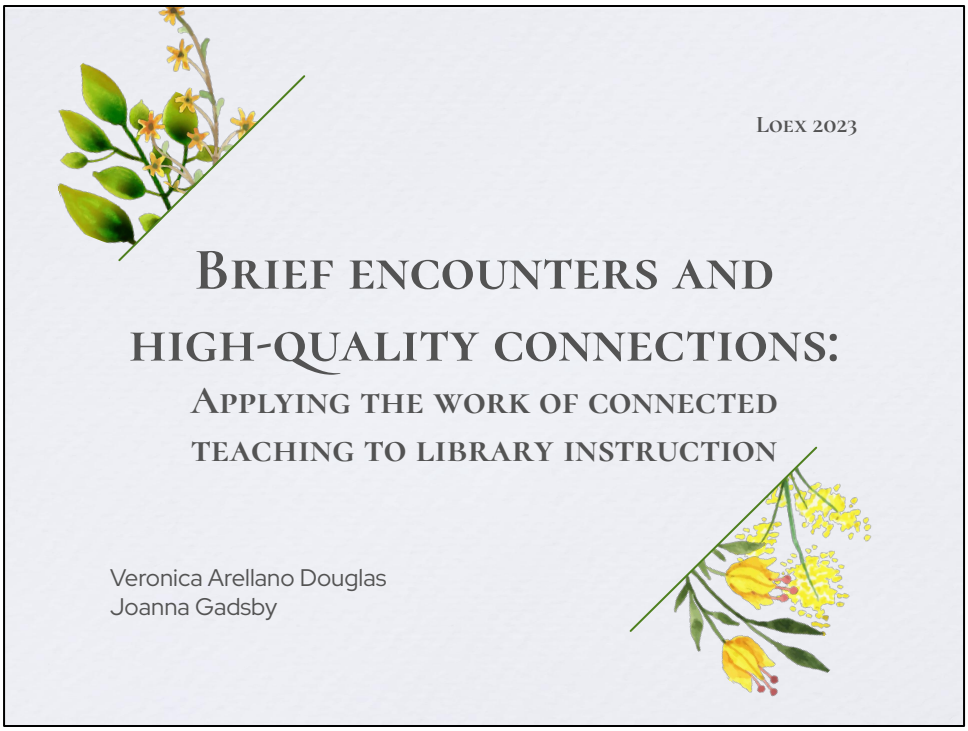
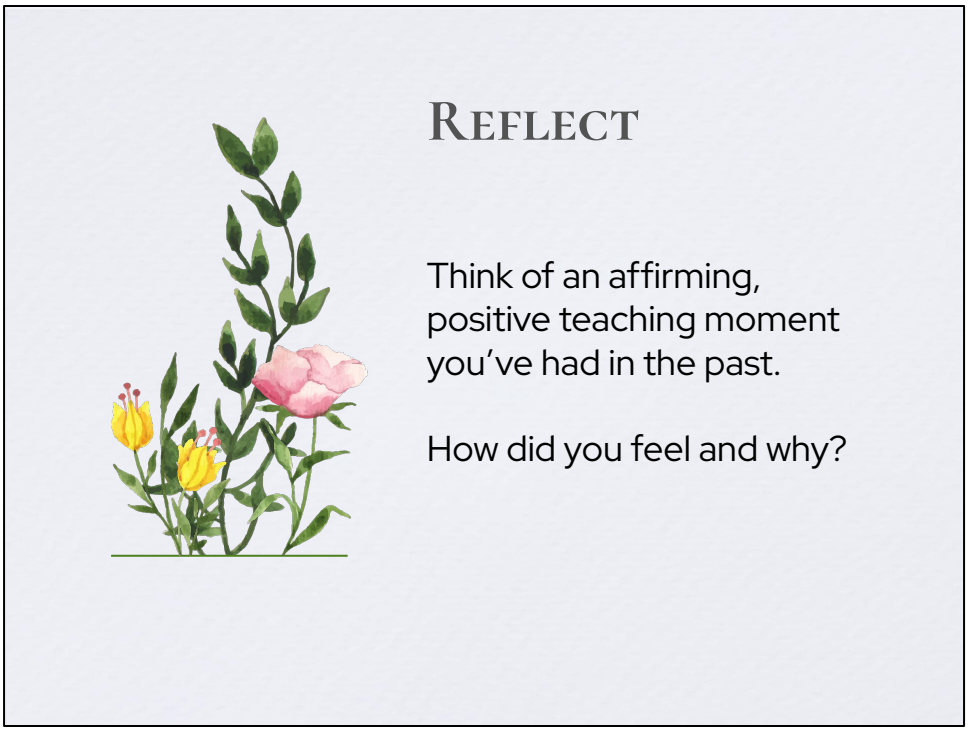
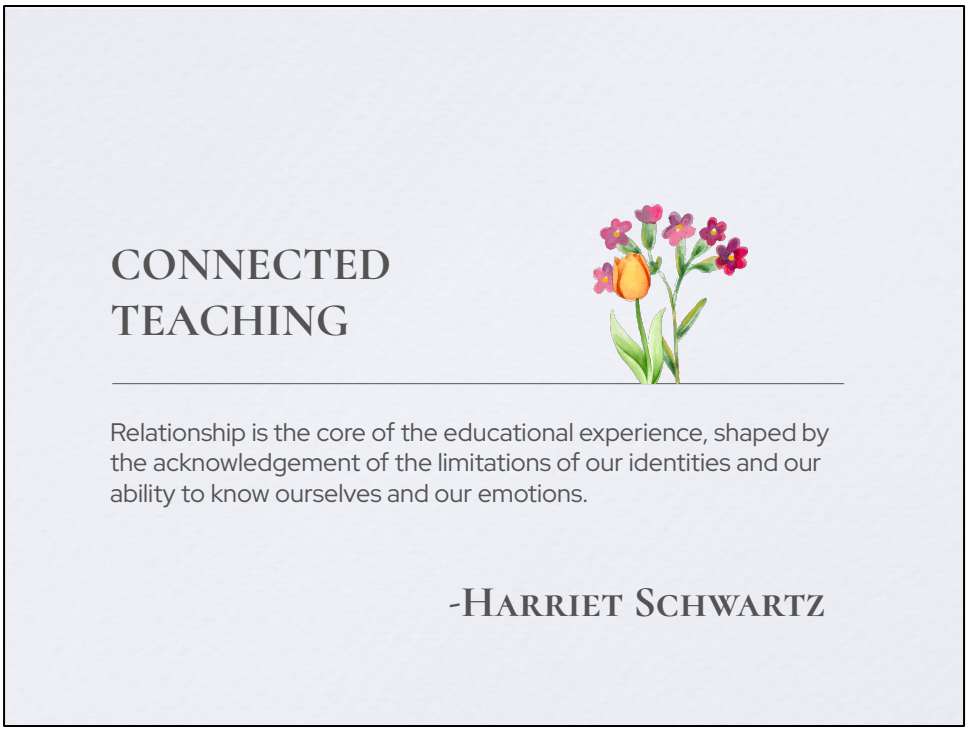


