How Authenticity and Empathy Shape Our Teaching

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What I have learned?

We all yearn for deep human connections.
Life’s Dream Trajectory

Problems & Mistakes

Experience and Fulfillment
Warm-Up Questions and Statements

1. How many of you have made a mistake in your life?

2. How many of you wish that you could go back in time and erase some of your mistakes?

3. Are there mistakes that you have made that you wouldn’t reveal to the person next to you even if I paid you $100?
Thought

“Mistakes are usual bridge between inexperience and wisdom.”

Phyllis Theroux, Journalist

Mistakes are the pathways to personal discovery and growth.

... but they can be painful to examine up close, and there is often a deep fear to disclose them.
Purpose of Presentation

- Reveal six of my career mistakes, and the lessons learned, that have reshaped my path to more meaningful personal and professional enrichment.

- Relate these to your own circumstances, students and their families.
Thought

“The unexamined life is not worth living.”

Plato, Apology
SIX Keys
There is no simple “right” key for every context.
1. Realize that I could be wrong about so many things and not even know it.
Our Life’s Problem

We are often so unaware of how unaware we really are about ourselves and others: at work, at home, in friendships.
Key #1: Wrongology

- We become so certain of what we think, believe, and feel about the profession and our students.
Application

“However disorienting, difficult, or humbling our mistakes might be, it is ultimately wrongness, not rightness, that can teach us who we are.”

Kathryn Schulz, *Being Wrong*
1. Make faulty assumptions about people, their beliefs and/or motivations.

2. Hold on to our certainty that particular methodologies are the best methods.
Application

- Learn more about how our currently-held (fossilized) views can distort our understanding of others around us.
SIX Keys

1. Realize that I could be wrong about so many things and not even know it.

2. Accept my imperfections and limitations.
FEAR

“Will others see me as flawed or imperfect because of my mistakes or limitations?”
Quotes

“We often wear ourselves out trying to be someone we aren’t or aren’t meant to be.”

- We pretend to be what we aren’t.
- We pretend to know what we don’t know.
Brené Brown
Researcher on Vulnerability, Shame, and Courage

“Many of us live in fear — the fear of looking weak, flawed, and imperfect.”

“Vulnerability is the birthplace of innovation, creativity and change.”

Vulnerability > Authenticity
Authenticity is the daily practice of letting go of who we think we’re supposed to be and embracing who we are.

*Gifts of Imperfection*
Application – Tasteful Vulnerability

- Authenticity builds honest human connections with others and greater trust.
- Authenticity attracts real people.
- Authenticity helps you wear the same face no matter what the circumstances.
3. Use technology judiciously.
“Computers make it easier to do a lot of things, but most of things they make easier to do don’t need to be done.”
Useful or Not?

“Technologies are becoming inherently more unusable because they often are trying to do too much.”

Just because you CAN do it doesn't mean it SHOULD be done.
“Less is More” Principle

Don't abandon what already works for you.

Use only what you need!
Easier to learn, support, and maintain.
Technologies that Work!

Don't abandon what already works for you.

“The best education is to be found in gaining the utmost information from the simplest apparatus.”

- Alfred Whitehead, mathematician, 1922
Avoid “Drop-in” Training Model

Situations

1. Schools invest all their money in hardware and software with no money left over for training.

2. Schools purchase iPads for tasks that can be done with simpler tools.

3. Schools evaluate teachers’ performance on whether they use technology or not.
Application

- Suggest technologies that work even in low-resource environments.
- Don’t penalize or stigmatize teachers who don’t use technology.
- Support others who may feel unneeded embarrassment for not using what you use.
3. Use technology judiciously.

4. Create a clear path for students to succeed.
Teaching Dilemma

Sometimes, we create unnecessary ambiguity for students to overcome, especially in testing situations.
Scales from 0-10

But what is the difference between a 6 and 7?
# Scoring Rubric

**Speaking Test:** Tell me one thing you did last week to improve your English skills.

*I reviewed the vocabulary in the book on Monday.*
*I went to the teacher’s office to ask questions on Friday.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grammar (past tense verb correctly.)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idea (clear and complete.)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Expression (last week, yesterday)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronunciation (key vocabulary)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 = correct/mastery   0 = incorrect
4. Create a clear path for students to succeed.

5. Express deep compassion for others.
Situations

1. Teachers sometimes misunderstand students’ perceptions, feelings, and needs, especially when they struggle personally and academically.
Be Careful not to Stereotype!

A mental picture that is often not true. Stereotypes can also hurt.

- “You know how students are from that city.”
- “The most effective teachers are the ones who use technology.”
- “Ah, that student is just lazy and can’t bother to do the work.”
Understanding Others

What you see . . .

Behaviors

Iceberg

What you don’t see . . .

Anxiety

Depression

Emotional Trauma
A Learning Experience

Avoid competing sympathies when validating someone else’s struggle.

I know how you feel. I lost my grandmother, too.
Treating People with Dignity and Respect

Golden Rule – Treat others the way YOU want to be treated.

Platinum Rule – Treat others the way THEY want to be treated. This accommodates their feelings and personal struggles and their self-worth.
New Perspectives

Let me first understand your needs, your situation, your story, and I will try to treat you in the way you want to be treated.
The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story the only story . . . The consequence of the single story is this: It robs people of dignity . . . Show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become.
Learn about others and their lives. Validate their perspectives, their struggles, and their challenges.

Sit with people in their discomfort and pain, and just seek to understand them. People are often struggling beyond your awareness.
5. Express deeper compassion for others.

6. Dare greatly.
Don’t write off teachers (or students) who are struggling without allowing them to develop and grow.

Sit with them in the midst of their discomfort and struggles as they mature.
SIX Keys – A Summary

1. Discover your wrongness.
2. Become authentic.
3. Support those who use and don’t use technology.
5. Express radical compassion for others.
6. Dare greatly.
References

Brown, B. (2012) Daring greatly: How the courage to be vulnerable transforms the way we live, love, parent, and lead.

