do, uh, over the weekend period. So a good example of this is like, sometimes I'll realize like, oh, I have laundry to do. Um, let me kind of add that to my list as I'm doing it to make sure that it's being kind of cataloged as something that I was working on over the weekend.

Now for me, it's really important for me to not lose track of what I actually get done, especially when I'm, I'm feeling overwhelmed or I'm feeling underwater with all of my tasks. It's incredibly motivating to see all of the things that I'm able to complete, and it also helps me to do basically kind of informal time tracking so that I know for a future weekend what is typical, like what I'm able to get done.

And then I have a better sense of like what I can put on my plate into the future. Now this is another question that I often get from people is how do you actually like efficiently or effectively track how much this stuff takes in terms of time so that you're not constantly like underestimating how much time something takes for you to do.

Now, for me, I overestimate. Like I, I will put less tasks on my list if I have a certain period of time. I like underestimate the time I have available and I overestimate the time that something's gonna take me because I don't wanna get caught in a situation where I have like, thought so optimistically, you know, about what's on my list that I'm just not getting done what I wanna get done.

And um, so going through all of these different strategies, Really orienting myself to the reality of what's on my list, what do I like, what do I not like? How long do I think it can take? What can be done simultaneously with other things? You know, all of these things are ways for me to kind of like wrap my head around what's actually on my list, what needs to get done, and what is the strategy that I wanna use to actually tackle it?

So this is like a very, like real time update of how I'm typically managing my weekends, um, because there's always quite a bit that I, I want to get done. But having all of these things on the list also lets me build in, uh, really effectively, more restful periods, making sure I'm getting my reading in my solitude time.

My jigsaw puzzle time has, has been like something that I've been doing for, for fun recently. If I wanna build in a nap or rest or other kinds of things, errand running, like all of this helps me to see. What's on my list and what I'm really working around. So I would also love to hear how you are prioritizing tasks recently in what can be a very busy time of the year.

You can always email me at hello dr katie linder.com. I always love to hear from you and the strategies that are working well for you. Thanks for listening. Thanks for listening to this episode of You've Got This. You can access show notes and transcripts for each episode@drkatielinder.com slash podcasts.

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