

Bonni [00:00:00] Many of us are getting ready to end a class. This process can be an exhausting one as we feel the various stressors this season can bring on today's episode 46, Ending well.

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Bonni [00:00:22] Welcome to this episode of Teaching in Higher Ed. This is the space where we explore the art and science of being more effective at facilitating learning. We also share ways to increase our personal productivity approaches so we can have more peace in our lives and be even more present for our students.

Bonni [00:00:50] If you've listened to this show even once before you might notice I sound a little different. The focus of today's episode is on ending well. And I view that as an aspirational title for today's episode not one am necessarily living up to the end of our semester.

Bonni [00:01:08] I'm on traditional semester system where I teach but I know many of you listening are on some different different schedules. But generally speaking many of us are at least ending a class even if we're about to start a new one after that.

Bonni [00:01:22] For me it will be some mess. Much needed rest over the summer what I'm really looking forward to in doing some writing and things like that but I want to share a bit about some of the things that I work to do to end well at the end of the semester and I also look forward to hearing from you too so if you'd like to comment on today's episode number 46 after listening to my ideas I'd love to hear yours. That's at teachinginhighered.com/46.

Bonni [00:01:49] The first one is to guard against student fatigue. We know that this can be the time in the semester probably more than any other that our students as they interact with us can sometimes be sleep deprived.

Bonni [00:02:03] They can be focused a lot on more of the short term versus some of the long term things having to do with their own deep learning and the value of the degree that they're earning. I know for myself I am also focused on the short term.

Bonni [00:02:17] So how could I blame those students engage with that are feeling the same thing. Well one of the ideas that's really been in my mind a lot is the idea of context context came up when the first time on the episode but it was a big theme when I spoke on episode number 38 with Steve Wheeler and he was talking about context as it relates to our digital competence and he felt like he rejects the idea that it's really a generational thing.

Bonni [00:02:48] He says it's really more about context and how we should be thinking about measuring our learners and really our own technical skills around context and getting things done that relate to something we want to accomplish using the technology as a tool to accomplish something and that's really been on my mind a lot.

Bonni [00:03:08] It's also the idea of context is on my mind because of rereading. Well I suppose not rereading. Reading the redone. Getting Things Done book I blogged about that but the author David Allen who wrote really one of the pinnacle works on productivity personal productivity. He just completely rewrote his book called Getting Things Done. It's much the same approach but has a new real writing flavor.

Bonni [00:03:34] I've been doing a book club with listeners of teaching in higher ed and we have really thought that the rewrite is a lot more practical and starts out with a lot more practical tools than some of the more theoretical ways that he started out his last episode.

Bonni [00:03:48] But of course when we talk about productivity that shows up in a lot of systems too that I can design my context or I can get things done if I if I list things and categorize them according to context and I'll talk more about this in future episodes and also in blogs.

Bonni [00:04:05] But all this to say we should be thinking a lot about our students context. It's finals week. Boy if I had the ability to redo higher ed and redo the way we do things there wouldn't be this great great crazy pressure of finals week. That sometimes tends to be more of a test of one's ability to survive or

thrive in a sleep deprived state that it really is a true measure of that deeper learning.

Bonni [00:04:35] So we want to be considering their context. And again guarding against the students fatigue then overlapping on to us and creating fatigue for us. Next up we want to be aware or beware of the temptation to vent particularly want to beware of the temptation to vent on social media.

Bonni [00:04:56] When Josh Eyer was here on Episode 16 really talked about honoring our students and spoke so eloquently about the kind of vulnerability that students need to have the right to experience the kind of learning that they were hoping that they well in college and they're hoping that we can be for them someone that they can trust with their vulnerable state of admitting that they don't know something admitting that they have a place to grow.

Bonni [00:05:23] And when we take our frustrations and trust me I've got them I've got them I just received an e-mail this morning from a student who I thought oh I said that so many times in class. But hey again if I'm aware of the students context I'm aware that there can be that sleep deprivation it can be tough to focus when we are not at our best.

Bonni [00:05:46] I can hey I can respond to that e-mail. Answer the question and I don't need to go start venting on social media. Anything that would specifically help me that student No I was referring to them if they are on my social media even if they're not it doesn't really matter.

