# Transcript: IT Podcast - Ep 76 - Why Is Starting So Hard with Julianne Koch and Jessica Galterio

*The following transcript is a verbatim account of the video or audio file accompanying this transcript.*

Speaker #1 (Narrator):

WGU's IT Audio Series. Flexible, portable, profound.

Speaker #2 (Julianne Koch):

Hello and welcome to the IT Audio Series. I'm Julianne Koch and I've been a program mentor in the IT college at WGU since 2012.

Speaker #3 (Jessica Galterio):

I'm Jessica Galterio and I've been a program mentor in the IT college since 2015.

Speaker #2 (Julianne Koch):

I've recently learned about a phenomenon that I've noticed about my students as well as myself and it has a name and that's what I want to talk about today. It's something called analysis paralysis.

Speaker #3 (Jessica Galterio):

I've never heard of that. What is it?

Speaker #2 (Julianne Koch):

Basically, it's the idea that when we think about starting an activity or a project or anything really, we get so wrapped up in over analyzing it, overthinking it, thinking about all the what ifs, so the things that can go wrong or how much work it's going to do, the fear of making a mistake. We start getting so wrapped up in those ideas that we just never start doing the thing.

Speaker #3 (Jessica Galterio):

This describing it gives me anxiety. I totally know what you mean. This sounds like the root of a lot of procrastination, I imagine. If you're too wrapped up in the details to even get started and then quickly you will find yourself in crunch time pushing against crazy odds to make something happen. I've absolutely noticed my students doing that and sometimes it works and a student is able to pull it off but more likely it ends up with one or two big things being left undone.

Speaker #2 (Julianne Koch):

Definitely. I know that I've experienced that myself. When I worked on my last master's degree at WGU, there was an exam for a course that I was so nervous about it. It involved economics and I knew that it was one of my weak spots. I was so worried that I wasn't prepared that I took and I passed the pre-assessment three times just to make sure and then once I finally felt comfortable scheduling the test I got worried and I rescheduled it more than once.

Speaker #3 (Jessica Galterio):

Oh, what happened?

Speaker #2 (Julianne Koch):

I passed. I probably would have passed the thing after the first pre-assessment but I just didn't feel that way and I couldn't take that step of just doing it because I was so worried that I would fail and I was so wrapped up in that anxiety and that feeling.

Speaker #3 (Jessica Galterio):

It makes lot of sense. If you feel like you're going to choke, you probably will. I might be dating myself a little bit here but Chris Webber comes to mind. University of Michigan was having one of their best basketball seasons of all time. They were 15 seconds away from the championship game with a chance to tie and Chris traveled, called for a time out they didn't have which resulted in a technical foul, meaning shots for the other team. Now, Chris notoriously does not give interviews about this moment. However, given their popularity at the time, the fact that the team was upperclassmen who weren't coming back for the next season, the fact that they came up short the season before, I can only imagine all these things were on his mind when he made that crucial error.

Speaker #2 (Julianne Koch):

Absolutely. I'm a Washington State University alumni and we call that couging it.

Speaker #3 (Jessica Galterio):

What do we do? How do we deal with this?

Speaker #2 (Julianne Koch):

Well, there's a few different strategies that really work. First is just understanding what's happening.

Speaker #3 (Jessica Galterio):

It's important to recognize when you're feeling overwhelmed about the content and how that might start turning into a trip down doomsday lane. If you find yourself thinking about all the ways that it could go wrong, rather than paying attention to all the reasons why it might go right you.

Speaker #2 (Julianne Koch):

End up taking a pre-assessment that you pass three times?

Speaker #3 (Jessica Galterio):

Exactly. Listen, we’ve all been there. Now that we've recognized it, what do we do next?

Speaker #2 (Julianne Koch):

Well, stewing in our own thoughts for several weeks is not the right answer because it's just going to feel bad. No, the next step is maybe thinking about analyzing why you might be overanalyzing.

Speaker #3 (Jessica Galterio):

So figuring out why I'm procrastinating or why I'm worried about writing the paper.

