



**Podcast:** One Thing – New Professional

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**Episode Title:** 1. Erika-Danielle Lindström

**Summary:** We chat with Erika-Danielle Lindström, Gender and Sexuality Coordinator at Utah State University.

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#### B E G I N T R A N S C R I P T

**Stuart Brown:** Welcome to the Student Affairs One Thing - New Professional, a podcast that asks a simple question of new professionals in the field – ‘What is one thing you have learned that you feel will help you as you move forward in your career?’ I’m your host, Stuart Brown, the developer of StudentAffairs.com, one of the most accessed websites by Student Affairs professionals. On our pages, we have the most cost effective job posting board listing hundreds of open student services positions and a wide range of webinars.

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On today's episode, I am very pleased to have Erika-Danielle Lindström, gender and sexuality coordinator at Utah State University. Welcome to the program.

**Erika-Daniell Lindstöm:** Well, thank you so much. Yes, I'm excited to be here.

**Stuart Brown:** So Erica, what is your one thing?

**Erika-Daniell Lindstöm:** So my one thing is the power of play. So for me, a while back in my student affairs journey, I was getting really burned out. I was exhausted. I just felt like there was so much of not like refilling the bucket when you're giving out to others. And several months ago I actually had a student that was living in my basement and he came to me and was like, hey, Erica, I have an idea, just hear me out on this. What do you think about chickens? I stared at them and the only, my only expertise on chickens were the cute videos on Youtube.

And I was like, okay, instead of saying no, sure, how about this? You make a proposal right out. What, why would we need chickens in the house? Why do we need all these things, do a cost analysis? And honestly, I really thought that this topic would be dropped, it would never come back up and left at the proposal. But sure enough, the student came back several weeks later and was so proud that they had the proposal. They were like, I printed it in color. I'm so excited about this. And sure enough, we ended up getting chickens. I was not sure where to go with this. And so having no chicken expertise, it has been a fun little journey because it really has changed my schedule. It has made it where in the mornings and the evenings and stuff. I have to take care of these chickens. But chickens, if you're not familiar with them, they have their own mind. There are mornings I am running around, I have a rake, I'm trying to shoo them into their coop, I'm trying to do all these things and I've realized that the chickens have become one of the highlights of my morning routines now - is because I don't know what's about to happen.

There's some mornings where they go straight back in their coop and it's great. There's other days that I am running around, my neighbors are laughing at me, we are trying to catch these chickens. I, my wife and my kids were all trying to gather them up together. But it's been one of those things and thinking about what did I break from my routine and what is the other things that I can do when everything just seems kind of monotonous and looking at a different concepts. So for me, like on my desk, I have legos here, I always have like for open office hours of like students coming in. And it's a really renewing refreshing thing because sometimes we think play should be a reward for doing all this work.

Now, I get to relax when in reality play is something that's essential. It's not a reward in itself, it's part of the work. So that way you can just be able to focus on what your needs are and what you're putting forth in your community. And so for me, chickens taught me that. I'm in the process of teaching them how to play a xylophone, youtube videos and chickens, there's a whole rabbit hole, you can go down. That's my one thing is what are you doing to play this week?

**Stuart Brown:** I think that's so important because especially for new professionals, where I think it's more getting wrapped up in the job, how much time I can devote to the job, what I have to do and to maybe get overworked overwrought because they want to do a good job, they want to impress their supervisors and that's when you hear about people getting burned out because they haven't incorporated any type of play into their routine.

**Erika-Daniell Lindstöm:** Oh, I definitely agree with that. And it's been fun, especially like with students or even just in your own thing. I know we talk about self care and what does that look like. But really thinking about the critical parts I think by just doing things that are not related to your work, not just because of like, I need to be in survival mode, so I'm not facing that burnout, but just things that have nothing to do. The things I think about what you were a kid, what did you enjoy? Because when I have those intentional times of I'm leaving the work outside, I'm leaving all my other responsibilities over here. This is my designated time. I feel more creative when I come back to the work. It's amazing way to think about it in different ways or if you're working on something with your student club leaders and stuff, encouraging them to play. And it's really interesting to see what is created of like the what if... Okay, now, let's try this. Okay, now, what about this? And kind of like the role play or just the thought process or getting them excited because I think that brings the energy back of, we're so used to being told no or oh it needs to fit in this or our perception of things. But to be able to be silly to be vulnerable to just enjoy things. I think it brings that energy back into the work each day.

**Stuart Brown:** And I think people don't need to listen to this and think, hmm, what type of livestock am I going to buy? But to find something, it could be anything, it could be. I'm going to create a garden. I'm going to grow pumpkins for Halloween. I'm going to learn how to ride a unicycle. I'm going to juggle. I'm retired, so I have a former colleague and she fishes and it was always when she told me, I couldn't wrap my head around, I just didn't think that this person was an avid fisher person. But you know, these are things that people do to relax, which bring it back to what you were saying - mental health, self caring is so important and hopefully you would have colleagues, you would have supervisors that would recognize signs that maybe things are a little tense or too intense. But a lot of it has to come from you what you would like to do. And also even to help create a hobby, it could be a lifelong.

**Erika-Daniell Lindstöm:** And with this, my biggest device with the play is if you start a hobby, don't have necessarily an end, like you have to accomplish X, Y Z be present in the moment.

I've tried some other ones during the time of Covid, like magnet fishing and that's a fun hobby as well. But do I have a goal of, I'm going to find the next buried treasure in that lake. It's fun to think that I will, but it's not a waste a day when I get to go outside or do things. Are my chicken's gonna be on America's got talent because they can play a xylophone? No, but it's really fun just to see what's going to happen and be present in those moments. So that's the big thing is we feel like we have to accomplish something constantly. And play, it's never about accomplishing things; it's just being present, being fun.

**Stuart Brown:** Erica thank you so much for sharing your one thing. I think it sounds simple sometimes, maybe it could sound a little silly. But I think it's, it's very important for individuals starting off in the field that a field that can be very intense and can really overwork people to have that sense of play that can help them through the day through the week through their life.

You have been listening to the Student Affairs One thing - New Professional, a podcast that asks a simple question of new professionals in the field, what is one thing you have learned, you feel will help you as you move forward in your career. My guest today has Erika-Danielle Lindström, gender and sexual coordinator at Utah State University. I'm your host, Stuart Brown, the developer of StudentAffairs.com, one of the most access websites by Student Affairs professionals. I hope you'll join us next time for another episode.