

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.

And today's episode is indeed our very last episode of the season -- season? It's not really what we're doing here -- term. It is the middle of December folks, and I am hanging up my headphones. I will talk to you again in January. Our next episode will drop January 11th in time for the fresh new semester, just after our gorgeously announced prep week. I can't tell you how happy I am for that prep week. Things will be quiet around here. In the meantime, I want to take a second today to go over the programming that you can expect to enjoy in the winter term. But I also want to let you know that our office is taking a little bit of a break. I'll tell you all about what you can expect over the next few weeks and what you can expect for the winter term. So let's get into it.

The first and most important thing that I want you to know is that our whole office is taking a much needed break. The help desk will be closed -- it's, I don't think it's ever been closed in the time I've been at TRU. I'm pretty excited about it. I hear it has once or twice closed in the past, but that has not been my experience. So from probably about the 21st of December through to the 4th of January, we won't be answering help tickets and we won't be answering our phones. We will be taking a much needed break from support. We feel comfortable doing this because of course we have the week of the fourth for prep now. So if you get really stuck and you just hang on, we'll be back and ready to help from January 4th. So yeah, that's the first, most important thing.

From my perspective, a break, I'm pretty excited about it. That's actually what I want to talk about on the show today. I want to talk about how we recharge because we all have to do quite a bit of recharging with quite a tight turnaround. I'm definitely planning to find some time to do the things that are restorative. For me, I'm going to read some fun books that aren't even about teaching and learning, and I'm going to bake a lot. My oven died this weekend, and then we found a refurbished oven on the north shore. And I have to tell you, it was 36 hours of emotional rollercoaster for me. The thought of having no oven for Christmas was just like beyond what I was capable of managing -- that's about where my emotional state is at these days.

I'm really going to try to recharge because the winter term is going to be difficult. I think that it's not going to be as difficult as what we've just been through. You'll remember that when Chris Adam was on the show, she talked about how the winter semester is going to open out into hopefulness in a way that the fall semester was really never going to do. But it's still going to be long. Well, one of the ways that I recharge because I'm a little bit of a workaholic is thinking about building new things and new programming, and I'm really excited about what we're putting together for the winter term. I wasn't sure we were going to have the energy to develop anything and, and we are revisiting some old favourites in the winter term, for sure. But we've also got some exciting new ideas for things that I hope will get you excited about the options for teaching and learning online.

I'm going to run through some of the ideas we have for the winter term. I'm still updating our registration system. So you can keep an eye out for those emails. There'll be one that will come through the Moodle site and one into your faculty-L as well as weekly updates through the winter term in the Bulletin. So if you miss something here, that's okay. You'll have other opportunities to remember and to register. Don't worry. And you know, all our workhorses will be there. We're offering a Moodle 911 intensive in the first week of January for folks who are new to TRU or who are feeling stressed out and

want to make sure they've mastered the platform. You know, we're going to go over the new Moodle 3.9, for sure. But we're also going to spend some time talking about things that get us excited.

And the number one thing I'm super excited for in January is the Digital Detox coming back. Those of you who participated in the Digital Detox in January will know that it's a series of essays through the month of January. This time, we're going to start a little later and end a little later. So mid January to mid February ish -- that are designed to get you thinking about your relationship to technology. When I wrote the Digital Detox last January, I had a lot of hope for the possibilities of technology, but I was really clear-eyed about their dangers too. I think that this year, it feels even more urgent to have really serious conversations about technology, the role it plays in our lives and how we can manage our teaching and learning relationships to technology, especially around issues of ethics and privacy. I'm really concerned about some of the ways in which the leap to online teaching and learning has involved well, not a great deal of respect for privacy.

And I don't really just mean here at TRU. In fact, I mean it less here at TRU than at lots of places where the push to hop on to Zoom as quickly as possible and the pressure to embrace e-proctoring tools. I think that these things have happened before we could have really full conversations about what it means to proctor an exam where the camera is in your students' bedroom, for example, I don't think we've thought critically enough about these choices as a sector. So that's what the Digital Detox is all about -- similar themes to last year, but with a fair amount of urgency around the discussion.

It's not all theoretical head in the clouds kind of stuff. We also are bringing back our very popular sessions on things like how to manage your marking load. Jon is going to do a session on best practices for video that I know everybody is really eager to hear because we all want to do the best we can with the resources that we have access to. Jamie is going to be talking about e-portfolios and Brian and I will be in that session too, but Jamie's done some amazing work on e-portfolios. And if that's something you've been thinking about as an opportunity for your students that'll be a session you won't want to miss. It's really going to help you think through what the possibilities might be for an assignment like that. We're bringing back the podcast workshop that was very popular. I think it was one of the last workshops we gave last spring. We're bringing it back. But with a renewed focus on some of the teaching and learning applications of podcasting, since I know many of you are dabbling in podcasting as a way to deliver lecture material in this fully online space, we've got a new workshop that we're calling tools of engagement. Is that too cheesy? It, can you tell, I came up with it. It's a little cheesy. In that session, we're going to talk about things like why aren't students posting to your discussion forums. What could you be doing differently to make those work better? We're going to look at tools like Slido and also Mattermost as options for increasing engagement in your classroom. Yeah, I'm excited. And then the last workshop of the term is probably my favourite workshop I've developed since arriving here at TRU. And that is a workshop that I do with Brian on using memes and gifs in your classroom. You know, animated gifs are, I like to call them the vernacular of the internet. They're the way in which online communities represent emotion. And they're a huge part of the online discourse in spaces like Tumblr and Twitter and everywhere -- you can use them in your classroom too. And one of the nice things that are harnessing, something that is such an easy to use vernacular for many students is that it can open up opportunities for them to express themselves in ways that might surprise you. When I had Catherine and Crystal on the show, I talked briefly about using animated gifs as my course evaluations, once upon a time -- we're going to revisit that idea and so many more, and we're going to teach you how to make your own memes and gifs, which hello, super fun. So that's where we're going to round out the term.

