

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Hello and welcome to You Got This! a podcast about teaching and learning and pivoting to digital for the whole TRU community. 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:

Today's episode is about learning, doing stuff you kind of suck at, and how that's hard. Let's get into it.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

So it's never my intention to turn this podcast into a vanity project, but I am going to tell you a little bit about an event I'm organizing this week because it's how I get to the conversation about doing things you're bad at. So some of you have probably heard the news stories about Ian Linkletter. He's an educational technologist, much like yours truly, but at the University of British Columbia. And he's been very critical of some of the proctoring services and surveillance technologies that are being used with students right now and he's been really vocally critical on Twitter including sharing some links to some support materials that were available publicly and openly on YouTube but were unlisted links.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

So Ian is being sued by the company he was being critical of and it's something that troubles me, a lot. I can't imagine why. If you've seen my Twitter feed, you'll know I have nothing to concern myself with. I'm concerned about anytime critiques of educational technologies are squashed and not just because of personal self-interest, rational self-interest, but because oftentimes when universities select educational technologies, it goes through a process, but I would like to see the process by which we select educational technologies look a lot more like a research ethics board where those ethical questions about how a technology is being used and whether or not it's right for our students, would get properly heard.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

That isn't always the case and many of you have come to sessions where I've talked about some of these ethical issues in educational technology. It's very important to me in the work that I do and the way I want to do my job well. So I'm organizing an event. It's going to be held on Tuesday morning, 10:00 AM our time, Pacific Time. It's a teach-in against surveillance technologies in education. We have some pretty phenomenal guest speakers at the event. Folks who are wonderful and brilliant people I admire deeply in the field. It's been a real privilege to get to work with folks and to create an event like an event that I would want to go to. So the biggest name who is speaking at the event is Cory Doctorow who you might know as a novelist and as somebody who is very outspoken about technology and privacy. But other speakers include Maha Bali who's an expert in care in education. Benjamin Doxtator who will be speaking to the sort of K-12 perspective on these technologies and how they function. Chris Gilliard who concentrates on digital privacy surveillance and the intersections of class and race with technology. sava saheli singh who is a postdoc at the Surveillance Studies Center at Queen's or that was her last position actually, I should say, who's created a whole series of films about big data and data surveillance that are fantastic. Jesse Stommel who many of you have heard me quote before. I admire him very much and his perspectives on education. And Audrey Watters, who is probably the only writer working right now

whose entire beat is educational technology and understanding the relationships between politics and teaching and business, and ed tech. So it's a phenomenal lineup and I can't believe even that I'm exchanging email with most of these folks who I admire so deeply.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

The thing about event organizing though is that I've never done it, and I'm real bad at it. I don't mean that in a faux modest kind of way. Planning an event requires tapping into all kinds of things that are not in my primary skill set. To plan an event well, you need to very clearly see your own limitations then you need to express those limitations to other people so that they can help you with it. Then you have to trust that those folks are going to come through for you and do what needs doing. You need to put your own ego aside and the way you think best to do things and listen to lots of other people take their advice on board. You need to push back sometimes, which I'm shockingly bad at. It's just been a whole growth experience and I'm fascinated by my own lack of skills in this area. I think there are things that I am good at. I think that event planning is not one of them.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

The reason why I bring that up on the podcast today, hey, everybody, here's the thing I'm bad at. Let's talk about it on the radio. It's because I'm actually thinking a lot about my former students. I'm thinking a lot about your current students. I'm thinking a lot about how hard it is to just learn how hard it is to sit with the process of learning and how hard it is to be bad at stuff because it takes a while of being bad at stuff before you're good at stuff. I've been working on this event for, I don't know, well, maybe we're getting on for eight weeks-ish, maybe a little more now. I haven't gotten any better at event planning in eight whole weeks, everybody, which may not be surprising to you, but I find it to be egregious. I'm thinking about students sitting in a classroom where they feel like they're not making up any ground week after week for long periods of time and how frustrating it is and how cool it is of them to stick with it.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Maybe I just want people to tell me I'm being cool because I'm sticking with it. Intellectually, I know that I am learning. I know that there's a lot happening right now that I will put to good use in the future. I know that I am testing myself in all kinds of ways and coming up short sometimes, but also recognizing where my areas of growth are. I'm seeing all the potential professional development that I could do around these ideas to be better at this job and the way we promote the events that we run in this department. I know all of that intellectually and also I'm really tired because knowing all that intellectually doesn't actually make it any easier to sit with the being bad at something. You've all learned a lot this semester and I think at least some of the discomfort that we've gone through together through this period is just because learning is really hard. It just is. And sometimes it sucks.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Welcome to the teaching and learning podcast where the host tells you that learning sucks. But it kind of does sometimes and you know I'm right. So as we head towards finals week, I'm thinking with deep empathy about folks who are learning right now through some of the most challenging circumstances any of us have ever put ourselves through. My hat is off to each and every person who is undertaking a new task right now because I swear to god, I will never plan another event as long as I live.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I hope you'll buy a ticket for this one though. Everything I've just set aside, I think it's going to be great. My own anxieties and ramblings aside, god, I hope you got something out of that. I feel better. I've invited Trent Tucker here on the show today to talk to you about his learning and growing process. Trent, I would say is the faculty member I know of who has launched head first into producing audio and video with the most gusto. And I think you can learn something from his enthusiasm. Let's jump in and let Trent tell you all about it.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Okay. So I am here today with Trent Tucker. Trent would you introduce yourself to folks and let them know where they might have run into you in what I lovingly call the before times?