Hello! Welcome and good morning, my name is Joanna Gadsby. My co-presenter, Veronica Arellano Douglas, was unable to attend LOEX this year, but she has co-created this presentation, Brief Encounters and High-Quality Connections: Applying the work of connected teaching to library instruction.

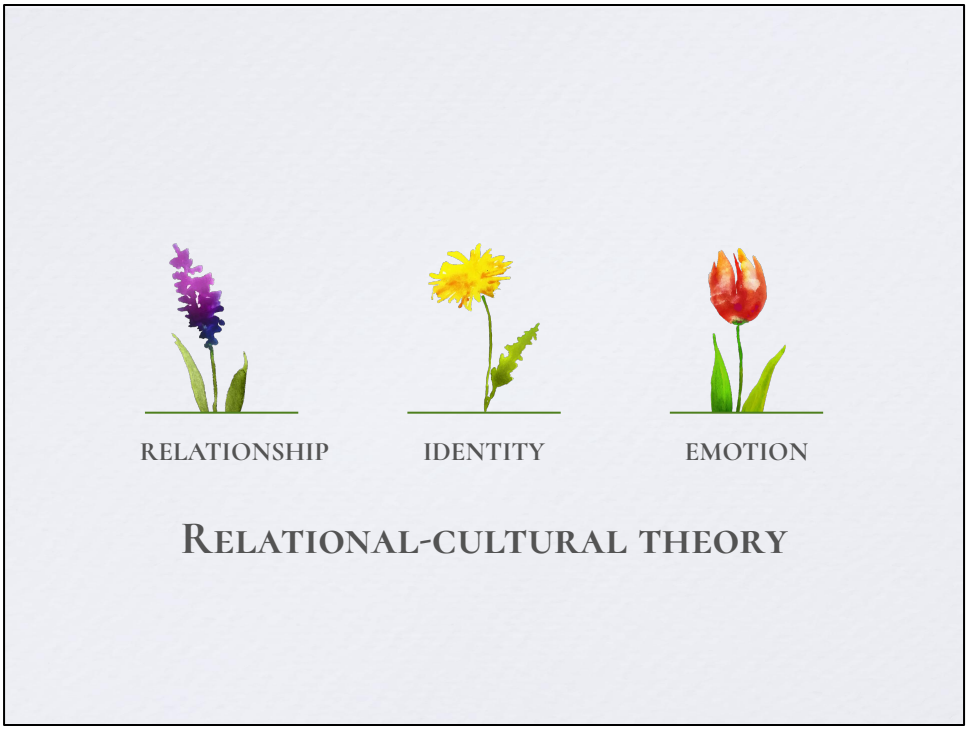


We would like to start today by offering a moment or two for you to reflect on an affirming or positive teaching moment you have had in the past. How did you feel and why? Take a few minutes to think (possibly to pair/share, or just share depending on setup of room)

