Brenna Clarke Gray:

Hello and welcome to You Got This!, a podcast about teaching and learning and sustaining community for everyone at Thompson Rivers University. I'm your host, Brenna Clarke Gray, Coordinator of Educational Technologies. And this podcast is a project of your friends over at Learning Technology and Innovation. We're housed within Open Learning, but we support the whole campus community. I record this podcast in Tk'emlups te Secwepemc within the unceded traditional lands of Secwepemcú’ecw where I hope to learn and grow in community with all of you.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

And this week, this week, I'm thinking about overwork and workload and boundaries and how sometimes the boundaries don't work. And what the heck are you supposed to do? But anyway, let's get into it.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Well, well, well, if it isn't the consequences of my own actions. How's your October going? Mine is a little flail-y. I'm feeling a little bit overwhelmed. Back in September, I made this real effort to establish some boundaries around work and to try to protect more of my downtime. And I also have all this vacation time to use up. So I have a bunch of really weird, like Friday mornings and Tuesday afternoons off. And I thought, "Okay, I'm going to nail this whole work-life balance thing."

Brenna Clarke Gray:

But it turns out that if the root problem is a combination of systemic overwork and being a people pleaser who can't say no to anything, then just deciding to work less resolves nothing, like nothing at all. The work is still there. It's just not getting done. And what I'm finding is that while I'm still making sure that for the most part, I'm not working in the evenings and I'm prioritizing family time, I'm also waking up at 3:00 AM, certain that I've dropped a ball because I have been dropping a lot of balls. The first time I recorded this essay, I did not have the microphone plugged in. So you're hearing the second round of my chaotic rambling.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Boundaries are important, and figuring out work-life balance is important, but it's not always as straightforward as it looks. I really struggle. I struggle with not just saying yes to everything. Part of it is that I'm still just really excited about the work I do and grateful to be part of this conversation. I think that I'm always a little bit worried that if I say no to a writing commitment or a conference, that that opportunity's not going to cross my desk again. And it doesn't seem to matter how established I feel. I still carry that around with me.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I don't know if that goes away on its own, or if you have to do work. It feels like I might have to do work. I don't want to do any more work. In a lot of ways the fall has been really good. It's been nice to spend more time with my kiddo and I'm enjoying quiet afternoons. But it's easy for the work to encroach bit by bit when I know how anxious I'm going to feel if I don't stay on top of it. And that's a really hard balance to strike.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I think that I need to do some really serious thinking about what projects matter to me and which ones don't, because what I am also noticing is that in addition to those 3:00 AM panic sessions, I'm also finishing a lot more stuff at the last minute than I'm really comfortable with. Like, I'm a procrastinator, don't get me wrong, love a midnight writing deadline. It's my wheelhouse. But it's very rare for me to be working on programming at the last minute, for example. Usually I sort of polish and have that stuff ready to go. But I think that part of what happens when you try to restrict the time spent on tasks without reducing the number of larger tasks is, and maybe this is obvious to everyone else, but the big stuff falls off the side of the desk. Right? I've got big, exciting projects I want to do. And the question is always like, yeah, but when? Yeah, but when? I don't know y'all. This is not really an opening essay so much as it is a place to park my feelings, which, you know what? If you want a place to park your feelings, a podcast is a really good place to start.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

The good news is I have an excellent conversation for you today, an engaging and fun chat with Jenna Goddard who runs our Writing Centre here at TRU and who also will eventually change the world. We have some thought in the conversation to follow. I'll let Jenna take it from here.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I am here today with Jenna Goddard. Jenna, would you let folks know what you do on campus, what your role is, and where people might have seen you out and about?

Jenna Goddard:

Absolutely. Well, I guess it depends on where they might have seen me because I'm often at Iron Road, but on campus, I'm The Writing Centre Coordinator. I also teach student success courses. I've been teaching at TRU for about 14 years. I used to actually teach in the ESL department and for TRU World. So sometimes it feels like I've never left this place.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

So that's really interesting. I didn't realize you had such a history in those other areas. I'm curious about like, I guess an elevator synopsis of what The Writing Centre does. Like if you're meeting new faculty and they're wondering how to best support students, what does The Writing Centre do for our students?