Trent Tucker:

In the before times. Well, let's see. My name is Trent Tucker and I'm an associate teaching professor in the school of business and economics. I just joined TRU back in January of 2020, pre-pandemic.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Good timing.

Trent Tucker:

Yeah. People might know me from... Let's see. I was at the teaching and learning day during Reading Week. I usually hang out at all of the CELT events online, picking up tips and tricks and things like that. You might see me on a Sunday afternoon with a handheld video camera making a welcome to the week video for my students out on the quad or the circle in front of the international building.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Nice. I love that. Speaking of video actually, it's kind of why I wanted you on the show today. I am not sure any teaching faculty member on campus has spent more time thinking about video and audio. I'm putting together like a really good AV experience for students this semester. As you like I think that's... It's been really interesting to watch your progress on Twitter and watch your toolkit expand. I was wondering if you could say a little bit about the leap into fully online teaching and how you've, I think really embraced it. I'm not sure if it feels that way from your perspective, but that's what I see.

Trent Tucker:

Well, thank you for the high praise. I guess it really started when we were kind of tossed into the blender in March timeframe. All of a sudden I'm like, "Oh, not have to do this face-to-face thing, but online. What do I do?" I thought about my opening shtick when I have a class and walk in. Here's some news for the week and here's something I found in the news that ties into the content we're talking about in class today.

Trent Tucker:

I thought how can I reproduce that? So I decided to do a Rick Mercer style rant, and that's the Sundays out in the... Does that main area of campus have a name? It's not a quad because it's round.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah. I don't know. I call it the quad because I don't know what else to call it. See, I'm also new, right? So I got no idea. Somebody will tell us.

Trent Tucker:

Actually, I call it the grassy knoll.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I like that.

Trent Tucker:

And students don't usually get the illusion, so that's fun. But I'll go to the grassy knoll with my handheld camera saying, "Hey, everybody. Welcome to the week. Here's what's coming up. These assignments, do these dates and here's the content I owe you." I'll end it with, "Here's the forecast for the week. It's going to be sunny most of the week but down to single-digit temperatures." My body craves going out at Sunday at around lunchtime and shooting this thing.

Trent Tucker:

So I've had a lot of fun with that and I did some variations on that. I did the dark and spooky abandoned building thing going into the national building around Halloween time. It's a good way to introduce to the students here's what's going on this week. And it's amazing, I'll go out and I'll shoot about three minutes of video, four minutes of video for my two classes, come home and do the edits and it'll take an hour to actually have the final two 90-second videos ready to go. I'm getting better at it though.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

It's an investment in the skill set. It's an investment in learning what tricks work. It's also I think an investment in deciding what level of perfection you need to hit and where the rough edges are okay to leave in. How are the students responding to those videos?

Trent Tucker:

I really don't know. I think they watch them, because when we have our weekly synchronous time, they'll make comments about videos. It's fun to see. I know that some people are watching them and picking up things. It's really hard to tell out there in video land. You talk about perfection. I used to be a perfectionist and then I started creating these videos. I'm like, "I don't have time for perfection. I'll just do what I do and if I make mistakes, I'll throw those into a blooper reel at the end." Students can watch the very end and they'll see a little one second... What's it called? Test pattern. Yeah, test pattern.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Oh, test pattern. Oh, fun.

