The Heart of the Matter: Creating the best climate for empathetic learning

Beth Knapp & Devina Bhalla
“Burning the first five”

Let’s get to know one another a bit…
Monte Syrie → "Smiles and Frowns"

Kay (2018) → “Burning the first five”

bell hooks (1994) → “There is an aspect of our vocation that is sacred...our work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students. To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential.” (p. 13)

Noddings (2012) → "a climate in which caring relations can flourish should be a goal for all teachers and educational policymakers. In such a climate, we can best meet individual needs, impart knowledge, and encourage the development of moral people” (p. 777)

Ritchhart (2015) → “building strong teacher-student relationships plays an important role in supporting student achievement” (p. 203)

Christensen (2019) → a foundation of care and trust also allows “classroom life...to make children feel significant and cared about," which is important because “unless students feel emotionally and physically safe, they won’t share real thoughts and feelings” (p. 55)
“Everything [my teacher] is doing is so beneficial to us, I love the breaks we get, I love spinning the wheel, the pre-class conversations and even the academic ones.”

My teacher “could keep checking in at the beginning of class. It really makes me feel appreciated and loved.”

“Please never stop caring for your students. Your class has provided one of the healthiest environments that I have known to date. There is a class consensus on how you positively raise our energy daily. Your thoughtful and supportive comments never fail to make me feel happy.”

“I cannot explain to you how much it has been a treat being a part of your classroom this year. Every other day, I would walk into school excited to participate in class. We had such a wonderful environment, and I could never have wished for a better teacher.”

“On top of engaging discussions, something that makes this class truly unique and special is when my teacher takes time out of the period to ask about our day and how we are doing. She is there to listen to and support us, and even changes her class schedule when we are feeling overwhelmed or underprepared. This makes us feel important and cared about and is great to be part of such a class.”

“Something that my teacher could keep doing is checking in on students before class starts every day. I feel like Mrs. Knapp is really interested in getting to know her students is able to do so because of such a small classroom environment.”

"Keep doing daily check-ins :) they mean a lot especially when I'm stressed in the morning."

"I always feel supported and safe in this class, and I always feel encouraged to share my thoughts. I never feel unsafe or like I can't express my thoughts."

"I feel loved, safe, and appreciated in class! :)"
Empathy

Connor (2014) calls for teachers to “figure out how to use our magic to develop our student's capacity for curiosity and to create the kinds of learning communities where the real and the imaginary coexist as they must...where we develop ‘imaginative love for people we do not know or whom we know very slightly’” (p. 337).

Mirra’s (2018) concept of critical civic empathy, or empathy that "encourages us to interrogate what we each bring to the table when we seek to empathize with others and to acknowledge the fact that the ways in which we are privileged (or marginalized) in public life inevitably influence how we interpret the experience of others” (pp. 7-8).

- Helping our students see “that my existence is wrapped up in yours, as your freedom is wrapped up in mine” (Mirra, 2018, p. 10).
10 Signs of Unhealthy Relationship

While everyone does unhealthy things sometimes, we can all learn to love better by recognizing unhealthy signs and shifting to healthy behaviors. If you are seeing unhealthy signs in your relationship, it’s important to not ignore them and understand they can escalate to abuse. If you think you are in a dangerous situation, trust your gut and get help.

Intensity
When someone expresses very extreme feelings and overt the top behavior that feels overwhelming.

Possessiveness
When someone is jealous to a point where they try to control who you spend time with and what you do.

Manipulation
When someone tries to control your decisions, actions, or emotions.

Isolation
When someone keeps you away from friends, family, or other people.

Sabotage
When someone purposely ruins your reputation, achievements, or success.

Belittling
When someone does and says things to make you feel bad about yourself.

Guilt
When someone makes you feel responsible for their actions or makes you feel like it’s your job to keep them happy.

Vulgar
When someone has a really strong, unpredictable reaction that makes you feel scared, confused, or intimidated.

Deflecting Responsibility
When someone repeatedly makes excuses for their unhealthy behavior.

Betrayal
When someone is disloyal or acts in an intentionally dishonest way.

10 Signs of a Healthy Relationship

Healthy relationships bring out the best in you and make you feel good about yourself. A healthy relationship does not mean a “perfect” relationship, and to have a healthy 100% of the time, but the signs below are behaviors you should strive for in all of your relationships.

Compassion
The relationship makes it a point to be supportive for each other.

Trust
Confidence that your partner will do exactly what you say they will do.

Respect
You value and support each other, and you listen when the other person will support.

Independence
You have space to be yourself outside of the relationship.

Equality
The relationship feels comfortable and supportive; the same effort is put into the success of the relationship.

Healthy Conflict
You are using open and honest conflict and support.

Fun
You enjoy spending time together and bring out the best in each other.


Name: ___________________________

Never Let Me Go Reading Check, 8 points

2/16/22

Write a paragraph (5-7 sentences) responding to the following prompt:

Consider the relationships listed below, and choose one to focus on. How would you characterize it? Is it healthy? Unhealthy?

Kathy & Ruth

Kathy & Tommy

Tommy & Ruth

In your answer, utilize at least 1 characteristic from the 10 signs of relationship health, published by One Love; and at least 1 quote from the text.

Your paragraph needs:

1. A clear, argumentative topic sentence
2. Integrated, textual evidence (with citations)
3. Sentences that build & smooth transitions
4. Strong word choice
5. An effective, concluding concluding sentence

Choice 3 - Consider the relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. How could you characterize it? Is it healthy? Unhealthy? If you choose this option, I will give you the 10 signs of relationship health, published by One Love. You will need to cite two main areas of the Macbeth’s relationship that you find healthy/unhealthy.

The relationship between Lady Macbeth and Macbeth is unhealthy relationship. One of the primary unhealthy signs this relationship demonstrates is possessiveness and manipulation. At the beginning of the play, Lady Macbeth possesses Macbeth and manipulates him to kill Duncan. Macbeth does not want to kill Duncan and is ashamed of his actions but Lady Macbeth forces him to kill him. Another unhealthy relationship sign that is prominently displayed is belittling. In order to control or manipulate Macbeth, Lady Macbeth uses phrases like “Are you a man?” to insult Macbeth’s manhood. She does this to control Macbeth. Their unhealthy relationship is full of deceit, manipulation, and belittling.
The Question Finding Technique

= The QFT, The Right Question Institute’s method for building people’s question asking skills

Steps:

1. Produce questions
2. Improve questions
3. Prioritize questions
4. Strategize
5. Reflect
Examples of my students’ questions

1. What do they get out of it?
2. How does it help students learn?
3. Is there a way to make it more interactive?
4. How can we use this in future lessons?
5. What changes do you see in the classroom environment?
6. How do students respond to this?
7. What do teachers think of it?
8. How can we improve the content?
9. What are the benefits of this approach?
10. How can we measure student engagement?
11. What are the challenges?
12. How can we incorporate student feedback?
13. How can we make it more accessible?
14. How can we make it more relevant to students?
What are places in your curriculum you can lean into empathy-based instruction or conversations about healthy relationships?
Why create partnerships?

#1
Allowing us to care for and reach more students

#2
Allowing us to care for and reach each other, especially in difficult moments
Who are people you can partner with and how can you think about those partnerships across identifiers (like age, race, gender...)?
Questions?

Please remember to fill out the conference survey and leave feedback about this session if possible!