Jenna Goddard:

Oh, well, I love the elevator pitch because I'm always trying to manage expectations of both students and faculty.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

You edit papers, right? You'll edit my paper for me?

Jenna Goddard:

Yeah. That's exactly what we do. We usually try to impose our voices on the student's voice because we don't want to encourage authentic voice in any way.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Sure.

Jenna Goddard:

Yeah, no, that's the opposite of what we try to do. So we really just want to encourage students to become more confident writers. And that's kind of the foundation of everything that we do. Students will come to us. They don't have to have an essay already written. Sometimes they'll just come with an assignment and tutors will meet one-on-one with them for half an hour for a session and give them some feedback, but really just encourage students to think critically about the choices they're making in their writing.

Jenna Goddard:

We teach about writing rather than editing, or at least the focus should be on teaching. Of course, editing is a small part of sometimes what happens. We really try to find strengths in the student's writing and highlight those so the student knows what they're doing well and can continue to do those. And we really just want to address the fear and vulnerability and sometimes negative emotions that are attached to writing academic papers.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Oh yeah. There's a lot of that, hey?

Jenna Goddard:

Yeah, we don't usually get students walking in, be like, "I'm so happy to be here." But usually that's how we hope that they leave.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Right. It's funny. I taught composition for nine years before coming into this role and ...

Jenna Goddard:

Oh, cool.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah, that's my background. It's this fascinating thing when you teach in a writing course, because it's like, no one wants to be there. Nobody elected to be there. Right? They're there because they need that credit for some purpose. And we want them to know that they need the skills too. Right? But so often it's viewed as like this hoop that they jump through.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

And so on the one hand we have The Writing Centre as like this amazing resource that they can draw on. But it's still tied up in all of those emotions that come with composition classes and some grizzled English professors saying, "A third of you are going to fail," and all that kind of stuff, right?

Jenna Goddard:

Yeah. And I'm so glad that you comment on the emotional piece because I think often, the emotional part of writing is sometimes strangely pulled away from the actual act of writing, and it shouldn't be. We should recognize that writing is an emotional thing, as well as a technical thing.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I had a colleague at Douglas who always told her class that crying was part of her process.

Jenna Goddard:

I love that. I couldn't agree more.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

It's an outcome. Yeah, totally. Mine too, especially for revisions. I'm terrible at revisions. Can you tell me a little bit about how The Writing Centre pivoted last year, how you met the sort of moment of the pandemic with services for students?

Jenna Goddard:

Well, I've tried to block that from my memory, but I'll dig deep and see what I can come up with.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

All right, Jenna.

Jenna Goddard:

Yeah. No, it's ... And you know what? I felt like, I was so impressed with the tutors because here are these students who are not only trying to navigate all of the changes in their own classes. All of a sudden they're navigating these changes to the tutoring sessions as well. And I have to say, it really showed me, because we've got the tutors and we have about 30 tutors on our roster. And then we have The Writing Centre stuff. And students are so much more flexible. It was so impressive to see. I was like, "How can we do this?" And they're like, "Oh, we can totally do this." So I was able to kind of be bolstered by their flexibility.

Jenna Goddard:

So what we did was everything online and we use this ... It's called WC Online. It's just the software that we use for The Writing Centre for students to book their appointments. And we were really lucky that there's embedded in that software, a platform for synchronous tutoring.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Nice.

Jenna Goddard:

We first started off with just asynchronous tutoring sessions where students would upload their paper and then get written feedback from a tutor. But so much is lost in that. So much of the magic in a tutoring session is that connection between tutor and tutee, or being able to ask questions and have that immediate response. And that was certainly lost. So we were still supporting students, but we knew that we needed to get better.

