

Bonni: [00:00:00] I just had my first 2015 Fall semester teaching nightmare. Turns out I'm not alone in today's episode I share some of my fears about teaching and ways that I often attempt to resolve those fears.

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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] I just started reading The Skillfull Teacher by Stephen Brookfield and Stephen was actually a guest on a prior episode and I do plan on inviting and hopefully having him back to talk about the revised Skillful Teacher.

Bonni: [00:01:02] But I wanted to just mention it upfront here I absolutely was grabbed in from the very beginning of the book because he's so vulnerably shares about some of the fears that he has had about teaching and some of the risks that you really have to take to have some part in someone else's deep learning.

Bonni: [00:01:23] And it just really is so comforting to have that in common with him and to know that I'm not alone in all of that and I thought that I would just share a few of the common fears that I find myself having so often I've been teaching now this is going to be coming up my 10th year.

Bonni: [00:01:40] I guess I just finished my 10th year teaching full time and did adjunct prior to that and I've noticed a pattern. There's definitely a trend of some fears that take place pretty much every year and I now know that there are going to be there it's kind of like knowing about Elizabeth Kubler Ross's stages of grief it doesn't necessarily mean you're not going to grieve.

Bonni: [00:02:01] But at least you'll know that you're not alone in having some of those common stages of grief. I feel the same way as I am reading Stephen Brookfield's *The Skillful Teacher* by the way that is not all that the book is about.

Bonni: [00:02:13] I think I'm finished with the first or second chapter but it's a much richer book and in his rewrite he has rewritten it from the ground up and included many new chapters and I didn't read the first version but I'm sure that it was brilliant. I'm really enjoying this one as well.

Bonni: [00:02:29] One of the common fears that I recognize having and in fact I'm not lying about the nightmares that's true. I do tend to have teaching nightmares I know I'm not alone in that because other people have started to mention they're popping up for them too. A lot of my nightmares tend to be centered on just the volume of people.

Bonni: [00:02:48] I'll be teaching in 3 sections of the same class in the fall of it many times before. It tends to fail it's required class for our business degree students business majors and they come in masses they come both our new freshmen come and sign up for that class.

Bonni: [00:03:06] And it also is something that many transfers wind up taking as they commence. Like a lot of lots of freshmen probably 80 percent freshmen and then 20 percent 30 percent transfer students and what have you. And also we get students who are not majoring in business but want to learn more about it or maybe they're a business minor.

Bonni: [00:03:25] And I just find that there's just this feeling of people just coming at me all day needing something more of a transactional nature to it. And that really De-emphasizes the part of teaching that means the most to me and that is those deeper connections.

Bonni: [00:03:42] And it starts to feel very much just rushed and hurried and confused and lacking in meaning and I feel like I'm not able to really use the gifts that I have to have those deeper connections.

Bonni: [00:03:54] And again lots of the nightmares and center around that the next fear is just I labeled it overall confusion I since I will be teaching three sections of that same class and I've done that once before. Last fall I did the same thing.

Bonni: [00:04:09] And I found myself pretty often at least more often than I would like to have done where I would have to say and did I say that before. Or I said it earlier in the classes I teach at 9 a.m. at 11 a.m. and right away again at 12:00 noon.

Bonni: [00:04:24] I've heard from other colleagues that it actually would be worse if it was on a different day. Maybe I taught at 9am one day and 10 the next day I guess it would be more confusing. I don't want to do that though I don't want to have it where it doesn't feel like it's fresh and new and that I'm just repeating something I said before I just don't like that I get confused that way and that I can't remember what day it is.

Bonni: [00:04:51] I'll be talking by the way not just about my fears but about some of the attempts I use to resolve them. I just need to beef up some of the things I do to resolve this one but it's certainly I feel like I'm not doing my best when I do that.

Bonni: [00:05:03] And I mean nobody likes to look confused in front of large quantities of people. The next one is lacking balance. We have two small children absolutely love being able to spend time with my husband.

