

Hello and welcome to You Got This! A podcast about teaching and learning and sustaining community for everyone at Thomspson 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.

And this week, there is no interview. Much as the sun will always rise and much as the rain will always fall, sometime around mid-semester the wheels will fall off the truck and Brenna will not meet her production deadline. Ah. Let's get into it.

So funny story. Last week, when I was recording my interview with Jamie Drozda, my microphone shorted out twice and I thought to myself this is fine. Sometimes, mics are finicky. They're not, by the way. A mic shorting out is not normal. But this had happened with my Yeti back in the summer, it just decided to not work for like a week, and then afterwards it was fine again, and so I thought to myself, "Hey the gods of technology have smiled upon me."

And then on Friday I was recording with my friend for our other podcast, Hazel&Katniss&Harry&Starr, and it shorted out like 6 times, which was great. And I thought to myself, "Okay self. We've got to replace this microphone." So I did. I did replace the microphone, which was great. And I found it on sale, even! And so I thought, hey look at me, look at me picking things up and figuring things out. But between finding and replacing the new microphone and various other things that happened including the editing of last week's episode, which due to the mic shorting out was a quiet nightmare, I managed to lose track of like this little tiny piece of the podcasting puzzle which is I didn't book an interview for this week.

Now, I try to book interviews well in advance because (a) I just think it's the respectful thing to do when I can I try to give people lots of notice, and (b) my mental health is better if I know the interview schedule for at least a month out for the show because, you know, then I know that everything is in hand. It's not a great sign, I'll be honest, when I start forgetting to do things like book podcast guests. It's kind of a central part of the whole having a podcast thing.

It's mid-semester and even though I am no longer teaching. It does seem to me that the ebb and flow of the semester still plagues me. There's something about October, this part of October, November, I guess, by the time you're hearing this — as the days really seem to contract, the weather gets colder, something in my brain seems to shut down for a little while, until I transition to winter mode. I'm also genuinely overextended, which regular listeners of the podcast will know is par for the course.

Something I really want to focus on doing in my own practice is more sustained community and development support and less one-off workshops. Not that one-off workshops aren't great, and they're how I meet so many of you and I love doing them. But they're hard to sustain and they require a lot of energy and sometimes they require a lot of energy without a lot of — I guess what I'm looking for is like, uptake or engagement or development. And for some reason at this time of year that really weighs on me. In spring, I love introducing new topics and seeing people just kind of get clicked in before we move on to something else. That's really fun and lively in the spring, but in the winter, I crave sustained community and I crave seeing your progress and that's one thing that I don't get to do with one-off workshops. I introduce you to a tool and you go off and do something cool with it and you may never tell me about it (which, by the way, you should totally tell me about it if you've been building cool stuff; I would like to know).

Anyway, all this to say realizing I hadn't booked a guest this week, I was going to try to like cover my tracks and be like oh yeah, ah, this is the thing we do every tenth episode. We do some reflective practice. Sure that's a thing that I just invented that's — sounds not bad, hey? I mean, you know, if I wasn't making it up off the top of my head this morning on my walk to work.

I hope you're doing okay. I hope that mid semester isn't hitting you quite the same way it's hitting me and I hope that you're feeling a little bit more capable, functional. But if you're not, if you're struggling right now too, I just want to remind you that it's probably really normal. When I was teaching full time I used to always make sure I had a guest lecture in either week nine or week ten because by week nine or week ten I was sick of the sight of myself and I just assumed my students must also be tired of me. I don't give you that courtesy, incidentally. I make you listen to a long form essay instead. Sorry.

One of the things I reflect on a lot is that it's a real joy to do the work that I do. I bet you probably feel that way about your work too. And that sometimes that makes the balance part hard. Because you want to achieve so much and do so many different things, you want to reach so many students, you want to engage so many members of the community. Whatever it is you do it feels life sustaining and vital. But so is rest. And if you're struggling right now it might be that you need to cut yourself some slack. So this week, I cut myself some slack by recording an essay and no interview. We'll be back to the regular format next week, I'm ninety percent sure. Nothing seems to quite go according to plan, but I'm hopeful. And I know I've talked about rest before lots of times. One thing that's true about me is I'm really really good at theorizing rest, theorizing the systemic challenges of labour within the institution, writing cogent arguments in favour of resistance and refusal. Not so good at implementing them in my own life, to be honest. Real do as I say not as I do energy over here. And so maybe that's what this week is — maybe this week is a reminder that if you're feeling overwhelmed, it's okay to take a couple things off your plate or just move them to a later plate. That's what I'm trying to do this week and I hope you find some space to do that too.

So that is it for Season 2, Episode 9 of You Got This! As always if you want to write to us you can email me. I'm bgray@tru.ca. 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. Of course, you can always comment on individual episodes there. I'm going to leave you today with a Tiny Teaching Tip.

I mean am I? I think I don't feel wildly qualified this week to give you professional development advice. So maybe what I'll just say is it's okay, if the semester is hitting you like a ton of bricks, to find one place to lift your foot off the gas. For me this week it's a much shorter podcast episode, that will be much shorter to edit and much shorter to edit the transcript on and I'm pretty stoked about both those things. I'm not sure what it is for you? Maybe it's changing some reading journals to a completion grade. Maybe it's giving your students a working period on an assignment instead of trying to come up with a lecture that you're not feeling like giving. Maybe it's putting an auto responder on your email and taking a one week sabbatical from responses. Whatever it is that would give you some breathing room and some space I hope you find a way to do it. We are all works in progress — me as much as or more than anyone — and I'm really conscious these days of my need to work on building a sustainable career. It's hard, I mean when working myself to death looks so attractive — kidding, mostly. Let's all work on ourselves. And take care of each other. And we'll talk again next week. Take care. Bye bye.