You're listening to You've Got This, episode 346. 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. In this episode, I want to ask you, what era are you in?

Now in previous episodes, I have talked about being in a season and I kind of think about seasons as periods of like several months. But when I think about eras, I think about like several years that you are kind of engaging in a particular thing. And now many of you are, I'm sure. completely familiar with Taylor Swift's Eras Tour.

Uh, this is what's kind of gotten me thinking about this. And people are dressing up as like, representing a particular era, and, you know, it's a, it's a really, um, kind of, there's so many, like, interesting costumes, and kind of how people are engaging in this, this musical event. And it's really gotten me thinking about the different eras that I can identify that I've already gone through, as well as the eras that I think I'm in now.

So I thought I would give some examples of this and encourage you to think about both your past eras and your present eras, and I don't think we're always in just one era, which is what I'm going to kind of talk a little bit about in this episode, because I actually think sometimes these things overlap and maybe even support each other in different ways.

So first, let me give some examples of past eras and kind of what I, what immediately came to mind for me when I thought of this. The first era that came to mind for me is what I'm calling my grad school era. And this is roughly 20, or 2005 to 2011. And this is when I was just really head down, focused on getting my graduate degrees.

What kind of stands out to me about this particular era is, you know, in addition to just being so focused on, like, doing the work of grad school, this was one of the areas of my life where I wasn't really thinking about my career. And I feel like everything that came after this era was very career focused, and it continues to be very career focused, in, like, building my career, developing skills for my career.

And while I was certainly doing that in grad school, I really, at that time, had no idea what I was going to be doing. Like, I was just kind of, like, in the work and, you know, collecting information, outputting papers, you know, I wasn't entirely clear what I was going to be doing. And from the beginning of grad school, I mean, I, I wasn't like drawn to this idea of tenure and, and being a professor.

So I knew I was probably going to be doing something other than that, but I didn't know exactly what it would be. So grad school in my mind is kind of the six year era that I can identify. A second era that I can identify having gone through, and I feel like I'm out the other side of it, is my book writing era.

I had about four to five years from like 2014 to 2019 where I wrote the bulk of the books that I've published and now I've done like seven or eight including like edited collections. Um, solo authored books, co authored books that I've done, and they all happened roughly within this five year period.

And this period really sticks out to me because Even though it was a relatively short period of time, like, it, it didn't feel like I was, like, rushed with these projects. I mean, I always felt like I had an iron in the fire, you know, when it came to one of these books. But, um, it, I don't know, it didn't feel, like, overly strenuous for me.

I think part of that is because a lot of that particular era overlapped with me working in a research unit. And so because of that, I was doing a lot of writing for my day job as well. So this was just, like, my writing era, where I felt like I was really... creating a lot of outputs and both in terms of like book projects, you know, articles and, and other kinds of documents that I was working on for this job.

Then I also identified a third era, which is also roughly a five year period. So I feel like I'm, I'm seeing a bit of a trend here. It's like four to six years is like what ends up being these eras. And the third era identified was kind of my business building era. So this was roughly like 2016 to 2021.

Where I did the bulk of, like, my experimentation with, like, new programs, products, services that I was creating for my business. So this is when I was doing, like, uh, different, like, a really wide range of things. I did webinars, I did, um, speaking engagements, I started to do coaching during this period. I built my coach training program during this period.

I had online courses that I created during this period. Um, so I was doing just a lot of kind of create creation and experimentation of what I thought could be kind of fun and interesting. And I, it's not to say like I'm never going to build anything else for my business. But I feel like when I shifted into the job I currently have, I definitely shifted into more of like a maintenance mode because I just don't have a lot of time or creative energy left over at the end of the day to be building a lot more things.

And I'm actually really happy with what I built before. So I'm kind of just like maintaining the, the programs and the services that I built during that period. Um, and, and I see that that business building era is kind of closing, uh, in roughly 2021. So when I think about how I define an era now, it's usually a period of several years, and it sticks out as having some particular characteristics.

So I thought it might also be interesting to kind of share some of the characteristics I'm seeing of my current era. I don't feel like I have, like, a name for what this era is at this point, um, just kind of the characteristics that I'm starting to, uh, identify for this kind of period of time. So the first characteristic that I've noticed is I feel like this is my like leading campus wide projects era.