Trent Tucker:

Yeah. So yield test pattern comes on in the 12 hertz hum or whatever it is and then they'll see the cut of me swearing on my... Actually, I counted the swearing part, but the wind blowing stuff around and whatever it might be. So the blooper reel stuff is fun. And it costs nothing, right? It builds rapport.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah. When I was a little girl, this is a total non-sequitur, but my brother told me, I had an older brother who is six years older than me, five and a half. He told me that when the test pattern comes on, it means that everyone at the TV station is dead. I was flat out terrified of test patterns for half a decade easy. They still unsettle me deeply.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I love that and part of the thing too is that those imperfections, as you say, they build rapport. They humanize us, right? Our students are struggling with our expectations and they're struggling with things like putting together their own video assignments. So knowing that you mess up sometimes and that you survive and it's all okay is really valuable for them even if it feels a little bit weird to be in that position.

Trent Tucker:

Yes. I model failure on a continuing basis.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yes. It's very true. So you've learned a ton in the last semester and a bit about video and about audio and about connecting with students online. Do you have any sort of tips you would give to someone who has just woken up from the ice floes and is going into the classroom for the first time fully online in January?

Trent Tucker:

Well, I would say audio beats video every day.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Oh, yeah. I totally agree. On this podcast, I agree.

Trent Tucker:

If you have a good microphone, you can get away with a lot. You can make up for bad video. So don't see it as an expense, see it as an investment. I've probably been investing too much in microphone technology, but I have my little handheld camera and it has a built-in mic and it's pretty good. But after going out on the grassy knoll, I discovered there's a lot of wind noise and background noise.

Trent Tucker:

So luckily for me I happen to have a Lavalier mic. I clip onto my jacket and I plug it into the side of the camera and I eliminate that. There's a whole lot of trial and error. I'll go out and I'll shoot my 90-second welcome to the week video and I'll come back and I'll go, "Well, that looks really bad because the camera was pointing directly into the sunlight."

Trent Tucker:

So I'll go back and I'll shoot it again. But it's the kind of thing when I go out there, I go, "Okay, I stand here. These are the shadows and the trees." When I'm like Rick Mercer, wandering around, turning my body, the camera will pick up the wolf on top of the brown house of learning. It'll pick up certain campus highlights that I consciously want to include.

Trent Tucker:

I've got a lot of trial and error. I know where the spot is to stand and how it looks and what settings on the camera. So I can go out and not have to recreate that every single time. So the learning curve has been... I ascended it and so my advice to people new to video in the new year, be like Nike. Just do it. Try it out. Video doesn't cost anything. You can get into creating videos for zero dollars on your cellphone and then maybe invest a little bit of money in a Lavalier mic or a desk mic.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah. That's good advice. Something that Jon Fulton has pointed out to folks before is having to listen hard is really cognitively difficult, right? So it saps a lot of your energy to try to have to listen in and hear what somebody is getting at. It's a lot less of a cognitive load to tolerate maybe crappy video or not quite perfect or a little bit shaky video, but you can still get the content and information as long as the audio is clear. The other thing too is if you're captioning your videos, the captions are only ever going to be as good as the audio that goes in, right? So investing in a decent microphone for that, it saves you time in the long run.

Trent Tucker:

Exactly. I do my synchronous sessions... With my grad students, I do big blue button. And with my undergrads, I do Microsoft teams. And that's just an idiosyncratic thing that I do. But I have been using PowerPoint and PowerPoint will auto caption your voice. So I share my PowerPoint screen and as I speak to the students, it automatically captures. And it's pretty good. It's not great.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I just want to ask, are you finding it okay?

Trent Tucker:

Yeah. I'm finding it tolerable. I've actually had students ask, "Why isn't the captioning working?" And I'm like, "I don't know. Something's up with my mic today." It says low input volume and I'm adjusting every single thing I can find to maximize it. But the students like the captioning on the PowerPoint. And I don't know what they're doing I don't know if they're just turning off the audio and watching on the screen. Maybe they got something else going on, who knows. But it seems to work really slick.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah. We're definitely increasingly seeing students having that expectation of video being captured. There's some really interesting research particularly on Generation Zed learners and their expectation that they can multitask using captions on any kind of video content they're experiencing and it comes from the way they consume media too which is typically with captions on. So it's a real shift in the way we use video, but it's great for all kinds of reasons. We'll talk about this with Chris Adam last week, I guess whether it's processing disorder and it's an accommodation from the institution or just you've got to keep your volume down because you've got a house full of people.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Either way caption helps, right? Language acquisition captions help. We used to think of it as an extra, but I think increasingly we need to think of it as a requirement of our courses going forward. So I'm glad to know PowerPoint works for you because I've been wondering about on the fly solutions.

