Bonni: [00:00:00] Episode 7 of Teaching in Higher Ed: Personal Knowledge Mastery.

Production Credit: [00:00:06] Produced by Innovate Learning, maximizing human potential.

Bonni: [00:00:17] 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 and 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: [00:00:41] This is Bonni Stachowiak and I am joined once again with Dave Stachowiak. Dave, thanks for joining us.

Dave: [00:00:47] I am glad to be back as always thanks for having me.

Bonni: [00:00:49] I have been doing a lot of thinking with this podcasting. One of the things that people talk about when you start blogging/ when you start podcasting this is a new term called working out loud.

Bonni: [00:01:02] And when we work out loud we sort of put transparency toward our thoughts and get them out a little bit. And so it's made me, this podcast has made me rather think quite a bit I guess about what it's all about.

Dave: [00:01:18] It sounds very deep and significant.

Bonni: [00:01:22] And I also have been doing- getting some feedback some early feedback from people asking them what they like and what they don't like.
Bonni: [00:01:28] And one of the things that I heard from one woman that I loved so much was that she feels like she’s here sitting on our living room couch just talking to us and she likes that feeling of the conversation.

Bonni: [00:01:40] And I’m sort of laughing because if you were here the person who said that I won’t say your name because I didn’t get her permission but if you were here we don’t have a living room couch right now.

Dave: [00:01:49] We don’t.

Bonni: [00:01:50] We are in the middle of a small decorating project and we will no longer have a living room. Dave is trying to change my language and have us call it a library.

Dave: [00:01:58] It’s not just you. I’m trying to rebrand it with everyone that comes to this house.

Bonni: [00:02:02] Yes. So the library will have a couch soon.

Dave: [00:02:04] And a small circulation desk in order to reinforce the library brand.

Bonni: [00:02:09] I did not know that.

Bonni: [00:02:10] So I’ve been thinking about the podcast. And to me it does come down to and for you who are listening. What you’re telling me is accomplishing meaningful goals, helping our students learn meaningful things, and continuing ourselves to be people who are ever learning.

Bonni: [00:02:29] And so this is going to be the first of many conversations around those topics.

Bonni: [00:02:35] And I’m doing a little bit of writing a book but put this on Facebook and on Twitter so you might already know this but I have a chance to propose a book but I have to produce a chapter sample first so we’ll see how that goes.

Bonni: [00:02:52] I’m doing a little bit of writing about PowerPoint in the classroom and I came across this great hysterical but also super depressing list of tweets from students talking about how much they can’t stand PowerPoint and really what the downfall is for them.
Bonni: [00:03:08] And so we'll talk about this in future episodes. But there was one that relates to today's topic from Blazik.

Bonni: [00:03:15] In case you want to go connect with Blazik who said, "being a college professor would be easy. Read off a PowerPoint you made ten years ago and give online quizzes with questions you Googled."

Bonni: [00:03:30] And none of us wants that none of us wants our students to be thinking that of us that we're back living off of at least I can't imagine that that we want that to be the perception.

Bonni: [00:03:41] And so we want to stay current even if it feels like our discipline perhaps never changes if you teach art history does art history ever changed.

Bonni: [00:03:52] But to me you're ever-changing your own sense of making meaning of what that history means and igniting that passion in your students for helping them make meaning of how that history may impact them today.

Bonni: [00:04:06] So. Spoken like someone who at history is part of her major as an undergrad. So I think that we always want to be continually grappling with how to engage our students and how to find even more meaning in our discipline and to me.

Bonni: [00:04:21] How do you take our disciplines and discover all the ways they're interrelated.

Bonni: [00:04:26] So it never stops to me. So today we're looking at something called personal knowledge mastery.

Bonni: [00:04:33] And personal knowledge mastery has previously been called personal knowledge management, and it is a discipline where we come up with ways of going out and finding information and then making that information mean something to us and then sharing it with others.

Bonni: [00:04:54] So we want to take that definition and grapple with it a little bit here now. So Dave I know that you have your own practice for personal knowledge management we're going to be sharing a lot about what we do. But today's episode is given an overview of personal knowledge either management or mastery.
Bonni: [00:05:16] So we’re going to start out with this definition from Harold Jarche. Harold Jarche is considered to be the expert in personal knowledge mastery. And he calls it a set of processes that are individually constructed to help each of us make sense of our world and to work more effectively.

