Challenging behavior is one of the most significant issues educators face. Though it may seem radical to use words like love, compassion, and heart when we talk about behavior and discipline, the compassionate and heartfelt words, actions, and strategies teachers employ in the classroom directly shape who students are—and who they will become. But how can teaching from the heart translate into effective supports and practices for students who exhibit challenging behavior?

In From Behaving to Belonging, Julie Causton and Kate MacLeod detail how teachers can shift from a “behavior management” mindset (that punishes students for “bad” behavior or rewards students for “good” or “compliant” behavior) to an approach that supports all students—even the most challenging ones—with kindness, creativity, acceptance, and love.

Causton and MacLeod’s approach
- Focuses on students’ strengths, gifts, and talents.
- Ignites students’ creativity and sense of self-worth.
- Ensures that students’ social, emotional, and academic needs are met.
- Prompts teachers to rethink challenging behavior and how they support their students.
- Helps teachers identify barriers to student success in the cultural, social, and environmental landscape.
- Inspires teachers to reconnect with their core values and beliefs about students and teaching.

We need to transform our classrooms into places of love. To that end, this book represents a paradigm shift from a punitive mindset to a strengths-based, loving approach and encourages the radical act of creating more inclusive and caring schools.

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Introduction

Love and Education: How Did We Get Here?

We decided to write this book together as a way to invite teachers to explore the practice of teaching and supporting students from a place of love. Every year, we conduct hundreds of workshops and presentations with administrators, educators, and parents around the country to help them develop loving and inclusive approaches to support diverse students. We wanted to share practices, stories, and tools from our experiences as people committed to teaching and leading schools from the heart.

We understand that it may seem radical for us to use words like love, compassion, and heart when we talk about behavior and discipline. However, we feel emboldened not only because the concept of love in education is not new but also because neuroscientists and biologists have begun to use this very same language in their research as they learn more about the significant impact love and compassion have on the human mind and body. Our brains are constantly forming and changing throughout our lives, and the human mind is particularly impressionable when we reach school age and adolescence. Educators, therefore, have the power to shape and change student brains at critical times in their lives. The compassionate words and actions we model and the heartfelt strategies we practice with our students can help shape who they are and, eventually, who they will become.

Many teachers and administrators, at their core, believe in teaching from the heart and leading with love. Yet they don’t always know how teaching from the heart translates into effective supports and practices for working with students who exhibit challenging behavior. Over the years, we have drawn from incredible scholars and thinkers (such as Alfie Kohn, Bill Ayers, and bell hooks), expert practicing educators, wise and intuitive students, and formalized approaches.
(such as restorative practices, humanistic behavior supports, and social-emotional learning) to turn an educator’s belief in love into actionable, practical, heartfelt practices that work to heal.

Why Do We Teach?

Because we have the incredible power and privilege to help shape student brains, it is critical that we ask ourselves the following questions: “What do we want for our students?” and “Who would we like to help them become?”

We have thought about this question long and hard, and we wanted to share our thinking with you as you begin to approach the question for yourself. We, Kate and Julie, teach because we believe we can

- Create inclusive and sacred environments where every one of our students can feel safe, valued, and loved.
- Encourage possibility, transformation, and creativity.
- Promote compassion and belonging in our students and communities.
- Build a society in which we celebrate the diversity of humanity.
- Help every human reach an even fuller version of their potential.

We also teach because we are hopeful and intent on living a life that aligns with our values. We teach because, although changing systems and communities can be daunting and seemingly impossible, we believe change begins with us.

And, above all else, we teach from a place of love.

Teaching Is Hard

Practicing love and compassion in education isn’t always easy, and we are not pretending to sugarcoat the daily realities of a teacher. We know that educators are tasked with immeasurable work and incredibly challenging situations. You must be both generalists and specialists and be prepared to teach reading, writing, arithmetic, a variety of content areas, life skills, communication and collaboration skills, socioemotional skills, and remedial skills. You must meet national and state standards and help your students achieve on standardized assessments you may or may not agree with philosophically. You must be guides, inspirations, nurturers, comforters, critics, comedians, gurus, therapists, and advocates. You must show up every day, in every way, for each and every one of your students.
Educators must also come prepared to address students’ fears, concerns, hearts, and minds. In recent years, educators have arrived at school, heartbroken themselves, to talk to their students about mass shootings at Parkland High School, a Pittsburgh synagogue, an Orlando nightclub, and a church in Charleston. Educators have shown up to discuss national movements and traumas connected to #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo. And educators have shown up to listen to and support students dealing with community and personal issues—a bomb threat at the local high school, a young boy who lost his mother to breast cancer, or a student bullied for her transgender identity.

But let us not forget that educators also have the amazing opportunity to come to school and celebrate and experience joy with students—and to practice and teach kindness, love, and compassion. Educators such as you are there to give a student a hug after her first typed communication on her iPad and share a goofy dance with students at graduation. Educators such as you take a moment to help a student understand her anger and let her know they are there to support her no matter what. Educators such as you are there to shed happy tears when 10th graders present community action projects about ending homelessness. And you are there to show students how to spread kindness and gratitude to one another at the end of a hard day . . . or a wonderful day.

Throughout all this joy, pain, and love, if we are to use a heartfelt approach that draws on love, we must also face our triumphs and failures with kindness and compassion for our students and ourselves. We must reflect on our bravest moments and our most vulnerable ones. We must consider our language and our actions with our most challenging students. We must consider how to push back against systems or schools that do not align with our values or educational philosophies. And we must always ask, “How can we do this better tomorrow with more love and compassion?”

Throughout this book, we will ask you to practice the radical act of reclaiming your classroom as a place of love. We will ask you to consider new ways to approach your students with love and to teach them, with words and actions, the new types of learning and becoming that can occur when we bring love and education together.

Before reading on to the next section, we want you to take some time to answer the question of why you teach (see Figure 0.1). This will help ground and focus you before you dive into the perspectives, tools, and “how-tos” of our approach. Please be sure to reflect on all the amazing, artful, change-making work you take
part in every day as a teacher. We encourage you to write or draw your response. Throughout this book, we will ask you to engage your learning in various ways with questions, reflections, and activities. We encourage you to dedicate a journal to use in connection with this book. Whenever you see this journal prompt icon, you can write, draw, and reflect in your journal.

