

Pause, Ponder, and Persist in the Classroom

How can educators find joy in the midst of seemingly overwhelming challenges? Researcher Julie Schmidt Hasson interviewed hundreds of people about their most impactful teachers and shares her findings in this unique and powerful book. She lays out a three-step process that leads to greater peace, and greater impact on students.

This three-step framework involves pausing, pondering, and persisting. First, teachers pause before reacting to an unexpected challenge, so they can intentionally choose a response. Next, they suspend assumptions and approach the challenge from a place of curiosity. Finally, they persist in this dance of patient inquiry and thoughtful responses in a way that leads to better outcomes for students.

The stories integrated throughout the book provide evidence of the many ways teachers make a difference in students' lives. It is a challenging time to be a teacher, and this book provides the inspiration and information teachers need to stay longer, grow stronger, and continue making an impact.

Julie Schmidt Hasson, Ed.D. (@JulieSHasson) is a professor in the Reich College of Education at Appalachian State University. Julie's research on the impact of a teacher is the topic of a TEDx talk and is the focus of her engaging professional development programs. She founded the Chalk and Chances project, a vehicle for elevating and celebrating teachers, in 2017.

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Education*

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Pause, Ponder, and Persist in the Classroom

How Teachers Turn Challenges
into Opportunities for Impact

Julie Schmidt Hasson

First published 2023
by Routledge
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

and by Routledge
4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Schmidt Hasson, Julie, author.

Title: Pause, ponder, and persist in the classroom:
how teachers turn challenges into opportunities for
impact / Julie Schmidt Hasson.

Description: New York, NY: Routledge, 2023. |

Includes bibliographical references.

Identifiers: LCCN 2022057149 | ISBN 9781032383774 (hardback) |

ISBN 9781032383422 (paperback) | ISBN 9781003344735 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Classroom management. |

Effective teaching. | Teacher-student relationships.

Classification: LCC LB3013 .S3467 2023 |

DDC 371.102/4—dc23/eng/20230126

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2022057149>

ISBN: 978-1-032-38377-4 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-032-38342-2 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-34473-5 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003344735

Typeset in Palatino
by codeMantra

To Brian, whose journey in teaching inspires me

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Acknowledgements

Bringing a book to life is a collaborative process. I am grateful to Lauren Davis and the team at Routledge/Taylor and Francis Group for helping to transform my words into a beautiful book. Thank you to Caite Hamilton for shaping this work and carefully polishing each paragraph.

I've been blessed with unwavering support from my family and friends. Thank you to Brian Hasson for being a partner in every sense of the word and to Cailin Hasson for helping me look at teaching with fresh eyes. Thank you to Laura Estes-Swilley for four decades of friendship and for the hundreds of conversations about what it means to live this teaching life.

Every child deserves to be nurtured as I was (and continue to be). Thank you to my parents, Bob and Gayle Schmidt, who always believed I could be a writer and who proudly displayed every piece on the refrigerator. Thank you to Mrs. Nancy Russell, who encouraged me when I was an emerging reader and again when I was an emerging leader.

I've been lucky enough to spend most of my life surrounded by educators. Thank you to all of the teachers who ignited my love of learning, to my colleagues who keep that fire burning, and to my students who provide my why. Most importantly, thank you to teachers everywhere for making the world a better place by making students feel safe, seen, and stretched every day.

Meet the Author



Dr. Julie Hasson is a professor in the Reich College of Education at Appalachian State University. When Julie is not teaching graduate classes in school leadership, she is conducting qualitative research in schools. Julie's research on the impact of a teacher is the topic of a TEDx talk and is the focus of her engaging professional development programs. She founded the Chalk and Chances project, a vehicle for elevating and celebrating teachers, in 2017. She is also the author of *Unmapped Potential: An Educator's Guide to Lasting Change* (2017) and *Safe, Seen, and Stretched in the Classroom: The Remarkable Ways Teachers Shape Students' Lives* (2022). She lives in Boone, North Carolina, with her husband, two dogs, and several geese.

