**LWQA episode 115**

You're listening to life work QA episode 115. Hey there, and welcome to life work QA where I answer a listener question each week and provide resources and guidance to help you take your life and work to the next level. I'm your host. Dr. Katie Linda. On this episode. I'm responding to a question from someone who wrote in and asked to remain anonymous.

So this person says on one of your episodes recently you discussed forming supportive communities for our writing and you gave tips and strategies on how to do so my question is how do you know when a community you belong to is no longer beneficial for the time it takes to participate and what are your suggestions on how to gracefully exit such communities without burning any Bridges?

So this is a really good question. I think especially for the end of the year because this is a good time to reevaluate what are the kinds of things that are taking your time that you are prioritizing in your schedule and sometimes this leads you to understanding that you need to pull out of certain commitments or other things that you've been doing for a while, but that are no longer serving you so I'm really glad that this person wrote in with this question.

So let me tackle first. How do you know if something is kind of not serving you anymore or it's no longer beneficial for the time that you're putting in. So here are some signs. I think if you're in one of these communities one is that you kind of just dread going you don't look forward to it. If there are regular meetings.

It's not something that you look. Forward to you don't really have any positivity associated with it. There are people there that you really enjoy seeing or maybe there's people you enjoy seeing but you just don't really like the context in which you're seeing them. These groups can also be a challenge.

If you feel like you're giving more than you're receiving and it feels kind of draining to go you're not really getting any energy from it. Maybe it's even taking energy away from other projects that you could be doing. If you don't feel like you're learning or growing anymore and that maybe because you.

Like the group has transitioned to something that is no longer useful to you. Maybe it was in the beginning. But we grow we change and we may not need what kind of the original purpose of the group was. Sometimes. It's also happens if the group loses its goal. So this is something I actually talked with a recent coaching client about about shutting down a committee because the original purpose of the committee just wasn't really there anymore and people just didn't really feel like there was an overall purpose for the group so they weren't contributing they were going and it kind of lost its energy as a whole.

So I think that if you feel more negatively than positively about something it's definitely time to re-evaluate whether or not it's something that you want to give your time to now the person who wrote in is implying that it can be kind of difficult to extract yourself from these groups and I definitely think that's true and these can be groups in your professional life and your personal life, but I think we have all seen examples of people who've done this gracefully and there are all different kinds of ways to do it.

So let me give you a few ideas. The first idea is to leave with gratitude ahead and to make sure that everybody in the group knows how thankful you are for being in that group that you've really learned things from each individual person in that group. And this can take the form of, you know, a final meeting where you kind of say this verbally, it can take the form of individual.

Thank you notes that you send out to everyone and I think that people can understand if. You need to move on from kind of a personal or individual perspective, but that you still value wipe the group exists. You still value that the group is giving to other people. It's just no longer giving to you or it gave to you in the past and it's not giving to you anymore.

This is also a thing something where you can express that you don't feel like you're kind of contributing to the group in the way that the group needs and you want to make room for someone else to come in and do that. So I think leaving with gratitude is really important. This is also I think a way to reframe the leaving for yourself.

If you're feeling kind of a lack of loyalty or you're feeling guilty about leaving a group like this. You can say, you know, like I'm so thankful. For what? It's given me and kind of think in your own mind or even write down. What are some of the things that this group has given to you that you didn't have before and you've really been able to grow from overtime.

The other thing that I think is useful if you're leaving a group like this and it depends on kind of what the group is if it's virtual if it's face-to-face if people feel like they're not going to have another way to connect with you other than through this group is to leave with other ways to connect with you.

So maybe there are certain people in the group that you want to stay connected to and you want to have like coffee dates or you want to somehow check in with them on a consistent basis, whether that's via email or phone calls, but having other ways to connect with members of the group so that they don't necessarily feel like they're losing you that they can still connect with you that you still want to connect with them in various ways and that they're not really.

Losing anything by not having you there that it's just time for you to move on. So that's I think in another important way of kind of gracefully exiting is not saying I don't want to interact with you all anymore, but that you still want to connect with them and still share ideas with them share strategies with them and continue those relationships in more positive ways.

I think sometimes it's kind of graceful to leave a group when you can give a kind of a rationale of. It's part of a larger reevaluation of your time. This is how some people have gracefully exited different collaborations and obligations that I've seen and I thought it's been really helpful then they come and they say, you know, like I'm overwhelmed and I need to cut back like that.

There's just too much going on and I'm really struggling, you know with time management or with being over obligated or I'm feeling overwhelmed and so I need to pull out of certain of my obligations and unfortunately, Happens to be one of them. And this is something I think that when you put it in a part of like a larger Narrative of I'm reevaluating my time and I need to pull out of some things.