**Figure 0.1: Why Do I Teach?**

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**Why This Book Matters Now**

Even when excellent educators approach teaching from a place of love, we find that they can still struggle approaching students with challenging behavior from the same place. When we work with educators and administrators across the country, they almost always point to challenging behavior, outdated behavior management practices, and misguided schoolwide discipline policies that get in the way of effective, heartfelt teaching. Because challenging behavior is one of the most significant issues educators face, we know it is critical to rethink these outdated behavior management practices that do not align with educator values such as promoting inclusion and teaching with love.

Since the 1990s, school discipline approaches have largely been dominated by zero-tolerance policies. Originally developed as an approach to drug enforcement (Skiba & Rausch, 2006), zero-tolerance policies were adopted by schools as a way to uniformly mandate responses to student behavior, such as bullying, fighting, drugs,
and disruption. However, such uniform responses are punitive and severe (e.g., suspension or expulsion) and are applied regardless of circumstances or context.

Educational and psychological research has shown again and again that zero-tolerance policies are not effective in creating safer schools. In fact, they often produce negative outcomes for students, such as a lack of opportunities to engage in school relationships, a distrust of adults, and a negative impact on self-worth and self-esteem (APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008).

Pause now and consider your answers to our question “Why do I teach?” It is likely that the outcomes of zero-tolerance policies and practices do not align with your values. This is particularly true when we examine the following incredible personal and systemic challenges students are facing today in our schools:

- Reports of anxiety and depression among our school-aged students are at an all-time high (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019).
- One out of every five students report that they are bullied at school (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019), and the reasons most often cited by students include physical appearance, race and ethnicity, gender, disability, religion, and sexual orientation (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019).
- Students who are subjected to bias-based bullying are at a higher risk for negative emotional and physical health effects than students who report nonbias-based bullying (Rosenthal et al., 2015).
- Schools across the nation are suspending, excluding, and expelling students with disabilities, students of color, and LGBTQ students at a significantly higher rate than their nondisabled, white, and cisgendered peers (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2016).
- Our nation is politically divided with a significant focus on identity politics connected to race, religion, immigration status, gender, and sexual orientation.

These issues are overwhelming, and our current punitive behavior management and disciplinary practices only exacerbate them. In order to realize the values you’ve outlined in your response to “Why do I teach?”—and to reclaim your classroom as a sacred, heartfelt space—we must rethink and restory the way we understand and approach student behavior. Our students, now more than ever, need us to believe in them, shine a light on their strengths, and approach them with whole hearts and compassion every single day.
What’s Different About Our Approach?

Our approach first requires you to shift away from a “behavior management” mindset that punishes or rewards students for “good” or “compliant” behavior. We then ask you to adopt new heartfelt approaches that foster a sense of belonging and aim to support all students, even the most challenging ones, with kindness, creativity, compassion, and love.

When we support a student using a heartfelt approach, we

- Focus on the student’s strengths, gifts, and talents.
- Brainstorm and enact strategies that illuminate and create deeper connections between teacher and student.
- Implement strategies that illuminate and create deeper connections between a student and their peers.
- Purposefully plan to ignite the student’s creativity and sense of self-worth.
- Problem solve daily to meet the social, emotional, and academic needs of the learner.

Rather than use outdated behavioral management practices such as rewards and punishments, our approach

- Helps you reconnect to your values and beliefs about students and teaching.
- Helps you identify barriers to student success in the cultural, social, and environmental landscape.
- Provides questions for rethinking challenging student behavior and how we support our students.
- Is steeped in the extreme self-care of the educator first.

When we use an approach that focuses on belonging, we are teaching and leading from a place of love. This book represents a paradigm shift from a punitive mindset to a strengths-based, loving approach and represents a radical act toward creating more inclusive and caring schools.

Who We Are

We, Kate and Julie, are here to guide you as you explore what leading with your heart to support students with challenging behavior means for you. For the past

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several decades, we have worked as teachers, researchers, and consultants to support administrators, educators, students, and parents through the art of creating caring, creative, and inclusive schools for all learners. We are in schools across the country working alongside teachers who are supporting students with some of the most challenging behaviors.

**Does This Book Fit with Existing Approaches?**

This book is an excellent complement to the strategies and ideas involved in Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and Restorative Practices in Schools (RP). It is not a replacement of these ideas but instead a deeper complement and personal guide to help teachers embrace all types of behavioral supports that focus on belonging, acceptance, relationships, and building an inclusive school culture.

PBIS consists of clearly defining and teaching behavioral expectations and rewarding positive behavior. It also focuses on targeted interventions consistent with expectations. For students with more intense behavioral support needs, it utilizes a wrap-around approach guided by a functional behavioral assessment. Our approach works hand in glove with these ideas, but it also provides a deeper framework of emotional supports to educators as they do this work.

RP, like our approach, focuses on shifting from the use of punitive strategies to handle student behavior, using alternative methods grounded in building positive relationships between teachers and students, and helping students problem solve conflicts and emotions. Schools using RP can implement specific methods, such as informal problem-solving conversations, circles, and mediation to help students reflect on their behaviors, take responsibility for what happened, and work collaboratively to determine a plan to address any harm done to the student, peers, teachers, or community. Emergent research regarding the effectiveness of restorative practices shows that the use of RP can reduce disciplinary issues and improve the academic and social culture of a school community.

Our approach parallels the RP mindset shift from punitive to positive and provides expanded problem-solving methods and conversations you can have with your students and your colleagues. When used alongside RP, our approach and practices will help you deepen your ability to build positive and authentic relationships with your students.
How to Use This Book

As you make your way through each section of this book, we will provide you with heartfelt strategies, variations, and examples you can try with both individual students and entire classrooms. We believe the ideas in this book are powerful tools for change, and we encourage you to spend time reading, analyzing, and practicing them. We have provided stories from teachers, students, and families we’ve worked with in each chapter (though we have changed some names and details). Our deepest thanks go out to all those who provided their voices and support for this work and this book. The stories are critical because we believe the experiences of these individuals are what best bring our approach and its dramatic results to life.