Bonni: [00:05:15] I love being able to do exercise and go out for walks and things like that. And we all know I mean it's just tough. We can get really engaged in the semester and there's so much to do in grading and preparing for classes and students have needs and things like that and just that fear that I am I really investing the time in the best places.

Bonni: [00:05:37] Am I doing enough for the students am I doing enough for the family. Etc. And then the last one is probably really the biggest one and I think the fear that Stephen Brookfield oh he just articulated so well in the beginning of the skillful teacher and that it just really comes down to me feeling inadequate that I'm not good at this and that's why I titled this episode the terror of teaching. It really does. If I allow myself to let that feeling dwell in me too long it can just start to get bigger and bigger is like I can't do this. It's too much.

Bonni: [00:06:10] I'm not able to teach as well as I want to. And he actually even articulate that in the book I'm a fraud. You know I'm not. This is not me. You shouldn't listen to me. I don't have anything worthwhile to say and that and that that's just a tough thing and thinking about the semester can kind of start to build and Tulla come and get my sea legs back again.

Bonni: [00:06:33] And this is when I get. We'll talk next about the attempts to resolve these fears. So the first fear was essentially quantity over quality that so many students and not ever getting to have those real quality relationships and the kinds of relationships and experiences I like to have with students that really brings about the sense of meaning for me and my teaching.

Bonni: [00:06:57] And one thing I attempt to do to resolve that is to carve out time for deeper connections. There's like a few different ways that I do this. We have Cafeteria on our campus it's a pretty small school and it's a great chance for me if we can share a meal and the CAF oftentimes the students already have some kind of a meal plan and we get meals pretty inexpensively and that works out really well for us to connect.

Bonni: [00:07:19] Sometimes we like to have students over to our house and we can have a game night or invite students over whether it's from a class or just a particular type of student maybe they have common connections and we can start to have those deeper conversations and then I also oftentimes like to have a time where I can go out for walks with students because that means I get to combine my love of getting outside and deans measure size and being in nature.

Bonni: [00:07:47] There's a beautiful beautiful trail by our Newport Beach back bay that is just breathtaking and you really feel like you're stepping away from everything when we get out there and I can even on my time scheduling tool I use one called time trade I've talked about it before on episodes.

Bonni: [00:08:06] I can set up even a specific invite for beach walk or back bay walk and I can either have that on my website if I want to invite anyone to do that. But in this case I'm I'm trying to specifically carve out time for those deeper connections so I can send it to a specific student or a specific group of students that I'm trying to be purposeful about having those deeper connections.

Bonni: [00:08:31] And then that email they can click on a link and find days that work for them so that's something I'd like to do to carve out the time for those deeper connections as far as my second fear confusion that I really feel like I'm not doing a good job when I get a little bit of living up to the stereotypical absent minded professor.

Bonni: [00:08:50] I really need to get better at using checklists when I have a checklist and maybe that's built into my PowerPoint somehow or I've got it in my class planning software which is called Plan book and if it's in plan book that

we're good cause then I can just go and revisit that each time each time the class the new section of the class starts. And another thing really. I mean we don't want to I don't want to cuddle my students too much.

Bonni: [00:09:15] I used to be really too much of a stickler and never wanted to make reminders it's in the syllabus it's in the schedule it the fact that I just work with so many of our younger students oftentimes they're 18 it's their first time at college.

Bonni: [00:09:27] I have found that I think I need to meet them a little bit more halfway than just expecting they're going to completely transform their lives from whatever it was they were accustomed to and I could build it into the system the learning management system that we use has a great calendar.

Bonni: [00:09:41] So I try to put as many things as I can in that calendar so I can get them used to looking at that and then I also am finding this fall I want to leverage remind more that's the service where I can send out a group text to all the students but they don't text each other they don't text me back and nobody sees each other's cell phone numbers.

Bonni: [00:10:00] It's a wonderful service I've talked about it before on the show and if I leverage reminded more than that I have to take precious class time for these little seemingly piddly reminders sometimes mean but sometimes I'm just trying to get them to work toward a larger goal. And I know everyone gets it.

