

-- Speaker 1 00:00:27 Hi everyone. Welcome to Dr. MCs Self-Care Cabaret podcast. I'm Theresa Melito-Conners, a doctoral level educational administrator and mental health practitioner focused on helping you our world's helpers. Every day we have a choice to prioritize our wellbeing, to incorporate reflection, recovery, renewal, and resilience strategies into our lives. However, those of us who step up and serve our communities in healthcare, education, nonprofit spaces and more can struggle with putting ourselves first. I've seen this firsthand, and it's a challenge. Enter Dr. MCs Self-Care cabaret podcast. Here we have real intimate conversations with leading experts, passionate about accessible, sustainable self-care in its 10 domains. It's all about the hard work we can take on together to find our spotlight. Before chatting with today's guest, I want to talk about a recent presentation to a fabulous group of helping professionals on the topic of self-care. We were talking about intention and how when you focus on something negative, let's say you actually attract more negativity into your life.

Speaker 1 00:01:47 So a couple ways that I like to think about this, and one of the things that I said to this group of professionals, and it really resonated with them, was the following. Energy flows where attention goes. Gonna say that again. Energy flows where attention goes. So again, if you focus on that negative, you are going to attract more of that. And it reminds me also of one of my favorite mindfulness practices. The what went well, ask yourself every day, even in the most chaotic, stressed out, fast-paced environments we find ourselves in, you can almost always find something that went well. I want you to take a pause right now and just think to yourself, what went well today?

Speaker 1 00:02:42 So what went well? Were you able to think of something? I hope so. We tend to do the opposite of that, and we focus on the negative. And when we do that, we attract more negativity into our lives, and that's not helping anyone. And that brings me to today's guest, who is

Dr. Karen Dudek-Brannan, founder and c e o of Dr. Karen, I l c A company focused on empowering educators to support language literacy, executive functioning, and cognitive wellness. She currently offers online professional development focused on helping K-12 therapists, folks like speech language pathologists, psychologists, social workers, and other service providers to develop programs and services to support students in the areas of language literacy and executive functioning. Dr. Karen is a licensed SLP and has a doctorate in special education. She spent 14 years in the school system before starting an online education company in 2015. She's currently the host of the Defacto Leaders Podcast, where she shares up to date evidence-based practices, personal experiences, and guest interviews designed to help clinicians and educators feel more confident in the way they serve their caseloads so they can help school-aged kids grow up to be successful, kind, well-adjusted people. I had the great fortune recently of connecting with Dr. Karen and I was a guest on her Defacto Leaders podcast a couple months back. I'll make sure that episode is linked in the episode notes for you. But without further delay, here is our conversation.

Speaker 1 00:04:36 Thanks Dr. Karen for coming to hang out with us this afternoon.

Speaker 2 00:04:40 Thank you so much for having me. I'm excited to be here.

Speaker 1 00:04:43 Ah, thank you. So let's dive right in. If you've listened to any of my other episodes, I'd love to start with this question. How do you like to practice self-care?

Speaker 2 00:04:52 My favorite way to practice self-care is through systems, which sounds a little bit backwards and not super sexy <laugh>, but that has been one of the most powerful things that I have found that's been helpful in not just doing self-care, but actually making sure that I do the traditional self-care type of things. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:05:12 All right. So tell me more. So what might that look like?

Speaker 2 00:05:16 Well, I have found that, and, and this is kind of an interesting backstory that I was just thinking about earlier today as I was thinking about what I would talk about with you. I don't know if you are familiar with Tim Urban or if you've listened to his TED Talk. Oh, I don't think so. Um, it, so it's c --

-- alluded Inside the Mind of a Master Procrastinator. It's, I highly recommend watching it if you haven't. And also he has in one of Tim Ferris's books, I think it's Tribe of Mentors, he's one of the people that is featured in there. And he talks about how he is a person that really resists structure and boundaries, but actually really needs them. And so he was saying that one of the things that he noticed when he went to the self-employed route, because he's a, he's a blogger and I, you know, he's a, does all kinds of work and he said that he initially was liked to be sort of a rebel.

Speaker 2 00:06:16 Like, I can work whenever I want. I can be working at three in the morning. I can sleep in and all of this. And so kind of resisted that traditional nine to five structure, but realized that he, what ended up happening was that he's sort of working all of the time and there's not a clear boundary of I'm doing this one thing here, I'm getting my work done, and now when I'm done with my work, I'm free to enjoy all of these other things that I like to do. So he realized that it actually was beneficial to him to have more structure and to have dedicated work time that looks traditionally more like a work schedule. Now I know that some people don't like that specific schedule of getting up and working at eight, from eight to four or whatever it is. Some people's schedule might be a little bit pushed back, or sometimes they might have time blocks in different places.

