

MAKING IT STICK: EMPATHY AS PATHWAY TO EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING@2015

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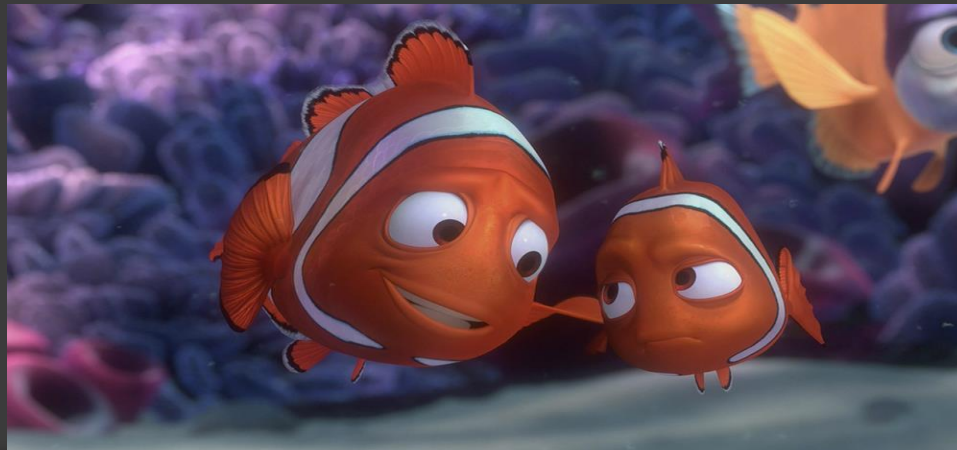
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This is Water David Foster Wallace

There are these two young fish swimming along, and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says, “Morning, boys, how’s the water?” And the two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and goes,

“What’s water?”



When We Teach, *This is Water*



Without Empathy, We Are Teaching Content Instead of Students

- When we teach with empathy we **see our students** for who they are and where they are as we guide them to what they are becoming. The connection is reciprocal as we “let students in” on our pedagogical choices and strategies and respond to their cues.
- Empathic teaching helps us to engage with **all** of our students, including (especially) **those at the margins and those who seem left out or left behind.**
- Empathic teaching is collaborative, as we **learn our students’ stories and they share with us how they learn best.**

Empathy As Gateway to Enhancing Learning and Making that Learning Stick

- ⦿ Empathy, or the ability to put oneself in another's shoes, is the act of projecting oneself into the context that is being observed.
- ⦿ Empathic pathways to learning are reciprocal, as teacher puts herself in her students' shoes and students become teacher.
- ⦿ Empathy's enablers – the brain's mirror neurons - allow us to experientially understand concepts not just by doing but **by observing another in the doing.**

The neural mechanism at work contemplates a construct of intel

- *Observing another in an experience allows the observer to develop a rubric for processing the experience as if it was the observer's own. Acting "as if" does the same.*



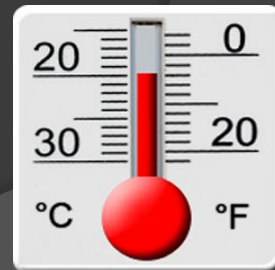
Living Our Values: Empathy Helps to Forge An Expanded Conceptualization of Both Self and “Other”

- Empathic teaching and learning yield a more inclusive perception of *“my neighbor as me.”*
- Empathy helps students to reconsider the “other,” understand perspectives different from their own and **reframe** “us/them” archetypes.
- Empathy is essential to **embracing difference**, communicating more effectively and forging globally inclusive perspectives.
- Empathic acuties help to shape students’ emerging sense of professional identity and encourages them to lead with integrity (from *“integritas”* – to integrate).

Empathic Teaching and Making it Stick: The Four Questions for the Teacher

1. What am I leading with as I enter the classroom?

A teacher is both thermostat and thermometer for every room she enters. Before I begin class, I pause and carefully scan the room. I take the room's temperature and raise it if need be (when I sense fatigue or weariness) or lower it (when I sense tension, fear or anxiety). At a minimum, I acknowledge what I am perceiving.