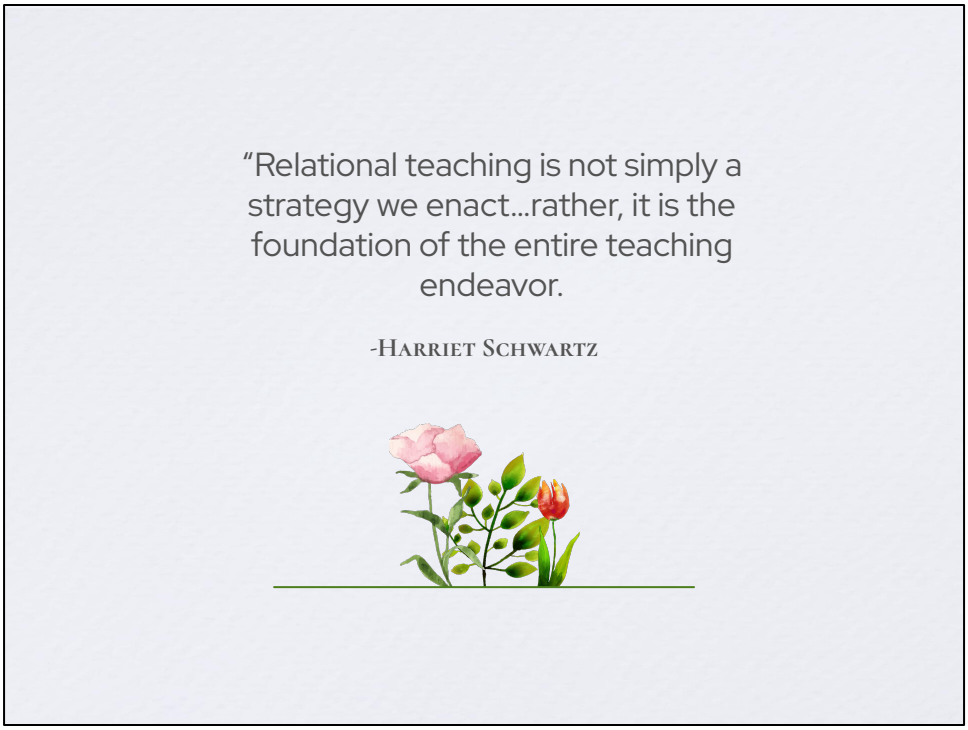
What are some commonalities among these stories?



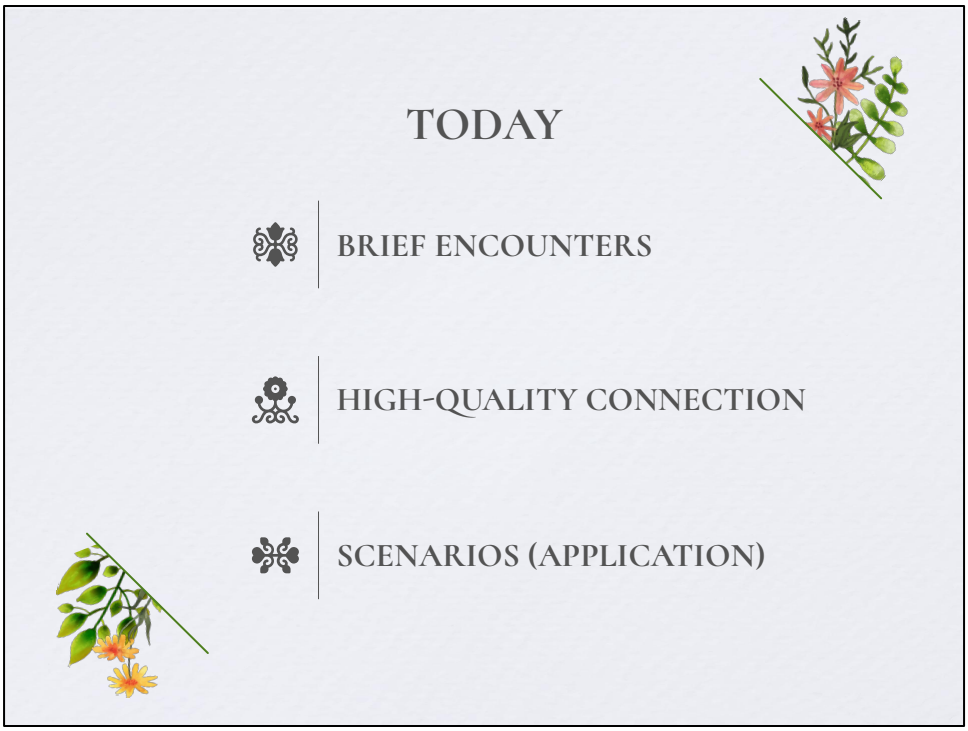
This session's focus on is on applying Connected Teaching to our teaching work in librarianship. This concept was developed and articulated by Harriet Schwartz in her book, Connected Teaching: Relationship, power, and mattering in higher education. To quote from her book, "relationship is the core of the educational experience, shaped by the acknowledgement of the limitations of our identities and our ability to know ourselves and our emotions. This emphasis on healthy growthful relationship is what makes teaching "connected" according to Schwartz.