Jenna Goddard:

So then we kind of went down this rabbit hole of, okay, which platform are we using? Zoom or BlueJeans or BigBlueButton or whatever it is. But yes, WC Online had this platform embedded in it, which was kind of cool because students would just go to this one place, book their appointment, and then they were able to meet synchronously with a tutor. So there was, they could turn on their camera if they felt comfortable. There was also a chat function. And then they would upload their paper to the appointment. And then, both tutor and tutee could work on it together.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Love that.

Jenna Goddard:

We were able to capture a little bit more of that connection, although with technology there are always issues and obstacles to overcome. So we were able to pivot, I thought, well, just acknowledging that it was a really tough time and people were learning a lot of new things.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

No, it's interesting to hear you say that because it echoes a lot of what Elizabeth Templeman has said about the Supplemental Learning instructors.

Jenna Goddard:

Well, that's really funny because Elizabeth is my dear friend and mentor, and I feel like a lot of things that we would share would be quite similar.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah. Well, I got the opportunity to work a fair bit with the Supplemental Learning instructors, just doing like Moodle workshops and showing and how to use Moodle from the teacher's side of the desk that they don't normally have access to and all that kind of stuff. And I think it was very much the same thing. Like the SI folks had so much energy and enthusiasm to meet the moment. And Elizabeth was just kind of like, "Okay."

Jenna Goddard:

Yeah. Your confidence is making me feel like it's possible.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yes, exactly. I love that. I do love that.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I wonder how it is now moving back to face-to-face. We were talking before we started recording about the range of modalities you're offering. It sounds like you're trying to meet students wherever they are and sort of whatever comfort level they're feeling about being back on campus.

Jenna Goddard:

We are. And just recognizing that people are going to be having a lot of feelings about coming back and trying to, yeah, as you said, meet students where they are. So offering in-person tutoring sessions for those people who just are craving that connection, safely of course, both tutor and tutee wear masks, but also still offering the virtual appointments, which we had. We didn't offer those in the past. And that's something that I learned over COVID was, hey, here's an opportunity to reach more students and at different times, because now we can support students on weekends and evenings. Typically, before, we would just have appointments available in typical hours of 9:00 to 4:30. And now we are, I think, more accessible and that's something we certainly learned over COVID.

Jenna Goddard:

It's really been interesting though. I think there was a lot of hesitancy at first to book in-person appointments. And now I look at the schedule and almost nobody wants to have a virtual appointment.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Oh interesting.

Jenna Goddard:

Everyone is clamouring for these in-person appointments.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

That's interesting. It's almost like it took folks like a few weeks to get warmed up and comfortable with the idea of being back. And then it was kind of game on.

Jenna Goddard:

Oh. And I absolutely understand that. It took me a few weeks to warm up to be back.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah. I'm still not 100% there. I'm interested in how ... I don't know how to phrase this. I guess I'm interested in -- this podcast is I think the primary listenership -- I'm always thrilled when I find out there's a student listening, but the primary listenership does tend to be the staff and faculty of the university. And I'm wondering about how you pitch or explain, or how do you let faculty know what to expect from having students supported at The Writing Centre? Because I suspect, just judging from my understanding, for example, what the chemistry department at my old institution thought, the one semester English course should accomplish. I suspect there's a range of expectations around what The Writing Centre can or should do for students.

Jenna Goddard:

Oh, how much time do we have? And Brenna, if you have any suggestions for how I can better reach faculty, I would just love all of those suggestions. I usually use the faculty list to serve to communicate we've got new resources or here are hours or updates to our services. I also painstakingly go through the course schedule. And I find any instructor who's teaching a writing related course and I email them.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Oh, my goodness.

Jenna Goddard:

Yeah. So I make this list and I think it feels a little bit creepy when I'm like, "Hello, I see that you're teaching a writing related course." It's like, "How do you know that?" So I'll reach out to them because I love to be able to pop into a class.

Jenna Goddard:

I don't know. Maybe I'm kind of old school that way, but I always think the in-person face-to-face is going to be more successful. And I realize that I can only meet a certain amount of people that way. But this way I can manage the expectations, not only of the students, but also of the faculty members, which is a huge part of what I need to do. Because so we track all this data in The Writing Centre, and most of the time, I think it's about 70% of students hear about The Writing Centre from their instructor. So making sure that the right information is getting out there is really important to me.