At the Podium Just Before Class Begins: I Carefully Scan the Room with Eyes of Compassion and Begin, Nonverbally, to Cultivate Connection

- ◎ *I might be the only light that my students see on this day.*
- ◎ Let me say what needs to be said and see what needs to be seen. *“The trouble with you is, you think you have time.”* Carlos Castaneda
- ◎ Stay on message: the power of resilience, humility and grace.
- ◎ The Seton Hall tradition: *the virtues of integrity, engagement, loyalty*
- ◎ **This classroom is a safe space**
- ◎ The ritual at the door when entering and exiting: **“Thank you” and “Use me”**

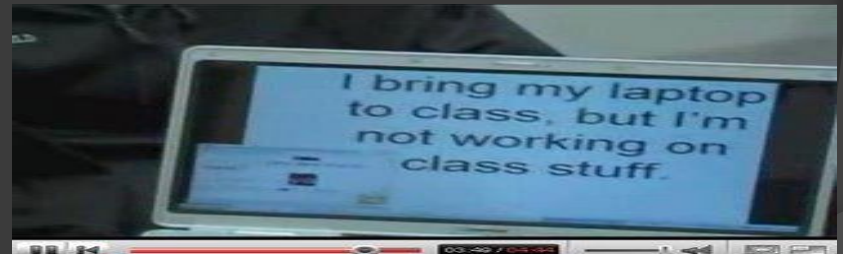
Cultivating Connection:

- ◎ *Face-to-face contact is the gateway to empathic teaching and learning.*

Laptops obstruct that connection.



- ◎ *Students without laptops in class do better on pop-quizzes and, in seminal studies at Princeton and USC, on exams.*



- ◎ *Students who handwrite rather than type (transcribe) their notes are actively filtering, ordering, processing.*

Empathic Teaching and Making it Stick: The Four Questions for the Teacher

2. Putting myself in my students' shoes (empathy**), with the eyes of a beginner, what would it take for me to understand this material and, from that platform, how can I present it to accommodate my students' various ways of learning best **to reach the whole class?****

How to know how our students learn best: *ask them*

- ◎ *the breakfast club*
- ◎ *active listening in and out of class*
(listen for “I **see** that” (often a visual learning cue), “I **hear** what you’re saying but” (auditory), “I’m not sure **how this works or how this fits in**”) (tactile/kinesthetic).
- ◎ *follow-up in and out of class*
- ◎ *the “coincidental” planned encounter*

Reaching the Whole Class: Positioning Students as Pedagogical Consultants

- Appoint a diverse array of students to assist with the development of **culturally sensitive and resonant pedagogy**
- Invite past and present students to observe class, give feedback and **collaborate on strategies to reach non-dominant as well as dominant groups**
- Using “pedagogical consultants” enhances **mutual accountability, agency** and positive manifestations of **voice**
- **Students of color share authority and responsibility**

Empathic Teaching and Making it Stick: The Four Questions

3. By the end of class/the week/this semester, what do I want my students to have learned, **what have they actually learned** and how can I facilitate and help them to anchor that learning?

- ◎ Ascertaining **what my students are actually learning** in order to be corrective: building regular assessment into the in-class experience and explaining why we are doing so is an empathic response to student stress, uncertainty and desire to achieve as it makes the learning stick.

Building Regular Assessment into Class: Incorporate Low-Stakes or No-Stakes Quizzing

- **Frequent low-stakes or no-stakes quizzing.** Consistent 10 minute mini-quizzes where students are asked to retrieve what was learned during the previous class signal to the brain that the material matters and needs to be remembered.



