You're listening to You've Got This, episode 426.

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 the power of doing small, nice things for other

people.

Now, some of you may be listening to this episode and saying, "This is super obvious.

Of course we should be doing this."

But I have to say, I look around me right now and there are a lot of very stressed people

in my personal life, in my professional life, and the stress is completely warranted.

They are struggling through a number of different things.

And I've really just seen the benefits of doing small, nice things for people when they

are super stressed and they are in need of a boost.

And of course, it also boosts my spirits to do nice things for people that make even a

small positive difference in their lives.

So in this episode, I thought I would talk through some of the examples of what I've

been trying to infuse into my work life and my personal life recently to see if any of

these things might be nice reminders of what you might want to include in your life as

well.

So the first one is thank you notes.

And I don't always take the time to hand write a thank you note, but even a quick note in

email can be a really kind way to acknowledge someone.

So lately we've been running a lot of searches on our campus for executive level leaders.

And I've been really trying to thank and acknowledge the folks who are offering all of the logistical

support for these visits.

They do a ton of work that often goes unseen, but I want them to know that it is so appreciated.

So taking the time to just write a quick note as a search is wrapping up, or even in the

middle of a search if we had like a catered meal or something that worked out really well,

just kind of saying thank you.

Thank you for everything you're doing to put this together.

Now the second kind of small nice thing is notes of encouragement.

Now I like to write notes when I know someone is going through something really challenging,

and I would put these in the category of like, keep your head up notes.

I also like to send out notes when I know someone is about to do something tough.

So I might write a note of encouragement or even like a text when I know someone is about

to go like on a job interview, just so they know that I'm thinking of them and rooting

for them.

Now some of my colleagues will let me know if they're heading into like a really difficult

meeting that they know is going to be challenging to facilitate, or they're just concerned,

you know, about the outcomes.

And this is often when I will write a note of encouragement just to say, I'm thinking

about you, you're going to do great.

Let me know if you want to debrief after the meeting.

Now the third kind of note is congratulations notes.

Now of course we can also take the time to write a note of congratulations when someone

achieves something of note.

And we are about to enter into the award season for many of our institutions.

So you may know someone who receives that kind of acknowledgement for their teaching,

their research, their service, their leadership.

This is kind of the season where some of those awards are happening.

But I also like to write notes sometimes to people who are like featured in our campus

newsletter for an accomplishment, or they're kind of featured because they've done something

that is newsworthy.

And so I always write a quick note and I just keep it short, but I just extend my congratulations

for being included in that publication, just so that they know that I saw it.

And I thought it was really cool and I wanted to congratulate them.

Now the fourth category of small nice things is small gifts.

Now there are several people in the office where I work that like to celebrate things

like birthdays and when people come back from vacation.

And recently my assistant came back from a several month stay out of the country because

she was caring for a family member.

And I welcomed her back by sharing some cake and like bringing in some treats for our office

mates and just putting it in this kind of like central kitchen area.

And it was a nice way to just celebrate her return and also to have kind of a festive

spirit with my colleagues.

And it wasn't something that took a lot of time to do.

It was just kind of like a small gift or a small way of acknowledging this person who's

incredibly important to my work and also beloved by everybody on our floor.

Now I also think there is a small nice thing, which is basically a thinking of you message.

And these are often text based for me, but I like to let people in my life know when

I'm just like thinking of them.

So for example, a friend of mine has a family member in hospice.

And so I reached out the other day with a text message, just saying like, I'm thinking

of you and I'm thinking of your family.

My mom is also recovering from hip surgery.

So I've been trying to reach out to her regularly as well.

So if basically if someone's going through something that feels like hard or isolating,

I just want them to know that I'm thinking of them and that they're kind of on my mind

as they're working through something.

And then another category of small, nice things that I was thinking about is follow up texts

after big events.

So I think we've all experienced the exhaustion that we can feel after completing a large

event.

And that might be like a conference that we planned or a commencement related event, or

even like a speaker series or candidate visits for an important hire that we're making.

I mean, all of these things take a lot of planning and we get to the end and it can

just be like this feeling of exhaustion.

And after these kinds of events, I like to send a quick note or a text to colleagues

to just say how well they did.

And I think that as you can maybe see from some of these earlier examples, I just don't

want someone to go unacknowledged.

I think that there's a lot of hidden work that happens in academia.

And I think we all see this and oftentimes like free work that we're volunteering our

time or we're doing things that are just not always acknowledged.

So I think it's a good way to make sure that I'm sharing the value of someone else's work

when I do a follow up text and just say, this really was fantastic and you did a great job.

And also I think sometimes we just forget to do this.

And so I wouldn't want anyone to ever feel like, you know, they're not necessarily receiving

the thank you for all of the hard work that went into something.

Now these are some things that I have personally done in the past, you know, several weeks or

months, but I can also say how much I have benefited when people have done these things

for me.

So for example, I had a colleague who had recently asked me for a favor, a professional

favor, and I completed the favor for her, of course.

And she gave me a thank you note and just said, like, thank you so much for doing that.

Like I know you didn't have to.

And it was something that was just really kind and small and not something that I really

was expecting, you know, but that was really nice.

I've also certainly gotten notes of encouragement and definitely like the keep your head up

notes from my colleagues, especially when I'm working with a lot of other leaders on

different projects.

I think that people tend to just pay a lot of attention to how each other is doing and

who's up on a particular day, who's down on a particular day, because right now there's

a lot of ups and downs in our professional lives, especially in higher ed, with a lot

of things that are going on in the news with our students, with our faculty and with our

staff.

And I say that across the industry, not just in my own institution.

Now recently I also had to send out like a kind of, I won't say it was like a major announcement

to my campus community, but it was a big milestone that I was kind of talking people through.

And I sent out a campus wide email about this and I had several colleagues reach out and

just say, congratulations.

We know how hard you've been working on this issue.

This, it was like an initiative, a larger initiative.

And they just kind of reached out to say, like, thank you for the work that you've done.

Congratulations on sending out this email.

We know that this is a milestone and it was really nice to just receive that.

Now I will say in the small gifts category, this is primarily often what I'm receiving

from my partner.

So it is especially during times of stress or where he knows that I'm juggling a lot

of things.

It's not uncommon for me to come home to a small gift that he is just kind of like was

being thoughtful and wanted me to know that he was thinking of me.

And I always appreciate that.

And this is not stuff that has to be like expensive.

Sometimes it's like a treat that he picked up at the store while he was getting our groceries

or something like that.

Now I also have recently had several folks reach out to me with kind of thinking of you

messages and you know, this is related, I think to people that I know that are not necessarily

in the higher ed environment, but they know kind of what we're dealing with in the higher

ed environment.

And the same way that I've been reaching out to colleagues that are in like federal government

jobs and saying, I'm thinking of you and just checking in and seeing how you're doing.

So things like that are all coming back to me as well.

This is not just me putting things out, small, nice things into the universe.

I am certainly receiving them myself also.

And I'm so grateful whenever I do receive something like this, because it's such a reminder that

we are all paying attention to each other.

We're watching out for each other and we're trying to have a, like an ethic of care about

our work and about the people that we work with that I think is really important and

it makes the work all the better.

So of course I would love to hear about small, nice things that I could add to this list

to do for people.

Or if you have had a small, nice thing that someone has done for you that was really impactful,

what are some of your favorite ways to be acknowledged and recognized?

And how do you like to acknowledge and recognize other people?

You can always email me at hello@drkatylinder.com.

I always do love to hear from you.

Thanks for listening.

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