Jenna Goddard:

I often have to manage expectations around the services, especially around the idea that The Writing Centre is remedial, because I'm trying to move away from that. I don't want The Writing Centre to be seen as this remedial space where only "bad writers" should come. Or, you have that, you talked about that instructor that's like, "A third of you will fail." And that same instructor is the one who's like taking a red pen to an essay and being like, "You need to go see The Writing Centre."

Jenna Goddard:

I really want it to be a space where ... Because as we know, that contributes to the feelings of vulnerability and fear-

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Totally-

Jenna Goddard:

... to enter into a space where they're coming in and they're basically saying like, "I'm not good at something." And whoever wants to enter a space and proclaim that?

Jenna Goddard:

We want The Writing Centre to be a space where all students feel comfortable coming, where everyone can see the benefit to just sitting down and having a second set of eyes on their writing and to be able to discuss writing and to have a conversation about it, as opposed who we don't want to have this idea that the tutor is the "expert" whereas the tutee is that person who's sitting there passively receiving these tidbits of information about what academic writing looks like. We really want it to be a space where people have conversations about writing, and people, their authentic voice is encouraged and tutors don't try to impose again, their voice over students, but encourage them to think about the writing and how the choices that they make in it can communicate different things.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I like that, and I think to me, that's a great ... must be a great place where the student tutors are such a gift because they're not just helping with all those skills, but they're very concretely modelling that students can do this, right? That this isn't just secret knowledge that the professor has. This is something that you can learn.

Jenna Goddard:

And that's something I hear all the time from new tutors particularly is, oh, they have this expectation that I'm supposed to know the answer. And I say, one of the best things that you can do is say to the student, "Oh, that's a great question. I'm not sure, but let's figure this out," and then show them the process of getting there because a student then sees, oh, here's this tutor who's, maybe they perceive them to be an expert. They don't know the answer, but they've seen the process then for finding it.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I love this. And I also, I want to circle back to that comment that the writing help isn't remedial. It's sort of fascinating, right? Because you don't write anything by yourself.

Jenna Goddard:

No.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

It's like when writing is done for publication, when writing is done for professional practice, it's never done alone. The only time we seem to have this expectation that writing happens as a totally solitary activity is in the classroom.

Jenna Goddard:

Absolutely. And writing takes place, I think, in a community. And if we can build communities that encourage that and encourage that collaboration and discussion, I mean, we're going to have a better institution.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Totally. You have this great position where you get to see students, you get to work closely with the student tutors, but you also get to see the students coming in and out of The Writing Centre. And I kind of have this perpetual question, this term, which is like, how are they doing? How are students doing?

Jenna Goddard:

They're okay. Let me just correct you. I actually have the best job, not just a great one. I am so lucky to do what I do. That's an interesting question because I would say it depends on the day.

Jenna Goddard:

I think that I've seen more ups and downs in the day-to-day versus you have the usual ebb and flow in the semester where there's that excitement at the beginning and people are like, "I can do this." And then midterms hit and people are like walking zombies. And then finals hit and they're just like crawling down the hallway. But it's ... I notice maybe more emotion. And of course, tutors aren't counsellors. But again, as I mentioned before, creating space for students to be feeling all of the things that are extraneous to what's going on in that one tutoring session and being okay with it. So, coming in, recognizing that they're stressed and they're stressed about, I don't know, a million different things at this point.

Jenna Goddard:

So I think tutors are recognizing this and also managing those emotions, asking them to take a deep breath, slowing down the pace, kind of those go-tos to create an appointment that's a little bit slower maybe, and encouraging and encouraging them to come back, helping them feel like they're not alone. So I see. Yeah. I actually don't really know how to answer this because I guess it depends on the day. I see tutors having good days and bad days, and students having good days and bad days. I see a lot of appreciation for in-person services again, for sure.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah. Making that connection, especially, I think about it in relation to students who did first year last year. I mean, this has been a theme of the last three episodes, and I keep asking people about this. But, I think about those students a lot, because I always think that second year is kind of when you hit your stride and you sort of feel like you have things figured out. But we have this whole second year cohort right now are really kind of like, as far as interacting with the institution, they're kind of like first year students in a lot of ways.