Building Regular Assessment into Class: Incorporate Low-Stakes or No-Stakes Quizzing

- ⦿ *Why? Because a good grade on the final does not necessarily equal true learning. When that grade is achieved because of a short term labor-intensive expenditure of effort (i.e., cramming), most of the information will be quickly lost.*

Incorporate Low-Stakes/No-Stakes Quizzing

- ⦿ *Why? Because by studying only once in “finals mode,” the brain is not getting the message that the information is important enough to be stored for long-term retrieval.*
- ⦿ **Frequent quizzing, even for no-stakes, transmits that message.**

How to Make it Stick: Distributed Learning or “Spacing”

- ◉ Distributed learning, or spacing, works better than end-of-semester cramming, in the same way, for example, that exercising for ten minutes every day is more effective than exercising for 70 minutes once a week.

Building into class frequent interactive review with opportunities for retrieval of what has been learned anchors, trouble-shoots and gets the whole class involved.



How to Build-In Opportunities for Distributed Learning or “Spacing”

- “Row calls”
- Drills/quizzes
- The wrap-up:



- *Tell me what you heard today (auditory)*
- *Tell me what you saw today (visual)*
- *Tell me what you figured out today (kinesthetic)*
- *Tell me what you learned today*
- *Tell me what you did not learn today*

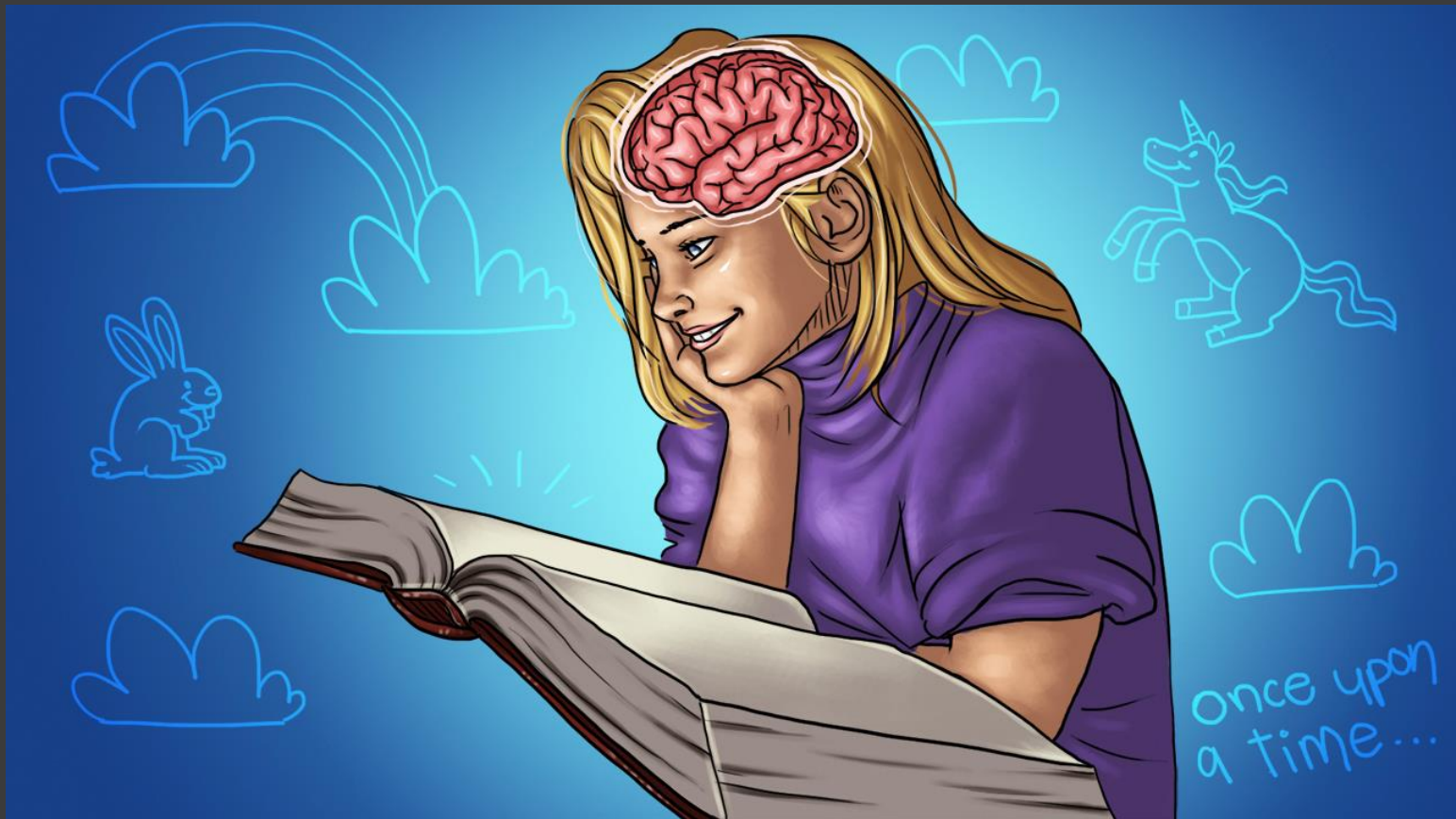
Empathic Teaching and Making it Stick: The Four Questions