Bonni: [00:05:37] So let’s start Dave with just breaking down the difference between. So what’s management and what’s mastery. Why are we calling it personal knowledge mastery instead of personal knowledge management? And he talks a lot about that on his blog which is wonderful. I’ll link to that and the show notes by the way.

Bonni: [00:05:56] If you want today’s show notes please visit us over at teachinginhighered.com/7. Join the conversation tell us what you’re thinking about as you’re listening to these podcasts and doing the deeper thinking yourselves.

Bonni: [00:06:09] And so he talks about that a lot at his blog; management would be just “I get it I process it and out it goes” it’s doing things the right way. And when we start thinking about mastery it’s tied back in with our vision.

Bonni: [00:06:27] And so one of the things that Dave and I learned in our doctorates was and masters level too was a great researcher in the area of organizational development and also personal leadership as well Peter Senge, and he defines personal mastery as "a discipline of continually clarifying and deepening our personal vision. It’s about focusing our energies developing patients and seen reality objectively."

Bonni: [00:07:02] So we take that big definition of personal mastery and we tie it in with knowledge.

Dave: [00:07:09] Both of us are students of leadership and have degrees in leadership and have done a lot of thinking around the leadership versus management question which is always a popular topic amongst leadership professors and programs.

Dave: [00:07:23] And I see this similar Bonni as when I think about personal knowledge mastery is the strategy, the decision making of where to go which has a lot of leadership is where are you going. What’s the strategy? Where is the management part is the okay what’s the regular process and structure that you need to execute in order to get to that destination.
Dave: [00:07:46] And so I see that so I haven’t read the blog you’ve referred to in any detail. From Jarche, I’ve read a few of his articles but that that’s kind of just how I think about the difference generally. I don’t know if that lines up with his thinking as well.

Bonni: [00:08:02] Oh that helps to break it down tremendously. So it comes down to- in today’s episode just the beginning of a conversation, which to me I think we talked about in our last episode which is just that feeling of being overwhelmed.

Bonni: [00:08:15] But in our last episode we talked about just the feeling of being overwhelmed in general with all the stuff we need to get done. But specifically today we’re looking at feeling overwhelmed by all the information that’s out there.

Bonni: [00:08:27] I could see the temptation to want to rely on the notes from 10 years ago and not have it changed because as we say life is pretty overwhelming as it is yet for most of us our professions are changing all the time.

Bonni: [00:08:42] I mentioned in previous episodes my enjoying to listen to podcasts on the drive to work because there’s constantly companies that are reinventing the way that things are getting done.

Bonni: [00:08:52] There’s this company called Kickstarter and if you’re not heard of Kickstarter before it’s a way that people can fund business ideas. I just saw this really great Kickstarter I don’t know if I sent it to you Dave- a Kickstarter for if you don’t have a stand up desk because they’re pretty expensive and Dave and I have talked about how much we love our treadmill desk but we know that’s not an affordable option for a lot of people.

Bonni: [00:09:13] And even those stand up desks can get pretty pricey. So this guy invented a stand up desk that hooks onto the back of your chair. Did I send that to you?

Dave: [00:09:22] I feel like I saw a link but I don’t think I read it.

Bonni: [00:09:26] Speaking of feeling overwhelmed...

Dave: [00:09:28] Yeah it has been a few crazy days but...
Bonni: [00:09:32] It was really neat though, it strapped onto the back of the chair and created a desk type surface right off of the chair.

Dave: [00:09:39] Oh interesting.

Bonni: [00:09:39] And then of course since most of our office desk chairs you can change the height of it, then you could also change the height of your desk and be more ergonomically correct. And so this guy had this idea but he doesn't have the money to actually manufacture it beyond the initial prototype.

Bonni: [00:09:56] And so he has a Kickstarter campaign and he does this great marketing video and starts to get people excited and funds it. And Kickstarter has been in the news in the last week too because someone got more than 30,000 dollars to make a bowl of...

Dave: [00:10:13] Oh is this the potato salad thing.