Jenna Goddard:

Oh, absolutely.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Are you seeing that in the way students are kind of ... Does it seem like there's a lot more students feeling that kind of, "What am I doing? Where am I?"

Jenna Goddard:

Actually, I see more excitement because I think-

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Oh, that's nice.

Jenna Goddard:

And I don't want to discredit all of the work that faculty put in last year because I knew I was working 15 hour days, but I also, I wasn't able to connect with my students like I typically would. I can use this correlation between how much effort I'm putting into connecting with my students and what's coming out of that. And I didn't see that last year. So in my own classroom and in The Writing Centre, I see a lot of excitement like, "Oh, this is what university is supposed to be like."

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Oh, that's nice.

Jenna Goddard:

Yeah.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

That's really ... That makes my heart feel good. That's good. That is an experience that for the students, I think, obviously I think online learning can be and is great, but it's also something that needs to be opted into and that people typically choose for all kinds of reasons. Right? And so instead of being kind of like, "Oh, I thought I was going into first year, but instead I'm in my living room with my laptop," and that's a really different experience. Right? That's a whole set of expectations that are just so, so different.

Jenna Goddard:

And we both went to university. We recognize that the experience is so much more than what's happening in the classroom. And they couldn't even have that similar experience of being in the classroom and meeting people there and then having discussion and those connections being formed. I think a lot of people felt so lonely last year. I mean, I did too, even though I ended up loving working from home, like a lot of people did. It was lonely. And so I see just connections forming. I see, and the appreciation and excitement that those connections kind of result in.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

And it's neat to see those connections being made in these kind of like parallel academic spaces, whether it's Supplemental Learning or The Writing Centre or any of these resources that exist for students to kind of expand their academic community and find more supports. I think that's wonderful.

Jenna Goddard:

Yeah. Oh, sorry. One thing ... Sorry, just came to mind.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah.

Jenna Goddard:

A tutor was talking about this this morning. He said, and I thought this was a really interesting observation. He said, "A lot of my appointments have ... " He's actually a Writing Centre tutor and a peer academic coach, which I can also chat about because that happens in The Writing Centre as well. But he said, "I have a lot of students coming in who," maybe second year students, like you said, did online learning last year. And they're actually just seeking validation or confirmation that they're on the right track because so much happened in isolation. And it's hard to ask for help. And I think it's harder to ask for help when you're not talking to a real person and when you're looking for help online. And he said that so many of them are coming in totally on the right track, but not knowing and just wanting someone to say, "Hey, yes, this is great. You're doing well. Keep it up."

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Oh, bless. Oh, my gosh. I can totally see that. Yeah. Because just like when you work from home and you aren't engaging with your colleagues in the same kinds of ways, you can wonder if you're on the right track, too. That's a totally natural and normal reaction, but not one I had thought of before.

Jenna Goddard:

Yeah.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

So I have a question about how, as a university community, we can support the work of The Writing Centre. I mean, we include The Writing Centre in the little list of things we ask people to put into their Moodle shell. We really encourage people to have kind of a corner, a physical space where resources are kept so that students know that they're there and to normalize talking about it. And one of the things we talked about in a session last week, or the week before was actually talking to students about how you made use of resources when you were a student so they can see that that's part of the process, but ...

Jenna Goddard:

Love that.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I just wonder. We all ... I'm looking at a copy of John Warner's Why They Can't Write on my bookshelf right now. We all have this perpetual conversation with ourselves about why can't students write. But how can we support the active work that's going on in The Writing Centre to kind of encourage that we are really a community of writers? Is that too cheesy? It's a little cheesy.