Introduction

Teaching ... No other profession has higher highs or lower lows. The work is undeniably complex and challenging. Why do teachers stay? For most, it's the deep satisfaction that comes from impacting the lives of students. However, opportunities for impact rarely present themselves in moments of wonder and delight. More often, these opportunities come hidden in a challenge or problem. The ability to not just navigate through a problem but to turn that problem into an opportunity for impact is the hallmark of a life-shaping teacher. How do teachers push past the busyness of the day to intentionally find the potential in a problem? In my yearlong quest to answer this question, I interviewed former students about their most impactful teachers. I also interviewed and observed teachers in action to identify common practices.

In my previous book, *Safe, Seen, and Stretched in the Classroom: The Remarkable Ways Teachers Shape Students' Lives*, I shared data collected by asking hundreds of people about the teachers they remember. In the stories former students shared about turning points in their lives, teachers often paused in the midst of a difficult situation. When a student's words or behaviors initiated unhelpful emotions, these teachers paused and took a breath. It's natural to feel frustrated or angry when a disrespectful remark or action interrupts a lesson, but a hasty reaction fueled by emotions can make a situation worse. Words spoken in anger can also damage a relationship. For teachers who consistently make an impact, the pause is a safeguard, preventing a regrettable reaction. A pause helps everyone in the classroom community feel safe.

It's not typically the situation itself that stirs emotions, it's the stories or interpretations attached to it. Therefore, following

a pause, the life-shaping teachers in the former students' stories took a curious stance. They pushed aside assumptions about the thoughts and intentions behind the actions, and instead, asked questions. They pondered, humbly inquiring about the student's perspective. No one likes to be the subject of misjudgment or faulty assumptions, but genuine curiosity helps students feel seen.

The most impactful teachers also demonstrated a high degree of persistence, especially when teaching students who struggle to learn or have challenging behaviors. It's tempting to think that having talent or excellent training is the key to great teaching, but even the most solid foundational skills won't take teachers far without persistence. It is through trial and error, reflection, and skill building that teachers learn to adapt their teaching for a diverse group of students with a variety of needs. What works with one student or one class may not work with others. Persisting is what allows students and teachers to stretch.

Examples of pausing, pondering, and persisting are evident throughout the stories I collected, and this three-step framework can lead to greater impact and also greater satisfaction for teachers. In order to arrive at the framework, I used a grounded theory approach to data collection and analysis, simultaneously collecting, coding, and analyzing data from my interviews and field notes. I did not purposefully select participants for the study. Instead, I placed myself where I was likely to find a diversity of backgrounds and perspectives. I made no assumptions about the race, ethnicity, gender, economic status, or ability of the participants. In some cases, information about these identities was shared in their stories.

The book you are holding represents a synthesis of the findings after the first year of the project. The names of some of the participants (and other identifying information) have been changed to protect confidentiality. In some cases, the timeline was compressed and events reordered to assist the reader in following the narrative. It is important to note that all memories are reconstructions. The stories people tell are filtered through their current realities. The meaning given to a story is influenced by the events that have transpired since the experience. I have

reported the stories as they were told to me (with a bit of editing for readability). I have reported the events to the best of my recollection, with support from my field notes.

In the pages of this book, I situated my findings in the context of existing research on teaching and learning. My goal was to create a work grounded in evidence but also accessible to teachers. And so, in addition to the content in each chapter, I also included tools for implementation and reflection questions (which may be incorporated into a book study). I continually find myself straddling two worlds, with one foot in the scholarly realm and the other foot in the classroom. This research has deepened my affinity for teachers and their profession. This work has affirmed my belief that teachers have the power to shape students' lives, and they do so in a million different ways every day. The seemingly ordinary actions and interactions that occur in classrooms have extraordinary implications. It is my hope that this framework of pausing, pondering, and persisting can help teachers stay longer, grow stronger, and continue making an impact.