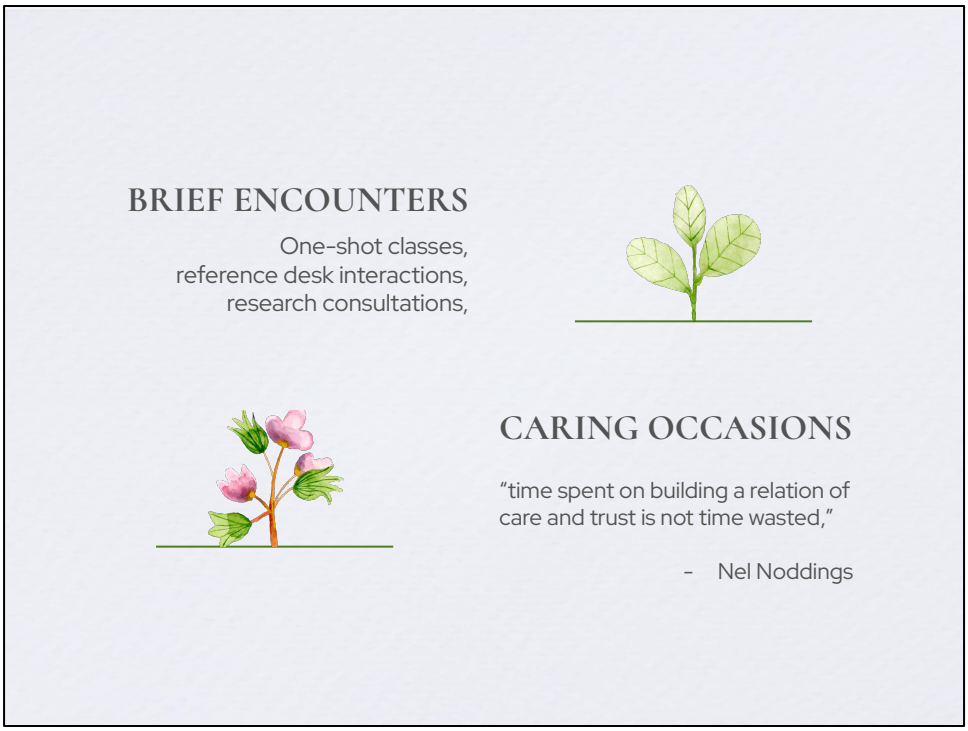
The foundation for Connected Teaching rests on three elements: “relationship, identity, and emotion,” where relationship is the core of the educational experience, shaped by the acknowledgment (or lack thereof) of the limitations of our identities and our ability to know ourselves and our emotions. It is rooted in Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT), a feminist model of psychological development that “posits that connection is at the core of human growth and development.” RCT was developed in the 1970s and 1980s as a response to commonly accepted Western psychological models that valorized the separation of self and pathologized individuals who did not conform to the cis, white, heterosexual, autonomous, self-sufficient ideal man. Application of RCT has expanded beyond a therapeutic context into social work, education, and librarianship. Within each of these disciplines and practices, relationships are sites for “personal growth and intellectual development.” They are the mode and method through which we learn, and Connected Teaching is an expansion of this idea.



It's important to keep Schwartz's words in mind during the session today: "Relational teaching is not simply a strategy we enact, rather it is the foundation of the teaching endeavor." Teaching is a relational practice, which is something that is easy for us to forget as librarians who teach because we are constantly teaching one or two shot workshops, meeting students via research consultations and other fleeting moments. But even in those brief encounters we do believe we have the opportunity for connection with learners.



So during our time today, I want to focus on the “brief encounters” in which we teach and refocus our attention from time spent teaching (in other words, to one-shot or not) to the quality of presence we bring to teaching. Together we’ll discuss what makes a “high quality connection” and we can find those in even brief or abbreviated moments. Then, we will go through some commonly encountered scenarios together, and think about how to apply these ideas so that we feel more connected to learners, more empowered as teachers, and better able to engage in collaborative relationships with other educators.