Bonni: [00:10:15] Oh maybe potato salad. So I mean that that's been in the news for some pretty silly reasons but there have been some tremendous innovative ideas that have come out of that and been able to be produced.

Bonni: [00:10:27] The one that I think is one of the most popular ones was the first smartwatch that starts with a P. I'm sorry it will come to me. Hopefully before we stop recording.

Dave: [00:10:39] Never underestimate the power of a good solid potato salad.

Bonni: [00:10:42] Yes true. So the sense of being overwhelmed by information. There is research study which I linked to in the show notes that we are bombarded every single day with the equivalent of 174 newspapers.

Dave: [00:10:56] That's a lot.

Bonni: [00:10:57] That's a lot. And so most people would say well that's not possible and that's actually part of the deal is it isn't possible, we couldn't possibly absorb that we couldn't possibly process that it couldn't be meaningful to us. It's just this flood of meaningless garbage at that point.

Bonni: [00:11:13] So one of the things a famous quote by Einstein is that information is not knowledge. It's all the stuff that's flowing at us until we can make meaning of it and actually take some action around it. It's just stuff.
Dave: [00:11:30] For me there is part of the thinking around this is not just what information to lead in but also what things to consciously make choices about not letting in because we can't process all the information that comes in.

Dave: [00:11:44] And I think that this is a real struggle for a lot of people they they tend to and I think most people error on the side of letting a lot of things and they look at a lot of websites they read a lot of blogs they watch a lot of TV they follow a lot of things on online and on social media. And it is really overwhelming and you never really make a lot of progress on getting into depth than any one of those areas.

Bonni: [00:12:08] And I've seen also in academia with some of the people that I have worked with is the opposite side too can happen.

Bonni: [00:12:17] So, there can be so much depth in my area of expertise and I'm so enthralled with this body of knowledge that is my life's work. That I can become pretty myopic and then miss the other parts which add richness to our lives. And then we can find a lot of I think dissatisfaction and have a higher risk for more stress and more or more burnout with that kind of a myopic focus.


Bonni: [00:12:50] So there's a guy who's pretty famous in the productivity circles he wrote a book called Getting Things Done. His name is David Allen. And one of the quotes I love from him is "if you don't pay attention to what has your attention it will take more attention than it's worth."

Bonni: [00:13:08] And so that's kind of what you were saying Dave, is wanting to have a discipline and a series of processes that help us have our attention on things that are going to benefit us

Dave: [00:13:23] Exactly which is one of the reasons I don't tend to watch TV very rarely because I just don't find that that's a good news consuming source or information consuming source and even for entertainment reasons I tend to you know do other things other than television, you know movies or other stuff.

Bonni: [00:13:40] I'm laughing because anyone who knows me or has listened to this might be aware that I am in my final throes of a binge watching a series of Breaking Bad. So I would say I don't watch a lot of TV but I kind of do. But I still am well under the average American.
Dave: [00:13:56] You are well under the average, but you do make up for the TV that I don't watch.

Bonni: [00:14:02] Yes. So an overview of personal knowledge mastery, it again is a set of processes that are individually constructed so everybody's personal knowledge management system looks different because they're individually constructed because they meet our individual needs. What do these processes help us do?

Bonni: [00:14:23] They help each of us to make sense of our world. So it's not just about it's coming at me and it doesn't mean anything, I go through a process of helping it make meaning helping me say what do I do with this information and then ultimately it's about working and I would say teaching more effectively.

Bonni: [00:14:42] So the broad model from Jarche, he has introduced three words that describe each phase of a personal knowledge mastery process beginning with Seek. So I'm seeking and capturing what's out there.

Bonni: [00:15:01] There is Sense, I'm curating it. I'm organizing it. I'm synthesizing it.

Bonni: [00:15:08] And then Share, I'm creating. I'm celebrating. I'm working out loud, as I mentioned earlier.

Bonni: [00:15:16] So that is again: seek, sense, share- the three parts of Harold Jarche's personal knowledge mastery system. So Dave, you have worked with a personal knowledge management or mastery system for some time. Talk to me a little bit about what do you see as some of the benefits of having something like this.

Dave: [00:15:43] For me, there's still times that I probably err on both sides but I find that it- I know what to do with something, I know where to find stuff and I know what to do with it when I come across it. So those are probably the two big things because we all have data coming at us in all sorts of directions these days.