Speaker 2 00:07:11 If you're working in a school, you have to be working in those school hours and maybe you have time where you do have to do prep and planning outside of school. But the main thing is, is that what I took away from that and, and how I apply that to my life and why that resonated with me is just that idea of having that dedicated time, having that structure in place, having certain habits in place, and giving yourself some constraints. Hmm. Even though people like to glorify this whole work whenever you want or have freedom, all of these things. But in order for you to have freedom to enjoy the things that you like to do, you have to get certain things done. Yeah. I mean, with, uh, being a person who, I have been self-employed since 2018 and I came out of the school systems and I know that a lot of people, when I have talked to people who are in more traditional roles, whether it be in the schools or whether it be corporate roles, a lot of times it's, oh, that's so cool.

Speaker 2 00:08:09 You're, you know, the ultimate freedom. You've got your own business. And I'm like, mm-hmm. <affirmative>, be careful what you wish for, because it's a lot of work to have to be making those decisions all the time. So, to me, when, when I have some kind of a system that I'm committing to, it's helping to make some of those choices up upfront. It's helping to resist some of that, should I do this, should I do that? When you have those habits in place and things are a little bit more automatic, some of those decisions are made upfront, it reduces that decision fatigue so that you can get into a better creative space. You're less stressed. Um, you make better decisions so that you actually have time to do those things that you enjoy doing. Because if you don't get those certain things done, then, then your work ends up bleeding into all your free, free time and you're always multitasking and you're never fully present during those things that you, you might want to be doing, like your family time, social life, whatever it is that you like to do, whenever that free time is for you.

Speaker 1 00:09:07 Yeah. Nice. You actually reminded me about, you know, back earlier, couple years ago at the beginning of the pandemic when a lot of folks were working from home, myself included, and, and in my role, I ended up working from home for almost two years. Boundaries were, and I'm really good with boundaries and I need structure and routine, and I'm really good at that. But during work from home, during those early covid months, boundaries got so blurred. It was like, yeah, you know, I like the physical boundary of like leaving my, leaving the school at the end of the day, shutting that laptop, heading home. And like having that separation that working from home was really tricky cuz I felt like, like the day kind of almost never ended because it was like, yeah, I could go downstairs for a little while and like have a snack or talk to my husband --

-- d or something.

Speaker 1 00:09:52 But then it was like the lore of like going back and doing more work was so like powerful that it was really hard to set those boundaries. So I worry about that even still as I hope to be full-time in my doctor mc work at some point in the future. Um, hopefully not so distant future. I think about, you know, being a full-time entrepreneur, small business owner, and what that would look like and how I will still have to invite some of those boundaries and structure back into my life. Otherwise, like, it, it really wasn't healthy for me during that work from home time. Mm-hmm. <affirmative> because it was so just unstructured. And I, it was like, whoa, how do I, how do I do this? What's going on here? And I didn't even realize it at the time until I went back into a more structured environment where I was like, oh yeah, this is, now we're back. Now I'm, I feel back to what is better for me mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So I, I totally see what you're saying and like, yeah, careful what you wish for because you know, I'll still need to be careful about that. Yeah.

Speaker 2 00:10:48 And you don't always realize, sometimes it's a gradual process where you don't realize how burnt out you are. It can really creep up on you. Yeah. And um, this, this is something else that I have noticed with self-care where I have to be very careful being self-employed because so many decisions are up to me. There are times when you may, if you had a team or a boss or somebody making a certain decision for you. Hmm. And yes, sometimes that sounds a little restrictive, but there are times when I find myself doing things that probably aren't in my best interest. Where I tend to avoid things is, so I am very good at doing independent work. If you gimme a research project where it's like, go read these articles, write this what this thing, like write something some kind of a, I have to go do research and work independently.

Speaker 2 00:11:45 I will do that all day long. I will do that probably too long. I would be like, you know, it's Saturday morning and my husband's watching tv so I think I'll go work for half an hour and six hours later I'm still working kind of a thing and I forgot to eat and shower and all of that. So I know that I will just, you know, funnel into those types of things. Where I forget is, oh yeah, sometimes you need to talk to humans and it's good for you. And I avoid that. So I sometimes will avoid the things that make me feel better just because there's a little bit of a, you have to put this thing down and go over here and this thing is comfortable. It doesn't necessarily mean that it's filling my bucket and making me feel good. And I remember somebody that, um, I went to a conference right after the pandemic where it was just when we were starting to be able to get out and do things again.

Speaker 2 00:12:41 So it was like, okay, we're safe. We can, we can do an in-person conference. And I remember the person who was putting it on said, you know what? I thought I was fine. You know, I thought I can do this. Like I'm, I'm fulfilled, you know, at home. And then she went out to this conference and she's talking to people in person and just feels totally recharged and didn't even realize how much she was lacking that. And so sometimes that's another thing where I have to be very careful with the self-care and with the systems and making sure that I am blocking out time for specific things that I tend to avoid. And that's something that I'm working on now is just that connection and networking piece because I do know that it's something that I tend to avoid when I get stressed or busy or fall back into my routines.