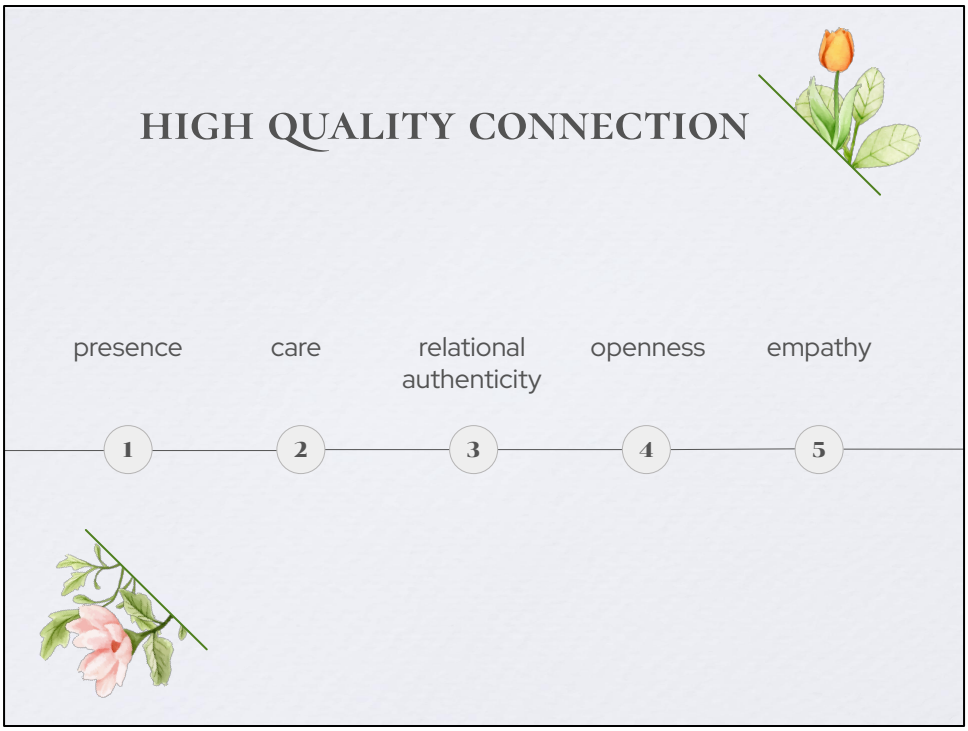


Schwartz states that Connected Teaching can happen in both "single meaningful interactions and longer term teaching relationships," making it an ideal framework through which to view the practice of teaching librarianship in all of its forms and iterations. The emphasis is not on time spent with students or the duration of an educational experience, but rather on the openness to relationship and connection on the part of both teacher and learner.

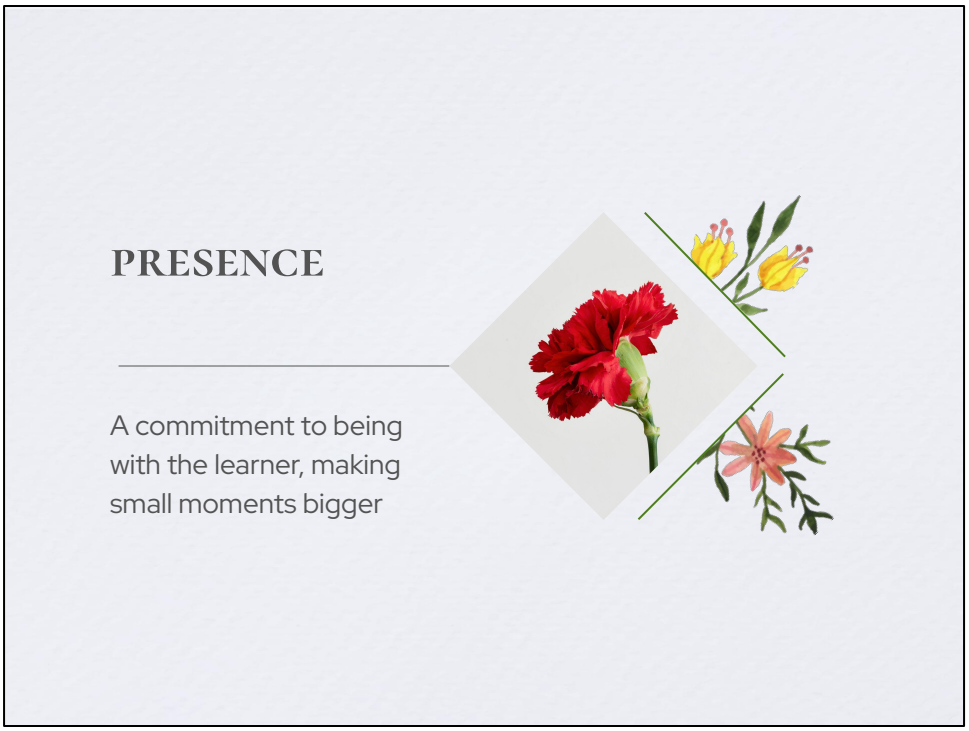
As librarians who were taught that our time with students in one-shots, research consultations, or reference interactions is fleeting, the idea of all of the above-mentioned qualities being present in a brief interaction or short class can seem unlikely. We are interested in thinking about a shift toward being open to the possibility of relationship, what Nel Noddings calls "a caring occasion," rather than coverage of content.

