

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Hello and welcome to You Got This!, a podcast about teaching, learning, community, conversation, and your digital life made 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. It's been a big, big summer full of big, big feelings. Let's get into it.

My friends, it is season three, episode one of You Got This! I am so glad to be back with you for a third season. I have big plans this season. I really want to focus on thinking about the digital strategy that's coming from the provincial government and how that might impact your teaching and your learning, but also just your engagement with digital tools. It'll be relevant to folks outside of BC, as well, but I'm particularly interested in what this means for our teaching and learning practice as we navigate this very strange moment where we've all gone back face to face, hello. We may all have different feelings about that decision, but we've learned so much about the options that come with digital teaching and learning. And we may want to find ways to integrate them. So that's sort of the intersection of what I do here and I'm excited to talk about it more.

How's your summer been? Mine has been interesting. A summer of, as I said off the top, big feelings. I ended up having to go back to Ontario for much of July and August for a family emergency that I wasn't intending that time. It was beautiful to be with my family and it's always beautiful to be in Eastern Ontario in the summertime. But yeah, there were a fair number of feelings associated with that, including being away from my kiddo who is starting kindergarten this Fall. Actually, I come to you to this recording immediately after dropping him off for his first half day of kindergarten. Yeah, well it's a house full of big feelings as you can imagine. A lot of change.

This transition into kindergarten has prompted a lot of thinking on his part about learning and how he learns and how he learns best. He's really good at articulating those things. But it's also, I don't know, it shapes my own thinking. When does this enthusiasm and excitement stop being the centerpiece? Because right now, it's the whole ball wax. It's exciting, but it's also prompting a whole lot of introspection for me. Introspection that is helped, I guess, by the fact that I submitted my tenure and promotion portfolio about a week ago today, just about. I mean, fingers crossed. Because you know what happens if it doesn't go well. It was interesting.

I made the decision to make my tenure and promotion portfolio, or at least most of the contents of it public. Really easy decision on my part because most of those resources are Open resources anyway, the portfolio was really just collecting them together with a bit of a contextual narrative. Anyway, I'll link to that in the show notes. But I've been reflecting a lot about secrecy versus confidentiality and who these different structures serve. And why some people feel really poorly served by tenure as a structure. I don't just mean at TRU, but everywhere. I think that while Open doesn't solve every problem in the world and particularly when it comes to the structure of tenure and promotion. I do think that Open offers some opportunities for radical transparency, let's call it. I think that's worth pursuing.

It's also really scary. It's funny, I wasn't expecting to have such a strong, effective reaction to posting my materials. I think I feel relatively confident in the work that I've produced in my time at TRU. I feel relatively confident in my capacity for relationship building and how that is represented in the work that I do, which as a faculty developer is the whole thing. Yet when I released it all publicly, I was overcome by this sense that everybody is going to find out that I'm a fake. Which I don't know, maybe you already knew. I don't know.

It's a moment of navigation and transition for my family, for all of us, probably. Whether it's a more intentional return to campus and all of the anxiety that brings with it. I still really don't want COVID, like I really don't want to get it. I'm really, really crossing my fingers to keep avoiding it. The amount of privilege that I've had to be able to say that at this stage of the game. But anyway. My more intentional return to campus means that you'll be able to come find me. We can go have chats and coffees in person and we won't have to schedule calls. I admit to being very excited about that part. But that's a moment of transition, for sure.

Obviously, my son's starting kindergarten and all the self regulation expectations that come with that huge transition. Submitting my tenure and promotion portfolio, a massive opening for transition, either a recognition of the career that I've built here or an ending. I guess, one has to be open to all possibilities. The transition that comes as our parents' age. For those of us who are at the life moment of being pulled between two really critical components of who we are, for those of us who have kids. This push and pull between the needs of our parents and the needs of our kiddos. Yeah, I don't know. It's going to be an interesting year. I feel like I have said that every year since I got here. But in fairness, I was hired seven months before the pandemic, so I've never really been at TRU in like a quiet and predictable moment. I'm eager to hear about your summer. I hope you'll follow up with me and let me know. I hope that it was less eventful than mine. I hope your feelings at the start of this term are less big. Mine are really big. They're taking up all the oxygen around here.

Anyway, no interview today, just a welcome back to the show, staking my spot in your pod-catchers and letting you know that I'm going to be here. Whatever you're feeling right now at the cusp of term, whatever you're excited about or nervous about or anxious about, I'm right there with you. I hope we can navigate all these big feelings together. You, me and my five year old. We will get through this together. Just as we have all this time. Because whatever the public messaging and whatever you feel about the state of society at this exact moment, the one thing I know is that our fates are intertwined. We are no matter what, for better or for worse, all in this together.

So that is it for season three, episode one. I cannot even believe I get to say that, 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. In both cases, that's Gray with an A. All of our show notes and transcripts are posted at yogotthis.trubox.ca, and of course you can always comment on individual episodes there.

I'm going to leave you today with a Tiny Teaching Tip, which is to say, I hope that this week and next you are starting your term as you mean to continue, with open hearts and with care. I've been reflecting a lot about when I arrived at post-secondary teaching and the sense I had that I had to be like a real hard ass. I really had this sense that I had to put my armor on and my armor came in the form of intense course policies and putting my sort of smiley, giggly demeanor on hold to be a different version of myself. Sometimes that's true and I'm not here to judge your personal circumstances. But I will say that I felt better about teaching and learning and being with my students when I found a way to close the distance between my classroom self and my real self.

So take that as an invitation in whatever capacity it makes sense to you. I hope that you can start this term as you mean to continue. And with that, I will leave you for another week. But it's so good to say, I'll see you next week. Take care of yourselves and each other. We are in fact still all in this together. And we'll talk soon. Bye, bye.