Chapter Contents

Chapter 1: Rethinking Students Who Challenge Us. This foundational chapter is about the active work teachers must engage in to rethink our students’ challenging behavior using a heartfelt, strengths-based approach. We explore the ways in which schooling systems, traditional disability labels, and deficit-based thinking can stifle educators’ natural inclination to support students in creative and loving ways. We then describe a new approach to view difference and diversity as natural and positive. We provide practices to help reset thinking and lead to a change in student support.

Chapter 2: Focusing on Educators’ Mental Health: Developing Love and Self-Care. When our cup is full, it is easier to share with others. We want educators who have full cups. Students deserve educators who are rested and in the right emotional place to support them with love and kindness. That requires a good deal of reflective self-care. Dealing with challenging behavior can feel very personal and emotionally taxing. We provide strategies and supports for you to reflect on each day and to process and heal the challenging emotions that come from this difficult work.

Chapter 3: Belonging: Putting Your Love on Display. In this chapter, we discuss the structures and practices in traditional schooling that can impede a sense of belonging for many of our students. These include pullout programs for
students with disabilities and English language learners, separate classrooms for students with behavior problems, and ability grouping. We contrast these with inclusive structures and practices that foster a sense of belonging and connections to peers and teachers. These structures and practices help educators cultivate relationships, facilitate collaboration, encourage friendships, and celebrate what is unique about each learner.

**Chapter 4: Creating a Culture of Inclusion.** In this chapter, we ask you to abandon the myth of the so-called typical learner and embrace diversity in new ways in the classroom. We discuss that, as educators, what we do and present in our classrooms (i.e., instruction, curriculum, language, materials, community building) has a significant effect on student behavior. We discuss class and school-wide practices that educators can draw on to decrease challenging behavior, create an inclusive culture, and respect who students are and the value they bring to the school community.

**Chapter 5: Teaching Gratitude, Kindness, and Compassion.** Here, we focus on how you can teach students important social and emotional skills such as kindness, compassion, gratitude, and trust. We provide strategies, ideas, and resources you can use daily in your classrooms or throughout the entire school. We address what research says about these practices and how they connect deeply to our goal of building kinder, compassionate, and more inclusive communities.

**Chapter 6: Exploring Acceptance, Belonging, and Community: Heartfelt Problem Solving.** In this chapter, we focus on shifting from a mindset of fixing or disciplining student behavior to collaborative problem solving with the student. We ask educators to reflect on their responses to student behavior and invest in building relationships—instead of barriers—with students. We discuss practices that support educators to do this work, including giving students and families ownership over the process, encouraging peers to work together to develop new ideas and mediate existing problems (which aligns well with RP), and leading colleagues to help create success plans for students.

**Chapter 7: Dealing with Crisis Artfully.** The goal of this book is to help students be seen, heard, and supported so they do not end up in emotional crisis. However, even with thoughtful planning, creative and engaging lessons, and a cohesive community, some students will still struggle with behavior. The most
important thing educators can do is accept that fact and respond in a compassionate, calm, and loving way. When a student struggles and is yelling, hitting, or kicking, we explain that safety is the primary concern. We then ask educators to reflect on how they would want someone to react to an extremely difficult situation or an emotional meltdown. This chapter deals with the practices that come in handy during a crisis.

Chapter 8: Proclaiming and Maintaining Loving Spaces. The book concludes with inspiration for committing to the work and practices you can use to increase your happiness, improve your health, and build a more connected community of educators. We know that educators who are happier and more connected to a support network are better able to support students. We therefore conclude with two “educator proclamations” for creating and sustaining radical and loving classrooms.

Helpful Tools for Using This Book
Throughout the book, we encourage you to write, highlight, and draw on these pages to help clarify your thinking and engage in the many self-assessment and reflection sections we’ve included. You will also find reproducibles, such as the following:

- Our strengths-based approach protocol for supporting students.
- Our collaborative heartfelt problem-solving process.
- Examples of heartfelt problem-solving processes and success plans.
- Teacher proclamations for committing to loving, caring classrooms.

Take Your Time
We hope that by the end of the book, our approach and the tools we’ve provided will help you feel empowered and encouraged to develop deeper relationships with students, promote desired student behavior, and improve an inclusive classroom community and culture for all. Take your time and feel free to jump around to sections you need right away. This book’s primary goal is to support you with love and compassion—because you are a teacher and a superhero.
Tiny To-Do List

In each chapter, we share a Tiny To-Do List to help you focus on ways to implement big ideas and practices from each chapter. Your first Tiny To-Do list is as follows:

- Dedicate a journal you can use in connection with this book.
- Reflect on and write your reflections for “Why do I teach?”
- Reflect on and write about what you would like to get out of reading this book.
- Do something kind for yourself this week, such as reading a book, taking a walk, meeting a friend, or meditating.
Rethinking Students Who Challenge Us

If we are to reclaim our classrooms as inclusive and loving spaces where all students are valued and celebrated, we must actively work on rethinking our students’ challenging behavior using a strengths-based, holistic, and loving approach. In this chapter, we aim to shift from a traditional deficit-based way of understanding kids with challenging behavior and instead describe new ways of thinking about student differences, including approaching behaviors as natural and expected means of communication. We then help you focus on the strengths, gifts, and talents of each student and provide specific ways of being and practices to help you reset and reinvigorate your thinking about students with challenging behavior. This approach helps us boost and lean into our natural inclination to support students in creative and loving ways.

Value Student Differences
The richness of our classrooms, schools, and communities is derived from difference. In a classroom community that operates from a place of love, we’ve watched it take only a few moments for students to notice, learn about, and
embrace one another’s differences. Often, this process of understanding and valuing difference uses a similar pattern with groups of students:

- Students noticing something *different* about a peer.
- Students becoming *curious* about that difference.
- Students learning what that difference means for how to *engage and connect* with the peer.
- Students *embracing* the difference and the peer.