As we think about moments of connection in our work as teaching librarians, we may have entire courses, one-shot classes, or even discrete interactions during class time that come to mind. Through her Connected Teaching approach, Schwartz writes that even brief encounters have the potential to be high-quality connections. There is just as much opportunity for disconnection with learners during a semester-long course as there is the ability to connect with them during a one-time class. It is not guaranteed that either of these interactions will be meaningful, but that is not a reason to write off brief encounters as unworthy. Instead of expending energy focusing on the little amount of time we find ourselves with in traditional one-shot instruction, we can ask ourselves, "What

can make even brief encounters meaningful?”



So what then makes a high quality connection? These relational practices--presence, care, relational authenticity, openness, and empathy--are ones that we believe can be incorporated into the practice of teaching librarianship regardless of the duration of instruction, creating educational experiences that foster connection, validation, and the kinds of work that leave both librarian and learner feeling attuned to one other, reinvigorated, and fulfilled.

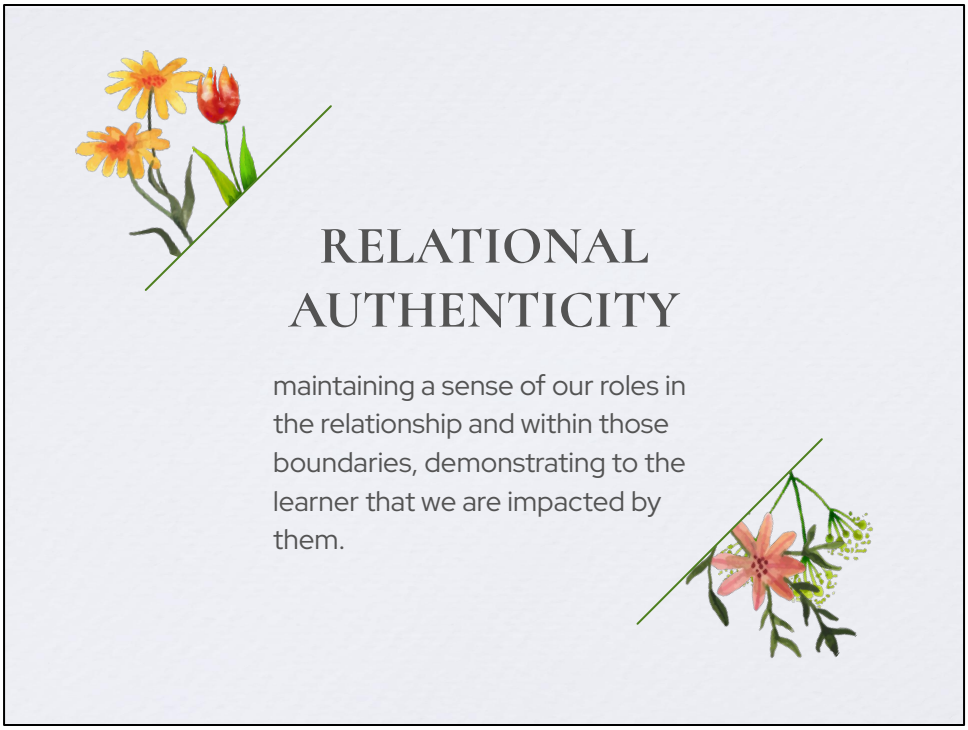


Both Schwartz and Jordan emphasize the importance of *quality of presence* in connection. Rather than "spend more time with students" or extend ourselves beyond healthy boundaries, we can instead focus on what Schwartz describes as "making small moments bigger." To be truly *present* with students in the classroom is to be engaged "in a momentary commitment to be with the other." It is not just about showing up, the kind of "presenteeism" that is marked by simply existing in a space and/or performing the actions that we believe students and teachers should exhibit. Our time in the classroom may be brief, but within that time, we are committed to being changed and moved by our students. We are committed to truly listening to understand, not just react.