1

The Power of a Problem

In countless ways every day, teachers have opportunities to impact students' lives. But these opportunities don't always present themselves as welcome occasions. Often, they come disguised as challenges or problems. The ability to not just navigate through a problem but to turn that problem into an opportunity for impact is the hallmark of a life-shaping teacher. When unexpected challenges happen in the classroom, impactful teachers somehow see the hidden potential for their students' growth and their own development. I was thinking about this capacity to turn a problem into an opportunity as I packed jars of peanut butter in boxes. I knew if I could figure out how teachers do this, I could more intentionally and consistently look for opportunities when problems surface in my own life. And the pandemic had brought a myriad of difficulties for me to navigate. After months spent in pandemic remoteness, I longed to engage with my community again. That's what led me to volunteer at the food bank. And so, instead of packing my schedule with more Zoom meetings, today I was packing peanut butter.

As I worked, I thought about the current reality for teachers. I knew my own pandemic challenges as a professor and researcher paled in comparison to the challenges of K-12 teachers. Most faced a quick pivot from in person to remote teaching with very little time to prepare. While balancing their own needs and the needs of their families, they still managed to attend to the academic, social, and emotional needs of their students.

Many months later, as things stabilized a bit, educators thought that feeling of pandemic-related burnout might ease. However, unrealistic expectations have continued to drive many teachers out of the profession. This became clear to me in a recent conversation with a former graduate student. Deanna (one of the most effective and dedicated teachers I know) called to tell me she was considering leaving teaching. Her words still echo in my mind. “It’s not that teaching has become harder,” she said, “It’s just become the wrong kind of hard.”

Teaching has always been difficult. Trying to meet the varying needs of a diverse group of young people takes incredible skill and commitment. In the past, feeling overwhelmed was more typical for those new to the profession. Feeling burned out was most prevalent in veterans who were asked to take on too many extra responsibilities. But recently, feelings of overwhelm and fatigue are commonly reported by teachers at all levels of experience. Systemic issues have caused many to lose hope and opt for a different career. Others choose to stay and try to continue making an impact, despite the toll it takes on their own well-being. As I worked at the table in the food bank, I thought about those teachers who stay. Could the way teachers respond to challenges make the difference between lighting up and burning out? And if so, what are the steps to a helpful response in the face of a challenge?

An Opportunity for Impact

I appreciated the time to ponder that the repetitive task of packing jars provided. Still, I was happy when Marcus (a regular volunteer at the food bank) arrived at the packing table to help. Like most strangers meeting for the first time, we chatted about our work. Marcus revealed that he directed the marketing department at a new technology company, while I shared my experience as a professor, teaching graduate students and conducting research. I told him about my quest to understand what teachers say and do to make a lasting impact on their students’ lives and confessed that after years of exploring teacher impact, I’m

still trying to figure it out. Whenever I explain my research to someone new, I am typically blessed with a story about a favorite teacher, and Marcus was no exception.

“Mrs. Pope was my home economics teacher,” he began, dragging a tape gun from one side of a box to the other. “I loved her class because of her kindness—and because we often cooked. One day, we made chocolate chip cookies. After they cooled, Mrs. Pope said we could each eat one. I snuck three more in my pocket.” Marcus realized his teacher must have seen him when she asked him to stay after class.

“I expected Mrs. Pope to lecture me or to write me a referral. Instead, she just asked, ‘Are you hungry?’ I told her that my dad left a few months ago, and my mom wasn’t doing well. I told her that our electricity had been off for a while.”

Marcus noticed his teacher gaze down at the spots on his shirt, then she did something he didn’t expect. She offered to let him wash his clothes in the washing machine housed in the home economics classroom.

“I brought my clothes by the next morning,” he recalled. “When I came back to get them, they were carefully folded, and they smelled so good. Next to my clothes was a large, brown bag with my name written on it. I peeked in the bag and found bread, peanut butter, cans of soup, and other snacks.”

Marcus leaned on the boxes. “Throughout my high school years, Mrs. Pope checked on me. My clothes were washed in that home economics classroom more times than I could count. My teacher and the ladies in her church group were the only reason I ate most nights.” Marcus told me that Mrs. Pope is gone now, and he can’t repay her for the kindness, but he tries to pay it forward by volunteering in our local food pantry.

