You're listening to You've Got This, episode 371.

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 want to talk about establishing baselines.

And what I mean by this is when you are in a period of your life, and it can actually be a very short period of your life, you have to kind of look at what is going on around you and say, "What is the baseline of what I actually need to be focused on right now?

And what are the things that I can let go of or maybe have some flexibility around?

" And I am thinking about this partially because my own life is very full and very busy right now with a lot going on at work.

But also because I'm seeing a lot of people around me fall to various forms of illness because it is just the season and people are having to negotiate with themselves of what can I actually get done in this period of time when I don't feel very well.

So I'm just kind of been thinking about what are some of the things that become non-negotiables when you are in a period where you have to really prioritize and start to strip some things away.

Now in my own work life, I am having pretty busy days where I'm trying to get as much done as I can so that I'm not taking a ton home, you know, at the end of the day.

I also am taking things home at the end of the day just because of the nature of the projects I have going on and the amount of meetings I have during the day.

And also I'm starting to have more evening events and things that I need to be going to and things are just feeling very, very full.

But I've noticed that there are certain things that even in my own mind, I'd kind of like unconsciously said to myself, these are baselines that are not going to be negotiable like during this period.

And I, I started to kind of collect like, what are some of these things that feel so important to me, that I feel like I can have like some semblance of control in the the midst of like a lot of other things that maybe don't feel as in my control.

And so I thought I would talk a little bit about today, where I'm establishing these baselines and why, and what are some things that I'm letting go for now and, and being kind of a little more flexible around.

I would definitely also tie in this conversation with my word of the year of devotion of really trying to be devoted to myself and kind of my own self-care and self-preservation to make sure that I can offer, you know, my best to those around me.

So one baseline that I have held since the very beginning of the year is morning workouts.

And I blogged about a little while back, and I can go ahead and post this in the show notes, this concept of going for the gold, which is basically hitting all of the Peloton badges in various challenges.

And because I have all the Peloton machines in my house, it's like this is something I can kind of focus on.

And this basically means like working out every morning for about 45 minutes.

And this is a mix of, you know, the bike, the row, sometimes walking, kind of depending on what I need to do and like a strength workout.

And I have created a calendar for myself to know what I need to do.

So I plan this in advance.

I know exactly what I need to do.

I know how long it's going to take and I've been able to keep up that routine now for about six weeks.

So this is something that has become a new baseline for me.

And part of it is even if like the rest of the day kind of like, you know, goes in a direction that is not what I had planned, I at least got in my workout.

And I have, you know, that piece of devotion to myself and to my health, that part got done.

Because I know that when I get home at the end of the day, the last thing I want to do is a workout right now.

I'm just too tired and I want to just like veg.

And I also get home later and later, depending on what's going on at work.

And so I just wanna have a lot of time.

I really need to kind of like get myself toward, you know, in early bedtime.

Okay, the next baseline is to triage email before shutting off for the day.

Now, sometimes I can get this done during the day, depending on what is going on between meetings.

And if I have enough margin, I've talked about this in a couple other episodes.

But if I cannot get this done, I've basically committed to going home, opening up my laptop, and triaging email, and just making sure that I am not getting, one, a bunch of emails stacking up that just is going to make me feel really overwhelmed, and two, that I'm not bottlenecking anything for anyone else who needs me to like review something.

Now in the newer role that I'm playing at my job, I just have an increased volume of email, and so I'm really trying to get into like a routine of how do I kind of work through that amount of email.

I love being an inbox zero person.

For a while I was like an inbox 10 person.

Now I'm like an inbox 20 to 25 person, but what I don't want to be is like an inbox 100 plus emails person.

So I'm really trying to just triage and get the emails down to a manageable number so that I know what I need to take action on the following day.

A third baseline for me is keeping my normal bedtime.

So I know that it's easy to kind of creep later and later, especially if you feel like you're not getting enough like me time.

And I've I've certainly had this desire where it's like, I just need a little more time to just be with myself and to like not be working.

And sometimes that's just like scrolling social media, listening to an audio book, whatever that might be.

But it's so important to me right now to get good sleep and to make sure I'm keeping my immune system in a really good place and that I can get up early enough to do those workouts that I've really tried to keep in my bedtime at 9pm.

And that is actually the latest I will go.

There have been nights I will acknowledge in the past six weeks or so where I have fallen asleep at like 7 30 at night because I'm just super tired of everything going on.

But for the most part, I'm able to stay up until about nine and then crash.

Okay, a fourth baseline, this was kind of the final one that I had really thought about, was prepping bulk meals in advance.

So on the weekends I have really tried hard to devote time, and sometimes this ends up creeping into like Monday night or Tuesday night just depending on you know like the timing of and how many meals I have you know that I've prepped from the week before.

But typically on the weekend and actually as I record this I have soup cooking on the stove literally right now as I'm recording this, I'm really trying to prep my lunches for the week in advance.

Now I think I've talked about in a couple other spaces.

I was on a soup kick for a long time.

I am still on that soup kick.

A couple other things that I've incorporated into my snacks is like a mix of crackers like rice crackers and some gluten-free pretzels and this like peanut butter filled pretzel you know thing.