The concept of care in education appears simultaneously in work by Nel Noddings, Carol Gilligan, and Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule in the 1980s. All center the relationships inherent in learning situations, but Noddings' definition of the caring relationship places it squarely within an educational context. In Noddings' work there is a *carer* and *cared-for*, with both parties playing their own role. She acknowledges that in education this relationship is unequal, with the carer holding more power than the cared-for; however, "both parties contribute to the establishment and maintenance of caring." The carer is attentive, "interested in the expressed needs of the cared-for," and demonstrates that the cared-for has been heard, even if the carer cannot meet those needs. The cared-for "shows somehow that the caring has been received." It's important to note here that this is not about gratitude. The cared-for does not need to give thanks, but, rather, offer some acknowledgment that the caring has been received. This could be as simple as a student revising a literature search approach after an in-class discussion with a librarian who offered a new way of thinking about their topic. It is a small, powerful moment that demonstrates the impact the librarian (carer) has on the students (cared-for).

In establishing a climate of care, we also acknowledge that there are times when we cannot, as carers, meet the needs of the cared-for. It may be because of limitations in resources or ability or because the needs of the cared-for are beyond the scope of our role as teaching librarians. Instead of struggling to meet

the needs of the cared-for that we know cannot be met, we can instead focus on “maintaining the caring relation.” A student may need far more intensive help in class than we are able to offer in the time that we spend with them. They may need time to think through options for their research topics or consider new avenues to pursue their ideas and would benefit from extended discussion with their instructor. Then, later, if we have maintained an open relationship, they know that we are available to help with their exploratory research, when they’re ready.



Relational authenticity is essential to a caring and therefore Connected Teaching relationship. It "is not the same thing as total honesty" on the part of the teacher or learner, nor does it mean placing the needs of the teacher above those of the learner. Rather, it is about maintaining a sense of relational clarity—what our roles are in the relationship—and, within those boundaries, demonstrating to the other that we are impacted by them. The feeling of having impacted, moved, or, more broadly, *mattered* to another person is extremely powerful. As Schwartz states, "some of my most memorable and motivating experiences as a teacher have been when I felt I mattered in the lives of students, I brought something important to their growth." Conversely, students feel the same impact of intellectual and personal mattering from us, describing "interactions as important not only when a professor complimented their work but also when they sensed their ideas or work were important to the professor." Schwartz calls this phenomena "intellectual mattering" and emphasizes its importance in growth and self-worth on the part of learners and the fulfillment of teachers.

Without relational authenticity, there can be no *mattering*. By being

relationally authentic, we show students the impact they have on us, which is an essential piece of the learning relationship. We also foster the ability for students to tell us what matters to them and how they are impacted by our words and actions in the classroom. Responsiveness is key. We have likely all been in classrooms (online or in person) where we are met with blank stares or silence from learners; as students, we may have been ignored or overlooked by teachers ourselves. This kind of nonresponsiveness causes disconnection and may even signal a "kind of danger" to learners who have previously been negatively impacted by unresponsive individuals in their lives.[41]

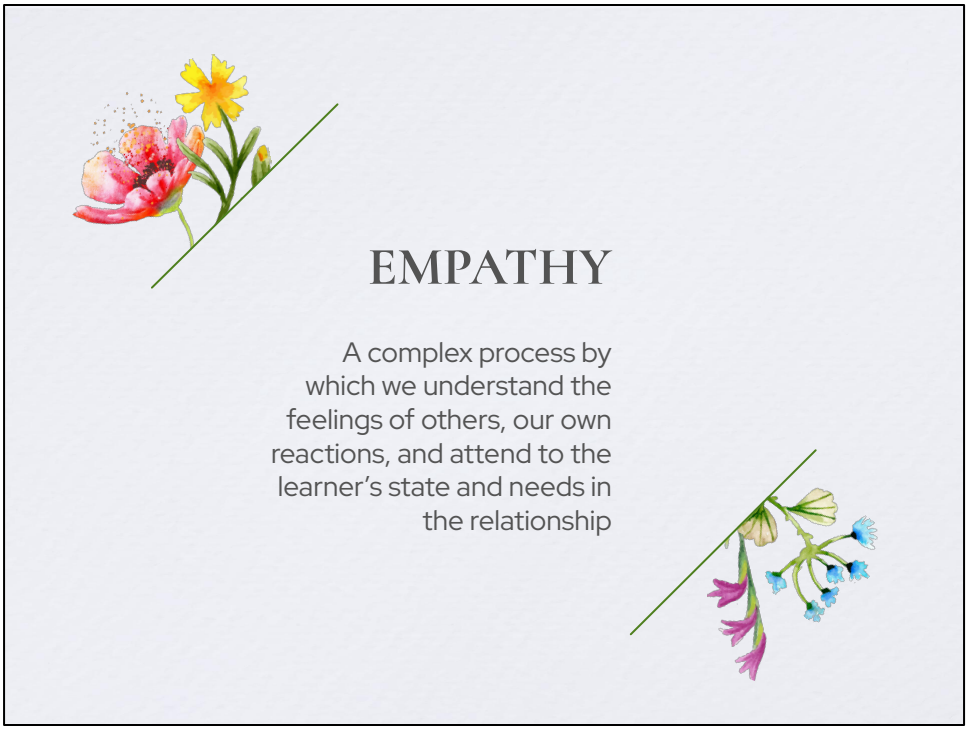
It is important to note that the relational authenticity and responsiveness that fosters connection is rooted in boundaries, which RCT encourages us to consider as "a place of meeting."[42] Roles are clear but can shift and change depending on the needs of the learner; at times the student may become the teacher, sharing with us content knowledge or experience that enriches our understanding of a concept or idea. This "authenticity in movement" thrives on the "respect, clarity, and responsibility" that boundaries bring.[43] Instead of reacting instantaneously to a student comment, question, or action based on what we think our role dictates we should say or do, we can take a moment to pause and speak/act with intention.[44] In doing so, we are deliberately setting or reinforcing boundaries, sharing with students how we are affected by them and noticing how we affect them in turn.