My new friend and I talked about what it’s like to be hungry and shared our gratitude for teachers like Mrs. Pope. We quietly blessed the boxes we had packed and hoped they would help kids struggling the way Marcus had. Then we signed out on the volunteer sheet, put on our coats, and walked into the

cold evening air. “It’s the wind that gets you up here!” Marcus shouted as he headed toward his car.

Faulty Assumptions

Brian (my husband) and I moved to the mountains of Western North Carolina two years ago to become faculty members at Appalachian State University. I was getting more accustomed to the curvy roads, but I still tried to get home before dark. On the way, I reflected on Marcus’s story. It was a beautiful example of turning a problem into an opportunity for impact. When Mrs. Pope saw Marcus take the extra cookies, her initial reaction was surely frustration or anger, especially since she had given clear directions. How did she push past that initial reaction and, instead, respond with compassion?

What struck me most about the story was the teacher’s decision to ask a question rather than assume. I considered how differently his story may have ended if Marcus’s teacher had responded based on assumptions she’d made. She may have assumed Marcus was greedy, or disrespectful, or worse. She may have written an office referral or excluded him from future cooking projects. Those decisions may have been justified, but they would have created a great divide in her relationship with Marcus and would have made things even more difficult for an already struggling kid. Yes, it’s important to hold students accountable for their actions, but it’s helpful to know the story behind those actions first. We are right to expect students to follow directions, but do we want to focus on being right or on making an impact? If Mrs. Pope had focused on being right, she would have missed the opportunity to make a positive impact on the life of a student, one who would continue to honor her years later.

I also thought about what I would have missed if I hadn’t heard Marcus’ story. I’m an introvert, but I rarely regret pushing past my discomfort to engage in a conversation with a stranger.

I have, however, read enough news stories to know that encounters with strangers can go terribly wrong. Author and journalist Malcolm Gladwell examined the varying ways we misinterpret or fail to communicate with one another, particularly with strangers. In his book, *Talking to Strangers: What We Should Know About People We Don't Know*, he cautions against making assumptions when someone's actions don't conform to our own norms. The tools and strategies we use to interpret the words and actions of people we don't know are often flawed. We can easily create inaccurate narratives about the intentions of others, and we are even more likely to misunderstand one another when we come from different cultures or backgrounds. These misunderstandings can lead to conflict, and the outcome can be harmful. This is particularly true for people in positions of power, like teachers. Making an effort to know our students is critical because our misunderstandings can lead to choices that have a detrimental impact on their lives.

Digging Deeper

I made it into the valley, down our gravel road, and into my home office just in time to begin a remote meeting with a group of eight doctoral students. This group of emerging scholars is focused on successfully navigating the dissertation process. During our weekly meetings, we update each other on our writing productivity and talk about our challenges. Their dedication and enthusiasm inspire me to continue my own research, and they are helpful sounding boards. My students knew that I'd been digging deeper into my data on teacher impact, thinking there was more to be revealed. I just couldn't quite put my finger on it yet.

As a professor and educational researcher, I explore the ways teachers influence the academic, social, and emotional outcomes of their students. I'm a qualitative researcher, which means I collect data through observations and interviews, rather than hard numbers. Initially inspired by my own teachers, I set out

to understand the lasting impact teachers make on our lives. For the past five years, I've interviewed people who were once students in schools (which is almost everyone). I visited farmers markets, craft fairs, and public parks with a sign that said, *Let's chat about a teacher you remember*, and hundreds of people shared their stories with me. Sitting at the park with a sign is not a typical data collection method, but it was the best crazy idea I've ever had.

Using a grounded theory approach, I analyzed the stories people shared (and my own field notes) line by line in order to identify emerging categories and themes. It became clear that what people remember most about their teachers is the way those teachers made them feel. Over and over again, people described feeling safe, seen, and stretched in their favorite teachers' classrooms. When teachers created a safe space for students, those students could show up fully as themselves and be seen. Then, teachers gently pushed them toward their potential. They helped them stretch. I wrote about the life-shaping power of teachers in *Safe, Seen, and Stretched in the Classroom: The Remarkable Ways Teachers Shape Students' Lives*, but now I was wondering how teachers recognize opportunities for impact. When an unexpected challenge happens in the classroom, how do they turn that problem into an opportunity?