We see students engage in this loving work every day. In 2017, a video from BBC News (2017) began circulating the internet and perfectly documented this natural peer process of embracing differences. A group of students greet their classmate Anu as she walks to the playground for the first time with her new prosthetic leg. Her peers bend down to take a look at her new neon pink titanium leg. They ask questions such as, “Did it hurt?” and “Did you pick the color?” They embrace her in hugs. The young girl then shows them how she can run with her new leg. Then her peers begin to run beside her and behind her, matching her pace. Soon, she is leading the way. This brief video ends with the young girl and a peer walking hand in hand.

We can learn so much from our students about how quickly and readily they embrace and celebrate differences (in the case above, in 42 seconds). But first, we must provide students with the opportunity to interact with and embrace one another’s differences so they can lean into their strengths and talents and learn from and grow with one another. Students’ readiness to embrace differences can often be stifled by school cultures and structures that focus on the concept of normalcy; consequently, schools often sort and separate students with differences before the peer community even has a chance to love and embrace them. The first step is breaking down the myth of normal.

**No Student Is Bad**

It is this mythical concept of normal that can too often perpetuate barriers for our students’ success. It can impede our ability to value student diversity and instead label it as different, challenging, or deficient. Perhaps the most pressing issue with labeling a student as challenging or deficient is that none of these labels are ever true. Isn’t that refreshing? Our students are not challenging, bad,
or naughty. Instead, student actions and behaviors, influenced by a contextual stew of socioemotional, academic, environmental, and disability-specific factors, present as challenging or disruptive.

In other words, we must remember that kids are not bad. All kids want to be loved and understood. All challenging behavior is merely evidence of kids asking us for that love and understanding in a way they know how. The more significant the presentation of behavior, the more we need to use love, support, and understanding in order to address the student’s needs.

**All Students Want Love and Understanding**

All students want love and understanding, so it is critical to rethink deficit-based thinking about students and student behavior. We’re sure you have, at some point, said or heard a teacher say something like, “He’s an attention seeker. He only acts out because he knows it will get him attention from the teacher or his peers.” This is a very common way to describe and explain students and their behavior. Ultimately, though, this way of thinking is fundamentally flawed. Consider the following examples:

**Deficit-based thinking:** We assume only kids with challenging behavior seek attention from adults and peers.

**Truth:** All kids seek attention. Attention is proof that we are loved and understood, which is a fundamental need for all humans.

**Deficit-based thinking:** We assume that kids only display the challenging behavior because it gets them something (i.e., attention).

**Truth:** All students would display the expected behavior if they knew how to get attention in appropriate and expected ways. The student exhibiting the challenging behavior simply doesn’t have the skills, tools, or knowledge about how to display the appropriate behavior yet.

Let’s look at another common phrase we sometimes say or hear about students with challenging behavior in teachers’ lounges and meetings: “She’s manipulative. She asks me questions that have nothing to do with the lesson, argues with me, and tells me all about what other kids are doing wrong. She often says, ‘The other kids don’t like the way I talk about them, so they avoid me.’ And I know she does all this just to avoid work!”
Again, we understand the student’s behavior is working in her favor! But here, too, this deficit-based thinking about a student and her behavior is fundamentally flawed. Let’s consider another set of beliefs around student behavior:

**Deficit-based thinking:** We assume that kids who display challenging behavior have planned the behaviors out using skillful forethought, impulse control, planning, and organization.

**Truth:** Most of us behave in ways to get our needs met. That does not make us manipulative. Most students with challenging behavior don’t have the very skills (i.e., impulse control, planning, and organization) needed to manipulate an outcome. In fact, if the kid had those skills, she would most likely be able to attend to the tasks at hand (e.g., focusing on the lesson and building positive relationships with peers) and avoid getting in trouble and isolating herself from peers.

Rethinking the deficit-based approach to working with students that attempts to incorrectly identify student behavior as normal or abnormal, good or bad, or malicious or innocent is the first step in reclaiming our classrooms as places of love. We must commit to the understanding that all kids want to behave because they all want love, understanding, and success. For kids with challenging behavior, we must remember that they want to attend to the math task like you’ve asked. They want to engage with peers in appropriate ways that lead to strong peer connections and friendships. They want to have positive relationships with adults, including you. But for kids with challenging behavior, they might not have the specific skills, prior knowledge, or opportunities to succeed in the ways in which schools expect them to succeed and behave.

**Kids Do Well if They Can**

Ross Greene, a scholar who writes and speaks with great expertise about how to implement better, more effective ways to work with kids with challenging behavior, explains in his important school-based text *Lost at School* (2008) that we must shift our thinking from “Kids do well if they want to” to “Kids do well if they can” (p. 10). This paradigm shift is powerful because it helps us reimagine our students using a strengths-based and compassionate perspective.

When we realize that all students want to do well, it helps us approach students in new ways. Even when students are demonstrating that they don’t
care or don’t want to try, we must look past the actual behaviors and language to the meaning behind it. Students might act as if they don’t care because they are fearful they won’t be successful. Students might say they hate us because they are scared we will be disappointed in them. Supporting a student who is scared or anxious is much different than looking at the behavior as defiance or manipulation. We not only need to rethink student motivations; we also need to reexamine our larger structures that are based on the myth of normalcy.

Normalcy Is a Myth

In schools across the country, the concept of “normal” often marginalizes students based on issues of differences, such as perceived ability, behavior, race, and language. We often do it with the best of intentions, but it still happens. The student with dyslexia who doesn’t read as well or as quickly as her peers is often educated in a segregated reading room down the hall. The student who is more verbal than others is told again and again to be quiet. The African American boy who displays challenging behavior in a predominately white school can be quickly disciplined, or even wrongly labeled with an emotional disturbance. Though there are many issues to grapple with in these examples, ultimately, they represent the damage deficit-based thinking can inflict on student structures such as placement, labeling, rules, policies, regulations, and ideas about what students can be.

The more equitable, effective, and loving way to work with kids with diverse backgrounds, abilities, and needs—including behavioral needs—builds on the peer process of diversity acceptance we shared earlier. First, we acknowledge that difference is the norm. This means that normal behavior, normal academic achievement, normal communication styles, and normal social skills—frankly, whatever you are attempting to normalize!—are myths. You and your students are thankfully too diverse and amazing to behave, move, think, communicate, and interact in the same standardized ways.