Speaker 2 00:13:27 Hmm. And so that's another thing where, um, why I think the structure is very important because a lot of times we might do things that we think are self-care or that we think are fun brain break type of activities, but they're really just sort of immediate gratification, quick dopamine boost kind of things that aren't really going to give us the feeling of satisfaction in the long run. They're just easy and accessible and that's what we're picking them because the things that are going to be good for us just to require a little bit more effort. Yeah,

Speaker 1 00:14:00 That's a good point. You made me think of shopping that add to cart sometimes feels really good in the moment. Oh, <laugh> get that dopamine spike and t --

-- hen you're like, ah, that didn't last long. Yeah. <laugh>. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Oh goodness. Yeah. So can you talk a little bit, just describe a little bit more about the, the work that you do in Dr. Karen L L C?

Speaker 2 00:14:20 Yes. So, oh, that's another thing where I have, I've made a lot of changes this past year and just what I'm focusing on, my initial, so initially again, I started as a school speech pathologist. Did that for 14 years, was working on my doctorate in special ed and wanted to do something in school administration, maybe be a curriculum director or special ed director, but ended up doing my business instead just because of family reasons didn't make sense for me to relocate, which would've been a, the case if I had to, um, if I took a school administrator position or if I did higher ed, which was the other option I was considering. So, um, started off in the language and literacy space, which I still offer that I still have programs for mostly speech pathologists, but really those people who are working with supplemental interventions for language and literacy in the schools.

Speaker 2 00:15:14 But really what I've been working on this past year is helping those people who are primarily in those related service provider roles. So speech pathologists, social workers, psychologists, counselors, you know, any of those other i interventionists or therapists that are working in the school setting, helping them to be better leaders and feel more empowered in their work. And the thing that I'm working on right now is really having this, this initiative where they take on a leadership role with getting executive functioning support in place for their buildings. Because that's a common area where when you look at a lot of the things that are going on in schools that are causing teachers to struggle that are c or you know, the, the things that the school administrators are concerned about, the things that the therapists are concerned about. When you look at a lot of the things that are going on when it comes to mental health with students, having anxiety with some of the behaviors that come up in the classroom with the academic skills that we want students to build in order for them to be independent when they get to the end of high school.

Speaker 2 00:16:19 A lot of it can tie back to executive functioning. And the reason that this tied into self-care initially for me was because a lot of those therapists get very burnt out in their roles and they go to those traditional self-care type of things. Like again, the wine and bubble bath. Hmm. You know, or go for a walk after school or call a friend or all of those things that are good things to be doing. But what I found is a lot of times people will still feel like, okay, I went and I took a break, but then I still have this to go back to on Monday. It's like a one and done and I still have this. Yeah. Where it's, I think that a lot of times, some, some people you really do need to block out that time to give your brain a break and all of those things.

Speaker 2 00:17:04 But also if you really view your work as a calling and it's compelling to you and you love doing it, it doesn't suck the life out of you. It's because it's, you don't feel like you have to have these, you know, firm really firm boundaries. Not that you shouldn't have boundaries, but it feels a little bit more freeing. It doesn't feel quite as overwhelming if it's, okay, well I did my work at school, but then here's this project that I'm going to work on for this set time again, boundaries still, but it doesn't feel like, oh my gosh, this is sucking my will to live. Yeah. Or something like that. And so I think that when you feel inspired and empowered in your work and you feel like you're making a difference that really shifts the way that you, that you feel and it makes you less likely to burnt out, burn out.

Speaker 2 00:17:58 And that's one of the things where I just, I think that sometimes people will see self-care as a bandaid where a lot of times there's this, these other structural things that need to be in place that are really causing you to have to feel like, oh, I need this work-life balance. And of course we need that, but we also can't just be, feel like we're not making any difference in the work that we're, that we're doing. And I think that part of the reason that people do burnout out is because they feel like they're not doing an --

-- ything. It's like, you need to see I did this and I got this result. We need feedback, we need to feel like we're doing a good job. We need to feel like we're our work matters. And so that's why I originally focused on that whole aspect of helping people be better leaders.

