You are listening to, you've got this episode 328. 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 Lender. On this episode, I want to talk about the kinds of things that tell me to wake up and pay attention to myself.

These are like the orange or like red flags that tell me that I'm not in a healthy place, and that could be like physically, mentally, emotionally, and I feel like it is so important to pay attention to what these things are. But I also feel like the challenge is to like name them before they're happening so that you can actually pay attention when they do happen.

And I feel like I've had some of these things like build up lately and I wondered if sharing, you know, some of these things that I'm defining as my little, like orange or red flags could really help you to identify what these are for you too. Because I think that for me, I like to take action when I know that something's not quite right.

So here are some of the things that I've really been paying attention to lately and then what I'm doing about. . So the first one is sleep. Um, this has been the biggest red flag to me lately, that I am not really sleeping as well as I normally do. One of the things that I've really prided myself on over the years is that I get seven to eight hours of sleep every night, and I've had people ask, you know, uh, Many times over the years, like, do I sleep because I'm a relatively productive person and they think I'm like up all night.

You know, like doing all these things and I actually have, sleep is so important to me. It's important to my mental health, it's important to just my health in general. And lately I have found that my sleep cycle has been completely. Thrown off on a number of different nights. I will like wake up in the middle of the night or like the early morning hours and my brain just like switches on and I can't get back to sleep like I will.

I will just lay there and think and process and problem solve and it, it's really challenging as someone who like loves to get a full night's sleep. . So sometimes of course I just get up and I work or I, I get up and I journal or you know, something along those lines. But I've really noticed this for the past several months.

And another kind of little flag to me is that I also have not been able to take naps. So even when I carve out the time to do it, like on a weekend, I've really struggled to get my brain to switch off, to allow me to relax enough to take a nap. So here is what I am doing about this one. First of all, I'm taking vacation time, which I think is super, super important.

As I've mentioned on a couple of episodes, I'm taking a full week off. Um, this is something that I made an annual goal. I knew that this was something I was struggling with, and I went ahead and just scheduled that time to make sure it was on my calendar. and, um, I feel like I just have really needed that.

So I'm taking some extra time off just to kind of relax. I'm also working on doing quieter activities at night that keep me away from screens, so things like puzzles while I listen to, like an audiobook, having a cup of tea, meditating, journaling, you know, things that are kind of just allowing me to process anything that's in my head that I don't wanna like wake me up in the middle of the night, like let's just get all of that out before I go to.

So I'm not necessarily seeing, um, consistent progress on this yet, but I will say that this past weekend as I'm recording this, I got a full night's sleep and I woke up feeling so amazing. Like I I, it was like night and day. And so I'm super motivated to like get back on a, a good track with this. . Now the second flag that I kind of pay attention to is my energy levels.

Now, it will not surprise you given what I just said about my sleep, that, uh, I'm not always feeling as energetic all the time. And this is something that I'm noticing mostly in the evenings after work, where I just feel like run down. And I had a night, um, this past week where I went to bed at like seven o'clock.

I mean, I, I was just really, really tired. So here's what I'm doing about this. , obviously first I'm working on my sleep. I think that that's a really, really important piece of this, but I'm also working on making sure that I'm eating like a little bit more clean so I have more veggies, more protein. I'm cutting out sugar, I'm making sure that I'm staying hydrated throughout the day.

Like I basically like, let me go back to the basics of like health, wellness, make sure that I'm like fueling my body appropriately and that I can kind of note. Um, I'm starting to see those energy levels shift now. The other thing I noticed recently that was kind of an interesting sign is I was really craving eggs.

And, um, if, if you have followed along and listened for a while, you know that I'm a practicing vegan. I've been a vegan for over 20 years. And, um, it was really weird that I was like, why am I craving eggs? And of course, you know, if, you know, your body craves the things that it needs and, and obviously I was wanting protein, so I started to build in more protein into my diet just to make sure that I was like getting what I needed nutritionally.

and I also just did a really, really intentional grocery order where I got a lot of like different snacks that I could make sure I was eating throughout the day. Um, things like nuts that had protein, a lot of different kinds of veggies that I could play around with. Um, and so this is something that I think has really been impacting my energy levels is just paying attention to kind of how I'm fueling my body throughout the day.

Okay. The third flag that I'm paying attention to is getting emotional. Now, I am not someone who is often emotional to the point of crying. There is nothing wrong with crying. I just know about myself that I don't do it very often, and when I do cry, it is often because I'm feeling. Really overloaded. Like I just kind of have hit a wall and I call it like bonking.