Bonni: [00:10:16] I know that if they want to now remind has a great way where if I want to make it available where they can during certain hours of the day text me and start some kind of a chat or maybe they can only text me if they're replying to a message I sent them in just because a lot of flexibility for how to set that up and I think I need to spend less precious class time with these.

Bonni: [00:10:35] Don't forget about this don't forget about that but doing it using that reminder service the next fear is really lacking balance trying to balance out the time I want to invest in our two young children and with my husband and other loved ones and friends as well as my professional goals.

Bonni: [00:10:52] And for me part of that is putting together every semester a template for what an ideal week would look like and I found this template from a guy named Michael Hyatt a link to it in the show notes and what it does is it has you in advance. Think about what a week would look like where it was ideal. Now we don't always have ideal weeks but if you think about it in

advance and try to block out what the different things you would work on during the week you might find out like I did.

Bonni: [00:11:19] There just aren't enough hours in the week so then having those realistic conversation with your family members and with yourself reflecting about well what will work what will that ideal week look like.

Bonni: [00:11:31] And as I did that with myself and just realized I can't do this again. I did this last fall. It isn't going to work and there's just not enough hours in the day. I realized that we could look at outsourcing some of what we do and my husband's been looking at this a little bit for his podcast he does the coaching for leaders podcast is a lot more listeners than we have at present.

Bonni: [00:11:54] But the Teaching in Higher Ed podcast listeners are continuing to grow and it's exciting to see so many people listening and sharing about the show and finding benefit and we can look at outsourcing the show notes and other aspects of production to someone else and maybe that isn't something that you can do necessarily maybe that the dollars and cents of it doesn't break out to be worth it to you.

Bonni: [00:12:19] But if by the way if it does there's options for virtual assistants out there where you can delegate things to on a relatively good cost to do so for things that you might find similar to that where someone else could do that they might even be faster than me. That certainly could free up that time. I think about that we pay our child caregivers 15.50 an hour or depending on how long they've worked for us etc. and that what if we do that so that we can work.

Bonni: [00:12:51] But what if we could free up one or two more hours of not having to work on show notes as an example and get to spend more time with our kids so it's how we're investing that money that we pay whether it's childcare or perhaps doing some kind of creative outsourcing. If that's not an option for you or just doesn't sound like a good deal there's also of course insourcing many of us have TAs.

Bonni: [00:13:12] And many of us talk about not necessarily leveraging them as well as we could. I always have an omni focus I have a template project that I've started to build for every time I take on a new TA teaching them about the systems getting their Loggins set up having them on the learning management system.

Bonni: [00:13:30] I give them access to a dropbox folder where I have a simple as this is I have a video of me showing them how to use the Scantron machine. I do small segment of multiple choice questions for my foundational exams and some of its essay book. But for those multiple choice no reason why my TA can't go upstairs and do all 95 of those and then hand the essay part of it with the attached scantron back to me for the more rigorous grading.

Bonni: [00:13:59] So that's kind of insourcing as we think about our TA's or graduate assistants. I also have a project management system called Ossa that I often use with TAs to kind of track on where we are and I know when things get done and I know if anything's falling through the cracks. I like that. Not a lot.

Bonni: [00:14:15] And lastly on this fear of lacking balance is learning to say no more often and I really benefited by reading a book called Essentialism: The disciplined pursuit of less by Greg McKeown and I've talked about this book prior on the show but wanted to mention that once again as a real good source of inspiration for me thinking about what really is essential and trying to be better about saying no to the rest.

Bonni: [00:14:41] And for me that often comes up in terms of committees. I can be guilty of saying yes to too many committees thinking I'm the only one who can save the day. And you know what I'm not the only one who can save them. There's a lot of other people who maybe are just waiting for an opportunity to engage.

Bonni: [00:14:57] And when I don't get better about say no then I just become one of the go to people for the newest committee that has come up around something on our campus that's important to me as well. The last fear which again to me is probably the biggest fear is just being inadequate and I think about what sometimes starts to pop up in my mind is that I'm not good at this as in teaching I'm not good at the stuff I'm not good at teaching.