Jenna Goddard:

No, no. I love the cheese. I'm all about that. And I'm all about building that community. I mean, I'm often encouraging students to come into our space and just make a cup of tea or a cup of hot chocolate. You sit on the couch. We've got plants everywhere. I really want people to see it as a space that they can just come and be, and they're recognized. And people care if they show up or not. And they don't have to have an appointment to come and use our space. Because I actually was an undergraduate student at TRU, and I didn't ever feel super connected to many spaces on campus except the library. I loved the library surprisingly. And I think just encouraging them to be part of that community.

Jenna Goddard:

But what can faculty members do? I mean, all the things that you just said, like encourage or normalize accessing services and talk about, "Oh, I did this when I was a student as well," or, "I wish I had done this. I would've been a much better student." But also those expectations.

Jenna Goddard:

I mean, I do get the students who up and say, "Oh, my instructor said I needed, specifically me, needed to go see The Writing Centre." Encourage all your students to do so. And I know that some ... I mean, I work with a lot of faculty members who are so supportive and they invite me in, or I can chat about the services. They also create an assignment, and part of that assignment is actually booking an appointment with a tutor because that's ... It's not just encouraging them to use the service. It's getting them to form these really good habits. Because accountability is a huge thing. I was certainly that student who wrote essays the night before.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah, same, same.

Jenna Goddard:

I remember. Just a total sidebar. I remember David Keppel-Jones was one of my English profs here at TRU and he was fabulous. But I thought I'd pulled off like this midnight essay and his comment across the top was: This smacks of the heady inspiration of midnight.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

That is such a great comment.

Jenna Goddard:

But, we want to encourage students to come in and see that writing's a process. Take pressure off yourself. You're not going to learn this in this one 30-minute session. You're going to learn this through frequently coming and having conversations about writing and working on those skills and building them. So, yeah, I love it when faculty invite me in, when they can talk about accessing the services or even tie an assignment to the service, and managing expectations around who the tutors are and what they do.

Jenna Goddard:

A huge part of what my work has been over the last two years is how can we decolonize academic writing spaces. I am totally obsessed with this writer, Felicia Rose Chavez. And she actually just, she gave a talk recently that I was able to host. I was so excited. I totally fangirled. But she talks about this wanting to build a community of writers, wanting to push back against white language supremacy that disproportionately affects black students, indigenous students, and other people of colour. And to realize that multiple Englishes is a thing that we value and support, and that we don't expect tutors to be perfect, just as we don't expect students to be perfect in that everyone has their strengths and everyone is growing and learning.

Jenna Goddard:

And I really value the variety of perspectives we have in The Writing Centre from having a huge diversity of tutors. I strategically try to promote tutoring positions to international students, or to students who speak English as a second language. I think that sometimes there's this perception that international students are maybe as a deficit. And I've just heard this from tutors who seem surprised that they've been invited to become a tutor in The Writing Centre. And they thought, "Oh, I thought it was just like native speakers who would be in this position." But yeah. So if faculty could start promoting all of what I just said in their classrooms, that would be fabulous.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I feel like I'm opening a giant can of worms right now, but-

Jenna Goddard:

Oh, let's do it.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

But as you were talking, I was thinking about this deficit model that so often we approach conversations around international students with, it echoes to me the same kind of conversations we're always having about academic integrity, and this perception that there's some really interesting research emerging that it's not actually that international students commit more active academic integrity. It's that instructors go after international students at a higher, faster, stronger rate, right?

Jenna Goddard:

Yes. There's a lot of connections between academic integrity and racism. And academic integrity issues are not international student issues. They're institution issues, and it needs to be addressed by ... It's not the responsibility of the students to shoulder this. It's the responsibility of the institution. And that means the staff and the admin and the faculty working there to teach it. Sorry, I get really passionate. I sit on the Academic Integrity Committee and Task Force. So it's, yeah, definitely my jam or my can of worms.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

No, I agree completely. It's something I'm very passionate about too. And I get so frustrated with this language we kind of use around like, "Oh, we have this culture of academic integrity." Like, no, we don't. We have a set of rules.

Jenna Goddard:

No, we don't. We've really conflated policies and procedure that are difficult for both students and for faculty to manage. Yeah.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah. And much like I think the way writing gets taught, this often becomes a relationship of policing. Right?

