

**[00:00:00] Bonni Stachowiak:** Today on Episode number 356 of the *Teaching in Higher Ed* podcast, I talk about One Year In.

[music]

**[00:00:09] Production Credit:** Produced by Innovate Learning, maximizing human potential.

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**[00:00:19] Bonni:** Welcome to this episode of *Teaching in Higher Ed*. I'm Bonni Stachowiak and this is the space where we explore the art and science of being more effective at facilitating learning. We also share ways to improve our productivity approaches so we can have more peace in our lives and be even more present for our students.

We're slightly over more than a year of dealing with a global pandemic. Even though I missed the quote unquote, deadline, I didn't want to miss this opportunity to do a little bit of reflection. I think reflection is such an important part of our process as teachers, as people who want to show up in the world in authentic ways. This is going to be a bit of a reflection on the last year that we have had.

I vividly remember the last outing that we had at least that was work-related. A couple of colleagues and I, we were setting up what is known as the IFD studio, the Institute for Faculty Development studio, and going shopping for the furniture. A lot of the plans were done, but we had to go get some of the big items for furniture and make some choices there. I had no idea what was in store.

There are so many things that have happened since then. I have learned enough about masks not only to own more than will fit in a single drawer, but also now I have certain features that I prefer on-set masks and I'm a little bit particular about things.

I also have had the opportunity to learn quite a bit about the coronavirus in general. I'm on our university's COVID-19 leadership team. I listened to a lot of podcasts, I read a lot. I also, sometimes come into pop-cultural references including this clip from Fallon Tonight that I found on TikTok, which I think says more than I could say about vaccines in terms of the cultural elements of them.

**[00:02:30] Fallon:** This is great news. The FDA says Johnson & Johnson's one-shot vaccine is safe and effective, only one shot. They actually released an official statement explaining their vaccine. They said, [song clippings] "You only got one shot."

[laughter]

**[00:02:44] Fallon:** Meanwhile, Moderna and Pfizer are jealous because their vaccines take two shots. They released a statement that said, [song clippings] "It takes two to make the things go around right."

[laughter]

**[00:02:53] Fallon:** People don't really care which shot they get as long as it works. They're just like, [song clippings] "hit me with your best shot."

[laughter]

**[00:02:59] Fallon:** Moderna, Pfizer, and Johnson & Johnson put their differences aside to release this statement, [song clippings] "Shots, shot, shot, shot, shot, shots, everybody."

[applaud]

**[00:03:10] Bonni:** Taking it from the humorous over to the not humorous at all, we've also been witnessed to immense inequities. I recently listened to an episode of the podcast called *The Dig*, about the global vaccine apartheid. As of this recording, I have had both of my vaccine shots and I'm taken care of, but I am reminded of all of those who will be without the vaccine, whether it be for the long-term or perhaps even in many cases forever.

There have been a lot of people that have done reflecting about the year that's gone by. I'll be posting in the show notes a piece by Michelle Miller that she wrote for the *Chronicle* called A Year of Remote Teaching that I enjoyed reading. I'm going to share just a few reflections now of things that I've been thinking about happened over the course of this year.

I can remember the last time that I hugged a student. In fact, I just vividly recall how things-- they didn't happen immediately, but it sure felt like, when I came to the realization that we were no longer going to be meeting in a classroom any longer, but before that, I came to that conclusion. One of the students, her grandmother was in the process of passing away, and her mom was in the hospital, and she asked if she could leave 15 minutes early from class so that she could go spend time with her mom as her mom experienced her own mother's death.

There were tears in her eyes, and I gave her a big hug, and looked her deeply in the eyes, and said, "I don't think you need to wait until 15 minutes before class ends. Why not you should go now and be with your mom." I just remember that so vividly, and we did stay in

touch the rest of the semester and she later on let me know that indeed her grandmother had passed away and some more parts of that story. I remember that hug and I remember those moments where the in-person can be a sense that we're providing comfort for others.

As I spoke about earlier, I certainly have been witnessed locally to amplified inequities those students without computing devices, those students without regular and reliable Wi-Fi access. We were fortunate in that we have a food pantry at our university, which is still relatively new and we were one of only three out of a total of nine in our county at colleges that was able to remain open this entire time. I'm grateful for all of my colleagues that have made that possible.