It is often easy for us to value diversity, but when it comes to students with challenging behavior, it is common for us to quickly jump to conclusions and beliefs about the student. Instead of these knee-jerk reactions when we are faced with behaviors that challenge us, we must pause and take the time to acknowledge and value the individual differences that have carried the student to this particular point in her life, education, and, of course, the specific challenging behaviors.
Embracing diversity means we must also abandon the idea that normal behavior is the only valuable behavior. This idea can be very hard because we know classroom disruptions happen due to challenging behavior, and we’d rather those disruptions didn’t happen at all. But if we take a moment to reimagine our well-behaved students and expand our thinking to include all our students, even if they have challenging behaviors, we then begin to expect that all our students will behave differently and will need to learn different skills.

If students are only valued when they are quiet and compliant learners, never question our authority, and do what they’re told, we run the significant risk of devaluing and underestimating too many of our students. Instead, when we seek to understand the whole student, we can begin to celebrate how they show up every day, even without all the skills it might take to succeed the way they’d like to (or in the ways we’d like them to). Only then can we begin to consciously create a classroom environment that values and addresses not only the needs of our diverse students but also the individuality they each bring to our world. Only then can we truly begin to understand our students as valuable—not despite the individual ways they move, think, play, and communicate but because of those differences.

**Star the Strengths**

Often, our kids with challenging behavior can spend the majority of their days being told what they’re doing wrong and how to do it—whatever it is—the “right” way. Sit still. Be quiet. Do your work. Walk in a straight line. Write neatly. Speak clearly. Raise your hand. It can be exhausting for educators and students. When we hyperfocus on fixing the behaviors and require kids to achieve that mythical norm, we often miss out on opportunities to give them “a chance” to nurture talents and skills. Let’s push against the traditional school mode of obedience and lean into radical love in the classroom. We begin by starring students’ strengths.

Carve out time and space to help students develop and build upon what they are interested in and good at. Starring the strengths helps you to approach students from a place of love and respect, and it helps you build their confidence so they feel, perhaps even for the first time, successful and confident at school. For example, take the way 10th grade teacher, Patrice Smith, approached a student named Song...
and starred her strengths to help address challenging behavior and simultaneously improve her feelings of success and belonging.

Song was often in the principal’s office for “defiant and loud class disruptions,” particularly during her English class with her ELA teacher, Tom. Tom was at his wits’ end because, as he said, “Song is such a bright student, a good student, but she just can’t keep it together in ELA. And with her outbursts, I just can’t have her constantly disrupting the class. I don’t know what to do.” Song’s geometry teacher, Kim, knew Song to be an excellent student with minimal to no disruptions in class. Kim suggested that she and Tom brainstorm about Song’s strengths and talents together. They discovered that Song

- Is a strong student who loves math and problem solving.
- Has two younger siblings and works very well with younger students.
- Loves comic books.
- Is interested in her Asian American heritage.
- Is musical.
- Is a kinesthetic learner and likes to move about when working.
- Is a leader among her peers.

Maybe you’re thinking that you’re at the beginning of the school year and you couldn’t possibly know all the relevant information about a student yet, not to mention a list of their talents and strengths. We recommend engaging students in this work by asking them to think through their strengths and talents during class meetings or morning circles, or even by handing out a survey or multiple intelligence quiz in class. These practices can help students identify and star their own strengths, talents, and interests so they know how best they can learn, interact, and grow.

Once you do this with your entire class, you can create a positive student profile that helps you understand particular students with challenging behavior from a restored, strengths-based perspective. By using Figure 1.1, we recommend writing this positive student profile with the student to make sure everything is accurate and true and that they feel a part of the process. Sometimes, this might require support from family, siblings, and friends. Keep in mind that the information in the profile should be used to create new ways and opportunities for the student to build on their strengths and interests and, ultimately, to shine in your classroom.
**Figure 1.1: Song’s Positive Student Profile**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRENGTHS, TALENTS, AND INTERESTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Is a strong student who loves math and solving problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is bilingual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Has two younger siblings and works very well with younger students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Loves comic books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Loves K-Pop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is interested in her Asian American heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is a leader among her peers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Has logical-mathematical intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Has musical intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is a kinesthetic learner and likes to move when working</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACADEMIC SUBJECT INFORMATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Is very strong in math and science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Excels in art and music class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Loves science and maintains a 99% average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Loves lab assignments, especially when she is the lab leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reads English independently at two grade levels below her peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Has a reading comprehension level one grade level above her peers with access to audio, text, and read-alouds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOCIAL INFORMATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Has some close friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Still has learning strategies for dealing with conflict</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FAMILY INFORMATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Lives with her parents, grandmother, and three elementary-aged younger siblings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Moved from South Korea when she was in elementary school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES OR ACCOMMODATIONS (IF APPLICABLE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Has been labeled with a specific learning disability in reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Has access to accommodations for audio text, text-to-speech prompts, tests, and read alouds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Receives consultant support from special education teacher regarding reading supports</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continues)
Restory the Challenging Behavior

Next, you’ll want to practice restorying the student’s challenging behavior. To begin this work, we ask you to join us in a short exercise. Use Figure 1.2 to look over some of the most challenging behaviors educators consistently highlight. However, instead of asking whether you have seen your students display these challenging behaviors in your own classroom, we’d instead like you to circle any of the behaviors you yourself have engaged in over the years—as a student, an employee, a family member, a friend, or a community member.

If you’re anything like us, you might have circled several of these challenging behaviors. This also means you are perfectly human. The fact that you’ve engaged in some challenging behavior in your life doesn’t mean you are not a valued student, employee, partner, parent, or friend. It simply means you were communicating something at the time. Perhaps, at that time, you didn’t have all the necessary skills and tools to understand your behaviors or manage them to the best of your ability.

Figure 1.2: Identifying Challenging Behavior

- Yelling
- Fighting
- Throwing items
- Avoiding work
- Leaving or storming out of the room
- Shutting down or closing off
- Challenging authority
- Talking back
- Swearing
- Talking out of turn
- Talking to your neighbor when the expectation is that you should be listening to the speaker
Talking to the person next to you during a faculty meeting might have communicated that the principal had gone on too long about the new literacy program and you needed a chance to actively engage with another person rather than passively absorb. Yelling at a spouse might communicate that you are angry or not OK and need new and improved skills to help communicate anger or pain more effectively.