Speaker 2 00:18:49 And the way that I do that is through things like helping them build systems so they can have time to focus on building relationships and being present. And then the executive functioning piece is just, that is something where people can focus on a specific initiative that is going to make a difference in their students. It just makes sense for that to be something that is lumped into all those leadership initiatives that somebody who is in one of those positions would, would wanna hang their hat on so that they can be seen as a, a valued resource in their building. Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:19:22 Interesting. So you bring up a lot of good points. So what you were describing about that feeling like you have meaning in your work and a calling and that larger purpose that really gets into the spiritual domain of self-care. Yeah. If we think about the 10 domains I talk about a lot. That's really the spiritual domain. And what's really interesting is educators tend to do really well in that domain when they kind of score across. Like I, I have assessments that I give folks and comes from Dr. Cook Cotton. It's not my assessment, but it's really cool. And we can link that in the episode notes too, but, okay. So educators tend to do really well in that domain because they, at some level, they understand how important their work is and they feel, they know why they show up every day. They know that their work has meaning. Yet if we, we know that yet the burnout rates and the retention rates and everything else like doesn't align with that. So like what's the, what's the missing piece? Is it more that sense of belonging that, that feedback, that support that they feel that they're lacking? What do you think?

Speaker 2 00:20:29 If you're talking about the related service providers, for sure it's the feeling of belonging because those services get very siloed off. I remember that when I was in the schools. You just feel like, okay, here's the third grade teachers and they have their little meaning that they do every week and here's the, the reading teachers and they do their little meaning. And I'm here by myself in my office. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And there's also, um, something interesting that happens. I, I'm guessing this happens to other related service providers as well. It for sure happens to the speech pathologist where, you know, when the parents, it's like, it's Valentine's Day or it's Christmas or it's whatever, whatever thing that you're celebrating, depending on what, you know, what holidays you celebrate. If you celebrate holidays, um, where it's, oh, we're gonna give all, like, the parents will give stuff to the teachers and how many people will forget about the speech people.

Speaker 2 00:21:26 Yeah. Now I will say some parents, if they're a parent who has a child who has a big team of providers, they're usually pretty good about it cuz they're like, oh yeah, I have to think about all the people that are supporting my child. But you, we get forgotten about a lot. And so I know that that's something so little, but just those, those little things where it's, ugh, you forgot about me again, or you forgot to tell me that you're, you're going on a field trip today. Um, it's always like, oh yeah, we forgot about speech. And so

Speaker 1 00:21:55 That happens often, often to, I would say in my role I'm often forgot about. And I'm the one pulling all the strings for the IEPs and like everything <laugh>.

Speaker 2 00:22:04 Yeah. Well, uh, my sister's a a counselor and, and she was talking about that where she was just saying that it's almost like you're, you have to be this stealth person who's sneaking in and out of classrooms whenever, whenever there's a fire to be put out. And it's almost your job to be kind of, I don't wanna say invisible, but like you go in there and you get everything taken care of so that the teacher can do their job. Yeah. And you're kind of just well under

Speaker 1 00:22:32 The radar. You're in there and, and I,

Speaker 2 00:22:34 Yeah. Which, which is good. I mean, you wanna free up the time for the teacher. Um, and so I think that that's part of --

-- it, the sense of belonging. And the other thing that I have found with some of these related service providers is that we're trained in this medical model. It's like you evaluate and you treat and you're this medical professional and you're this, this clinical expert. And then when you transition the role to the school, it gets a little bit messy. And it's like, am I a teacher? Am I a therapist? Um, how do I fit in here? And people don't really understand what you do. You  
Speaker 1 00:23:06 Can say what, you can't say what like falls under the per of the school, what doesn't like Yeah, for sure.

Speaker 2 00:23:12 Yeah. Well there's that. And then also, um, people don't, because they don't understand your role cause they don't have your background, which is understandable. They don't understand the scope of what you can offer. And so that is something else that's hard because, you know, you, you just feel like you're not appreciated. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So a lot of the work that I do with people is figuring out how to be seen as that trusted expert. And a lot of it does require you to think about the way you're communicating because we do have to realize that a lot of those times that those things happen when people don't think of you, when they don't make the referral, when it's appropriate, when they don't call you into the meeting, they forget to include you wherever, or you make a recommendation and they don't follow through on it.

Speaker 2 00:24:00 A lot of times it's so much more about the other person that it is about you. And so that's why there are things that you can do to change the way that you're communicating. But where I usually start with people is getting their systems in place so that they can have the bandwidth. Yeah. Because a lot of times, I mean, when you are in a clinical area, you do need to have your protocols down solid as far as like, what are the basics of my role? And then it's okay, what are my, what what is my process throughout the day so that I have time to even think about how am I going to form a relationship with this teacher or whoever it is. And um, and really when you make time to do that and you make time to build those relationships to go into the classroom and support a teacher, then that's where you can start to be seen as a person that, where people are going to come to you.

