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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 intentionally and purposefully downshifting and what that means when I am going from tons of work to vacation time.

This is something that I have mentioned in the past is a challenge for me.

And I think everyone, you can kind of relate to going from, you know, 10 to 12 meetings a day to all of a sudden you have a completely open schedule and you get to decide how to spend your time.

It's a real shift and you want to be thinking about these things intentionally and meaningfully.

And so I thought I would talk a little bit about how I purposefully downshifted as I went from working my normal, you know, kind of workload to a week away from the office.

And I have mentioned in a previous blog post, which I can link in the show notes, some of the things that I was trying to do during my spring break time away.

And there's some writing in there, so it's not all fun.

But it was really helpful for me to think really carefully about how I wanted to downshift into having just a really different schedule for a period of time.

Now I have found it's really challenging for me to get my brain to do that kind of shift because the kinds of things that my brain is used to doing on a day-to-day basis at work is like jumping from meeting to meeting to meeting, doing a ton of problem solving, and not necessarily doing the kind of creative work that I was hoping to do over the spring break period with the writing project that I've been working on.

And so I was really trying to figure out how can I help myself shift into a different mode And let me tell you some of the things that I did.

So the weekend before this week off of work, I did basically a YouTube binge of like music and dance videos.

And I can try to link a couple of these in the show notes.

But basically, if you search like evolution of dance on YouTube, you will find people, really talented people doing these kind of like decade by decade dances where they talk about like how dancing has shifted over time.

And getting completely out of like my normal creative space, like I am not a dancer, I am not a musician, but I can definitely like appreciate the creativity that goes into some of these kinds of things.

That was really fun to just spend a few hours like going down a bit of a rabbit hole, letting the algorithm like take me where it would take me for these kinds of dance and music videos.

And this is not something that I typically spend time doing.

I focus my energy in a lot of other places and spaces and not YouTube random videos, but it was really fun to do that for an evening.

Of course, I am also doing some reading this week that will not come as a surprise, but I chose a couple of books that I thought would help me to think again in kind of like a different creative way.

So one of the books that I recently read is called The Outermost House.

And this is a book that is basically a nature writing book about a man who spends a year on Cape Cod in a cabin.

And it was written in like, I think 1925 or something like this.

And it's really interesting.

It's a very different genre than what I normally read.

And it's incredibly detailed.

And I will not give you tons of spoilers about this nature book, but there's a lot about birds, if you're interested in that.

And it was just kind of fun, again, to get my brain kind of thinking in a different way.

So I always love to test out new genres and kind of see what that can help me to think through, you know, in my own writing.

So that was really interesting.

Now I also, in my purposely downshifting, decided to spend some time on things that I don't always have time for.

So I've watched a couple of movies.

I have done some resting in the form of napping, that is definitely something that's important Just to kind of like get my nervous system to kind of help make that shift too, and to recognize that like this is a time of rest and recovery and to sub-degree more so rest and recovery than like creative work.

I've really designed this kind of vacation time around a little bit of work, but I would say more of the rest and recovery.

So getting myself to downshift into that mode of knowing that I can kind of like rest and nap and, and just kind of be a little bit lazy has been really helpful.

Now the other thing I've really focused on is what I call task light days.

So I might have a couple of things that I want to get done on any given day.

And this could be like emails that I need to send or, um, errands that I want to run, but I'm trying to keep my days pretty light in terms of what I need to do.

And for the first few days of my, uh, time off Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, I did have like a meeting that I needed to attend on each of those days, like a 30 minute meeting.

Um, But again, like the rest of the day was really open.

And I also focused those task light days on what I would consider to be meaningful tasks.

So for example, I wanted to buy myself a pair of running shoes.

That was one of my tasks.

Um, I wanted to go climbing, you know, that was one of my tasks.

And then I also wanted to make sure that in the midst of those task light days, I was allowing for a ton of flex in my schedule.

So if I wanted to move tasks around, if I wanted to replace those tasks with something else as long as it wasn't time sensitive, I could do that and I could kind of just play with what I felt like doing at any given time.

And this is one of my favorite things to do when I have uninterrupted time in my schedule is just to allow myself to do what I feel like doing.

Now that does mean that I allow some level of procrastination which I think is super healthy given that I'm often a procrastinator and not a procrastinator.