Now, turn this same understanding toward student behavior. Throwing something across the room might communicate she is not OK and needs support and new skills to better communicate her anger, confusion, or pain. Likewise, running out of the room and turning desks over on the way out after an altercation with a peer might communicate that the student is angry and embarrassed. Perhaps her peers didn’t know or understand that she needed a note-taking accommodation during work time. Perhaps she wanted to socialize but doesn’t have all the skills required to do so yet.

Remember, kids do well if they can. All kids want to do well because they want love, belonging, and understanding. It is up to us to restory our students’ challenging behavior in order to help them succeed, feel loved, and feel understood. Certainly, it’s what we’d want someone to do for us.

To set you up for success with the practice of restorying challenging behavior, we’ve provided a few simple questions we’d like you to follow. We will continue to use Song as an example for the process.

**What is the challenging behavior? (Be as specific as possible.)** Song is disruptive (e.g., she interrupts, curses, or refuses to participate) during reading activities in English class. This often results in her leaving class to visit the principal’s office or cool down.

**What do we know about the student that might inform the challenging behavior?** Song has a specific learning disability in reading. She was identified as an English language learner when she arrived from South Korea three years ago. She excels in math but utilizes text-to-speech applications to help her work through word problems and new math vocabulary.

**How can we restory this behavior as communication?**

- Song doesn’t feel confident in her reading skills.
- Song doesn’t yet know how to ask for or doesn’t have the opportunity to access her accommodations such as text-to-speech applications or audio text during her English class.
Song doesn’t feel like she can succeed in English class.
Song feels like she doesn’t belong in English class.

You can see that when we restoried Song’s behavior as communication, we didn’t include stories like “Song is unmotivated in English” or “Song is manipulative and relies on behavior to get out of English work and class.” Instead, we restoried her behavior as communication from a place where she is only seeking success, connection, and belonging. Use Figure 1.3 to see how you can begin restorying your students’ experiences.

Figure 1.3: Using Restorying Questions

1. What is the challenging behavior? (Be as specific as possible.)
2. What do we know about the student that might inform the challenging behavior?
3. How can we restory this behavior as communication?

Learn from Student Behavior

A critical and integrated step is to move from restorying the behavior to learning from the behavior. Once you begin to practice from the mindset that behavior is communication, you must then deeply listen, observe, ask, and learn about the behaviors—and the student as a whole person. By using these practices, you can begin to pinpoint the communicative intent in collaboration with the student and respond by providing loving and creative supports and tools. This might mean we ask the student a direct question about their behavior such as, “Song, it must mean something when you put your head down on your desk after I’ve asked everyone to independently read. Can you tell me what it means for you?”

Another strategy is to watch and make hypotheses about the communicative purpose of the behavior. This is similar to what we did when we were restorying the behavior. When creating hypotheses, always consider the most positive potential purpose for behavior that remains consistent with the facts. For example, consider a student’s need for joy, choice, control, sense of belonging, positive relationships, interdependence, independence, expressions of frustration, and access to communication as potential purposes of behavior.
Consider also that the challenging behavior is displayed because the student, perhaps due to disability, language, culture, trauma, or any number of interconnected and complex factors, does not have the skills or tools with which to communicate, process, or regulate their emotions or behavior in a way that schools or educators deem appropriate. Remember that kids do well if they can, and we must always assume that students do not have a malicious or manipulative intent. We must believe they are simply trying to have their needs met and, in some cases, merely survive. If colleagues disagree with you, you can point them to empirical evidence that shows behavior is linked to a mismatch between student needs and classroom expectations, activity, schedule, or environment (Epstein, Atkins, Cullinan, Kutash, & Weaver, 2008). Alternatively, you can say that you choose to believe this because you are reclaiming your classroom as a place of love and therefore must look for the positive intent in your students.

Expand Your Perspective and Give It Time
If we are to commit to supporting students from a place of love, we must widen our lens of understanding and address the greater context of factors affecting the student. We must dive deep into learning about students’ preferences, talents, and interests; their family context; the way they interact with the curriculum; our instruction and teaching style; and the social landscape of our classroom, school community, and larger community. When challenging behavior occurs, in order to consider the most loving response, we must try to understand how the behavior is connected to all these factors.

Not only is this hard work, it also takes time. We must practice patience because knowing about students and providing supports doesn’t mean the behaviors will stop right away. Just as it takes practice to learn new math and reading skills, it also takes students time to learn new skills to express their emotions, needs, and wants.

Apply the Golden Rule
The golden rule for supporting students with challenging behavior in schools is to support them just as you would want to be supported. Remember the exercise we did earlier in the chapter where we asked you to circle some of the challenging behaviors you have displayed?
Now we’re going to ask you the follow-up question: “What was it I needed in that moment?” Go ahead and get out your journal to respond.

Did you need a hug? The benefit of the doubt? A friend to listen to you? A chance to escape the faculty meeting? Someone to help you outline the difficult task ahead of you? A nap? A snack? Whatever it was you answered, we imagine that your responses did not align with what so often is provided to students in schools with challenging behavior—angry words and body language, physical redirection, limited recess, a visit to the principal, a punitive call home, lunch or afterschool detention, a suspension. The issue is, we know these don’t often work. Paula Kluth (2010) even argues that a “punitive approach almost always serves to distance the teacher from the student and certainly fails to strengthen their relationship. It is ironic, but true, that the more a teacher may try to control a situation [or behavior], the more out of control that situation may become” (p. 22). Instead, as educators, we must practice the Golden Rule with our students if we are to reclaim our classrooms as places of love.

Be Conscious of Your Language
As poet Gregory Orr says, “Words build worlds,” so we must be incredibly conscious of the words we use about and with our students.

Using Writing
Consider the words written about students who have challenging behavior. We might see a long list of deficits, disorders, and problems written in indelible ink in a student’s IEP. Each sentence represents a problem or situation that gets recorded in that student’s permanent record. We would like you to rethink that practice and instead record all the student’s gifts, strengths, and positive attributes. When we write about students in these ways, we can actually restory a student’s future.