Dave: [00:16:06] And so for me it's actually, I think the key step for me is the the second of that of putting it in a place where I can organize it and then process it later and then decide what I'm going to do with that.
**Dave:** [00:16:19] But I'm also intentional about where things come at me too. Like I mentioned don't really watch television. I try to keep my subscriptions to newsletters and RSS feeds and things like that actually pretty light because I'd rather spend the time to really read well the things that I get versus being overwhelmed with the fire hose of things.

**Dave:** [00:16:42] So I tend to and I very intentionally don't subscribe to things like CNN breaking news and things like that and I used to just get pinged by stuff like that all day long with what's going on in the world. And I finally got rid of some of those subscriptions and I found that there was no benefit to having them.

**Dave:** [00:16:59] I don't need to know what's going on in another part of the world that just happened that was breaking news. If it's really important I will hear about it like someone will say something about it. Like we had something we were going to church this morning and you said something. "Oh did you hear about this happening in the news?" And of course I didn't because I tend to not follow.

**Bonni:** [00:17:17] I do have to share with the listeners because it was a discovery of I can't resist sharing...

**Dave:** [00:17:27] Just be careful you don't lose your iTunes clean lyrics tag.

**Bonni:** [00:17:31] It's my juvenile sense of humor that I cannot resist sharing. So this was the discovery this week that was it President Harding...

**Dave:** [00:17:40] I think so.

**Bonni:** [00:17:41] They found diaries that showed... I have to have you look it up just to make sure I'm not saying the wrong president.

**Dave:** [00:17:48] I am pretty sure it was Harding.

**Bonni:** [00:17:49] They found documents that he had some type of a mistress and that he- Dave and I love listening to the game show Wait Wait Don't Tell Me every week on our way to church.

**Bonni:** [00:18:01] And so I paused the recording because I wanted to remember he and his letters to his mistress he had a name for his genitalia. So a special name and I couldn't remember the name so I had to put it on pause because I'm challenging my brain to come up with what the name was for it...
Bonni: [00:18:20] Jerry, if you're interested was the name that he had come up with in his letters. Yes.

Dave: [00:18:26] Not the places I thought this episode was going to go.

Bonni: [00:18:29] I didn't actually predict this. But I think...

Dave: [00:18:32] Anyway what was I saying?

Bonni: [00:18:33] You were saying that when stuff like that comes up.

Dave: [00:18:36] Oh yeah I'll hear about it because I'm married to you.

Bonni: [00:18:42] You will hear about it, and you won't have to know the second that these love letters are uncovered.

Dave: [00:18:46] But in all seriousness. So, if really big things happen in the world you hear about them pretty quickly. I mean you know I'm online and I interact with people all day long. But that you get rid of the most of the noise. So I am really intentional about like anything that's kind of like the fire hose subscription.

Dave: [00:19:00] You know, even things that I like reading like Harvard Business Review great example, wonderful publication, love reading a lot of their articles. I don't subscribe to any of their feeds though because it's like you know 10, 15, 20 things a day. I don't want to get pinged with that all day long or see that on my Twitter feed or RSS.

Dave: [00:19:16] So I wait until the people I follow pick up one of those and who I really pay attention to I have relationships with and start passing around and once I've seen that once or twice from people I follow them I'll go oh that must be a good one. I'll put that into my system so I read it and a lot of folks in my community will send me stuff now.

Dave: [00:19:32] And if they took the time to send it to me then I'm definitely going to read it because that's relevant for something for me to know about.

Bonni: [00:19:39] So you just brought up one of the key differences to me in how this type of a process is unique and that is it's less about going out and reading more books or taking more classes or getting more information.
Bonni: [00:19:57] A lot of it is on the connections and establishing a network of connections that will bring greater meaning. And that it's interconnected to because it's not just them providing to you but it's you providing back to them and the richness that's found there in so capturing the scheme is about establishing a network.

Bonni: [00:20:25] Curating, the sensing is about organizing what you've captured and making meaning of it and creating or sharing is when you share and you're transparent about what it is you've found and you then have something new to contribute back once things have come into your body of thinking and your own personal knowledge management system.

