You're listening to You've Got This, episode 430.

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 some of the benefits of letting your brain putter

around.

Now, I think we all know what I mean by puttering, but typically we think of this as like physical

puttering, like decluttering or doing the dishes or laundry.

One of my favorite things about like a weekend morning when I'm like unscheduled and I'm

just at home is I just putter around.

I wander around my house and I like do little things here and there and I put in a load

of laundry and I will, you know, put away some things that wander downstairs that need

to go back upstairs and I just kind of putter around my house.

And as somebody who's a real homebody, this is something that I just deeply enjoy.

It's very relaxing.

And I would guess that you have something like this as well, where you just kind of

putter around your house and it can be something that maybe you don't get to do all that often.

Well, I was thinking the other day that there's a mental puttering as well.

And I was actually doing some mental puttering and I was like, why is this feeling so satisfying?

And I realized it was kind of the same thing as this like puttering around my house, but

I was allowing my brain to kind of putter around.

So I thought I would share some of the things that I was doing that was allowing for this

feeling.

And I would guess there are infinite numbers of things that would be mental puttering that

you could put on this list.

But for me, there were certain things that felt really satisfying.

And here are some of what those things were.

So the first one is I mentioned in a previous episode that I've been doing some education

back into like my yoga practice.

And I had some educational videos for a class that I needed to work through.

And one night I came home from, I think this was like a Friday night.

So it was, it was after a long week, I was really tired.

And so I just kind of turned on some of these videos and I think I had like a load of laundry

going in the background and I was just kind of like working my way through the content.

And I didn't really have a whole lot else that I was doing, but just kind of paying

attention to this and allowing my brain to just kind of like take in this information.

Now sometimes after a long week, I struggled to have more intake because there's a lot

that happens in a week and I just need to rest.

But this was also something that felt very restful as I was doing it.

And then the next morning I had a little bit of more time.

I kind of put myself to bed at a decent time, got up early the next morning and I was able

to kind of wrap up these educational videos that I had started the night before.

So there was kind of this like really satisfying starting of the puttering and ending of the

puttering the next day that made it feel very like luxurious.

And I could take the time I needed to really look at that content.

Now the second kind of mental puttering that I often find myself doing is catching up on

my YouTube watch later list.

So if you are not a YouTube watcher, you can have this option when you create an account

of having something called a watch later list, which basically is like, if you're browsing

YouTube and something comes up and you don't have time to watch it in the moment, you can

just put it on this other list and come back to it later.

And so I collect all kinds of things on my YouTube watch later list.

Sometimes this is somebody that I follow on YouTube and they have a particular video I

don't want to forget to watch.

Sometimes it's just, I go through the regular browsing of YouTube and there's some random

thing that I'm kind of interested in.

But when I can catch up on this YouTube watch later list, what I often find is there's a

bunch of different stuff on there.

And so I just kind of like pop around to like different things that are interesting to me

at that particular time.

And a lot of these videos are not super long.

So I get kind of this like really fun, like quirky list of things that I get to work through

that I really enjoy.

Now kind of similar to this is when you start to assess and kind of like close out your

browser tabs.

Now if you were like me, um, I know some people are, are pretty, um, I don't even know the

right word to use.

But I have, it's abundant what they have in their browser tabs.

I probably get up to maybe 15 or 20 and then I'm like, okay, this is too much.

Like I can't go much further than that.

I know some people who have like 50 tabs to a hundred tabs open at any given time.

It's a lot.

So at some point though, whatever your limit is on your browser tabs, you will start to

kind of poke at them and say, okay, this feels like there's too many things open.

What do I actually have here that I've opened?

And I love this kind of mental puttering where I'm just going through my browser tabs and

saying, okay, like, do I still need this open?

Why was, why did I save this?

What is the purpose of having this open right now?

And I kind of assess what's going on with that particular thing.

Sometimes it's like a podcast episode that I wanted to listen to.

Sometimes it's like a quick article that I wanted to read, or it's like reminding me

to do a task or something and going through and kind of like checking off those browser

tabs can be really, really satisfying.

Now kind of similar to this is reading anything that you have collected over time.

So if you do like the pocket app where you collect a bunch of articles, or if you have,

you know, maybe a feed reader where you have a bunch of stuff coming into your feed, if

you've kind of collected something over time, you can also kind of do this mental puttering

where you're just kind of sorting through things and seeing what's there and maybe checking

some things off as read and just kind of like browsing.

I love the mental puttering of like browsing a bookstore or browsing at the library.

This is something I would also call a kind of mental puttering.

And for those of you who are still ordering hard copy magazines and you have them kind

of piling up or you are a catalog person and they're like piling up, this is the ultimate

form of mental puttering is kind of flipping through these things and eventually setting

them aside or, you know, recycling them and just, you know, going through this pile of

stuff that you've collected over time.

All right, I've got a couple of more.

Hopefully this is giving you some ideas that you might want to do your own mental puttering

soon.

One of them is just catching up on social media posts.

Now I know that there is kind of, I would say a shaming around just like browsing social

media and some people really say like at the end of the day, this is like not a good productive

use of your time or depending on what you're looking at social media about, like maybe

there's some stuff there that's like not good for your mental health.

I get it.

But I also follow a lot of social media that for me is like the latest books that are coming

out or it's somebody's artistic process or it's something that I consider to be kind

of positive or they're updating on something like having a baby or whatever.

And sometimes catching up on social media posts can actually be really kind of fun and

satisfying.

And I think it's kind of similar to the YouTube watch later list where my brain likes to kind

of jump around and have different kinds of topics and different kinds of things that

are shown to me.

And you know, you could definitely just go to the, um, like browse function of any social

media site and see what the algorithm gives you.

That's always kind of interesting as well.

But if you've curated a list of people that you genuinely enjoy catching up with and you're

really curious about what's going on with them, this can be a nice way to just allow

yourself to do some mental pettering.

Now the last thing that I had on here was this concept of organizing digital files.

I do feel like this is something that you can probably do in the background of other

kinds of things that you might be doing.

So if you're like watching a television show or a movie or something, you might be kind

of doing your organization of digital files.

And I talked recently on the show, which I will link in the show notes about the power

of archiving.

And I think that going through digital files, similarly, if you have like those magazines

that have piled up, I will often pile up like PDFs of like readings that I want to look

at.

And I do need to eventually go through all of this stuff and decide, do I still want

to look at this?

Is this something that's still interesting to me?

I don't want it to get kind of lost just because it's in some file somewhere.

So I think organizing digital files can be another form of kind of mental puttering and

decluttering that we would often do in our physical puttering around the house as well.

So I'm curious if this has ignited for you a desire to do some mental puttering, first

of all, but also if you have other things that you would add to this list of how you

tend to do mental puttering.

So you can always email me at hello@drkatylinder.com.

I always love to hear from you.

And I do hope that you find some time in your schedule for some mental puttering one of

these days soon.

Thanks for listening.

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