Using Personal Communication
We like to stick to the following three guidelines when communicating, regardless of the age of the person with whom we are connecting.

1. **Use positive and loving language.** Using positive language with students helps frame the way they will think about themselves, respond to us, and interact with one another. If we use negative deficit-based language with
students, they internalize it and respond accordingly with self-doubt, a negative self-image, and deficit-based language with us and peers.

2. **Be honest, specific, and direct.** Students in our care deserve our respect and love, and that means we must be honest, specific, and direct with them. Phrases like “Great job” and “Try harder” are vague and don’t mean anything to students or to us. If we want students to understand that telling a peer they’re a “retard” isn’t OK in a classroom grounded in love and respect, we must shift our response from “We don’t use that word, Peter” to “Our class expectation is that everyone is treated with love and respect in here.” It is also important to know that the conversation doesn’t end there. Having a private conversation with Peter later or even scheduling a class meeting to revisit the type of language and respect expected in class is an important follow-up step.

3. **Use inclusive language.** This may seem like a no brainer, but it is so important to use inclusive language in all its forms. Spend the time to learn the correct pronunciation of all your students’ names and their preferred pronouns. Always use age-appropriate language with students and speak directly to them—not to teaching assistants, paraprofessionals, or other educators. Use a student’s native language in everyday conversation and make sure your curriculum, whenever possible, represents the cultures, genders, and racial makeup of your class. Make sure to avoid isolating phrases such as “Tell your mom and dad” because so many of our students have unique family constellations, whether it is two moms or dads, grandparents, a single parent, or a legal guardian.

You likely have other guidelines for communication and language you use to help focus on empowering your students, building their confidence, and creating an environment of belonging. We encourage you to continue building that practice and sharing with your students, colleagues, and families.

**Learn to Love**

Sometimes we need to dig deep to star student’s strengths and restory their challenging behavior. Even if you want to love all your students, it might take more time and effort to accomplish that goal. But if you are to reclaim your classroom as a place of love, we ask you to change your thinking about what it means to love a student. Attempt to create a love that is resilient and unconditional. A love that
doesn’t depend on the student’s behaviors or daily moods. If you can approach all students with this type of unconditional love, you can more readily embrace their challenging behaviors with humor, curiosity, and empathy. You can clean up the mess and give a hug. You can know it’s OK for you to be disappointed sometimes—or even often. You can embrace the knowledge that learning new skills takes time and patience—both for you and them.

There is much about teaching that can make us feel like giving up, but when you love your students, it is easier to find strength. In fact, in bell hooks’s powerful book *all about love* (2000), she writes, “Knowing love or the hope of knowing love is the anchor that keeps us from falling into [that] sea of despair.”

We believe that all endeavors to teach your students to be creative, compassionate, and thoughtful critical thinkers will be in vain if you cannot show up for them with love and give them the hope that goes along with being loved. This is particularly important to recognize when they are communicating to you through challenging behavior that they need new skills, tools, relationships, and love. We know that education is much more intimate than is often discussed. Every day, we work to develop intellectual and emotional connections with our students and engage them in discussions and problem solving that will help nurture their love of self and community.

We must not manage our classrooms. We must learn to love our students.

**Recognize the Difference We Make Six Hours a Day**

When we open ourselves to working with and loving our students, we also open ourselves to heartbreak regarding all they are going through. Many of our students have experienced more trauma and heartache than we have. When working in schools, it is common to experience personal heartbreak because we feel helpless to deal with forces outside school that negatively affect our students’ mental, physical, and emotional health, such as homelessness, addiction, unmet mental health needs, abuse, incarceration of family members, and so much more.

As an open-hearted and loving educator, these feelings of heartbreak and hopelessness are normal and natural. Worry and loss of sleep over our students is part of being a compassionate human being. Compassion fatigue is what we label an extreme state of tension caused by helping. It evidences a focus on the suffering of those in need to the degree that it can be felt as a secondary trauma.
In the research about strategies used in effective trauma-informed schools, educators are encouraged to practice preventative measures through self-care (we will address this topic in greater detail in Chapter 2) and increased awareness and identification of secondary trauma symptoms, such as feeling overwhelmed, hopelessness, fatigue, engaging in self-destructive coping strategies, low job morale, and withdrawing from relationships with colleagues or family.

Self-care and awareness are important strategies to prevent or deal with secondary trauma, as is connecting with your colleagues and friends. Tracy, a teacher we know who works in a middle school with a high rate of students dealing with trauma, started a Teachers Supporting Teachers group at his school. Every Monday after the bell rings, the group gets together to check in about how they are doing, share self-care strategies, and simply connect and recharge with one another. Tracy said that for something that wasn’t all that difficult to organize or execute, it has done miraculous things for his morale and well-being. Beyond caring for yourself and connecting with others, it is also important to ground yourself in all you do have control over when it comes to your students.

We have over six hours a day to make a difference in the lives of our students. We have six hours per day to fill a student up with love and hope. We have 360 minutes a day or 21,600 seconds per day to change their lives in ways beyond our imagination. It is unknowable what can be accomplished for a student in that amount of time. The hugs, the high fives, the handshakes, the wiping of tears, the positive messages of “You can do this” and “You are deserving of love and belonging” all make a significant difference. You may be one of many people in a kid’s life who provides them with a foundation of love and kindness, or you may be the only one. If we remember that our main goal is to build, support, love, and connect, then our teaching, our students, and our relationships in schools can flourish.

Rock Your Support of Students

In a recent presentation with a large group of educators, we brought large landscaping rocks, each the size of a person’s hand, and set them in the middle of each table. We explained the following Rock Rules:

1. Put a rock in your dominant hand.
2. Do not set the rock down.
3. Hold the rock the entire time.
4. Do not mention your rock.
5. Bring your rock with you everywhere.

Each table group had someone designated to be sure that their tablemates followed the rules. Then, all the participants had to continue to participate in the rest of the conference. Some of the activities involved groups working together to build a tower with paper and tape, whereas other activities included individual tasks such as taking notes. If a participant did not follow one of the Rock Rules, they were to come to the front of the large room and write their name on the “Warning Wall.” After the morning activities and lunch had concluded, we told the group it was OK to set down their rocks and discuss the experience.