Trent Tucker:

It seems to work fairly well and going back to the the whole Gen Z thing or Gen Zed, I guess we're in Canada. My daughter who is 23, she will watch everything on Netflix with captions on. I think it's just part of her routine, sort of that multitasking, I can listen if I want, if I want to listen to something else or I don't have the attention right at that moment for the audio I can see it on the screen. If I need to mute something to take a call, I can still watch the Netflix and see the dialogue. It's good to have this dual modality for sure.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah. It's just really interesting how it's had this huge uptake recently and really it's because it's ubiquitous. When I was a kid, if you wanted to turn on captioning, you had to have special equipment to be able to do that, right? In such a short space of time, it's just the default. I think it might even be the default on Netflix for kids now. Because I don't ever remember turning it on, but my son's programming is all... The captions are always on by default. I like it for him for language acquisition, for seeing how words are spelled. It's handy.

Trent Tucker:

That's true.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Okay. So we've talked about tech stuff. We've talked about your video practice which I really just... I'm gonna come to campus on Sunday and watch you do this, and this tip about mics is really important. What else have you learned this term? What else is really sticking with you in terms of the experience with your students so far this semester? Not a small question, I recognize.

Trent Tucker:

I use a lot of different modalities. My courses, I told them right up front, everything is asynchronous. Everything you need to succeed in this class is online. It's there for you. Work at your own pace. If you want to binge watch all of my Excel videos, feel free. If you want to just parcel them out over time, that's okay too. It's all there for you. The time we meet online, our synchronous time during regular class time is set up basically almost like an extended, what's going on this week kind of video thing. Then I'll do Q&A and get into details and do examples. But it's not formal teaching. Of course, everything is recorded and made available to them. So that's been part of the practice. But within the asynchronous videos. I've got a graphics tablet, so I can annotate PDF documents. So it's not just voice over PowerPoint. It's here are the notes, here is the diagram and I'm annotating over that. I recently bought a whiteboard. and I can set up my video camera pointing at the whiteboard and actually get fairly good resolution out of that. Now, I can do teaching videos. I'm actually teaching in front of a whiteboard again. So pretty excited about that.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I bet.

Trent Tucker:

The smell of xylene markers and the squeak of the whiteboard marker and the black soot on your fingers when you wipe the board and all that. When I do Excel videos, I have another piece of software

which will capture all the keystrokes because I used to get students saying, "Well, what was that formula how did you do that?" So much like I can close caption, if you will, an Excel video, here's this formula and they see it... They can't really read what I'm typing in because it's pretty small, but they have a caption bar below that gives them the full thing, right? So all of those little things. I think about what is this video for? What's the tool I need to do? Is it a stand up in front of the whiteboard video? Is it a voiceover Excel video whatever it might be.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

How long do your videos run in general?

Trent Tucker:

Too long.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Making a short video is really freaking hard.

Trent Tucker:

It's like the old Mark Twain or I think it was, I'd write a shorter letter, but I didn't have time.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

It's totally true.

Trent Tucker:

I will record things and I'll look at the clock and go, "Has it been 20 minutes already?" And then I'll have to find a natural point in the video to break it and say, "Here's part one of this four-part trilogy and the way they go with that."

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I'm glad to know you're breaking it up. I mean, from nothing else to upload to Kaltura on those long videos can just kill some folks. I just imagine. I don't know. I don't love sitting in front of the computer looking at video, so the idea of it being broken up is really appealing to me personally as a learner. I try not to always infuse my own personal preferences when I give advice to folks, but I don't know anybody who likes to sit in front of a really long instructional video.

Trent Tucker:

I do the same thing. When I watch LinkedIn learning videos, I'll watch them at speed and a half and if I'm not getting what I want out of it, I'll just quit and find another video. The other thing I do is a really low-tech approach. So you've got notes. You can just read the PDF document and try it on your own. If you get stuck, then you can use the video as a resource. There's sort of a before, here's the first version spreadsheet and then here's the finished problem completion version.