Speaker 2 00:24:51 You know, maybe you helped somebody else with something and so now even though it wasn't what you were trying to get at, you've helped them with something. And so now they see you as a valuable person, they're gonna be more likely to, if you say, Hey, here's a suggestion that I have for you in your classroom to feel like you're included in that process. Mm-hmm. And so that's really what I work on with a lot of people because that can have a huge impact on your sense of belonging. Just, just again, feeling appreciated. Yeah. And feeling like you're included in just, you know, the overall morale. Yeah, for sure. Um, so, um, and I know that, you know, when, how it I think relates to self-care is just, just again, that sense of belonging but also just, just that structure and that clarity of when is my work done for the day? Right. So that you don't feel like, like I think that sometimes people feel like, like, can I leave my laptop at work? Am I done? Like, when am I really done? Yeah. So that's another thing that can be really helpful in creating systems. You, you have that boundary of like, this is what I have to do and then I'm done. Yeah. And I can just be done for the night. <laugh>, I talk

Speaker 1 00:25:58 A lot about boundaries and push teachers and educators to really make strong boundaries. Cause it's, it's critical.

Speaker 1 00:26:06 Did you hear the news about our exciting new offering from the self-care cabaret? We're calling it Talk Back. If you're familiar with the theater space, you may have participated in a talkback before, after a performance, the cast and crew will come back on stage to chat with the audience and answer questions. Think of it as a casual guided discussion. Inspired by this and by popular interest, we've come up with a talkback for the self-care cabaret podcast groups will listen to a podcast episode or two of their choosing. Then I'll come and lead your discussion either in person or virtually of those episodes expanding on the big ideas. It's a great option for groups looking for short, impactful --

-- professional development or smaller teams looking to get an introduction to self-care and wellbeing. We have done a few of these so far and let me say they have been so much fun. So if you're interested in bringing a talk back to your group or organization, email, podcast, dr mc self-care dot com and now on with the show. So when you talk about systems, are you talking about like literally scheduling out like your, your, all your tasks, your self-care stuff? Like talk, talk a little bit more about like what that looks like in practice.

Speaker 2 00:27:25 Yeah, so I actually came up with this. So I did it sort of intuitively on my own and for a while I was doing some consulting work with doctoral candidates who were finishing their dissertations. So obviously you're familiar with the best life could <laugh>. Yeah. So a lot of that is is around, there's, there's so much with, with boundaries and structure and um, yeah, there there's a lot to it that doesn't have anything to do with writing and how smart you are. Tons of executive functioning. Again, <laugh>, you have to have to plan a huge project out. You have to be able to coordinate people and communicate and understand how you're coming across to people, all of those things. But what I did was, again, for me it was an 18 month project. So I had to figure out what's my, what's my end goal.

Speaker 2 00:28:18 And then I had to chunk it out into, I did it in quarters where I had to figure out what I was doing each quarter. And so I call it my master planning process. And that's what I teach people to do. And I teach them to, to start with the end goal in mind of what they're trying to accomplish and then figure out what they need to do in each 90 day block. So if you're thinking about it in terms of a year, it would be quarters, so like q1, q2, you know, et cetera. But it's just, it's really hard. You do have to block out time in advance when you're thinking about something like that. But it's really hard to know what you're doing in Q4 when you haven't even gotten through q1. And from a motivation standpoint, it's really hard for you to motivate yourself to think very specifically about what am I doing this day, you know, when it's months away.

Speaker 2 00:29:07 So what I show people how to do is get kind of a, a broad overview of what they're doing each quarter and then how immediate it is is going to be, um, going to dictate how specific you are. So for example, you're gonna be the most specific about the current 90 days. That's a good chunk where we can figure out what we're doing within that, that next 90 days. And then, you know, you've got what you're doing each month and then the to-do list comes in the next two weeks. And so that way when you think about what do I need to do today, you've already thought about where you're going long term. And what this does for people is that, um, a lot of times what people will do in the school systems is that it, you're very much caught in the urgent, immediate put out the fires.

Speaker 2 00:29:56 And there might be something that if you put this in place, it's going to have a huge impact on the way that you serve your students, the relationships that you have with your colleagues and the results that you get. And then also it's going to trickle down to what you're doing in your therapy. Because if you have put something in place where you've trained all these other people to do certain things and support students in a certain way, that's going to actually cut down the amount of work that you have to do when it actually gets to, to your, your therapy sessions. So it's going to impact that, but it's really hard to get ahead of that because you're always so busy. Yeah. So the reason that I have people start with the, the master plan and work backwards is that you do have a to-do list in the immediate two weeks and then you put your things that you have to do, like your daily routines that you have to do, your appointments that you have that day, your, you know, and then you block out.