Bonni: [00:20:50] Then it gets made new again when you share it. Personal knowledge mastery is a discipline. This is Harold Jarche's another definition "a discipline of seeking from diverse sources of knowledge actively making sense through action and experimentation and sharing through narration of work and learning out loud."

Dave: [00:21:18] Nice.

Bonni: [00:21:19] That's a good one. So this is just been an overview of what personal knowledge mastery is about. We are going to be spending some time on this topic and Dave and I'll share with you how we do it.

Bonni: [00:21:32] I started out this episode sharing about how overwhelmed we can all get just with the tasks that we had to get done but we also can't get overwhelmed with this flood of information.

Bonni: [00:21:41] And one of the things that you're sharing with us about what's been a value to you and I recently just finished teaching a doctoral level class where I taught personal knowledge mastery and it's been so much fun to see them starting out the class pretty resistant to technology and some of the services that we use or not even ever having heard of them before to celebrating that.

Bonni: [00:22:04] And the class has now ended it's been over for gosh about three weeks I think now and I'm still connected with them and seeing how they're working out loud just because it's of interest to me and it's so rewarding to see the people who are have continued these processes even though they're in the middle of a doctoral program.
Bonni: [00:22:21] They see the value of the Seek Sense Share and they’re still doing it. It’s really great and they’re about actually to take a trip to Washington D.C. as a part of their program.

Bonni: [00:22:30] And I’m going to really enjoy seeing how that trip goes because Dave and I, we went to D.C. as a part of our doctoral program and that was really transformative to me. So it’s going to be fun to get to see it through their eyes and get a little sneak peeks.

Dave: [00:22:42] You know there reminds me of something you know for years I’ve worked with the Dale Carnegie and we’ve one of the things we teach in our courses is how to manage stress and worry more effectively and when people tell us that they’re really overwhelmed right now and they’ve got a lot of stress going on their lives and as a result it isn’t really a good time to you know maybe take a class.

Dave: [00:23:05] One of the things we often will have conversations with people about is you know we find that that’s actually the best time for people to get better at managing stress because they get the immediate benefit of being able to manage their stress and their worry and their attitude more effectively and it makes real results medially because we’re dealing with so much of it.

Dave: [00:23:26] And so I say that as an analogy for this is you mentioned the doctoral students that I think there’s a temptation when you’re overwhelmed in information to say well let me wait until I’m a little less overwhelmed and then take you know get the system set up better and my experience is that never really happens, that there’s never a good time to you know to not do something that’s going to help you to be a little more effective

Dave: [00:23:55] So if you are overwhelmed right now and you’re thinking Gosh I can you know I don’t know if I can do this you know take one step. Do something that utilizes a system.

Dave: [00:24:02] In the future episodes I know Bonni’s planning here to begin the process and if you do yeah you may invest a little bit of time upfront but that practice, that discipline now will cut down so much noise and help you to be so much more effective at processing information and really make you that much more wise.

Bonni: [00:24:20] So this has been set up the framework and the next ones will be a lot more pragmatic about specifically what tools are Dave and I using to seek
sense and share. And we would love to have you as a part of the conversation please again join us at teachinginhighered.com

**Bonni:** [00:24:37] Before we end the episode today, Dave We don’t want to forget about our recommendations. We started with these being educational technology focused recommendations kind of throw that out the window because I’m enjoying the broader focus. So what do you have as your recommendation for our listeners today? What’s been catching your attention?

**Dave:** [00:24:55] Well something that caught my attention about a year ago is a book online. It’s a free book that’s only available by the Web and it’s called Practical Typography by Matthew Butterick. I had a chance to interview him on my Coaching for Leaders podcast a couple of weeks ago.

**Dave:** [00:25:10] And what this is- it is an online... The best way to describe it would be like a writing a style guide. But for the everyday practitioner so it’s much less you know complex says like an APA or an MLA guide. It is practical topography and how to write and how to use good punctuation all that for kind of the everyday average person.

**Dave:** [00:25:34] So this is not the thing to direct students to who are writing papers and APA or MLA or something like that. What it is helpful for I found is for your own personal communications, your letter writing and your email writing, how your producing documents for your institution or your own personal communication.