One other exciting initiative that's coming online is you know, CELT's popular book club. I asked if LT&I could horn in on their territory to share the discussion of a book for the winter term. And it's a book that I'm really excited about because I think there's something in it for everyone. The book is called Critical

Digital Pedagogy: A Collection which I know isn't the most exciting title in the world, but it's edited by Jesse Stommel, Chris Friend, and Sean Michael Morris. And these are names you've heard me mention before on the show. It's just a fantastic collection of essays. Think about teaching and learning online in new and different ways. And the nice thing is it's a series of articles. So you can leap in on the weeks that interest you and skip it on the weeks that don't. And the commitment is not quite as intense as committing to read an entire book in a book club. Some of the article titles that I hope will excite you as much as they excite me, are things like, "A guide for resisting ed tech: the case against Turnitin," "Our bodies encoded: algorithmic test proctoring in higher education," "Why start with pedagogy: 4 good reasons, 4 good solutions," "But you can't do that in a STEM course" -- which is one I'm really excited about, because I know we don't offer a lot of tailored STEM programming. So I'm excited for us to chat about that one. There's a chapter called "Adjunctification: living in the margins of academe" and one called "Librarian as outsider," trying to bring more voices into the conversation about digital teaching and learning. There's one on amplifying indigenous voices. One about making disability part of the conversation. My favourite article in the collection is probably one called "A pedagogy of kindness," which I'm sure you've noticed over the last 15 episodes matters to me a great deal. I think it's really important that we centre our pedagogy in kindness and that article is going to make a case for it. So I'm excited about this book club, because I think that it will give us a lot of interesting things to talk about and open up a lot of fruitful conversation.

I really want us to be a campus where we think critically about teaching and learning online, where we don't just absorb the latest tools, where we don't just move to the latest system. But we think with intention about what we want our digital tools to do and how we expect them to serve us and our students. And I think this is a really good collection for having that kind of a conversation. So I do hope you'll join us. Yes, I wanted to share all our programming with you because for me, it's really easy to get bogged down in the little tasks day to day. For me, it's answering support tickets and fixing Moodle shells. I love that work. Actually, I really love the problem solving aspect of my job, but I also recognize that there's more to teaching than fixing a Moodle shell. I relish the opportunities to talk with you about the bigger picture issues that I hope inform our teaching every single day. And I'm really grateful that the community has trusted me so quickly to have these conversations with you. It's been a remarkable semester. It's been a remarkable year. And I think the level of discourse around things like teaching and learning online has really elevated in our community because you're all doing such good work.

Okay. Which brings me to the break. I really do hope you take a real break. We all need it. I know how hard you're all working and I know how close you all are to burn out. And I think about you all a lot. When I'm not thinking about my, my own burnout. I really want to invite you to spend your winter break, however or whatever you celebrate, spending some time reflecting on what you've accomplished this semester and what you'd like to achieve next semester. But remember that those achievements are only going to be possible if you take that time to rest and to recharge and to fill your cup. So whatever that looks like for you, maybe it's jigsaw puzzles. Maybe it's long walks, maybe it's... sports. Allegedly. I try not to leave the house. If it's cold. I'm really impressed with the work you've all done this semester and grateful to be part of this community. And I hope that you take the time to celebrate it.

It's a shorty this week. I'm just eager to get on vacation. For me, it's one more week of full-time work and then rest. So that is it for episode 15 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. And it's about reflection before you sprint towards that rest. Now, listen, this is a little bit of a do as I say, not as I do. I am a recalcitrant journaler. I have several teaching journals that have lots of writing for about seven pages and then nothing after. I know

how hard it is to find time to reflect on process. And I know how hard it is to do when you are exhausted. So I want to invite you, when you finish listening to this podcast today -- listen, it's short. It's like 20 minutes shorter than usual. So you've basically got 20 free minutes. Can you take a minute and put some thoughts on paper, about your experiences of this term while it's still fresh? What worked for you? What didn't, what do you wish you could learn more about? What do you still feel lost about? What do you think you've nailed? A question I like to ask myself at the end of term is: what did I do this term that I would be proud to teach someone else? And what did I do this term that I would not be proud to bring up in a department meeting? And I like to reflect on those two questions. They're difficult questions. It's not a comfortable conversation to think about our regrets, but I think it's necessary. I think, you know, it's necessary. And I think getting it on paper now, while it's still fresh, will really let you let go and rest over the break. So that's my challenge to you. A little bit of reflection, and then I really hope you follow it with a whole lot of rest. I'm going to try in this case to do as I do. And not as I say, wait, no, I definitely need that vacation.

Please take care of yourselves, take care of each other. I wish for you a restful, easygoing break, and I'll be thinking about you, but not too much. Cause I'm also going to be thinking about cookies. I promise. Until January. We'll talk soon. Bye.