Trent Tucker:

So if you're confident in Excel, you don't need the notes, you don't need the video. Open up the original problem, try it for yourself and then see if you get the same solution. So there's lots of choice for the students on how to wish to use these materials.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

How do you find they're doing this term?

Trent Tucker:

With the content?

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah, with the content. Even just, I mean, in all factors but in particular do you find that they're responding well to the choice and to the options?

Trent Tucker:

I think so. The content in my MBA course, which has got my largest enrollment, which is kind of my reference, we used to have 10 assignments and now we've parsed it down to six. We've sort of chunked out a lot of things. I've been very flexible on deadlines. They have a get out of jail free card so if they get stuck with time crunch or whatever, bail on that assignment without a penalty and things like that.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Oh, great strategy.

Trent Tucker:

There's those kinds of things. I have a sense that maybe some of them are struggling a bit with everything managing that part-time job and that full-time course load and being away from home.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

And the pandemic.

Trent Tucker:

There is a pandemic going on.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I don't know if you noticed. I'm sort of struck by the moments when I feel like I'm being expected to act as if everything is normal. I find them really unsettling in a way that sometimes even takes me by surprise because nothing is normal. I don't feel normal ever. Maybe I'm really feeling this pandemic, but I just feel like there's a latent anxiety about the world. I'm grateful I'm not trying to take a class right now, I have to say.

Trent Tucker:

I know the feeling. I mean, I have two kids. One finished her undergraduate degree. She's taking a post diploma courses at college and my son is in second year, university. I keep asking them, "Tell me what profs are doing. What are their best practices?" My kids don't tell me anything so I'm in the dark. But I check in with them and I say, "How are things going?" And they're finding it tough as well. This new modality of sitting at home, looking at my screen, again is tough.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

What will you take with you? You've invested a lot. I mean, you in particular, we all have invested a lot of labor, but you've invested a lot in learning a particular set of skills or developing a particular set of skills. What about the way you're teaching in this crisis mode do you think you'll stick with as you move into hopefully one day, non-crisis mode teaching where we're face-to-face again and stuff?

Trent Tucker:

When we're face to face again and stuff.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah. I'm a journalist.

Trent Tucker:

I would keep some of the good things about this. I'm on Twitter and I follow a number of people and people are saying, "This isn't all bad, this online stuff." And that whole Rick Mercer rant weekly video thing, keep that up. It builds rapport. It costs nothing. And do I incorporate that video and walk into a class and say, "Hey, everybody. Here's a video for the week"? When I was at University of Guelph teaching the big 600 cedar undergraduate business class, you had to be larger than life because you're a little tiny figure run running around and moving your hands and trying to grab people's attention away from their screens, which is kind of odd these days. But I would do news of the week. So I had a green screen set up and the music would come on, dut, dut, dut, dut and then do, "In business news this week..."

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I love that.

Trent Tucker:

It was one of these things where right in the middle of the class, I'd stop and run the business news segment for a minute just to give people a cognitive break and give them a little bit of entertainment, getting to think about the content in context. I've been doing that with the videos as well that if you're going to sit through a 20-minute Excel video, you might get rewarded with the chocolate chip cookie dough recipe.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Nice.

Trent Tucker:

It's a different modality. I've had students wondering what the next recipe is going to be.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I love that. It does infuse a level of humanity and just... I don't know. I think I really miss engaging with students as people, which in my role was already hard to do and something I had to work out intentionally, but now I really only engage with students when they... Well, when there's a massive crisis they need me to help fix or it's very transactional. I don't have casual conversations with students anymore and I miss it. So I like hearing about ways in which that kind of just incidental conversation is still being built into our classrooms because I think it's a loss when it goes away.

Trent Tucker:

And I find when I do the synchronous pieces, before it'll be like an 11:30 start. So at about 11:27, I'll start a video. Always a music video. Always Canadian content.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Nice.

Trent Tucker:

And then in the chat, I will type in useless trivia, Trent's useless trivia about this Bare Naked Ladies video was filmed in Scarborough and it's really a cover of a Bruce Coburn song.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Nice.

Trent Tucker:

People pick up on that and then I get other stories, "Hey, I met Bruce Coburn, blah, blah, blah."

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Cool.

Trent Tucker:

It's good.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

That's fun. And I think the reward for taking the time to do that when I think sometimes it feels like, but I have all this content I have to cover. Students are much more able to work with the content when they feel some sense of connection. So it's worth it. It's worth taking the time to build those spaces.