Bonni [00:06:01] There there's been you know lots of studies that have come out that show that venting doesn't help in fact social intelligence theory even says that our bad morale can actually be contagious so when we are frustrated and were venting that way that we're actually potentially passing that and to others.

Bonni [00:06:17] Now I don't mean to oversimplify the research. This is not my area of expertise. It does crack me up that there was a study that said that Kirstein does help though. So if we're going to vent we might as well do it with a potty mouth.

Bonni [00:06:29] So to curse of a storm that was related by the way to pain. Apparently our pain threshold was shown in a study to be greater if we curse which just is such a funny study. But I have not taken to Kersting I have two small children here at home that I'm hoping don't learn their first curse words for me.

Bonni [00:06:47] I would be a great achievement. Those being never demons. We want to make sure we're recognizing our students achievements and one of the ways we can do that is to help them see with clearer eyes how the learning objectives have been attained.

Bonni [00:07:01] So if we bring that back front and center as we close the class and we help them see both through evaluating their own work evaluating their peers work that they really have accomplished a lot and if they're not able to take a step back and to see that we can help them take that step back and see exactly what it is they've accomplished and and really spend a moment to celebrate and acknowledge that achievement.

Bonni [00:07:28] One of the things that I like to do is have the students themselves articulate the value that they've experienced what they think they might take away and that might seem somewhat artificial but I find actually the students enjoy that process and it does help them contemplate that and then express it.

Bonni [00:07:45] It's never a forced thing I had my students in my classes giving some final presentations and I just asked the group of them when they were up there at the end of their presentation. There is a time for some questions and answers.

Bonni [00:07:57] And I ask them what any of you like to respond to what you think will be something valuable that you're taking away. If we look out one year from now three years from now where what will be the more lasting things you suspect you'll be taken away from this class.

Bonni [00:08:12] And I think they I almost saw the mood really shift from there are also nervous about their presentations. Now they got to demonstrate their learning by giving that presentation.

Bonni [00:08:22] They did a great job it's been affirmed and now they're able to articulate if they choose what it is they'll be taking away from the class speaking of asking students to reflect on what they'll take away from the class we have for many of our institutions this is also the season when course evaluations are administered.

Bonni [00:08:41] And when we do that we want to present the course evaluation process professionally. And this goes all the way back to when I was first out of college. I used to pass of course evaluations every day. I taught computer

classes and so every day we would have on a scale of 1 to 10 in the training and development field these are often called Smile sheets because it wasn't necessarily about learning.

Bonni [00:09:04] It was more about how much you liked the person who taught your course that day. And there would be all kinds of unprofessional ways that I used to observe that the instructors would present the process they'd say things like hey you know this is time for the course evaluations.

Bonni [00:09:20] And I'm hoping to keep my job so I hope I get straight tens of jokes that are just completely inappropriate that that process really puts students in an awkward situation.

Bonni [00:09:29] And of course if the instructor is standing right there in the room or nearby it's not going to be necessarily as professional or credible of a system that you're hoping to be. So we want to really think through how to be professional.

Bonni [00:09:44] Many of our institutions will have the professor leave the room and I talk about why I do that when leaving the room. So you have a chance to report on the class without me hovering over you. And I always ask for a student to volunteer and I do this in front of the whole class so they can see who volunteered and then I'll say Oh thank you so much.

Bonni [00:10:03] Now if you would take this and deliver it directly to this person I'm not going to be seen this feedback and tell our class is over and all the grades have been processed. And even though most of them know that already I still say it every time because they'll be that chance that some student may not understand the process and they can see hey this is a fair process.

Bonni [00:10:23] This is what fairness looks like. This is what a professional way to evaluate a course. Now I will say I myself have all sorts of concerns over the evaluation process at my institution specifically. And then just globally in higher eds a lot of concerns and I do a lot of reading about that and I suspect that many of you who are listening to this podcast have your own concerns.

Bonni [00:10:46] Of course our students have concerns too. A most recent one is students don't really understand if it's really in a really bad class and they give the feedback how come it doesn't get fixed right away. They don't recognize some of the gaps that occur in the evaluation process and higher ed so it's frustrating for them to take that seriously.