Jenna Goddard:

Yeah.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

And rather than kind than teaching and learning. How does academic integrity intersect with the work at The Writing Centre? I mean, it must, right? Tutors must have to have these conversations all the time.

Jenna Goddard:

Absolutely. And I mean, tutors ask, "Okay, so what's the best way if I notice, for ..." Typically, we won't see obviously issues of contract cheating in The Writing Centre. So it's really specific to, we'll notice instances of plagiarism or fabrication. Contract cheating, whole other can of worms that maybe you probably don't want to get into right now.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Not right now.

Jenna Goddard:

But yeah. And so we always approach it from, and I love it because I'm like, "If you just approached things with a lot of positivity and enthusiasm, it'll go over well."

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I buy it. I buy it.

Jenna Goddard:

Yeah. So tutors might say, "Hey, I've noticed here that you've gone and done some other research and that's a great thing. So let's just talk about how to cite it appropriately and give credit." So it's indicating to the student that, okay, I can see that you've cut and pasted this from the internet, and I've noticed it, which means probably your instructor will notice it, but instead of operating from that place of fear and shame, it's, "Hey, you know what? Doing research and finding other sources is a good thing, but giving credit is also important."

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I like that. It's almost like it's a skill that everybody can learn and not like a secret box that only a few people can magically open.

Jenna Goddard:

Definitely.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

That was a tortured metaphor, but I'm going to leave it in. Jenna, we're almost at the end of our time. Is there anything else you would want to share with our community about the work that you do or really anything that you want to share?

Jenna Goddard:

Perhaps just a plug for peer academic coaching, which I think is such a fabulous resource and I think it's underutilized because it's, well, it's relatively new. We actually, I'm not sure if Elizabeth Templeman from Supplemental Learning talked about it in the podcast with you, but ... So it's something that she and I do. Well, actually, let's be honest, mainly she does off the side of her task, but it's this like ... it's like if Supplemental Learning and The Writing Centre had a baby, it would be peer academic coaching.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Oh, I love that baby.

Jenna Goddard:

We do love that baby. That baby is one of our favourite children. Okay, it's getting weird. So it's basically Supplemental Learning leaders who are, they have some training around working one-to-one with students. So they can sit down with students who might just be like a first year student or can be second and third year, but maybe feeling a little bit overwhelmed, or that student who comes to university and they're so motivated and so excited. And then all of the assignments start coming in and all of the midterms start coming and they just get overwhelmed.

Jenna Goddard:

I think back to when I was an undergraduate student and how I studied was to just reread my notes and reread my textbook and probably highlight them. And it's not effective.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

No.

Jenna Goddard:

And I wasted a lot of time doing that. I always think, "I could be such a better student knowing what I know now."

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah.

Jenna Goddard:

So they'll sit and meet with a student and just listen to some of the challenges they're experiencing. And it's all discipline specific. We have these coaches from every discipline law, nursing, science, business, arts on campus. I think that's all of them. I'm second guessing myself. And so they can, a student can meet with a coach in that discipline. And then, they'll talk about some of their obstacles or challenges and then get some really great tips around things like time management or attention management or taking notes or how to study or how to take tests or managing test anxiety. And it's a really great resource, I think, because again, it's to address that loneliness that a lot of students feel like, "Oh, everyone else has their stuff together and I don't and I'm struggling." So it's nice to sit down with someone who has been there and can give some great tips and hopefully make their courses a little bit more manageable.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Oh, I love that idea. I love any situation where we let students model success for each other, because they're so much better at it than we are. Our success models first of all are probably out of date for what students are experiencing. And second of all, they know we've got it figured out. We're employed. It's like ... We don't typically have it figured out. I was just thinking about how much I rely on my group chat to be like, "I'm totally overwhelmed right now." And they'll be like, "Have you done your planner this week?" And I'll be like, "No, I have not done my planner this week. That is why I feel so overwhelmed. Thank you." Right? And it's like-

Jenna Goddard:

And I love telling students this. It's like, "Even the faculty and staff don't have it together."