Seeking to Understand

In our Zoom meeting, I asked my students if they had ever experienced a moment that could have been painful or regrettable, but instead turned into a positive experience because of a teacher's response. Daniella thought her experience with Mr. Avery might provide some insight.

"The day after my 16th birthday, my father was diagnosed with cancer," she began, her voice shaking a little. "It was aggressively moving into his bones, and he had to begin intense treatment right away. My family never had much in the

way of financial resources, but we got by. When my father had to stop working, it was devastating. I managed to pick up two after school jobs. I babysat until dinner time. After that, I went straight to my waitressing job. I got home around midnight and then tried to catch up on my homework and studying." Daniella had always been a good student but was finding it hard to keep her grades up.

"I loved Mr. Avery's history class," she continued. "He made the subject come alive and he was always enthusiastic, so I was mortified to find myself suddenly awakened by the bell at the end of his class one day. Before I could pull myself together and collect my things, all of the other students had left. I had to face Mr. Avery. I was afraid he would think I didn't care about his class. Or worse, he might think I was partying or abusing alcohol or drugs."

Daniella recalled walking up to her teacher's desk. "Mr. Avery said he'd noticed a change in me, that lately I wasn't engaged in class. He asked what had happened to cause such a change." Daniella decided to tell him about her father. She told him how she needed to work to help support her family. "I apologized for falling asleep. He just listened and reassured me that he wasn't disappointed."

When Daniella got home from her waitressing job that night, her mother was waiting up. Mr. Avery had called. He wanted to refer the family to an organization that could assist them.

"Because of Mr. Avery's support, we received food and help with medical bills. I was able to work less hours, and my parents were able to feel a sense of peace," Daniella shared. "I will never forget his willingness to go above and beyond his teaching responsibilities to help a tired kid and a family in need."

We all agreed that Daniella's story provided insight into the ways teachers like Mr. Avery turn a potentially dubious situation into an opportunity to make an impact. He could have taken offense at her falling asleep. He could have assumed she was disinterested and lazy, and therefore, chosen not to invest in her success. Instead, he asked a question. There was definitely something interesting about a teacher's ability to thwart an initial

emotion driven reaction and suspend judgment in an effort to understand. I thanked my students for helping me dig deeper into the idea. After everyone got the assistance and support needed to keep writing, I clicked the red leave button and closed my laptop.

Being Other Focused

The research of psychologist John Gottman has an undeniable influence on my understanding of student–teacher interactions. Although he mainly studies romantic relationships, his findings are broadly applicable. Dr. Gottman has identified bids for connection as the building blocks of relationships. A bid is an attempt to gain attention, affirmation, affection, or any other positive connection from another person. Relationships are built by consistently noticing and responding to bids. There is ample evidence in my data that this holds true for student–teacher relationships.

When a student gives a bid for connection, we can respond in three ways. We can turn against, turn away, or turn toward. Turning against means responding in a demeaning or critical manner. It can easily happen when we are frustrated. For example, if a student is crying, responding by calling the student dramatic would be turning against. Turning away is giving no response at all. It often happens when we are preoccupied and not focused on the other person. The response best for building relationships, turning toward, entails responding in a caring, affirming way. Consoling the crying student and inquiring about what’s wrong is turning toward, which provides the care and connection the student is seeking.

I finished my cup of tea and opened my journal. I was wondering about bids for connection and how they precede moments of impact in the classroom. How do our responses to bids for connection determine the kind of impact we make, for better or worse? How do teachers like Mrs. Pope and Mr. Avery, teachers who make positive and consequential differences in

students' lives, respond to unexpected or challenging events? Perhaps students aren't always intentionally sending bids, but their actions indicate a need for help. When a student sneaks extra cookies or falls asleep, how do the most impactful teachers respond? What can we learn from them? I quickly jotted down these questions.