Speaker 2 00:30:56 And what I tell people to do first is whatever your long-term plan is, you put that in there first and then you fit all the other stuff around it. So you have push-in for something comes up, you get sick, you can't work on it. Well you can just shift it around cuz it was already there in your schedule. Yeah. And that way you don't let these things that I refer to as kind of your, I --

-- like your dream initiatives and your dream projects where you're always like, oh, I wish I could do this in my building, or I wish I could do this side project. It could be anything. It could be a side hustle that's gonna earn you more income. It could be I have something I wanna train the the teachers in because I know it would really support them really well. And I know it would help a lot of students on my caseload and make a big difference in my building. It could be, again, what it was for me was I'm gonna do my doctoral dissertation while I'm working full-time in the schools because I don't wanna be, you know, a, b, d Yeah. Like a lot of people.

Speaker 1 00:31:53 Yeah. A lot of people don't ever finish for, for folks that don't know, that's all but dissertation. So you literally do Yes, all the coursework, but just don't like cross the finish line and don't do the dissertation. I don't mean to diminish that the dissertation isn't very challenging, but it's like to, to get to that point and then stay ad is like, oh my goodness.

Speaker 2 00:32:11 I I can't tell you the stories that I've heard.

Speaker 1 00:32:13 No. We could have a whole different podcast episode on that's <laugh>.

Speaker 2 00:32:16 It's, it's devastating, you know, but when you're in the thick of it, um, I remember in my program it was 40% of people finished, so there was a 60% a b, D rate. And I thought that is insane. And then I got into it and thought, oh, okay, this is why <laugh>.

Speaker 1 00:32:31 I don't think my program, I don't, I don't remember what the completion rate is, but it wasn't much, wasn't much better. And then I remember they gave us like seven years and I remember being like, this isn't, this cannot take me seven years. And I managed to do it in a very condensed, almost unheard of period of time, which just goes to show you how insane I probably was <laugh> during that time period while working full-time. And um, you know, trying to have some semblance of a life. I didn't see a lot of people other than my husband and my mother for, for three years. <laugh>

Speaker 2 00:33:02 That was your whole, your whole program was was 10, uh, seven years. Yeah. They could gave you or Okay. Yeah, mine was eight and I took all eight because I decided to do the director of special ed at the same time as the special ed doctorate and there were some extra courses and I just took my time. But towards the end there, I was like, Ooh, yeah, I'm, I better hustle.

Speaker 1 00:33:22 No, I did not take my time. I was like a, a lunatic <laugh>. I don't recommend it at all. Um, but we got through it. We got through it and here we're on the other side of it, so I know. My goodness. So yeah. So I'm glad you didn't, uh, you were able to persevere and didn't get stuck in the a, b D aspect. Yeah. <laugh>.

Speaker 2 00:33:41 Yeah.

Speaker 1 00:33:41 So I wanted to ask you too, before we kind of wrap up, you know, h how else can we help educators, you know, still feel ambitious and passionate about this work and the teaching practice without, you know, getting burnt out? What do you think?

Speaker 2 00:33:56 Man, that is the million dollar question, isn't it?

Speaker 1 00:33:58 You could solve this talk to Karen <laugh>.

Speaker 2 00:34:00 Um, so I feel like I am just continually peeling back the layers of the onion and it, there's just so many more layers. You know, I started off by thinking, wow, here's this one area in my language therapy where it takes up a lot of my time and energy, and if I just solved this one problem, my life would be so much easier. And I, I feel like I did solve that problem. Um, and it, my life did become easier. But then you just, what I found is that sometimes when people solve these initial problems, there's always this other thing. And it's not necessarily that things can't be fixed. I use that term really loosely, but I think it's just that when you learn new skills, you level up and you want more. Hmm. So it's, I think that a lot of times with therapists, it's okay, I have this initial thing, I just started this job.

Speaker 2 00:34:51 I wanna get really, I wanna get really good at, um, just my, my therapy practices for teachers. I would say it's, you know, what are my routines in my teaching practices? Like, do I have all this stuff down? Do I feel like I really know the curriculum? I I understand how to, how to have --



-- good teaching strategies. And then you figure that out and then you realize, okay, I've got this figured out, but now that that's done, there's this other thing, you know? And for me it was, there's the language therapy and then a lot of times these therapists were saying, well, now I feel confident in my skills, so that's great. I'm excited about these sessions. Like this one thing that was super hard for me is better now. But now I realized, hey, um, I need to get all these other people on board with these strategies and I need to start training these people in these, these other, um, these strategies that I'm doing.

Speaker 2 00:35:42 And that's what led me to, to the leadership angle. And so I think it's just that we need to give people support and time to keep building their skills so that they can continue to keep leveling up. And that could look different for other people. You know, for some people it's, um, they go from being a teacher to a school administrator or to being, you know, a tutor and having a business on the side or whatever it is. And some people it's just leveling up within the role that they have. Hmm. You know, you can be, you can step into a leadership role and feel like you're making a difference in the position that you're in because you maybe you have different responsibilities. Like some people will get involved with the union and they'll start to get involved with political advocacy and then they'll see the impact that that has on the other people that they work with and on some of the policies.