4. Why should my students care about this material and how can I *show* them that it matters?

- The relevance of the material to the exam, to daily life, to societal concerns, to global issues, to social justice and to character-building.

Using Empathy to Make it Stick: Story-Telling

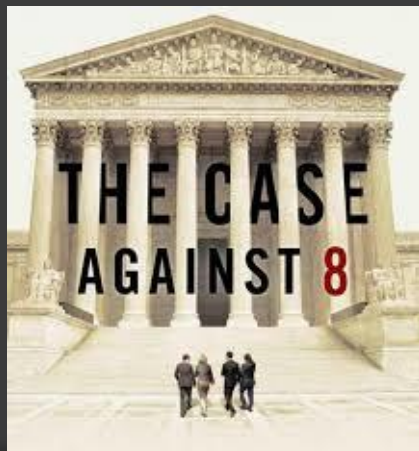
- Story is “content enriched by emotion.”



Making it Stick: Story-Telling

For example:

- ◎ Telling stories from professional and personal experience
- ◎ Watching documentaries, movies, television clips to feel the meaning and impact of the subject matter



Making it Stick: Empathic Listening

- ◎ *“The fly on the wall”*
- ◎ *“Tell me what you just heard.”*
- ◎ *“Walk in their shoes/feel what they’re feeling/relate and react.”*

Making it Stick: Changing Scenery to Change Perspective

The brain seeks variation, movement and intermittent breaks.



Think of the classroom as a theater in the round. Every twenty minutes (the adult attention span is 19-22 minutes) do an exercise that has students **switch seats, change rows, stand in the back of the room, come to the podium, come to the table.** A change in location can bring a change in perspective.

Making it Stick: Increasing Ways for Students to Talk More

Create diverse ways for students to talk about the material so that they talk more and you talk less. Those include exercises such as:

- “You Be the Teacher”/Peer Teaching
- “Explain this to our guest.”
- “Coming to the Table”
- “Tell me what you just learned”
- “What are you sensing now?”



Making it Stick: Adding Contextual Cues

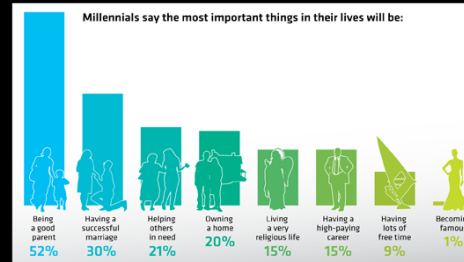
- ◎ Props, songs, tastes, scents and pictures help to do that, serving to embed material in more than one part of the brain. That makes the memory of the material stronger and lends a “feel” to the subject matter.
 - *“It takes two” to make an easement appurtenant*
 - *The peanut shell and the thumb tack: bite in*
 - *The scent of pine for the profit*
 - *The Prof. mask: What would Prof. say?*

Empathic Teaching Makes the Learning Stick for Millennials:

Our Students –
Millennial “Gen C” –
born between 1982 and
1998.