Realizing I needed more examples, I rifled through my data file and pulled out a stack of stories. I found my transcription of a story shared by a young woman named Shelby. I met Shelby on a college campus where she was pursuing a graduate degree in social work. She was full of energy, practically bouncing as she shared her memory of her fourth grade teacher, Mrs. Berns.

"I loved going to Mrs. Berns' classroom," she started. "It was a peaceful sanctuary in my otherwise chaotic young life. I was always well behaved in school. However, I felt like an annoyance to my teachers—until I met Mrs. Berns." Shelby described her childhood self as scattered, constantly losing or forgetting things. She recalled the teachers prior to Mrs. Berns becoming annoyed by her missing papers and library books. "Just a few weeks into my fourth grade year," Shelby continued, "Mrs. Berns noticed that I had not turned in homework for several days. I was ready for her to lecture me, but instead she asked me questions: "Do you have a quiet place to do your homework after school? What is your after-school time like?"

Shelby explained that she usually went to one of her aunt's houses because her mom had to work. Sometimes she went to her grandma's house. She never really knew where she would end up. "I went with the relative who could take me," she said. "If my mom worked late, I slept at a relative's house. This happened more often than not, so my belongings were always scattered all over the place, and never where I needed them."

Shelby recalled feeling a little embarrassed telling her teacher about her situation. "Mrs. Berns stood there for a minute, then she walked over and cleared off a little desk by the window. She placed some paper and a box of pencils on the desk. She told

me to pick up my breakfast and come directly to my new homework spot instead of waiting for the morning bell with the other kids.” Shelby smiled as she described how she worked on her homework every morning and kept her library books and other important things inside the desk. “The routine was comforting, and I treasured the extra time with my teacher.” Mrs. Berns could have let her frustration drive her reaction to Shelby’s missing work. Instead, she asked questions. This teacher made a lasting impact by finding out what her student needed and figuring out a way to provide it.

Relational Care

Shelby’s story offered a beautiful example of a teacher pushing past the urge to react in frustration and respond with grace instead. By doing so, Mrs. Berns demonstrated relational care. Educator and philosopher Nel Noddings is known for her work around the ethic of care, and according to Dr. Noddings, caring is grounded in intention and attention. It is a focus on another while (explicitly or implicitly) asking, *What are you going through?* A caring teacher is receptive, trying to understand what the student is experiencing. From the perspective of the ethic of care, the teacher as carer is interested in the expressed needs of the student, not simply the needs assumed by the teacher or the school. As the teacher inquires and receives information from the student, the student feels recognized. In other words, focused and caring inquiry helps the student feel seen and valued.

After listening, the caring teacher then decides how to respond and, if possible, responds directly to the student’s expressed need. But, if helping the student to solve the problem is not possible (at least not in the moment), the caring teacher still responds in a way that strengthens the relationship. There are many times when teachers cannot satisfy the expressed need of the student. Perhaps we lack the resources or feel it crosses a boundary. For example, a teacher may not be able to directly

intervene when a student is experiencing conflict at home. It is then especially important to find a way of responding that still validates the student's needs. Just the willingness to listen and desire to help can communicate the teacher's valuing of the student and the relationship. Mrs. Berns couldn't reduce the chaos in Shelby's home life, but through her caring response, she could provide a sense of calm at school.

A Mindful Pause

This is the point where I must acknowledge that teachers are human, and what challenges humans more than anything else is other humans. Teachers interact with 20 or more humans all day, every day. To add a degree of difficulty, they interact with those whose brains are not yet fully formed. I've spent more than 30 years as an educator and parent, and I carry countless recollections of regrettable moments when words tumbled out of my mouth that I immediately wished could be reeled back in. Luckily, there have also been times when I responded in thoughtful ways. What made the difference between helping and harming? There was one thing present in all of the helpful responses and absent in all of the hasty reactions: a pause. Pausing and taking a breath seemed to be the safeguard, the barrier that kept regrettable words from escaping.