Bonni [00:11:06] And I subscribe to a list serve that is for people who are in faculty development in the U.S. and one of the people Deborah she wrote about even what we called the evaluations and she likes to call them not course evaluations but to call them students experience of teaching.

Bonni [00:11:26] She thought that was a much more reflective answer is not the only one I'm just mentioning her name because it came up in the thread and then another individual Ed had written about the importance of separating the assessment the assessment or all the various ways that we assess student learning.

Bonni [00:11:42] We want to separate that from the evaluations of people who strive to facilitate learning and have those be two different processes that are separate but are both taken seriously and given weight in our process of evaluating our work in higher ed.

Bonni [00:12:00] The last thing I have to recommend for all of us to finish well to end well is to take more breaks. I'll be talking about this potentially in future episodes but I did just get the Apple Watch. A lot of people noticed when I was back on campus on Monday they were saying that the new watch and what do you think of it. And if you're interested I would.

Bonni [00:12:23] I don't know how many of our listeners are interested in hearing about the Apple Watch but if you think about it drop me a note and let me know if this is a subject of interest to you. The reason I'm bringing up on this episode is that it has been helping me take more breaks.

Bonni [00:12:35] One of the things you may have heard about the Apple Watch is that it wants you to stand up and move around. At least for a minute every hour. And in its scorecard if you will is set up to have that be at least 12 times. We do that per day. That's 12 hours.

Bonni [00:12:53] We make sure we're not sitting too long and this is certainly one of those times of the year where I can be sitting too long even in my classes if my students are presenting. Then I'm sitting in the back and I get to start to feel what it's like on there and from sitting too long.

Bonni [00:13:08] And then of course there's lots of grading done this time of year and I might be in front of a computer for way too long and I do tend to be one of those people who can get really really focused and lose track of time.

Bonni [00:13:19] And boy the Apple Watch will tap me literally has this. It's called haptic feedback but it feels like a little tap on my wrist. It's not startling at all like I never really enjoyed having the cell phone and the vibrate function just to joltin for me for sitting on a desk it really startles me or even if it's in a pocket which I don't really have a lot of pockets.

Bonni [00:13:39] But I just it's not been a function I've used very much. My phone is almost always just completely silent but this is just a really gentle tap tap and then it reminds me and I tend to be a real achievement oriented person so the idea that it's actually check enough.

Bonni [00:13:53] She stood up for her third hour for the day she gets her little check mark I really enjoy that. It gives me however many alerts I want during the day tracking my process and that really does help me take more breaks.

Bonni [00:14:06] If you to have some interest by the way in the Apple Watch I have put in the show notes at teachinginhighered.com/46 a couple of articles. One is interesting to me that Penn State is experimenting with the Apple Watch to measure student learning this fall.

Bonni [00:14:24] And I just took a quick glance at the article and I'll certainly be looking at it closer in the future if I do see an interest in me speaking more about the Apple Watch. But it looks like they are going to have kind of how some of the research has been done to say what kind of mood are you in right now and then you text back and they're able to track that through their subjects.

Bonni [00:14:45] Well this is what are you thinking about in terms of your learning right now is the way that I that I read their early descriptions of their research. And then Fraiser Spiers who is more in K through 12. He does a lot of writing about technology educational technology and he talked about presenting with an Apple Watch.

Bonni [00:15:03] So we many of us know we can use our smartphones as remotes so we can advance our slides. He's in our smartphones. Well now we can advance our slides using our Apple Watch. And he describes how he did that and what a couple of the different setups are. None of us need to necessarily go out and get an Apple Watch.

Bonni [00:15:23] That is certainly not what I'm suggesting. I tend to be an early adopter on these things I'm not there yet to say that this is a must have tool for

all of us in fact quite the opposite. But we can set timers on whatever it is that we have that's with us whether it's our phone or our computer to help us take more of these breaks back on Episode 34.

Bonni [00:15:42] I was honored to have Natalie Houston who writes for The Chronicle of Higher Ed about productivity and she talked about how she sets timer's for all sorts of things she's also written about that quite a bit on the Chronicle and I encourage all of us to be setting timers because we do lose track of time.