Speaker #2 (Julianne Koch):

Yeah. If you think about writing your paper for English comp and it brings up the same feelings that you get when you think about the English teacher you didn't like in high school well, that might be your root cause.

Speaker #3 (Jessica Galterio):

Or maybe you're worried that you won't have time to retake the exam because the last time you failed the test it ended up putting you off track for a whole term, so you want to absolutely make sure you pass it on the first try.

Speaker #2 (Julianne Koch):

Exactly. Now it's probably not always as straightforward as those examples but it could be.

Speaker #3 (Jessica Galterio):

It probably helps to find ways that this situation is different. You have more time because you planned ahead. Your English teacher is long gone. You're older now and you have a much stronger hold on the English language than you did back in high school.

Speaker #2 (Julianne Koch):

Definitely. There might not be a reason at all. Don't get all hung up on analyzing your childhood and forget that the goal here is to get your paper done or your test scheduled.

Speaker #3 (Jessica Galterio):

Can see how that might happen though. What do we do from here?

Speaker #2 (Julianne Koch):

Well, there's a few different strategies for what to do next. First, to make a decision. It doesn't have to be a big decision, just make a decision. Maybe it's narrowing your topic down or just sitting down with the course material and reading a few paragraphs. You don't have to go crazy. You don't have to do it all at once, just do something small.

Speaker #3 (Jessica Galterio):

Every journey begins with the first step. That first step is always a little rough. But once you've taken one step.

Speaker #2 (Julianne Koch):

It's easier to just keep going.

Speaker #3 (Jessica Galterio):

Now we've done a couple of small things. How do we keep from getting all wrapped up in it again?

Speaker #2 (Julianne Koch):

Well, give yourself a goal with a deadline. People look at their term and they see six months but it's really a lot shorter than that if you look at each class individually. Most of the time you've only got about six weeks per course.

Speaker #3 (Jessica Galterio):

It's so easy to let time get away from you.

Speaker #2 (Julianne Koch):

Pick something and say that you're not necessarily making a decision about it right this second but that you have until maybe the end of the day tomorrow to schedule your exam. You don't have to take it tomorrow, just get it on your calendar.

Speaker #3 (Jessica Galterio):

We are more likely to get things done when there is a deadline approaching. It seems to be human nature. What other advice would you give someone who's dealing with this?

Speaker #2 (Julianne Koch):

There's a couple of things. First is to get you some uncertainty. You don't know if you're going to pass the test until you've taken it, you don't know if you can memorize the acronyms you need for your certification until you've sat down and spent some time with some flashcards. We've already talked about taking small steps towards your goal but just understand that no one is perfect, so it's okay if you don't get 100 percent on your exam if the cut score is an 85.

Speaker #3 (Jessica Galterio):

That's a really good point. We're not looking for perfection here. No one is perfect.

Speaker #2 (Julianne Koch):

Exactly. If you're having a hard time getting started on something right now then I really recommend finding a small step you can take, something as small as looking at the table of contents or hey, even listening to this episode is a small step because you're realizing that it might be something you're struggling with then move on to a bigger step. What are you going to write about? Then maybe start the outline. Then start putting in your references, get that thesis statement.

Speaker #3 (Jessica Galterio):

What should I do if even that little step is something that's too hard for me? Luckily, at WGU you have a wonderful resource in your program mentor. I'd suggest chatting with them about some small steps you might be able to take this week.

Speaker #2 (Julianne Koch):

That's a great point. WGU mentors are awesome at breaking things down and helping students plan and tackle really hard things.

Speaker #3 (Jessica Galterio):

As I tell my seven-year-old when he's getting overwhelmed, you can do hard things. I believe in you and you know what? I do. You can do hard things. You can get this thing finished and you can get your degree.

Speaker #2 (Julianne Koch):

I think that's a great note to end on. Thank you for listening to this episode of the IT Audio Series. Hopefully, you'll be able to make some great progress on your goals this week.

Speaker #1 (Narrator):

Schedule time with your program mentor to explore more deeply. WGU, a new kind of you.