**Dave:** [00:25:54] And there’s a ton here and it’s all free. It’s a really well done guide and it really provides a lot information and some things that I didn’t know just on some of the general rules about writing- how to use fonts, how to appropriately format things and things that I find that are really a lot harder and not as accessible in some of the style guides.

**Dave:** [00:26:14] So I would I would definitely recommend that if you’re looking for a good writing tool resource or just a general guide for writing and communications. And it’s a practicaltypography.com.

**Bonni:** [00:26:24] And my recommendation is very much relevant to the conversation around personal knowledge mastery and that is Dave Pell's Next Draft. And Dave my husband, not Dave Pell, but Dave Stachowiak had mentioned earlier. Not wanting to get pinged by all the news.
Bonni: [00:26:42] I actually recently went and tweaked my subscriptions a little bit because I was subscribing to a couple two or three different news sources I think they had AP wire and there’s Google News top stories something like that

Bonni: [00:26:57] And I was just going in there and it would be the same story about- was it Harding by the way?

Dave: [00:27:02] It was.

Bonni: [00:27:04] The same story about him five different ways from five different news sources. It was it was too much. And so this guy he is a master curator. When you look at personal knowledge mastery he would be someone who is just the picture of what that looks like done well; so he goes out and must read every day voraciously and then he makes sense of it and he will then write. He’ll categorize the day’s news in such unique ways.

Bonni: [00:27:35] And it's really it's a very short read.

Dave: [00:27:38] Ten bullet points everyday.

Bonni: [00:27:40] It's funny because I never noticed it, is it always ten?

Dave: [00:27:42] Always, well at least as far as I can tell ya. It is amazing.

Bonni: [00:27:45] Oh it's amazing.

Dave: [00:27:46] Absolutely amazing.

Bonni: [00:27:47] It's funny it's insightful. It deals with incredibly tough difficult stories and then ridiculous stories. He was writing about the world cup- sorry listeners if this offends you.

Bonni: [00:27:57] I have no interest in the World Cup but I would even read the part I wouldn’t click through to the links to his stories that he links to. But I would read through the sentences just because he’s so entertaining. And if I slow myself down to read every sentence I mean he’s a hoot.

Dave: [00:28:11] I do read that every single day because he does such a good job curating. It's like if you hired someone to go out on the Internet over the last 24 hours and find like the 10 best stories the 10 best journal on all kinds of topics
news popular culture all kinds of stuff. And then he bullet points them. And here's the 10 best and it's amazing and it's free.

**Bonni:** [00:28:32] Yeah. So there'll be links to the stories if you want to find out more or you just get the overview from him if it's something you're not particularly interested in but oh it's fabulous. Yeah and he is really funny and then like I said he's also serious at the same time.

**Bonni:** [00:28:45] He's a wonderful resource to me and what I was able to do is unsubscribe from some that weren't as much value and I can't wait till his pops in every day. He took a little time off recently and I felt a yeaming to have him come back.

**Dave:** [00:28:56] Well he cracks me up too. Because he's totally just like a real person. Like you'll get a message sometimes one day like my kids are off school tomorrow so there won't be one tomorrow. I like it. That's awesome. Or my gates on spring break next week so you will only be getting one Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday and I really do miss them when they're not there. They're pretty amazing.

**Bonni:** [00:29:14] Thanks so much for listening today. We appreciate your ongoing feedback. Let us know how you are liking the podcast if you have suggestions for topics what's working what's not working. Go to or send an email to feedback at teachinginhighered.com .

**Bonni:** [00:29:30] And we're also looking forward to doing a Q and A show coming up. So we would love to find out what questions you have for us and you can go to teachinginhighered.com/feedback. And you also can leave a voicemail to where we can play your audio with a question in future episodes.

**Dave:** [00:29:49] Absolutely. And if you go to teachinginhighered.com/subscribe you'll get Bonni's guide for essential educational technology tools. Some of them we talked about today but lots more there in the notes and weekly update each week some good stuff to be checked out.

**Bonni:** [00:30:07] Thanks again for listening.

*Teaching in Higher Ed transcripts are created using a combination of an automated transcription service and human beings. This text likely will not represent the precise, word-for-word conversation that was had. The accuracy of the transcripts will vary. The authoritative record of the Teaching in Higher Ed podcasts is contained in the audio file.*