

Operating With the Highest Standards is Exhausting [Episode ...

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SPEAKERS

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Cathy Mazak 00:02

Welcome to the academic writing amplified podcast. On this podcast, we believe that the culture of academia needs to change radically. Women and non binary people are revolutionising academia within institutions that were not built for us. If you're ready to reject the culture of overwork, kick, guilt and overwhelm to the curb, and amplify your voice, to make a real impact on your field, without breaking down, or burning out, you're in the right place, with our team of experienced writing coaches, as CO hosts will share insights and talk to inspiring guests to bring you the practical strategies, systems and mindset shifts. You need to find time to write, publish work you love, and design your career on your terms. And it all starts with writing. Let's go. Hey, everyone, hello. So I'm exhausted? Are you exhausted? I think you probably are, I hear it all the time from academics and especially from those in our who come and start our programs, the ones who finish our programs feel somewhat less exhausted, but it is, you know, it comes and goes, it can get worse and get better. And so today, I want to talk about how operating under the kind of very, very high standards that you have for yourself is exhausting. And exhausted people have a hard time writing. So there's a relationship between any kind of creativity and rest. And something that might not you know, like maybe you're like an engineering professor or a chemistry professor or and you don't really think of yourself as like, a creative person, or a person who is creating. But you are professors create all the time, we create syllabi for our courses, we create lectures and PowerPoint presentations, we create learning materials, we create environments, right, we create labs, we create a writing, right. And so even though you might not think of the kind of academic writing that you do as like creative writing, you are creating when you are writing. And so any act of creation, like that, really does require a commensurate amount of rest. But as an academic, you're probably not that great at resting. And all of this is complicated by the fact that you are operating with like the highest highest standards. So today, I want to talk about those high standards, I want to talk about how they lead to exhaustion, and then how exhaustion undermines writing to make the connection between, you know, not lowering your standards in a bad way, but saving your super high standards very intentionally for certain kinds of things at certain times. And then loosening your standards somewhat, your work is still going to be awesome for other things, depending on your like your goals and what you want to do. Because here's the bottom line,

here's the bottom line. You can't write from a place of exhaustion. And so your publication pipeline will stall out if you are exhausted all the time. So yeah, like let's dig into that. So let's talk first about operating at like exceptionally high standards. You probably finished your PhD and got your tenure track job because you operate with really high standards, right? So you're not doing your work halfway, you are trying to be the best at what you do. You're trying to do the best job in everything, especially for women, you really have this idea and it's learned through the culture of academia that you have to do more than men have to do. If you're a woman of color, you are intersectionally having to do more to prove yourself in the eyes of like that white male culture of the academy, right? Women of Color especially, are undermined and ignored by that kind of like culture of academia writ large. So it feels like we got to work like extra extra hard. We have to always be impeccable. We have to Yeah, just like operate with the highest highest standards and we can't slip that is not possible for humans to maintain all the time. And we are human That's. So we really have to think about the ways in which we can manage our energy and manage our expectations around what parts of our career or what activities that we're involved in, we are going to give that high standard to, and what places in our career and even in our lives, right, where we can accept a lower standard, like still excellent, still good. But not like it has to be the best ever. So let me give you an example. One example is, like when you're writing a grant, we want to go for excellence, right? Like we really want to have high standards in grant writing, is going to increase our ability to get the grant. And, you know, it's so much work and energy to write a grant, it's really like, it's hard to see it not get funded, right, because we've put so much time and energy into it. So you definitely want your like grant writing to have a really high standard, right. But let's say you're going to a committee meeting, and you have to take the minutes. Please take mediocre minutes, like just let it be fine. It doesn't have to be great, right? You don't have to operate with like super high level of excellence and all these things. And truthfully, like for teaching, of course, we want to be excellent, great teachers. Do we also have to like in every single assignment be meticulous graders? Could we have some assignments where we grade meticulously and others where we don't? How can you kind of manage your energy output towards your teaching work, so that you're putting lots of energy into the important things that you want to do with a high standard. And then letting some other things be like just the same that they were last year, like no reason to have to, like reinvent the wheel, or try to do it better and better every year, like some things, we could do better. Some things, maybe we just leave them the same. So what I'm trying to say is that if you are working from this place, where you are always pushing to this super, super high level of excellence, and that's probably how you got to where you are, that's great. And you've earned the ability, and everybody has the right to this, right. But you can now be more deliberate and more intentional about where you demand excellence from yourself. And where things can just be good, like just fine. Because truthfully, you're good, and you're fine is probably better than most people's good or fine, it's probably Excellent. If we continue to demand this kind of high level of excellence in every single thing that we do, and every aspect of our job, we will just get exhausted. And this is the connection that I want to make. If you're operating from exhaustion, you can't write like you can't write exhausted, or you can, but it's like three, four times slower than it would be if you weren't exhausted. And that's because creation like writing creative activity, which writing is whether your science or whatever kind of writing you are doing creating, that requires a certain amount of rest from you. So how this manifests a lot for people is like they'll say, like, I just don't have any motivation to write. Right? So they'll be like, my pipelines clogged up. And it's because I have a lack of motivation. And the first question I ask everyone is, do you have a lack of motivation? Or are you like tired, like deeply exhausted, and for many people, you they are deeply exhausted. So we're striving and striving and striving to be like, excellent in everything we do with this really high standards, and then we get exhausted. And then we say we have a lack of motivation for writing. And it's just like, it's really treating yourself like inhumanely to do that.