We began by talking about what the rocks represented, explaining that students all carry rocks. We asked this group of educators to consider the rocks their students carry. They responded by saying that these were things that weigh students down and shared examples such as trauma, anxiety, anger, depression, stress, pregnancy, body image, isolation, homelessness, addiction issues, disability labels, poverty, sexual identity, gender identity, and mental health issues. To say the least, they came up with a lot of different kinds and sizes for the rocks.

We then discussed what it was like for them to have carried rocks all morning. The educators described being very distracted by the rocks. It was stressful attempting to keep the rocks secret. The rocks also significantly influenced their ability to stay focused and connected to the learning.

“The rock impeded my ability to do anything it seemed,” one educator said.

Another educator said, “I am quite struck by how difficult this was, especially because I knew that, at any time, I could set down my rock if I had to.” He paused and then noted, “My students don’t have that luxury.”

**What We Can’t Do with Students’ Rocks**

We can’t hold students’ rocks for them, regardless of how much we want to take away the pain of struggle. If we attempt to hold all our students’ challenges and concerns, two things happen. First, they do not learn how to carry and manage those issues, and second, we cannot function well when we are carrying the load of our students’ rocks.
We can’t pity students for their rocks. Pity is not useful for students. When we pity our students, we diminish their lived experiences and the resilience it can bring. Likewise, we can’t spend our time blaming others for the rocks. Blame is not useful in schools. It is not useful to blame parents, caregivers, or situations. Instead, we can invest every breath in making our classroom experiences more accessible and compassionate for students.

We can’t group students by rocks. It is commonplace in schools to place students with the biggest rocks in the same room. However, this practice decreases the natural diversity and all the richness that comes from learning with and from people who are different from us, as well as those who may have fewer rocks to carry. Additionally, this homogenous grouping practice creates a stigma. Students quickly learn that their classroom is indeed a place for students who struggle with the biggest rocks. Lastly, students learn best from peers who can be models. For example, perhaps a student’s rock is about learning to build positive social relationships. This student will best learn this skill when she is surrounded by others who interact and socialize well.

What We Can Do with Students’ Rocks

We can make space for their rocks and acknowledge and witness them. Recently, when we were presenting and doing the rock activity with a group of educators, a teacher who was clearly frustrated came up to us during the presentation and said, “I just can’t NOT talk about this rock! The direction of secrecy is killing me. I can’t listen to what you are saying or do anything else, really. Please, can we talk about them now?”

When we keep quiet about the rocks, we increase the challenge the rock presents for the student who carries it. Instead, we must create safe and open spaces where students are free to share their struggles.

We would love to be able to teach students that they can set their rocks down, but that option is often not possible. Instead, we can teach students that their rocks do not have to sink them or weigh them down. We can teach them that once we acknowledge the rock, we can then work together to create supports to make the challenge of carrying it more manageable. For example, if a student is currently homeless and living in a shelter, we can be sure to discuss it with her. Yes, it is a huge rock; it’s a challenge she has no control over that can cause feelings of helplessness.
and hopelessness. But we are there to support her, provide extended deadlines for work, offer lunches and snacks, make her laugh, ditch the homework, and expect great things from her.

We can also help students build with their rocks. We can help them arrange their rocks into giant structures called *inuksuk*. An *inuksuk* is an Inuit practice of rock building where rocks are stacked into human form and placed in spaces where it is hard to travel. When you come across an *inuksuk*, it means “Someone has come before you.” In other words, for some students, we can help them know that they are not alone, that others have traversed this path before, and that they have survived.

We can also examine our own rocks. Take some time and answer the question “What rocks do you carry?” Most of us carry many challenges, even if we have not taken those rocks out to look at in a while. How are you supporting yourself? Are you able to carry your own load of rocks, or do you need other kinds of support?

Finally, we can celebrate rocks. Lucy, a student we know, turned her rock of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) into several beautiful works of art. Painting her rock onto a canvas opened her up to a deeper understanding of her experiences and challenges. Each brush stroke helped her see how OCD affects her life. She was able to explore the weight of her OCD but also the strength and resilience it had created within her.

Lucy explained that in her artwork, she explores how she felt lost in her OCD. In Figure 1.4, you can see that she painted the feeling of losing herself in the overwhelming nature of OCD and how it can totally exhaust her with repetitive thoughts. She then said that by painting and drawing, she has been able to understand, visually, what is happening for her.

Believe it or not, our rocks can be celebrated. They might make us stronger, more independent, empathic, smarter, and creative—if not right now, then possibly in the future.

**Lean in When Kids Act Out**

This chapter has been about restorying our students, viewing them in new ways, and helping them view themselves in new ways. We want to conclude this first chapter with an analogy from Josh Shipp (2015), an expert on supporting kids with challenging behavior and the adults those kids can challenge. Shipp begins the
Figure 1.4: Lucy’s Rock

analogy by asking you to remember the last time you rode a roller coaster and the safety bar came down over your lap. You probably tested the bar by shaking it, hard, before the ride began. But you didn’t test the safety bar because you hoped it would fail and you’d go plummeting to your death as soon as the first upside-down loop appeared. You tested the safety bar to confirm its stability, ensure it was safe and secure, and confirm its ability to protect you.

Shipp explains that this is exactly what kids are doing when they challenge us. Kids with challenging behaviors have significant uncertainty in their lives. Remember all those rocks they are carrying around? All those skills they still need to learn? All those feelings of belonging and safety they crave and perhaps don’t have yet? When they test you with behaviors, they are simply looking to you to confirm that you are stable, certain, and safe. Therefore, the next time a kid tests you, we want you to simply be the safety bar for them. Know that they are simply confirming you are there for them, no matter what. Don’t push them or send them away when they challenge you. Lean in.
Tiny To-Do List

- Use your journal to complete any exercises in this chapter.
- Take five minutes and write a new story about a specific student.
  - What are this student’s strengths, gifts, and talents?
  - What are some possible reasons for their behavior(s)?
- Write down one thing you can do today to build confidence in a student who is struggling and one thing you can do to lean in and provide them with the certainty they are seeking. Implement those new actions as soon as you can.


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