It's really something than I enjoy, like giving myself that flexibility.

So for example, this podcast is being recorded the night before it is being posted and that is a little unusual.

I'm typically at least a few days ahead, but I just felt like doing other things.

And so I allowed myself that flexibility and time to kind of move things around.

So that was really nice as well.

The other thing that I really like to focus on in terms of purposely downshifting is self-care.

And for me, what this has looked like over the past several days is one, lots of hydration.

I have mentioned before, it will always be true that Denver is very, very dry, no matter what time of year it is.

And so this for me was really in the form of like putting lotion, like on my hands, for example, making sure that I'm drinking a lot of water.

And I have at work, like certain habits and routines around like having tea in the morning and having water throughout the day.

And so when I'm home, I have to really pay attention that I'm still hydrating because I don't have those same kind of routines that I'm doing all the time.

So making sure I always have water with me has been really helpful.

And then doing kind of the, the lotion, um, on my hands like a couple times a day, because I find that especially like my cuticles get really dry.

And so really trying to take care of that is like very small, but I find that like during the work week, I don't always remember to do this.

I don't always remember to kind of like pause and like during a meeting, for example, like a zoom meeting, put lotion on my hands.

Now this is something I used to do in the pandemic.

You may have remembered me talking about how I got like a bottle of cuticle oil and I would use it when I was on zoom meetings.

And I've gotten away from that and I need to bring it back.

So I'm starting to do some of that during this vacation time.

The other thing that I have done, which might seem kind of antithetical to purposeful downshifting, it makes sense, at least for me, is to do longer workouts in the morning.

So I am in a schedule right now where I have like a pretty, um, prescribed workout that I'm doing every day.

It's usually a mix of bike, row, and, uh, the treadmill.

Depending on the day, it can be a mix of those three things, but I typically have a limit when I have to get out the door to go to work.

So it's usually about 45 minutes between those three different machines.

And it's really nice to like be able to relax that schedule a little bit and to do a little bit more or to just go a little bit longer if I feel like that's what I want to do.

So this morning, for example, I typically will do like 20 minutes on the bike and I did 30 minutes on the bike.

So I'm not talking about like major, I'm not like running marathons here.

Um, but it's definitely nice to just have that flexibility and know that I don't have to be like out the door at a particular time, and it allows me to just have like really relaxed routines in the morning.

So that is the last thing that I'll talk about is purposely downshifting for me.

It means that I can like allow my day to kind of happen in the way that it wants to happen.

So I can have these longer workouts in the morning.

I don't have to like immediately get ready and shower right after it's done.

I can like have breakfast and kind of linger over breakfast, which has been really nice.

I can have meals throughout the day that are not like fit in between my meetings.

So if I have breakfast and then I'm like not hungry until the early afternoon, like I can eat when I want to eat.

I can have easier access to snacks and things like that, just because obviously I'm home, I have my kitchen here.

Like these are all really, really basic things, but when I have like such a busy, busy schedule at work and I don't always feel like I can just like take a moment.

Like sometimes it's hard to even go to the bathroom in between all the meetings that I have.

So just having like the freedom of like allowing my day to unfold in the way that it wants to unfold has been really nice.

Now the other thing that that obviously involves is listening to myself, listening to my body, listening to how I'm feeling and allowing myself to kind of make choices based on that.

And that to me is also a very downshifting, um, kind of exercise and that it allows me to kind of pay attention to my nervous system, how I'm feeling at any given time, and then to respond accordingly.

Which unfortunately for a lot of us in our day to day work, it's harder to do that.

Now I'm not saying that's a good thing and that I shouldn't be doing this all the time, but I definitely find it so much easier when I have like a wide open schedule and I can kind of play and experiment a little bit with different kinds of things that I might feel like doing.

So that is how I am purposefully downshifting into my vacation week.

And, um, if you want to find out a little bit more about what I was able to accomplish over the course of this period of time, I will be releasing a blog post later this week, talking a little bit about debriefing, um, my spring break time.

And, uh, so far I can just say it has been lovely.

So I am looking forward to posting that soon.

In the meantime, I would love to hear if you have ways of purposefully downshifting and what that looks like for you.

You can always email me at hello@drkatylinder.

com.

I always love to hear from you.

Thanks for listening.

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