So, writing needs rest. Like I'm not saying I'm not saying to use this as like some kind of excuse to not write like, well, I've never rested. So I'll never write like No, not that either. Not that not the extremes. You need to acknowledge that you can't really write from a place of exhaustion. So you have to look at how you can be less exhausted. And that's where you can look to like, Well, where are there places where I want to keep my high high standards and what are the places where I can just be good. Instead of being like, Oh, I have to be, you know, the most excellent minute taker at this meeting, or I got a chair of this committee and like the most excellent way that anybody's ever chaired the committee. Like really like you Don't really though. So save those like moments where you're like I really, really want to do excellent work for the work that is deserving of your very precious energy and attention. The other layer here, right to combat exhaustion, so that you can write is rest. I'll just give you like a really real example right now, it's been a very difficult three months over here in my coaching business, and also somewhat like with some health things with the kids, we all got just like a terrible cold, brought us down, I'm still like this little weird cough that I have is still part of that bad cold. That lasted for four weeks, three, four weeks, like, I think we're on week five now, where we still kind of have this like, still not 100%. And I just feel rundown. I feel really rundown. And of course, my coaching friends, were all like, when are you going to take a break? When are you going to take a break, and I knew like I needed to take a break as well. Thankfully, that break is happening. So that's really, really good. And so I want you to think about like for yourself, like what has been dragging you down? What has been sucking your energy? How can you combat exhaustion, right? Like how can you build in some rest so that you can feel better, and so that you have someplace to write from? I was talking to a client the other day, and she was talking about how she has this like really long warmup period for writing. Like, she was using the word procrastination, like she procrastinates for like two hours before she can like actually start writing. But when she was describing what she was doing, I'm like, I don't think that you're procrastinating. I think that you are tired like that you are like resting. So she would do things like she would have a coffee and really enjoy drinking it, she would play a video game on her phone, she would take a walk. And I'm like, well, all of those things can be like restorative things, right? They can help you to rest and feel, you know, like rest your brain from the academic work. So maybe what you're actually doing when you think you're procrastinating, you're actually use your brain trying to get the rest that you're not getting. And similar to that lack of motivation thing. And if you're listening on the podcast, I'm doing a lot of air quotes, the lack of motivation thing, like, Is it lack of motivation? Or are you just like, really, really tired? And it's not like a motivation is lack of rest, right? So thinking about how not just through one technique, but across everything that you're doing in academia? How can you find the ways to make it less exhausting, and to build in rest, so that the title of this video or audio, if you're listening on the podcast, is about striving to be the best at everything. And really, you just need to, like, let some things be just okay. That's one way that you can preserve energy so that you're not so exhausted. Another way is to actually rest right to really like think about what is it that you need to have downtime for your brain or to rest your body and your brain? Like so for me, I love reading a novel. It can't be a very, like literary novel, like it needs to be like a romance novel, or like a fantasy fiction novel or something like that. Really is like page tourney, or watching. Like I'm watching it like a very solid B level Netflix series that there's like four seasons of it. I'm like, great, that helps me when I can't rest my brain, that kind of like, okay, I'll watch a series, I'll read a novel, that kind of thing really helps me rest. So you got to find out for you. What is the activity that's going to help you rest? It's not always like take a nap. Although also naps are welcome. You know, for me, I can lie down to take a nap. And I'm just still thinking about work. So so like, I need to do something else. So what is it for you? And how can you build more of that in every day, something that is just like, really transformational for me is walking, it can be a 10 or 15 minute walk is preferably a walk without headphones. But if you have trouble like turning off your brain, and you want to turn it off, so you're not thinking about