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Oh, my God. No, not at all. Not at that. I love this idea because, yeah, that's exactly it. It's that modelling and it's that relationship building and it's that sense that you are part of a community and not just ... You're not just here to take classes. You're here to figure all kinds of stuff out.

Jenna Goddard:

Yeah. And what you said about it's the peer-to-peer that is ... I don't know. I used this word before. It is magical and speaking of being easy, but it really is. And I think, I'm pushing 40. Nobody wants to hear it from you. They want to hear it from their peers.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

It's true. And I came up through Supplemental Learning and that's where I first started to teach and to explore the idea of being in a classroom. And it was such a ... so powerful and empowering on both sides. It was empowering to walk into a peer led session and feel like, "Oh, that's concrete evidence that someone here has figured out how to do this." And it was empowering to be the person who is seen as having enough skill to model. Right? That's feedback that goes far beyond a grade in a class.

Jenna Goddard:

And then it impacts you for the rest of your life.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Oh literally, that's why I do what I do. Like the line between, particularly, I mean, it's why I pursued teaching, I think, but even more so faculty support. The line between Supplemental Instruction and faculty support is like, it's pretty solid line.

Jenna Goddard:

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And it's funny. I mean, and what you're talking about is something I feel so passionately about is that, it's about encouraging people to be able to see their value and their potential and to grow their confidence. And I think I came into Elizabeth Templeman's office once and I was like, "Nothing else matters. Only building student confidence." And she's like, "Take a seat, Jenna. And yes, the skills also matter. You can't just build student confidence in your class. Let's also look at those learning outcomes."

Brenna Clarke Gray:

That's so practical. I love that.

Jenna Goddard:

I love her.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

This was a fantastic conversation, Jenna. It was also just really inspiring and energizing. So I'm so grateful for your time today.

Jenna Goddard:

Well, now that we're being recorded, can we just be friends now because I've always wanted to be your friend?

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yes. Let's absolutely be friends.

Jenna Goddard:

Perfect.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

The main reason I have a podcast is so I can make friends. So this is perfect.

Jenna Goddard:

It's a great idea. I'm going to start my own podcast.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Oh, thanks so much, Jenna. I'm leaving this all in by the way.

Jenna Goddard:

Okay. It was so fabulous chatting with you. Thanks Brenna.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Take care.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

So that is it for season two, episode six of You Got This! As always, if you want to write to us, you can email me. I'm bgray@tru.ca. And I'm also on Twitter @brennacgray. And in both cases, that's Gray with an A. All of our show notes and transcripts are posted at yougotthis.trubox.ca, and of course you can always comment on individual episodes there.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I'm going to leave you today with a Tiny Teaching Tip or maybe just a tiny teaching reminder. Everything I flailed about at the beginning of the episode, I think we need to be mindful of what we model for our students in terms of work-life balance and in terms of saying yes to things. I don't think I've had many models in my career of how to say no. I've been supervised by some pretty remarkable people like doctoral supervisor is a superstar. And the effect of that is that I don't think she ever needed to say no. But I do.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Modelling that behaviour is really important. I've been lucky. One of the fun things I'm working on right now is I'm on the supervisory committee for a doctoral student at Queen's. And we were at her doctoral prospectus defence on Zoom this week. And I got to thinking about all the ways we consciously and unconsciously model what academic success, but also what normative academic behaviour looks like. And I'm trying to be more mindful of the different ways of being in these jobs as I work with students more. But I also think this is important for our colleagues, right? We establish the norms of our disciplines together. So making sure that we're doing that in healthy ways is really important. I'm going to try to figure my ass out by next week. I'm going to do my best. I'm hoping you'll be here next week to chat with me. I'm always grateful to have you as a sounding board. And I promise that I'm always trying to model good practice in my own way too.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

So until next time, I will meet you right back here next week, and hopefully I will be a more grounded and balanced version of myself. Would you even recognize her? Take care of yourselves. We'll talk soon. Bye-bye.