There, of course, has been quite a bit of humor around coronavirus, particularly focused at the absurdity of some of the things that we're being asked to do. There's a Twitter account called, it's supposed to be Associate Deans, but it's abbreviated, Ass, A-S-S, Deans. You can imagine what that is supposed to be an abbreviation for.

There's a tweet that comes to mind that reads, "To thank you for your hard work during this difficult time, we are sending all faculty a \$20 gift card to the university bookstore. Cards must be redeemed in-person and cannot be used online. They expire on December 31st." That exact thing did not happen at my institution, let's just say this one hits a little too close to home for me to talk much about here.

While there have been so many difficult aspects, there also have been many discoveries on my part. I feel like I'm discovering new ways of sensing, being able to read the room more than I-- perhaps even thought that I could, even when we used to be in a classroom environment. I've talked previously about my use of collaborative tools such as Google Jamboard or Google Docs, Google Slides, in order to be able to see more of what people are experiencing, what they're learning, what is going on, on their end of things.

I've also been witnessed to incredible lessons in independence and specifically with our children. Our kids can now set up calendar invites in digital ways. They can incorporate businesses. I'm only slightly kidding here. [laughs] Our son has a real fondness for foxes, and he now refers to himself as a code name of L-Fox.

Actually, they got them for Christmas, but then we bought a bonus set of these fort building tools where there's long sticks and then prongs that you can stick the sticks into in lots of different angles. They have been building all kinds of contraptions forts out of this. There is now foxy ink that has been established and we just crack up at the fact that he's incorporated it already. It has its own logo. It's so funny.

Their calendar invites can also include Zoom links, which is really funny to be sitting in a Zoom meeting and to get a calendar invite from one of the kids that always contains the most hilarious titles, including sometimes them trying to extend their choice time at the end of the day and as you can expect often with fox's included as emojis. They also have had the opportunity to talk to friends from around the world.

In a recent episode, when we spoke with Maha Bali, we talked about how her daughter has had the opportunity to play Minecraft with our kids. I just really so pleased to think about the ways in which these technologies allow us to get exposure to parts of the world and other people that we otherwise might never be able to.

With Minecraft, it's funny because so much of their learning is centered around that, not just with vocabulary, but with so many things. I can remember very early on the word texture. I was so surprised that our son knew that word and, "Oh, yeah, I know that word from Minecraft," but that's not just one anomaly. I promise there are so many more things that they have been able to learn and it's really been such a joy.

The last thing I'd like to reflect upon is just how my expectations have really been lowered for myself, for others, and it feels weird to even say that, but just trying to recognize the time that we're in, trying to find what is good enough, and also trying to find time to grieve. I think that's where I've probably failed the most.

As I reflect back on this time, it seems when I read other people's work and listen to podcasts and how people talk about that, I wonder if there will come a time where it all falls down and just, I need to take that time to grieve. As it is now, I have been reflecting so much on what Brene Brown talked about in a podcast. I'll link to you in the show notes about when we're under stress, how some of us will over function and how others will under function.

I know for myself, I definitely fall into the over functioning, and I do wonder what that will look like in the long run. [laughs] I probably am going to need to process even more than I already have some of the grief that's come along the way.

Before I get to the recommendations segment, I wanted to take just a moment to thank today's sponsor, and that is TextExpander. What TextExpander lets us do is shorten the time that it takes to type things that we type repetitively. Even if we don't realize that we type these things repetitively, you easily create what are called snippets, a short series of letters or numbers or whatever. When you press your space bar instantly, it expands into something that either you have trouble remembering or that you just find yourself typing over and over again.

I have TextExpander snippets for the show notes for these episodes. When I create one, it asks me what's the episode number, what's the title, who's the guest, and when that information repeats throughout, it will bring that information down. Just one example would be that, the guest always provides a recommendation, which we're about to get to in a moment. The guests name shows up at the top of the episode show notes, but also down at the bottom for what they're going to recommend.