It's not just the one group that you're pulling out of necessarily you're kind of doing a real valuation of a larger aspect of your professional or personal life. And so I think that is something that everybody can understand now they might be disappointed but I think people still understand when we do these things that we need to pull out a certain obligations are.

Le T's because it's part of kind of an overall picture of our mental or emotional or physical health or well-being that we can't do all the things and so something eventually has to be sacrificed the final thing and this definitely I think needs to be done carefully in terms of The Burning Bridges peace at home that this person wrote about is giving a rationale or a reason that just feels honest to you.

And I think that if you want to share a narrative of growth with this group and if it makes sense and if you feel you know, trusting enough with the people in this group to say I feel like I've outgrown the group a little bit now, you need to be a little careful about not making everyone else feel like they haven't grown but you can somehow frame A Narrative of I've gotten so much out of this group.

I feel like I need to be in a different space in terms of. The next part of this journey for me. So one example of this I can I can think of is like let's say you're in a parenting group and you are a parent of an older child and there are other people in the group who've just had new babies and you feel like there's a lot of baby talk and not a lot of talk about older kids.

You might say, you know, like this group has really changed and in good ways, you know, it's really supportive of the new parents who are in this group or of the parents who've just had another young child, but I'm feeling like. Need to connect with parents of older children. I still want to stay connected with you, you know, but my needs are currently not being served.

Now as you can hear this is difficult to do and I think you need to do it with honesty when you trust the group and when you feel like the group will understand and kind of have a sense of where you are, but I think that there's a. Challenge to that if you were the one maybe who started the group or you've been kind of a core member of the group that you would want to make sure that the group feels like it can be sustained without you there.

And so I guess another strategy for this is to announce that you are thinking of leaving the group but say I want to stick around for a little while to make sure that their structures in place that the group is going to be strong enough to continue or. That you can kind of pass the leadership that you've brought to the group on the someone else and you're not going to like leave anybody in a Lurch and I think that everybody can understand that as well and we'll be grateful for you kind of sticking around and bridging your time with the group with leaving the group.

So one important thing about that is that you don't wait till until the point where you're feeling completely. Done with the group and you just want out like right now you need to start to kind of think about and not be in denial about. Oh, I feel like I need to be moving on really reflect on that now because it allows you to have kind of a graceful exit strategy and to start planting the seeds about the fact that you may be leaving the group or that it may no longer be serving you now, I think a final strategy and this really depends on the group as well.

Is to basically suggest a replacement for yourself. So if you're extracting yourself from a group and it's appropriate given the group's purpose to suggest someone else who might be a good fit for the group. That's definitely something that you can do and one example of this is I was on a conference planning committee last year and they asked me to come back and I'm not planning to attend the conference.

This next year for a range of reasons and it's a great conference. I really want to support it. But I feel like if I'm going to be on the committee, I need to be attending it and knowing that I'm not going to be attending it. I suggested a colleague of mine that would be perfect in my place. She's wonderful.

So I think that that's one example of gracefully saying like I really love this event. I want to make sure it has all the support it needs and I can't do that right now. So let me give someone else in my place who I think would be really good. So that's another way I think to gracefully exit is.

Introduce someone else into the group and that really shows the group that you value the group that you want the group to succeed but that you may not be the person who can help it to do its most successful. So I hope that these offer some strategies for how to gracefully exit from a group if you feel like it is not necessarily serving you some of these strategies are a little bit more challenging than others and I think it definitely depends on how much trust and experience you have with the group.

In terms of how kind of honest and truthful you want to be about your own kind of personal Journey, but there are lots of ways I think to exit a group without going into detail about that. If you don't want to share those kinds of details and to make sure that the group feels that you are grateful for them that you still want to stay connected in some way and that you are most concerned or very concerned about the success of the group in it and how it moves forward.

So, of course, I would always love to hear other strategies for gracefully exiting groups like this. You can contact me via email at contacted. Katie lender dot work. You can tweet to me at Katie double underscore lender, or you can find me over on Instagram @ KD underscore Linder and tell me how you would handle this particular situation.

I want to thank this person for writing in hopefully you got some good strategies here and thanks so much for listening to this episode. Thanks for listening to this episode of Life work QA show notes and a transcript for this episode can be found at Katie lender dot work / podcasts life work QA is part of the radical self-trust podcast Channel a collection of content dedicated to helping you seek self-knowledge nurture your superpowers playfully experiment live your core values with intention practice loving kindness towards yourself and others.

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