Trent Tucker:

And I think as professors we feel that our content is thou shalt cover this many chapters in the textbook. I learned really in my first year of teaching that I can't cover it all in the time given and I really need to focus on the most important bits. I started telling students, "You will learn in this class, but you won't learn in this classroom. You'll learn hanging out in your dorm room with your buddies or around the kitchen table or in the library working on a project." That's where learning happens, not the 90 minutes with me. Although that is special for sure.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Well, and better to establish for yourself the skills students need to leave the class with and worry about in this context especially worry about nailing the skills and stress less about the content, right? If they're missing a critical fact in the next iteration of the course or the subject matter they move on to, they can get that fact, right? But if they're missing the skill set that allows them to succeed in the next piece, that's a problem. And I think especially right now when our students are feeling so wildly overwhelmed, figuring out how to focus on what they really need for that next step is important. And it's hard because

we all got into our disciplines because we love them and we like teaching them and we want to talk about stuff so I get that it's hard.

Trent Tucker:

Exactly.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah. Well, Trent this was fantastic. I'm grateful for you taking the time to chat. I will include if you don't mind some pictures to things you post or some links to things you posted on Twitter like your green screen setup, which I think is pretty epic.

Trent Tucker:

Sure.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Awesome. So people can see that you really have been playing with just about everything, figuring out what works for you. Anything you want to share with folks particularly looking towards winter semester? Maybe they're feeling a little bit anxious about heading back to it in the winter? Do you have anything you would share with an instructor in that position?

Trent Tucker:

Yeah. I would say have fun with it. When I do my synchronous time with the students, I'll put on my radio voice and I feel like Dr. Johnny Fever from WKRP. "Hey, students out there in radio land. Oh, wait. We've got Brenna typing in a comment in the chat. Let's see what she's gonna say."

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I love it.

Trent Tucker:

And it's fun. "So-and-so unmute your mic. You're on the air." Because I feel like a radio host. I'm wearing headphones because that's the way I can best hear them. I've got a microphone in front of me. I feel like a radio host. I might as well play the part.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I like it. There's a larger message there. Just lean into it. Something you can enjoy, right?

Trent Tucker:

Yeah. Have fun with it because... Don't see it as a chore, see it as, "Hey, this is fun. I get to create something different each week."

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Love it. Thanks so much, Trent. That was perfect. Thanks for coming to chat.

Trent Tucker:

You're very welcome, Brenna. Take care.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Take care. So that is it for episode 13 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.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I'm going to leave you today with a Tiny Teaching Tip, and it returns to me being bad at event planning. You know what, I'm not done. I'm still venting. It's been hard, okay? Just joking mostly. No, the reason I'm saying that is because I think that something we could offer to our students right now is a recognition of how hard they have worked this semester. We're all staring down the barrel of finals and it's stressful, and we're all staring down the barrel of a winter break that's going to look unlike any previous winter break. I keep looking at the numbers and I keep listening to Dr. Bonnie and I am running out of hope and steam, and I think everyone is. Can you take some time this week to check in with students and let them know that you can see how hard they've worked? Can you check in with them and give them some reinforcement about the learning they've done, separate from their grades?

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I think probably the students right now who need to know you see them are the ones who are struggling with their marks, but are still learning and sitting with the discomfort and they're still with you, and they've made it this far. Can we take a minute to celebrate that a little bit before we jump right into finals? I don't know what that will look like for you. I'm a masochist and I used to write thank you notes to all my students at the end of term. I loved the process of doing it but I always, always left it to the last minute and would stay up all night writing notes. I don't actually recommend that strategy. But maybe an email check-in or a little bit of audio feedback on an assessment or maybe you reach out with a message to the whole class in a video that just talks about how you know how hard everyone is working and that you know that maybe their outcomes aren't quite where they would have hoped for themselves or that you can see that they're not always getting it, but that they're trying. My generation gets a bad rap for being the trophy generation. I'd like to point out when we were five, we were not giving ourselves the trophies. Other people were giving us the trophies. But it does help to know that you are seen in your struggle. Maybe that's why I told you how crappy I am at event planning.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Anyway, see if you can find a way to see your students this week and to let them know that you're grateful, that they've stuck with you through the muck, because I know you are. You all tell me about it all the time. Until next time, we'll talk soon. I'm going to make it and so are you. We're almost there. Hold on tight.