If you head over to [textexpander.com/podcast](http://textexpander.com/podcast), you can get 20% off your first year and find out more information about TextExpander. I've mentioned that many times TextsExpander is really essential to my own productivity system. It saves me a bunch of time. It also helps

me keep consistency and accuracy. The show notes are meant to be the same for every episode, and so it's much easier to manage things like that. I also manage now the new newly redesigned weekly update from *Teaching in Higher Ed*, all of that is done through TextExpander.

On that note, something I've been doing recently is, when I create the weekly update, it has a special color that I create, or I need to type in for each of the buttons that I use. It's a special teal and I've created a shortcut. That's just, T-I-H-E, as in Teaching in Higher Ed, teal. As soon as I type that, up comes the color that it needs to be in the code box and off I go without having to remember or go look it up somewhere. It saves me a bunch of time. Head on over to [textexpander.com/podcast](http://textexpander.com/podcast), and let them know that you heard about TextExpander from *Teaching in Higher Ed*.

This is the point in the show where I get to share my recommendations and I have three of them today. I mentioned on another episode about really loving a new podcast called *Strong Songs* with Kirk Hamilton. I was very specific on that episode, not to say that I recommended the whole podcast, but I actually just recommended an episode. I love it so much that I want to save it up. [laughs] As I discover other episodes of his that I want to recommend.

Also, Dave, I was disappointed by the way that I had recommended it because he's loving it so much, but I'm still leaving room for him to come on and mention and recommend. Actually, he can recommend the whole *Strong Songs* podcasts, because he doesn't have the rule that he can't repeat himself or repeat me. [laughs] Anyway, I wanted to recommend a strong songs episode that is, playlist for Trying Times.

Most of the time, Kirk Hamilton will do the *Strong Songs* around a particular song, but every once in a while, he changes up his format. For this episode, he created a playlist and the playlist is in all the popular music streaming services, so you can just use that show notes page to go to your preferred streaming service and add those songs to your library. The playlist for Trying Times includes songs by Paul Simon, Aretha Franklin, Seal, The Cardigans and Nina Simone, just to mention a few.

The next thing I'd like to recommend is like sending someone a greeting card, but it's a little bit more it's called Greetabl and that's the word Greetabl but with no E on the end of it, will also be a link in the show notes.

What's great about it is, it is a box, so it is three dimensional. Inside the box will be some kind of a small gift it might be a bag of tea or some confetti or some caramels or chocolate, something like that. It might be edible or non-perishable. On the box itself, when you open it up, are bunch of vibrant colors or decorations, and then you also can upload pictures and you can customize it with a particular kind of greeting.

In fact, if you sign up for their pro service, you can even customize the entire packaging of the whole box itself. We've sent them to our colleagues. We just recently sent out some to

celebrate different kinds of accomplishments and people just love it. They have such a good time, at a lot of times, they'll take pictures of it and share it on social media and we get such a kick out of seeing it.

I just think it's a wonderful way to encourage people. I'd encourage you to check out Greetabl and I also would encourage you to consider just sending someone a book. I recently sent someone the book called *Hope for the Flowers*. I'm not actually going to recommend that here, because it turns out I already recommended that and I try only to recommend things once, although I'm sure I broken that rule at some time along the way.

We sent our colleague the book *Hope for the Flowers*, by the way, in case you haven't been listening to every single episode ever, that is a children's book, but it's really a book for adults that's disguised as a children's book, and he got such a kick out of it. I'm looking forward to him being able to read it to his kids, and also to just be able to share it with others. It's a really one of my favorite books of all time. My last recommendation is to consider sending a book.

[music]

**[00:16:56] Bonni:** Thanks for listening to this episode of *Teaching in Higher Ed* episode 356. If you'd like to look at the show notes, they are already in your podcast player, most likely. You also can head on over to [teachinginhighered.com/356](http://teachinginhighered.com/356). If you have yet to sign up for the weekly update as I mentioned in January, I updated it. I'm getting a lot of positive feedback, that it's a really important resource to people. I'm so glad I put the time in and need extra expense to do that.

Head on over to [teachinginhighered.com/subscribe](http://teachinginhighered.com/subscribe) to get subscribed and receive that weekly email with the recent episodes, show notes, other resources, quotable words, and all kinds of other good stuff. Thanks for listening, and I'll see you next time on *Teaching in Higher Ed*.

[music]

**[00:17:55] [END OF AUDIO]**

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