You're listening to You've Got This, episode 383.

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 share some of the lighter tasks that I do to boost my mood when in a heavy period of work or when the new cycle is making things feel heavy.

Now right now I know a lot of higher ed campuses, including mine, are carrying extra weight with protests that are happening at the same time as things like commencement.

I know I've talked with several people concerned too about what campuses are going to look like in the fall with the new election cycle.

And even though summer days are coming, this can be a heavier time for people and maybe it's heavy for you for other reasons.

Maybe you're having some heavy days because of other things that are going on in your life.

And what I realized was this week as I had kind of an especially heavier load, I was coming back from being sick, there was a lot going on on my campus, I was finding myself drawn to what I called light tasks.

And I wanted to talk about what some of those light tasks are in case you find yourself in a heavy kind of day or week or month or season.

and you're trying to kind of balance that for yourself or even maybe kind of pull yourself out of that experience.

Now I'll also say this time of year I found on my campus that things can get a little emotionally charged.

There's a lot of tension and some of that can just be because it's the end of the term and everybody's tired.

We're trying to kind of get all those last-minute tasks done before the summer months.

And this is another reason for me at least that I found myself drawn to these kinds of tasks.

Because if I have, you know, an exchange with someone over email or something that feels a little bit tense, I can turn my attention to something that maybe boosts my mood in a different way.

So I thought I would share some of the things that I'm doing when things are feeling a little bit heavy for me.

And they can help to turn things around with my day.

So the first one is writing thank you notes.

So I am a huge fan of personalized thank you notes, handwritten thank you notes.

And I've been doing these recently because I've started to do, um, with the new leadership responsibilities that I took on this year, uh, this calendar year.

I have a division of about 200 people that now kind of reports up through my portfolio and these were a lot of folks that I hadn't necessarily worked with in the past.

And so I started to do a regular events where people could come and just talk with me and, um, beat me and ask questions and get to know each other.

And these are primarily in the form of like weekly lunch chats where I just set up in a conference room and everyone brings their lunch and we all just kind of sit and chat with each other.

And for folks who come and join me for those lunch chats, I've started writing them personalized thank you notes just to say thank you for taking the time, especially during a busy time of the term and just really offering my gratitude for carving out, you know, time in their day to come and hang out with me for these lunch chats.

And I have just found that, you know, whenever I can have an opportunity to write a thank you note, it slows me down, first of all, because I'm not typing, I'm actually handwriting something and I often have to just really think about, you know, the gratitude that I'm feeling and that's something that can always turn things around.

So really enjoy that.

Another task is just to check in with team members via text to say, I'm thinking about them.

So, um, this past week on my campus, there were a lot of cabinet members that were getting pulled into, um, different things that felt pretty challenging.

Um, I'll say we're, we're kind of having some events in our campus that are feeling a little bit hard right now.

And um, I was just, you know, checking in saying I was thinking about people, letting them know that I'm here to help if there's anything I can do.

It just offered a little bit of extra support for those people and also for me because they often responded and said, "Same, let me know if I can help you.

" Similarly, I've also been checking in with my staff on Teams messages.

We use Microsoft Teams at our campus and just sending a quick note just to say, "Hey, how's it going?

Is there anything I can do to support you or help you right now?

" I think sometimes it can feel like it takes extra time to do these kinds of things.

And I actually build it into my calendar.

So if I have margin in between a meeting, I'll say on my calendar, Teams check-ins, just to remind myself to do this.

And I often do it when I'm at my desk for at least 30 minutes, because I want to make sure that if somebody is responding back to me, I'm seeing that response.

And we can have a little bit of back and forth.

So I don't want to send a Teams message and then walk away, because then I'm not going to see their response.

So I do want to make sure that I'm to be at my desk for a moment and that I actually can like not be in a meeting or something and be responsive to people who might be responding to me.

Now of course when I'm reaching out to these folks and I'm asking if they need help, some of them are responding with like, yes, it would actually really help me if you did X, Y or Z thing.

And so the next thing on this list is to actually do the tasks that people ask for help with and then circle back to confirm that they're done and that they're off their plates.

So one example of this is earlier this week, one of my staff said, actually, you know, there's this thing that's stuck in procurement for us right now.

And it would really help me if you could check in with kind of your contacts to see if you can get this moving for us.

And I did.

I was like, yes, absolutely.

Let me send that email.

And let's see if we can get like an update on what's going on.

