You're listening to You've Got This, episode 432.

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 talk a little bit about my process for how I start

writing a new book.

Now, this is something that I've definitely talked about in the past, but it's probably

been a little while because it's been quite some time since I've written a new book.

I'm not counting the edited collection that I just worked on, although it is a new book.

It's a totally different process than when I write a book that is a full manuscript myself.

Part of why this is on my mind is because several weeks back, I felt like I stumbled

into accidentally writing a new book.

I wasn't necessarily expecting to have that happen, but here we are.

I think that this is something that is going to be a deeper topic that I want to explore.

I'm not ready to share the content yet, but I am going to share more about the process.

Basically how this started was several months ago, it might've even been a year ago, I can't

even remember, I had this idea.

It was literally a sentence in my head.

I wrote a note, just a sentence-long note in a blank Word document, and I saved it on

my desktop of my computer because I was like, "There's something there."

I'm not sure what it is yet, but there's something there.

When I was in the last stages of working on this edited collection, which we just turned

in as I record this about two weeks ago, I started to play around with this new topic

because it was something that I was seeing examples of in my work.

I was starting to think about, "Okay, maybe I can start to flesh this out a little bit."

I jumped on AI and I had it ask me a bunch of questions to try to start to flesh out

this one line topic into a framework because that's what I was thinking was there, was

behind this idea there might be a framework with some definitions, some examples, different

things that I could think about.

Through this batting ideas back and forth and doing some of this reflective work, I

started to outline some chapters and I started to think about the order of the topics and

the ideas and really what is the argument and the arc of the book.

What am I trying to say?

This is actually one of, I think, the most relaxing ways to go about starting writing

a book.

I don't have a contract.

I'm not writing a proposal.

I'm just playing with it and trying to understand what am I trying to say that I see in the

world that I'm trying to describe this framework and what is a solution that I'm offering based

on a problem idea that I'm putting forward.

I started talking about the book with just a couple of people just to test out the ideas

and I started to think about the structure for the book.

For this particular book, I feel like I need to use vignettes that will help me to describe

the kinds of examples of the problems that I'm seeing that I think this solves.

I haven't really done that in a book before.

That was something that was interesting to think about.

What are some of the case studies basically that I could leverage?

When I started taking notes, I was in a presentation the other day and I started taking some notes

on ideas and I filled a whole page with ideas of what these vignettes could be.

The cool thing about starting to ideate on a new book is you can take little notes here

and there of things that you think are relevant.

I'm not really drafting content yet.

I'm really just working around the edges of trying to understand what this is.

Part of that for me right now with this particular idea is starting to define the terms that

I'm using in this book and to talk about the specific examples to help me explain what

those terms mean.

Without going too deeply into the content, this is a book that's about leadership development

and there's basically A, B, and C. There's an A way of going about things, there's a

B way of going about things, and I'm actually arguing for this C model and saying that A

and B on their own are not effective.

They can be effective in certain situations, but they have their drawbacks.

How do we move toward this model of C, which is more effective, particularly given the

complexity of all the things we're dealing with right now in higher education?

One of the other things I started to think about as I'm working around the edges of the

idea is maybe there's diagnostic criteria that people can see themselves in the concepts

that I'm talking about.

They can say, "Oh, I'm operating more in this A framework," or, "I'm operating more in this

B framework," or, "I'm operating more in the C framework.

How are these things actually showing up in my work and the things that I'm doing?"

Then I started to open up a Word doc and just start dumping all these notes in so that I

can start to play around with ideas.

I have at this point a structured outline of the chapters and what I think is going

to be the order in which I talk about some of this stuff.

It was only after I did all of that, and I gave myself this no pressure, just play, just

write down some notes and things.

It was only after I did all that that I started to look around to see, "Is anybody else talking

about this in the way that I am thinking about?"

Because who knows?

Maybe this is a concept that already exists out there and other people have already figured

it out.

There are people who are using similar language to what I'm doing, but they're not using it

in the same way, which I'm like, "Okay, that's interesting."

For the framework C, framework A and B, I had a way of talking about that.

C was something that through my reflective activities and playing around with the content,

it emerged.

It wasn't something that I had originally started with.

The language that I'm using to describe it is definitely not something that I'm seeing

other people talk about.

That was interesting just to do some light searching.

In terms of the next steps, I need to do a deeper literature review because just glancing

around online is not enough, obviously.

I want to see who's talking about these topics and are there things that I can leverage that

maybe already exist to give more of a foundation to what I'm describing, like leadership theories

and things like that.

I want to start to mock up some content for an introduction and an initial chapter to

test out the ideas and also to see how quickly I can do the writing.

Because I feel like with something like this, it may be something where I do quick research

treatments of the chapters and have the basic bones of what I'm trying to say.

Then I go back to the literature and shore it up based on what I'm looking for.

Whereas with other projects, I think about my dissertation, for example, which turned

into my first book, I was really looking at the literature first and it was very emergent

of what was coming out of the literature.

Then I was looking at very specific primary sources that I was analyzing.

This feels different.

This feels almost like I have the ideas and I want to put the ideas down first and then

use other sources to shore that up.

I want to think about that.

I guess eventually I need to write a book proposal and decide how far I want to get

with the book before I pitch it to someone.

I think right now I'm just fine with plugging away and seeing where it goes and not having

a lot of pressure about a deadline.

My life is very full right now, so this was unexpected to have this project come along.

Then I think the other question for me is what publisher do I want to work with?

I have a current publisher.

There's another publisher I've been looking at that I'm intrigued by and I'm curious about

whether or not I might want to engage them and think about if this could be a fit for

their catalog.

I don't know.

I think that starting out with this project and allowing myself to turn on that creativity

faucet and just kind of see what comes out, it's nice to do that without pressure.

At this point in my career when I have several books under my belt and I'm not really doing

it for any reason other than I kind of am interested in it and I have an idea and I

want to see if it could be helpful to other people, that takes a lot of pressure off and

it actually allows me to have a super flexible timeline depending on what I'm hoping to do.

I may periodically update about this as I'm going through the coming months.

I'm not sure how this is going to fit in to my schedule if I'm being honest because there's

just a lot happening, but it's kind of fun.

It's fun to have this little project on the side that I can kind of noodle around and

see what's there.

I'd be very curious to hear how you start a new big project like this and if you end

up ever like stumbling into it in the way that I've described with it being a little

bit maybe accidental.

If you want to share your process, you can always email me at hello@drkatylinder.com.

I always do love to hear from you and as I said, I'll keep you updated as this is developing.

Thanks so much for listening.