It would be disingenuous to say that all classes and instructional experiences will necessarily turn into high-quality connections.However, if we are not *open* to moments of connection and care, then they will surely not occur. But what does it mean to be open?

We may have encountered students in our classroom who on the surface express frustration over evaluating information sources they've found via their usual research methods for inclusion in a research paper. Yet, as we *listen* and *engage* with the student, we learn that their real confusion stems from not understanding the discourse that takes place in academic research papers. They aren't necessarily confused by the act of evaluating sources but by the purpose and point they serve in their writing. A brief interaction in the classroom that begins with a student asking, "Is this a good source for my paper?" is really a bigger discussion about college writing, the students' previous academic experience, and how they get the help they need. Through dialogue we can begin to uncover students' needs and cultivate their trust in their own learning process.

In this example we've made a brief but total connection. We've moved

beyond our assumed needs of the student to those they actively expressed. In doing so, we've avoided the trap of "virtue caring" where we assume we know what students need and completely bypass the listening and dialogue present in a growthful relationship. These are the caring efforts that "often misfire, and the students who most need to be part of a caring relation suffer most." In contrast, "relational caring" occurs when we set a foundation of relationship through attentiveness, relational authenticity, and presence. We are creating a potential opportunity for our students to connect with us and us to connect with them in turn. This is the *openness* that leads to exchange.



As central as empathy is to caring and connected teaching, it's a concept that is often misunderstood and maligned. Popular understanding of empathy characterizes it as an emotional reaction, one that is unconscious, innate, and automatic. Yet when viewed through a relational lens, empathy is a "complex cognitive and emotional state… one that requires work towards developing a well-differentiated sense of self as well as an awareness of and appreciation for another's subjectivity," or personhood. The practice of empathy is an intentional process that embodies a high degree of cognitive and affective labor to ensure that we are practicing *empathic accuracy*. We are not "attributing to the other feelings that we would have under similar conditions." We are understanding our reaction, differentiating it from their own, and attending to their state in the learning process.

SCENARIO No. 1

An instructor in the Women & Gender Studies department contacts you to schedule an instruction session for their Intro to WGS class. They are asking for a session 2 weeks in advance of the desired date.

Last time you worked with this instructor, you did not seem to be on the same page. The class felt rushed, awkward, and not helpful to students. Communication was not effective. You like this instructor and want to try to work with them again.

tinyurl.com/LOEXScenarios

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What opportunities do you see for connection in this scenario?
2. What can you do to initiate this connection?
3. What do you need to feel affirmed and empowered in this scenario?
4. What would be some signs that the other people in these scenarios want to connect with you?
5. How can you establish a climate of care in this scenario?

tinyurl.com/LOEXScenarios

SCENARIO No. 2

You are teaching a 2-session series for a Technical Writing in Engineering class and have a great lesson plan sequence ready to go. Other sections of this class have gone well.

When the instructor and students show up, you learn that this is the honors section of the class and the students are working on a completely different assignment.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What opportunities do you see for connection in this scenario?
2. What can you do to initiate this connection?
3. What do you need to feel affirmed and empowered in this scenario?
4. What would be some signs that the other people in these scenarios want to connect with you?
5. How can you establish a climate of care in this scenario?

SCENARIO No. 3

A student comes in for a research appointment with you and they are very clearly upset and overwhelmed. They are working on a research paper for a history class and they are on the verge of tears!

It's difficult to determine exactly what they need assistance with at this moment, but you know from their email that they are researching family life in English in the early 1800s.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What opportunities do you see for connection in this scenario?
2. What can you do to initiate this connection?
3. What do you need to feel affirmed and empowered in this scenario?
4. What would be some signs that the other people in these scenarios want to connect with you?
5. How can you establish a climate of care in this scenario?

DISCONNECTION

Not all interactions will be high quality connections.

OPENNESS

But we remain open to the possibility of connection.

THANK YOU.

Joanna Gadsby
gadsby@umbc.edu

Veronica Arellano Douglas
vadouglas@uh.edu

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