The other thing that I have on this list of lighter tasks is to give team members compliments in real time when they're doing things well.

So this is something that I was really trying to do this week to kind of boost the mood of people around me to just be very open about what I was finding helpful, how appreciative I was of kind of a lot of people had really positive attitudes this week.

They were really trying to turn things around quickly.

Everybody was kind of jumping in as a team to get progress made on different projects.

And so really giving people compliments about their contributions and how they're really helpful with something I was focused on this past week.

Um, the next thing is to offer gratitude for people in every single email that I'm sending.

So, um, there were a lot of things that came into my inbox this week that I had to kind of like triage or move to someone else or delegate something to someone really quickly.

And, um, I definitely wanted people to know that I, you know, I'm sending something your way.

I know it's a really busy time.

I'm super appreciative of you and your expertise and your ability to kind of turn something around for me.

There were also several things that I had to send to people this week because I was pulled into different meetings and things that were different than what was on my normal schedule.

And I had to like delegate more than I typically would.

And so when people were sending things back to me, I was definitely saying thank you so much, you know, like I know this is like a quick turnaround, or I know this is not something I would normally ask you to do, but I'm so grateful that you were able to get it done for me.

Also a lighter task for me in this past week was it happens to be my niece's upcoming birthday.

And so buying gifts for her birthday was something that was really a lighter task.

So if you have an opportunity to buy a gift for someone, if there's you know a birthday or some kind of event, that was something that I really enjoyed this past week.

I also made a point to call some family members and just check in and focus on lighter topics, like what TV shows people are enjoying.

Sometimes I admit I will call a family member and I will say I would love to chat and please don't ask me anything about work right now.

And I will just I needed an escape.

And so I would love to talk about things like what I'm reading or what they're watching or something else that is a little bit distracting, but not necessarily focused on the the stuff that is feeling heavier, if that's work or if that's something else that I'm experiencing.

So I might even say, I don't really want to talk about what's on the news right now.

I would prefer to just kind of focus on something else.

And so I think kind of setting some of those boundaries when you come into a phone call with a friend or a family member can be really helpful.

Okay, a couple more.

The next one is to look at lighter social media.

And so for me, that's things like book reviews and other accounts that I follow that are very positive.

And I try to stay away, at least for short bursts of time, from things that are going to focus on news media and other things that are kind of adding to the heaviness.

So I might kind of curate a list of people that I'm interested in kind of focusing on more that are in that more positive vein.

And I think for each of us, that's going to look really different in terms of what that means.

And I will say too, A lot of people use social media to stay hooked in with certain kinds of events or politics or other kinds of things that they're interested in, and I think that's completely fine.

But I also think that for heavier periods when you're needing to kind of take a break from some of that, you can kind of curate a list of things where you may be able to get a bit of a break.

And then the last thing that I had on this list of lighter tasks is doing things that I'm really looking forward to.

So for me, this might include like creative work or tasks that I know are going to help me to feel accomplished.

So I will say there was a night earlier this week where I had had like several days in a row of pretty intense, you know, like meetings, and I had to be really nimble with my schedule and things were getting moved around.

I had some evening events at work because we're leading into commencement.

And so we have a lot of like student celebrations and things like that.

And while I really enjoy those things, um, they can be pretty draining for me.

And so I had an evening where I didn't have an event and I just sat down and plowed through like three hours of like tasks and creative work and content creation and other kinds of things that were kind of mine.

Like these were things that I like to do that made me feel like I was checking things off, that I was getting caught up after I was sick, you know, like, and it just felt like so wonderful.

And I even stayed up like an hour past my bedtime to like continue to have this nice energy and it was really really really good.

So I think that everybody's lighter tasks are going to look really different in terms of what is going to help to boost you, but I think it's a wonderful idea ahead of time when we're not in that kind of heavy days or heavy season to start to figure out what these things are that you can kind of lean into when you are in a period where you might need a little bit of a boost.

So of course I would love to hear what are some of your lighter tasks, you can always email me at hello@drkatylinder.

com.

I always love to hear from you.

And I do hope that you have, if you are in kind of a heavy season, some lighter days ahead.

Thanks so much for listening.

Thanks for listening to this episode of You've Got This.

You can access show notes and transcripts for each episode at drkatylinder.

com/podcasts.

If you found this episode helpful, please also consider reading and/or reviewing the show through Apple Podcasts.

(upbeat music) [Music] [BLANK\_AUDIO]