work stuff, then you could listen to a podcast or you could listen to an audiobook. But it's really important to figure this out. Because you cannot write from a place of exhaustion. And like I said, it looks like different things. We call it different things we call it lack of motivation. We think like, Oh, we're just we lost interest in writing. Sometimes we think we're not good at writing. And really what it is, is you're exhausted. So to summarize Eyes, if you're operating at the highest standards all the time you are leading a life of exhaustion, you have to figure out how to put your energy and time, but especially your energy behind the things that deserve it. And let the other things that you do be just fine instead of, you know, like, they want to be awful, but that you're just okay. You know, they're just done with a level of acceptability, they're acceptably done. And then you also really need to find the ways to rest to rest your brain to rest your body to take breaks, to kind of like, work to continually fill your cup of resting and restoration. Because if you don't, you won't have a place to write from. And so my message to those of you who, who maybe have said that to yourself, right, like I don't, I just don't have the motivation to write I have so many things, and I don't have the motivation. Or here's another way that manifests because it's a little easier for some people to start projects than to continue projects, because we're really tired. We like are serially starting things, instead of, you know, taking projects all the way to the end, which is another way that our exhaustion can clog our pipelines. So we're just looking at, we get that little hit of motivation, because it's something new. But what really is happening is that you are exhausted. So you need to rest. I always believe that we coach about the things that we need coaching on and I definitely need a rest. So it's Friday, when I'm recording this. So I'm gonna go and do that resting, I hope that you do the same. And just understand that if you want to publish more things, and if you want to get your writing and your voice out in the world, you need to rest you can't do it from a place of exhaustion. So it is worth it to think about what you can do to make your situation better so that you're not exhausted, so you can write and publish. By the way, we have the waitlist for our next cohort of navigate open. So I'm going to leave a link here, but basically it's [scholars voice.org/navigate](https://scholarsvoice.org/navigate). And you can click on the pink button to join the waitlist. Now join the waitlist means that you're going to be the first one to hear when we are opening our enrollment period. Our enrollment involves an application process, we highly curate or navigate community. So if you are interested in some of the things I've been talking about here, and especially when it comes to like that energy, you know, like putting your best energy behind the things that deserve it. There's a lot of that in navigate. So if you're interested in joining our next 12 week cohort of our navigate program, which is a program for clearing your publication pipeline, so that your voice is heard in the world at the level that you know it should be, then go ahead and go get on the waitlist. Have a great day. Bye. Thank you so much for spending your valuable time supporting yourself and your writing by listening to this episode. If you like what you heard today, the best way to say thank you is to hop on over to Apple iTunes and write an honest review. The more reviews the more amazing academic women and non binary people will find this podcast so go write one now