WHO ARE THE MILLENNIALS?

THE DEMOGRAPHICS



Other names for Millennials:

Generation Y: Refers to the generation to succeed Generation X.

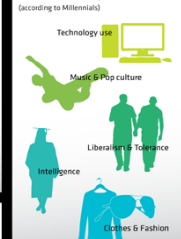
The Echo Boomers: Refers to the fact that many Millennials are children of Baby Boomers.

The Net Generation: Refers to the internet being a part of their lives that they grew up with and take for granted.

The Boomerang Generation: Refers to the tendency for many Millennials to move back in with their parents after going away to college.

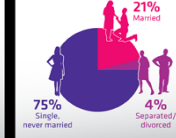
The Peter Pan Generation: Refers to delaying the rites of passage into adulthood longer than most generations before them.

Top 5 things that make Millennials unique:



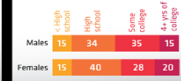
Marital status

(Millennials ages 18-48)



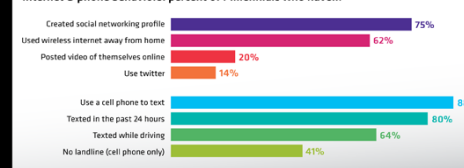
Educational attainment

(% of Millennials ages 18-48)

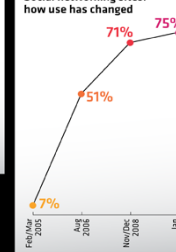


MILLENNIALS AND TECHNOLOGY

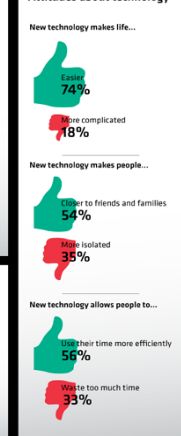
Internet & phone behaviors: percent of Millennials who have...



Social networking sites: how use has changed



Attitudes about technology



MILLENNIALS AND NEWS

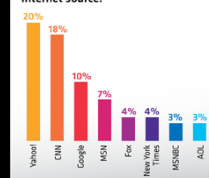
How Millennials get most of their news:



Television source:



Internet source:



How often Millennials visit the social networking site they use most:



Flowtown™

Sources: Pew Research | Wikipedia

Teaching With Empathy Teaches Empathy

- ① Emotional cues are effective pathways to critical thinking for millennials. Emotion mind answers the “**why?**” that in turn makes the “**how?**” resonate.
- ① Teaching empathy – putting oneself in the other’s shoes – **helps students to transcend the self-referred (why should this matter to me?) and think about (feel for) “the other,” and why it might matter to and affect him or her.**

Empathy Tempers “The Epidemic of Facelessness”

- Empathy helps to norm mutual respect, compromise and the willingness to learn something even from people with whom we disagree.
- Empathic teaching tempers the tendency of millennials as “social media natives” to shun and to shame both message and *messenger* of viewpoints different from their own.
- It is an antidote to the dehumanizing effects of online exchange, transforming the inquiry from “*what* are you doing?” to “*how* are you doing?”

Empathy to Foster Identity and the Professional/Ethical Imperative

- The rule of capture's contemporary iterations: the consequences of elephant poaching and the David Sheldrick Foundation's elephant sanctuaries
- The class gift: adopting an orphaned elephant, named by the class "*Blackacre*"
- "*It does matter to this starfish.*"
Encouraging students to see the virtue in their midst by inviting them to nominate class members for "starfish awards."



Empathy helps to frame the task of reinvention for both the academy and the profession.

- *In and out of the classroom, we can teach and also **show** our students a view of the legal profession that is noble, honorable and, if justice is to be achieved, indispensable. The care that we take with each class can demonstrate our love for the law, our profession and the sacred trust that we share with our students. At its best, our teaching is that love made visible.*