Bonni [00:15:59] It's kind of a good thing when a student's writing has her so engaged that we don't want to take a break but we do want to make sure we're taking breaks and moving around and that's going to help us keep our stress levels in check and not have us get too out of whack as we end.

Bonni [00:16:14] Well this is the time in the show when I make a recommendation and I decided since I am a little bit under the weather I've got this cold.

Bonni [00:16:23] I thought boy I do really get a lot out of moving as I said taking more breaks getting going for walks. I also get a lot out of listening to music and so I wanted to do a music recommendation. And this is one that I have loved for a very long time.

Bonni [00:16:39] The album is called We All Love Ella: Celebrating the first lady of song. And this is you can get it on. I've got a link to the iTunes version of it but of course you can likely get it on whatever it is you buy or listen to music off of.

Bonni [00:16:57] I suspect that most of you have heard of Ella Fitzgerald but just in case you haven't. She was known as the first lady of song. She was also known as Lady Ella. She was American jazz and song vocalist and she sang as is often said much of the Great American Songbook and boy can. Could she ever saying I said Can.

Bonni [00:17:21] I tend to speak of her and present tense because her music is so very much alive with us today. And so this Alpe album is not all of her singing. It is other people that are singing songs that she was made famous for having sung and you would find artists such as Natalie Cole, Chaka Khan, Diana Krall, Dianne Reeves, Linda Ronstadt, k.d. lang, Michael Bublé just to name a few 16 songs on the album.

Bonni [00:17:49] And one that I absolutely love. My favorite favorite that I listen to it's definitely on my top 25 ever listen to songs on my playlist is You are the sunshine of my life. This is a duet she did with Stevie Wonder and what I really love about it is that reminds me a lot of teaching.

Bonni [00:18:08] I think of teaching a lot as jazz because yes jazz does certainly have a some kind of organization to it a framework a melody and we've got a rhythm and we've got some predictable elements to it. In fact even the breaks that come in to jazz are somewhat predictable to those of us who who listen to a lot of jazz because they just feel like they're coming and then we come to know even if we haven't listened to that piece before.

Bonni [00:18:36] Here comes the break. But what's also really fun about jazz and what was really fun about the way that Al is saying is the unpredictable nature of it and how you could have the melody but you could choose to go and improvise and create your own new melody.

Bonni [00:18:54] And what's so fun about what she does with Stevie Wonder and this particular piece is they are just loving the music and really playing together in fact in the beginning of the song. They both jump in to start to sing the first verse when they only meant to have one of them start to sing and then she just picks right back up and then starts singing that first verse and he comes in on the second.

Bonni [00:19:16] So I hope you have a chance to go listen to it and if you like jazz I suspect you'll like this musical recommendation. We tend to end our shows with recommendations but I'm actually going to end today's show with a request some of you might remember from the last episode that we are about to celebrate Episode 50. It's amazing. It's been almost a year since I started the podcast.

Bonni [00:19:40] And what I'm asking each of you to do is to just pick up the phone and leave a quick voicemail with something that you got out of listening. However however long you've been listening one big take away that you've had from any of the episodes and one recommendation that you have and as you might know from listening that could be song it could be a movie it could be a book.

Bonni [00:20:00] It could just be a way of a protein teaching or a way of a protein our life. I've got a few of them now but I would love to hear from you. And again it just takes a minute. If it pick up the phone and dial 949-38-LEARN

and I would love to hear from you and get a voicemail from you and be able to include you on the fiftieth episode.

Bonni [00:20:27] Thanks so much for listening to this episode of Teaching in Higher Ed Episode 46. As always if you have feedback on the show I'd love to hear from you. That's at teachinginhighered.com/feedback. And as I mentioned though even more than the feedback just those horns pick up the phone call me at 949-38-LEARN and be a part of Episode 50 and celebrating all that's happened in the Teaching in Higher Ed community this past year.

Bonni [00:20:56] And once again if you'd like to subscribe to Teaching in Higher Ed you get a weekly e-mail that has all the show notes with the links that we talk about on the show.

Bonni [00:21:06] That's at teachinginhighered.com/subscribe. I truly do hope this is a semester or a term for you of ending. Well thanks for listening.

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