Psychologist Shauna Shapiro calls this practice "mindful pausing." According to Dr. Shapiro, a moment of pause between an event and a response can make all the difference. But this is easier said than done. The limbic system, which controls our emotions, is typically the first to respond in a stressful situation, causing us to react automatically and quickly instead of slowly and thoughtfully. But a pause gives the reasoning prefrontal cortex time to get started. A pause gives us the space to see a situation clearly and choose a response, rather than automatically reacting in ways that may not serve us, others, or the situation. When we pause in mindfulness, we take a step back from whatever is

happening in order to observe a situation more objectively. A mindful pause puts us back in control.

Pausing also allows us to become aware of our thoughts. What story are we telling ourselves about the situation? What assumptions are we making about the other person? In the heat of the moment, it's easy to make assumptions about someone else's intentions or the meaning behind their actions. Pausing allows us to consider other options. Is a student acting inappropriately just to aggravate the teacher, or is it possible the student lacks the ability to self-regulate? What else could be going on? What do we not know that may shed some light on the situation? Pausing and questioning our quickly contrived narratives seem key to responding to challenges in ways that create a positive impact.

Slowing Down

One of my favorite movie characters, Ferris Bueller, once said, "Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it." The classroom is a fast-paced environment. If we're not intentional in our focus, we can easily miss the small moments that become opportunities for big impact. If we react to events rather than thoughtfully responding, we can do harm. I decided that slowing down, paying attention, and pausing might just be the path to finding a greater sense of peace and making a more consistent impact. Teaching is full of challenges, and the way we respond to those challenges determines the kind of impact we will make. And, the way we deal with challenges in the classroom can either light us up or burn us out.

By the time I turned off my office light, my journal pages overflowed with questions: What happens in the mind of a teacher between an unexpected challenge in the classroom and a response? Could pausing and seeking to understand in a difficult moment increase the likelihood of positively impacting a student's life? Most importantly, does choosing the path more likely to make an impact add to a teacher's sense

of satisfaction? Wrestling with these questions would have to wait. I needed some sleep because tomorrow I was heading to Briarwood Elementary, where I had been coaching Sarah Ross, a new principal. I planned to shadow her throughout the day, and I couldn't help but wonder if I would find more examples of turning problems into opportunities for impact at Briarwood.



Leveraging the Power of a Problem

Pausing with a Problem

The first step in finding the opportunities hidden in problems is to accept that problems are an inevitable part of daily life, especially in the classroom. Technology will have glitches, schedules will change, and students will behave in unpredictable ways. Expecting challenges can keep you from being thrown off course when they occur. When a problem arises, take a breath. A pause gives you the chance to identify your own emotions. An unexpected challenge likely produces initial feelings of frustration, overwhelm, or anger. A pause provides the space to quiet a rising emotionally driven reaction in favor of a more thoughtful response.

Pondering about a Problem

The second step in turning challenges into opportunities for impact is avoiding the creation of an initial narrative about the problem. Our first reaction to a problem is typically negative. For example, arriving at work to find the copy machine broken may elicit a string of negative thoughts: *Now I won't be able to give the quiz as planned. We will get behind on the curriculum map. Students will then do poorly on the end of course exam.* Instead, pause and view the situation as objectively as possible: *The copy machine is broken.* Then, ponder how to respond to the problem in terms of improvement. Instead of the negatives, how can you leverage the problem for current or future benefit? *The copy machine is broken. This will give us one more day to review the more difficult parts*

of the content. The copy machine is broken. Now students can take the quiz in the computer lab, which will more closely simulate the end of course exam.

Persisting with a Problem

Finally, give yourself grace. It takes time to train your mind to pause a quick reaction, and instead, choose a helpful response. In the fast-paced classroom environment, we often feel pressured to deal with problems quickly, but this can exacerbate a challenge. Practice slowing down and focus on one step at a time. With practice, you'll become more adept at handling problems in a way that leads to better outcomes for your students and less stress for you.



Questions for Reflection

Think of a recent challenge you encountered in your classroom.

What was your initial reaction to the challenge?

What story did you tell yourself about the situation?

Was your story helpful?

Looking at the situation objectively, can you identify opportunities for potential improvement within the challenge?

How might regularly looking for the opportunities hidden in problems increase your impact and your satisfaction in teaching?

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