For the past couple of years, I've been leading really public projects at my institution and that's going to continue, you know, this year and I'm sure into the future. So I started my job chairing a digital strategy task force that was kind of a campus wide initiative. Last year, I led a budget realignment project.

Um, that budget realignment project is going to continue into this year, and I'm also going to be working on a campus wide working group tied to kind of this larger academic transformation project that we're, we're working on in the provost office. So through all of these campus wide initiatives, Um, I am learning so much about collaboration, project management, organizational development, communication, um, engaging our shared governance bodies.

I mean, like there, there are so many things that I'm learning, but it feels like a trend. It feels like a pattern that I'm seeing in this particular era of my career. The second characteristic is this is definitely a reading era for me, and this should be no surprise to anyone who listens to this podcast.

I just cannot get enough of books lately. They are so helpful to me, and I think partially just to my mental health. Because they serve as like a really nice distraction when I need to relax or wind down. And I have also loved in the past couple of years in particular, exploring really different genres than what I normally read.

So for many, many years, um, I was a mystery thriller reader, and that was the primary thing that I would, that I would look at maybe a little bit of literary fiction here and there, but. was really into mystery novels. And recently I started getting more into romance and fantasy and sci fi, and I have just enjoyed it so much.

And I think my YouTube channel is good evidence of this era. If you want to keep up with what I'm reading, um, I'll drop a link into the show notes for both my YouTube channel and, uh, my Goodreads profile if you want to see what I'm reading at any given time. Uh, okay. The next thing I identified for this era is, um, kind of like, I don't know, I don't feel like it's vanity related, but maybe it's my shorter hair era.

So I recently cut my hair shorter, kind of like a chin length bob, maybe a little bit longer than that. And it is so much easier to style and take care of them when it was longer. So, um, during the pandemic I grew out my hair, like, past my shoulders from, like, a pixie cut. And, um, lately I was just, like, being driven crazy by it.

Like, it just was taking too long. And this is the same reason why I cut it down to a pixie in, like, 2016. I was just annoyed with it. Um, I am not sure I'm ever going to go back to long hair again. I really like the style that I have now. It's so much easier to, like, style and get ready in the morning. So I feel like this is my shorter hair era.

I had one before. I grew it out. Now I'm back. And then the last characteristic that I really identified for this particular time period is what I'm calling like a learning and growth era. And I feel like this era in so many ways has really been about learning new things. And in order to do that, I feel like I've taken some risks and I've really leaned into some new areas of work that I don't have much experience with.

And I've also just dedicated a lot of time to learning new skills as a leader and kind of in the role that I have now, and I have found it takes a lot of pressure off of me to just acknowledge that I'm in a learning phase, because basically it means I'm not going to do things right all the time, and it makes it a lot easier to try new things where I know I can fail at them, or at least I don't have to do them perfectly.

And so kind of acknowledging that this is like an era of learning and growth, which I think many of us have at so many points in our lives. I mean, you can think about my grad school era as another big, you know, era of learning and growth, but just happening at a different level and happening in kind of a different way.

And I wonder for many of us as academics, if, if our different eras that we identify for ourselves professionally are really tied to learning and growth and different levels and phases of what that's looked for. like for us in our careers, that as soon as we kind of like, you know, climb a mountain and we hit a plateau, we're looking for that next thing, you know, that we can learn and grow into.

And I feel like that's definitely been something that I can identify various points of learning in so many different areas, whether that's coaching or yoga or other things that I've done throughout my career. And this feels like another learning and growth area, maybe around leadership. Really thinking about what it means to lead in our current kind of industry and higher education environment.

And it's not always easy. So you really have to think about, like, what are the skills that are going to help us to do this successfully? So those are a few of the different eras that I've identified in my past, in my present. And I'm really curious if you have things you would identify in your own life or career, your own kind of eras that you would name and define.

Of course, I would always love to hear about them. You can email me at hello at drkatylinder. com. I would love to hear about how you're naming and defining your own eras and what that has really meant to you in your life and your career. Thanks for listening. Thanks for listening to this episode of You've Got This.

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