Like I just, I kind of bonk emotionally, and I, I love a good cry. I think we all do, we find it helpful at times, but if I see it happening more frequently with myself, I really start to pay attention, you know, that it tells me that I, I don't have kind of the capacity to handle the load that I'm carrying.

So here's what I'm doing about this one, because I had a, a kind of two week period where I cried a couple of times, you know, within that two week period, and I thought, all right, like, I need to be paying attention. Um, one is I'm really paying more attention to my workload and my schedule to make sure that each day is feeling more balanced and that I don't have multiple days in a row that feel really challenging to me.

And the things that feel really challenging right now is sometimes it's just too many meetings. Sometimes it's other factors like, um, if I feel like I'm doing a lot of like relationship management at work or emotional management at work of other people, um, which is kind of part of the role that I'm, I'm playing in the project that I'm working on.

Um, and that comes in the form of like reassuring people. , um, listening to people, but because we're, we're doing, you know, a bit of like, um, even what I would call like crisis management, it can be, uh, a load, you know, when you're, when you're, um, supporting people in that way. and I'm used to doing that, um, because of coaching.

You know, I, I do a lot of that work in coaching and work with a lot of people who are, are challenged by various situations and, and they bring that to coaching. But I, I think, I find that when I'm doing it like all week long and I'm doing it on the weekends, you know, with my coaching clients, I start to feel a little fatigued.

So really just paying attention to that. And then also I'm back to processing my emotions in my journal every day and sometimes more than once a day, which has been a huge help to notice when I'm feeling overwhelmed and extra stressed. So really just trying to process emotion in ways that feel, um, healthy to me.

Now, the last flag that I was really thinking about for myself is a lack of focus. And sometimes I find, um, that like I'm working on a task for longer than it would normally take, or I find it harder to sit down and like focus on like the book that I'm currently reading, for example. Uh, usually this means that my brain is just very full.

and I, I need a break. I, I just can't take any more information in and, um, I'm just kind of struggling to like process cognitively the kinds of things that my brain is trying to process. So here's what I'm doing about this particular flag. in the moment if I'm experiencing this, I really try to step away from the activity and like take a walk or let myself rest for a little while and do something different.

And usually what that means is I'm not trying to like cram more information into my brain. , like, it might mean that I'm like talking something out with someone else, either a colleague or my partner, or I'm just taking a walk and like getting some fresh air and like walking away from the particular thing that I'm, I'm dealing with.

So that's like in the moment it's just like, take a breather. I'm also paying more attention to when this is happening in my day or in my week. So for example, I'm more likely to feel this lack of focus later in the week, and that's when I'm starting to feel, I think, a little bit more just cognitively depleted because my brain is very active, you know, throughout the week I'm solving a lot of problems.

I'm working through a lot of issues, and so by the time I get to like Thursday or. , I'm really starting to feel this lack of focus, even more so trying to build in like more margin into my schedule later in the week and just give myself a little bit more of a break can be really helpful for that. . So what I notice about each of these things, each of these different flags that I'm talking about, is that I'm not seeing the normal pattern that I would expect.

That's like the, the bigger picture flag that I'm noticing. It's really about knowing myself super well, so that I can see if I. Like if I see or feel that something is off or out of joint, I can kind of be attentive to that. And I can say like this, this means something to me that this feels different.

And then I can decide what I wanna do about that thing That's not feeling quite right. Now, I'm definitely someone who has a bias towards action, which means if something doesn't feel right to me, I want to think about why. And then I want to see what I can do to resolve it. And this is somewhere where I often use my journaling.

So if I'm feeling something that is just kind of. Misaligned or not quite right. I'll journal about it and try to figure out like, what is the emotion that I'm feeling about this? How do I wanna try to resolve? and that often helps me to figure out a potential solution that I can like bring to bear that that might help me to feel better or feel more aligned.

So I would love to know if you have the similar kinds of things that help you to kind of pay attention to yourself and know that there's like a flag, like a red flag or an orange flag that's saying, , you need to pay more attention and potentially make a change in a particular area of your life. Um, if you want to share, if you want to tell me more about that, you can always email me at hello dr katie leonard.com.

I always love to hear from you. And what I love about kind of this self-knowledge component, which is definitely something that I've talked a lot about in terms of like radical self-trust, is the more we know ourselves, the more we can start to be paying attention to these things and keep ourselves like aligned and in the best state of moving forward.

If there are things that are feeling like. I don't know, dragging us down, dragging down our energy or, um, making us just not feel like ourselves. That self-knowledge really helps us to know when it's happening and to make the changes we need to, or that we might want to. So I hope hearing a little bit about those four things that I have found for myself is helpful to you.

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