Speaker 2 00:36:37 Or maybe they realize that they wanna get involved in community programs because they realize that that's something that's lacking in their community. So whatever it is, um, or if it's just, um, that they start to be seen as that go-to person and their building, that that trains other people on certain things. And then, and people just like, some people just enjoy doing all of those things. I was a person when I was in the schools. I, I don't know if I just need constant stimulation and get bored really easily, but I was always working on some additional project. And that's, that's what I mean when I say those dream projects. Like I, there's this different way that you can do your speech therapy schedule and I wanted to try it and I thought, oh wow, this would be really cool to try. Let me just, uh, reach out to somebody who's done it before and come up with this whole plan and go to my administrator and say, Hey, I'm thinking about trying this, what do you think?

Speaker 2 00:37:30 And just do it, it required some planning in advance, but it, it kind of made me feel like it made me feel rejuvenated in my current role even though I was still in the same position Yeah. That I was before. So I think just giving them the opportunity to do that so that they can continue to feel recharged. It doesn't feel stale. Yeah. It feels like they're continuing to level up and get better in their skillset. Um, and I think that that does come down to, um, gosh, there's so many different things. Uh, the administrators need to know what training they need. They need to know how to help them to build systems and ways to communicate so that people don't feel siloed off so that they have time. You know, for example, uh, different i e p team members, they have time to talk to each other so they can collaborate and feel more connected.

Speaker 2 00:38:26 Um, that's so hard. Yeah. There's so many different things. Um, gosh, we just had <laugh>, this is it, it sort of ties in, um, in my town they just voted on this referendum, which increased our taxes. Uh, but it was, if it didn't pass, they were going to cut funding for all of these extra programs, like all the anything extra that wasn't core curriculum. Awesome. Yeah. On the chopping block, all junior high sports. All freshman sports. Oh my God. I mean imagine how devastating that would be for your student population. So just, yeah, it passed. So we're good. They still get to,

Speaker 1 00:39:07 So, but then in another couple of years they'll be back again. Like it <laugh>.

Speaker 2 00:39:10 Yeah. And I say that just because, um, because yeah, like I just think that if anybody who's in any position that's sort of involved in the school, if it's parents who need or who are in the community that are voting on things, if it's the administrators that are deciding what professional development do I provide --

-- my staff and what do I need to block out for them? Um, yeah. I mean, uh, we, like they need resources and time to do their jobs well is really what it comes down to. Yeah. And I am just throwing spaghetti o at the wall over here trying to be a person who is making an impact on that and providing that <laugh>.

Speaker 1 00:39:53 I think you're making, I think you're too, I think an amazing impact, Dr. Karen. And I'm trying to thank you <laugh>. Um, for sure. And that piece you talked about like feeling that recharge and that rejuvenation, sometimes I refer to that as renewal and that was actually, yeah. You know, in my dissertation topic was on self-care renewal for leaders and teachers and how practicing it and modeling it and promoting it for others can really help shift culture and impact some of the negative aspects of being in this arena. But that renewal piece is, is really important for sure. So you've given us so much to think about. Thank you so much. Um, wondering, you know, if you wanna let folks know how to contact you or, or follow you and whatnot and how they can, how they can do that.

Speaker 2 00:40:37 Okay. Well, I would say the, the first place that you can go is you can check out my podcast. It's called Defacto Leaders. It's on the b Podcast network, which has a number of different school leader podcasts and, and people in education. So to find episodes, you can go to my website at [dr.karen.doakbrandon.com/blog](http://dr.karen.doakbrandon.com/blog). So that's just dr. Not the whole, not the whole word. Um, and then also I do have a program for related service providers where I teach them a whole framework for getting executive functioning support in place in their districts. It's called the School of Clinical Leadership. So I go through a lot of the things that I shared today. So the whole idea of creating your systems so that you can have time to build those relationships. But I also teach specific strategies for executive functioning so that people know what am I training these other people in what needs to be in place. Yeah. Really you do need the, the systems and the productivity and the leadership angle in conjunction with that because that's something where it really does need to be a team effort. So, um, to learn more about that program, you can go to [dr.karen.doakbrandon.com/clinical-leadership](http://dr.karen.doakbrandon.com/clinical-leadership). Awesome.

Speaker 1 00:41:54 Well, we'll make sure those are linked in the episode notes. And what's your social media handle? Cause I know you're very active on Instagram.

Speaker 2 00:42:02 Um, so at Instagram it's at Dr. Karen's speech language. Okay. And then, um, I have, let's see, my Facebook page is just Dr. Karen's speech and language. Perfect.

Speaker 1 00:42:13 Well,

Speaker 2 00:42:14 And you know what, I've recently been more active on LinkedIn, so connect with me on LinkedIn.

