



## **Dear Teachers (and Caregivers): Just Be Present**

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Let's be realistic for a minute. Academics are not priority right now even though we'd like to make them that. For some of us it's our business and dedication our "teaching" that propels us, to even in these crazy times of moment to moment crisis and change, meet the challenge of doing our best as teachers. We ARE teachers. We live this. Breathe it. It is who we are. For so many of us it is our life calling of something much higher and deeper than just an academic degree and career. So it's hard when that is what we've known and now we are being called... to breathe and slow down. It doesn't feel like it, I know, with trying to not only be flexible, learn a new way of teaching, new technology, scramble for lessons, and THEN handle our own kids, parents, lives and ourselves. We forget ourselves a lot. For this to work, going forward... we can't. We also can't forget that our students, our kiddos, can't forget themselves either. They are going to be scared. Petrified. Stress. Traumatized. That is what is around them, in the media, at home, with their friends on social media.

It reminds me of the day of 9/11 when our staff gathered right before arrival in the library to watch the towers get hit and then fall later. We were in shock. We didn't know how to handle our own emotions at that point. The kids came flooding in, yelling, screaming, complete frenetic energy because they'd just seen it on TV. They were petrified, their fight, flight or freeze responses were in action. And honestly, so were ours. But we had to pull from our strength and greet them with calmness, safety and reassurance, even though in our minds we were wondering, "is it going to be ok? am I telling them the truth?".

It reminds me of Columbine too. Where all we could say to our kids was, "Honey, I don't know. But you are here with me now and we are safe right now in this moment."

I'm sharing this with you, because for those of you who haven't lived through disasters and major crisis, this can be paralyzing. It can be paralyzing to those of us who have been through major crisis before as well. But I suggest this...

just  
breathe.

Breathe. Find calm. If your entire first two weeks is nothing but breathing together, checking in with each other, moving through some yoga poses, playing games and talking... let it be. Be the rock. Be soft and gentle and calm. No sternness and consequences and all those things right now. Not now.

Listen. Focus on what they tell you. Let them know that when they talk, they are the most important person in the world to you. And when they ask questions about what is happening and what is going to happen, be truthful but not dramatic. The thing to remember... is that it's OK to say,

"You know I'm scared too. I don't know what's gonna happen. But know, I'm here for you. And we can talk all you want to."

Breathe. Have them breathe with you. Inhale slowly, exhale long. Keep doing it. Getting slower and slower as you go. I call it "turtle speed" and my kids love it. It has taken their world of chaos in a high poverty, high trauma life and given them a tool and a means to be safe and OK within them.



THAT can make the difference for them and for you. Not what your rubric looks like or how the self reflection goes, or if the choice board meets standards. I'm sorry, but that's all well and good and admirable and keeps US busy and distracted and YES, there will be some kids that WANT something to busy them to get THEIR minds off things--absolutely respond to that.

But they need us... to be WITH them. To be PRESENT. To let them know we have not abandoned them. That we love them and we are here. Even if it's by phone or computer.

And that is a hard thing to do right now, for ourselves, our kids at home and definitely for our students.

Be brave and breathe.

If you need help learning how to incorporate breathwork, moving meditation and mindfulness into what you do message me! I have resources! It's what I do! It's how I've taught title 1 for decades through crisis after crisis. It's what I teach in therapy with my clients too.

Just breathe. Be present.