Bonni: [00:15:23] I'm not good enough. And when I realized that really comes down to is I'm not perfect at this. And that desire to want to be perfect really hindering me from sometimes taking the kinds of risks that we need to take in order to teach students in such a way that they can experience deep learning.

Bonni: [00:15:41] I think often about what it would be like to be a college professor who lectured for 50 minutes three times a week and gave a midterm and a final and one paper.

Bonni: [00:15:51] That seems to me really a lot easier than what it is than I do and maybe that's just my my view from a distance but I'm pretty good about putting together a PowerPoint. As you know if you've been listening to this podcast for a while I can put together a half an hour podcast once a week that more and more people are listening to it.

Bonni: [00:16:09] This seems to be that I could talk three times a week and I could present three times a week and then I could I could assess and grade and call it a day and the type of teaching that I do and many of you who are listening do goes beyond that seeks out that deeper learning.

Bonni: [00:16:27] And it isn't a safe way to go. It isn't. Students are are as we've shared in prior episodes are often uncomfortable with this new way of learning in college they're more accustomed to the lectures they're more accustomed to a few assignments that they'll be graded on.

Bonni: [00:16:45] And it takes some while a while to condition them to see the kind of learning that can take place to see the kind of connections and relationships that can be built that deeper learning. If we take those risks and so I I want to stop saying I'm not good at this and realize what that's really saying is I'm not perfect at this and I don't want to be perfect at it.

Bonni: [00:17:03] I want to even get to the point where I am comfortable modeling for my students failures. OK failure can lead to wonderful successes. And we know what doesn't work.

Bonni: [00:17:14] And we can get right back up and try again and care continue to care continue to take those risks and doing new things. This is the point in the show where we do recommendations. And since I mentioned to you I started to have some of the fears that I'm working on resolving around the start to a new semester.

Bonni: [00:17:36] One of the things that's so fun for me is a song that I'd love for you to even watch on video you can get it on whatever music service you listen to but I'd love for you to listen to it or watch it on YouTube because it's so fun to see this guy play the guitar his name is Tommy Emmanuel.

Bonni: [00:17:52] And my three and a half year old can't pronounce Emanuel so and in our house his name is Tommy meow meow Tommy meow meow and it's a song called Tall Fiddler.

Bonni: [00:18:02] And if you've ever played guitar before it is remarkable to watch him play this song and I'm going to play just a tiny bit of it so you can get a sense of the rhythm of it.

Bonni: [00:18:16] But again I hope you'll go click on the link to youtube to watch him play the song. The finger movements that he's doing is just incredible. I hope you'll take a listen to it and like I said watch his amazing play of the guitar.

Bonni: [00:18:43] So you have to picture my two children running around our kitchen island listening to Tommy meow meow play fiddler. And it gets faster and faster and faster and the kids laugh and does delight in this. And it does bring back such good perspective to me and it brings me energy makes me laugh and it's just a wonderful way to reframe my mind so I'd highly suggest for you Tommy meow meow, Tommy Emmanuel's Tall Fiddler.

Bonni: [00:19:12] And that's going to be it for this episode but as always I would love to hear from you any feedback that you have on the show ideas that you have for future guests or just checking in and letting me know how you're finding the show I love to hear from you could do that at teachinginhighered.com/feedback if you have yet to subscribe to the weekly update. You can do that at teachinginhighered.com/subscribe.

Bonni: [00:19:39] And that will get you a once a week e-mail that has it. The show notes links to everything that I talk about on the episodes. And also a weekly article on either teaching or productivity. Although a couple times a summer I've missed it but we always get the email with a show notes so we hope a blog post each week too.

Bonni: [00:19:59] And I'd love to see you subscribe you'll also get a free gift with that of the ed tech essentials guide with 19 tools to help you use technology to leverage the power of technology to facilitate learning in your classrooms. Thanks so much for listening. And I'll look forward to next. We got some great guests coming up.

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