I kind of do like a mix of those and then I've also started doing chia pudding as well as like an afternoon snack which is really high in protein and that's basically just chia seeds with some almond milk and I usually put in a little bit of oats so it's kind of got like an overnight oats feel to it and I'll snack on that like with some fruit.

So I have a lot of things that are very standard in my like meal rotation, my snack rotation, and it just makes it super easy to grab and go in the morning and to make sure I'm getting a really nice like nutritious vegetable filled meal at least for my lunch time.

Now dinner time sometimes we get more takeout, just because of what's going on or it's a little bit more like whatever I feel like eating.

But for now, prepping those bulk meals for lunches in advance has been a continued baseline.

Now let me also tell you the things that I'm starting to let go of for now or just being flexible around.

These are things that ideally I would love to be able to do, but right now it just doesn't really feel possible.

I'm just kind of relaxing my own expectations, being kind to myself, giving myself some grace.

The first one is taking a lunch break or having like a lunchtime walk.

Now depending on you know the season and how busy things are at work, I was doing this pretty consistently for a while and I've got a couple of routes around my campus that'll take like a 30-minute walk you know at lunchtime just to get away from my desk, away from screens, and you know have some fresh air in the middle of the day.

Lately this has has been a little bit harder.

And part of that is because lunchtime is one of those times where I typically don't have meetings, sometimes I do, which gets in the way of the walk.

But also it's the time when people know they can come find me if they have like a question or they need to talk to me about something.

So it's becoming more and more common that while I'm like snacking on my lunch, somebody will come in and grab me and talk to me for a while.

And then I can't necessarily go for the walk because I'm, I'm having that like meeting that I wasn't expecting.

Now, sometimes I will grab a person and go for a walking meeting instead.

I'm trying to do walking meetings when I can to get outside, get that fresh air, but it's something I'm starting to relax a little bit just because it's becoming a little bit more challenging to do.

The second one that I mentioned, I'm being a little more flexible around, is leaving work on time.

I have some evening work sessions now where I have colleagues that were working on a writing project and we just cannot find the time during the day to do that.

I have some meetings with people who also have a busy schedule like I do, and the only time we can find a connect is after 5 o'clock.

And so rather than having a 7 AM meeting, I would prefer to have a 5 PM meeting.

And then I have-- sometimes I have an evening event.

I have a dinner coming up this week that I need to go to.

Last week I had a happy hour that I needed to go to.

So sometimes there's just stuff after work that I have to hang around for.

And that has shifted my schedule a little bit as well.

The other thing that I've noticed I've had to be more flexible around, and this one is really tough for me, is daily responses to emails that are outside of my work.

So this is like emails that come in from like people who listen to this podcast and they're like asking a question.

Sometimes it's like a client email.

If it's something that's kind of admin related, I typically delegate that to my partner at this point.

But I don't, I used to be able to do this like every night.

I would kind of like triage the email outside of work as well.

And that's becoming harder to do because I'm often bringing work home.

So I tend to leave this kind of clean out of my other email boxes until the weekends and I get to it sometimes Friday night into Saturday morning.

And then I do that same kind of like triaging.

The amount is less and I'm able to get through some of it during the week, but I would love to be more responsive to like everyone coming through my inbox.

And right now that, that feels a little bit challenging to do.

The other thing I'm kind of letting go for now, and I got to say this kind of hits me, hits me in the heart a little bit is having things done days in advance.

So I've talked about before being a procrastinator, not a procrastinator, which basically means I like to be working way ahead to give myself buffer time and margin and the nature of the projects I have right now are highly collaborative, which means I can't always control when other people are getting things to me and sometimes that's happening kind of at the last minute.

And I've had to really just like accept that and know that like my work style is not the same as other people's work styles, and we're all basically doing the best we can in the midst of like very crazy jobs.

So I think that this is something that, um, when I can control this, I am controlling it.

So I am doing content creation ahead of time.

I am doing like laundry, you know, like bulk folding of laundry ahead of time.

Like I'm really trying to do things like bulk food prep and things like that, that I can control kind of in my personal life, but sometimes the work stuff I can't work ahead on.

And that's tough.

I would love to have a little bit more buffer and margin just for my own kind of peace of mind, but I realize this is a season right now where I can't always have that.

And so I'm just trying to be a little more flexible there.

So all that to say, I would expect that you probably have seasons in your life where you need to establish new baselines and you need to think about What are the things that have become non-negotiable?

And what are the things that you are willing to be flexible on or you have to be flexible on given kind of what's going on around you?

And I find this to be really helpful because one of the things I have noticed is those baselines for me are a lot about kind of like my own health and wellbeing.

And it helps me to know that I'm still prioritizing that even in the midst of things that are feeling kind of challenging.

And also I can kind of look at the things that are being more flexible and decide, okay, when can I incorporate those things back in?

When I feel like I have a little bit more control and I'm able to do that.

So I would love to hear if you are establishing new baselines for yourself and what that looks like for you.

You can always email me at hello@drkadylinder.

com.

I always love to hear from you and thank you so much for listening.

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