Speaker 1 00:42:18 Oh, me too. I think. Are we connected on LinkedIn? I think we are.

Speaker 2 00:42:21 We are. <laugh>, yes. Very

Speaker 1 00:42:23 Exciting.

Speaker 2 00:42:24 My new favorite social media. I not, I'm on the other ones, but it's just, it's different on LinkedIn. LinkedIn is, I really like it.

Speaker 1 00:42:32 LinkedIn is pretty cool. Yeah.

Speaker 2 00:42:33 Connect with me.

Speaker 1 00:42:34 Awesome.

Speaker 2 00:42:35 Anyone who's listening,

Speaker 1 00:42:35 We'll make sure that folks know where to find you and of course, um, you know, they can reach out in any of those ways. But thank you so much for hanging out with us and giving us so much to think about and share with us today.

Speaker 2 00:42:48 Thanks for having me.

Speaker 1 00:42:59 Setting clear boundaries and systems to keep yourself on track is so important. And I love Dr. Karen's advice for avoiding burnout, including developing a sense of belonging and finding those aspects that refuel you. So important. Thank you so much for listening. I hope you're feeling more energized and empowered. And if you'd like what you heard here today, subscribe and leave a review for this podcast on your preferred platform. And be sure to follow along on Facebook and Instagram at Dr. MCs self-care and Dr. MCs Self-Care Cabaret on LinkedIn. You can also visit my website, [dr.mcself-care.com](http://dr.mcself-care.com) for the latest updates and to sign up for my cast party, my eNewsletter. And if you're interested in having me present to an audience near you, email [info@dr](mailto:info@dr) --

-- mc self-care dot com. Thanks again. Stay well and do good. Do what in

Speaker 3 00:44:31 10 seconds or less? What's a speech pathologist for people who don't know the term?

Speaker 1 00:44:36 Ooh.

Speaker 2 00:44:36 Oh, ooh. All right. Good one. So a speech language pathologist, oh my gosh. I, it's like, I didn't expect to answer this question. So, whoa. Speech pathologist have a wide scope. So we treat, uh, both children and adults who have some type of communication disorder or swallowing disorder. So if you are a speech pathologist working in the schools, you might work with students who have a D H D, autism learning disabilities. Um, and as far as the specific skills that we work on, we might work on kids who have a hard time pronouncing different sounds, kids who have a hard time processing language and learning different, um, language concepts. Uh, understanding linguistic skills, understanding different academic concepts. Let's see. Uh, we work with stuttering, voice disorders. And then also if you're working with adults, sometimes people who have had strokes or traumatic brain injuries, they may need rehab for different cognitive skills. Like, um, uh, let's see, people with aphasia. So people who have had a stroke and have lost their ability to speak. Um, or even people who have a hard time eating and swallowing due to either a developmental disorder or because they had some kind of an illness or an injury. Hmm. So lots of different things. I haven't even covered everything. I think I got the, got the main

Speaker 1 00:46:00 Ones. That was good. That was much better than I could have done. I would've, I, cause I obviously work with the speech folks in my district and whatnot. And, and it's funny cuz like with speech, people just automatically assume it's like, just like articulation, but it'ss like, it's so much more than that. It's like, same thing with ot, like the OT folks, you know, they get kind of, they're like, oh, totally. It's not just handwriting. I'm not just teaching. Like it's not what it's I know,

Speaker 2 00:46:22 I know. It's like I, I just, I've, I've thought about it. Um, like all the different related service providers, like what's the most annoying thing that they think about you? Um, like counselor. Oh, you're just the person that figures out their classes. Yeah. <laugh> speech pathologist. You're the person that works on R School. Psychologist. You're the person that does the testing. Yeah. Social worker. You're the person that does the attention rating skills. Yeah. <laugh>. Like what's the most cliché thing we can say about every

Speaker 1 00:46:49 Occupational therapist? It would definitely be handwriting.

Speaker 2 00:46:51 Yes. Handwriting. Um,

Speaker 1 00:46:52 Yep. Yeah. I'm trying to think. For me as a special ed coordinator, it's probably, I'm just one the signs IEPs. I mean that's really all I do. Oh yeah. <laugh> uh, or runs a meeting. I run a meeting <laugh>. Oh my goodness. So funny. Uh, I think we could make some fun memes with all that <laugh>.

Speaker 2 00:47:06 Oh yeah, totally. He just keeps

Speaker 1 00:47:08 The Chromebooks plugged. Oh. And my husband is an IT person. He just keeps the Chromebooks plugged in. That's all he does. <laugh>.

Speaker 2 00:47:13 Well, you know what, every single one of those people needs an IT person. That is very

Speaker 1 00:47:18 True. That might be the most important one Far

Speaker 2 00:47:20 In demand.

Speaker 1 00:47:21 My goodness. Well, thank you so much.

--