

**Transcript for Openness, Flexibility, and Kindness in the Classroom
BCcampus FLO Friday event hosted on May 24, 2024**

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Host: Helena Prins

HELENA PRINS:

Welcome everyone. I'm so glad that you're giving us some of your time on this Friday morning. It's a little bit drizzly here in Victoria, B.C. My name, Helena Prins. I'm an advisor on the learning and teaching team here of BCcampus, and I'm joining you from the territories of the Lekwungen-speaking People, which includes the Songhees and the Esquimalt Nations. I have the very fun and rewarding job of coordinating our family and facilitating learning online offerings, and I'm really thankful to my colleague, Kelsey Kilbey, who's here for technical support. We are recording the session. If you do not wish to be recorded, please turn off your camera and you can also change your name to "FLO Participant." We have enabled live captioning. And throughout the session, you can use the chat to ask questions or to use the raised hand icon that you'll find in the reaction button. And we'll also share a feedback link with you towards the end of the session. And I just really love to hear your feedback afterwards. One of the questions is about topics of interest for professional development, so please let us know what we can offer that will help you in your professional development. If you want to put an emoticon in the chat, just to tell us how you're doing this morning, that would be wonderful. It gives me such joy today to introduce you to our fabulous FLO facilitator, Tanya. Tanya and I met each other in July 2022, when we embarked on our doctoral journey at the University of Calgary and it's been quite a journey so far. I see that some of our cohort colleagues are here too. Thank you for joining Tanya and myself today. I have the utmost respect for Tanya and the work that she does in post-secondary and beyond. I can't think of a better person to talk about this topic. Openness, kindness and flexibility. Tanya, you embody that. So with that, I hand it over to you.

TANYA PAWLIUK:

Thank you. Thanks, everyone for coming. I'm really grateful for this opportunity. I love talking about having these qualities as part of my teaching practice and sharing these qualities with students that I spend time with and also receiving these qualities from students that I spend time with as well. We will talk about openness, flexibility, and kindness in the classroom. But before we start, Kelsey? Thank you.

I'd like to begin with the territorial acknowledgment. I'm actually joining you from the traditional lands of Tk'emlúps̓te Secwépemc within Secwépemc'ulucw. These are the traditional and unceded territories of the Secwépemc Peoples. For those folks who aren't familiar perhaps with Secwépemc'uluc also known as Kamloops in British Columbia. That's where I'm coming from today. Next.

I should say if you're open to letting us know what territory you're coming from, you can put it in the chat. That would be lovely as well. While you do that, I'll just speak a few minutes to our

objectives. When you thought to come today, you knew that we were going to consider positioning openness, flexibility, and kindness for self and others as learners and educators, and really think about it as foundational to the interpersonal communication we experience within classroom settings. We're going to explore our own opportunities to nurture authentic relationships for the potential of transformative learning experiences and also identify opportunities within our own education practice to create conditions necessary for transformative learning experiences. I think this is something that we all hope to experience or hope to support with our students. And just a quick note that I'll probably often refer to classroom because it is my setting. But I do know that every one of us who exists within a post-secondary system or any education system is an educator and is educating. If I don't speak to your particular context, it's not that I don't see its value or honour its educative potential. It's just probably not my context, but I see Caitlin here and I know Caitlin's in libraries. Thank you, Caitlin, for reminding me of that. And so to begin, I thought I would just introduce you to my particular context because that might help speak to why openness, flexibility, and kindness has become such a big part of my teaching practice. Next.

To do that, I wonder if you could just think before I speak specifically to mine. What brought you to this topic today? What brought you to thinking about openness, flexibility, and kindness in the classroom or your setting? I see some people are from eastern Canada, Ohio. Nice, Barb. Welcome. On a Friday, will the slides be available? My understanding is they are, yes. Yeah. What made you want to talk about openness, flexibility, and kindness? Feel free to put it in the chat or you can unmute if you're comfortable doing that. Or if you don't want to unmute or put it in the chat, if you just want to reflect for a moment for yourself why these qualities might be of importance to you or of interest. So Caitlin's sharing, "Remembering what it's like to be a learner, empathy, relationality, and recognition." Yes. Yeah. I really like that attention to recognition. This is something that students often reflect on, maybe being seen for their role, rather than for who they are outside of their student category. "What brought me here? You, of course." Lots of supporters. But also, "We need more of this openness, flexibility, and kindness, not only in education." Yeah, I feel that. I feel and we're going to talk in a few minutes about this connection to social justice and how this commitment to upholding these values within the classroom also sets the stage for upholding them within our communities, our education communities and our communities of practice. We have someone who's interested in the pedagogy of kindness and learned from Indigenous learners and teachers. Excellent. "Students seem to be under a lot of pressure these days and wondering how to support them and maintain academic standards." Thank you so much. This is a really important focus for me as well. "The pedagogy or andragogy for the adult learner crowd has been really important to thinking about how I serve students academically, as well as provide support." In order to do that, I found that boundaries have become very important. "Teaching adults may have lots of familiarity with academic contexts, but they need or lost, but they need empathy." Yes. "It's easy to forget how great a risk it is to engage in formal learning." Thank you so much. We call those relational risks. We're taking these academic leaps, but we're also engaging in relational risks when we do things like talk to our librarian or talk to our faculty member or talk to fellow students in the class. Here we have someone sharing that "Curiosity around how your work

overlaps with trauma-informed skilled practice." Excellent. Thank you. Hopefully, I'll be able to answer some of these questions or these thoughts or these interests within the presentation. If not, we can definitely come back to them at the end. We have one more comment. "Thinking part of the reason is I want my learners to know I'm human and can relate to them in order to establish a bond of starts to encourage learning." Yes. And I think I'll share why I relate so strongly to that comment. Thank you. Next.

Let me start by sharing my context. I work in a professional and paraprofessional program at Thompson Rivers University, and my background is child and youth care, which has a strong relational focus, which is why these qualities, these interpersonal qualities of openness, flexibility, and kindness are so important to me. We lead with empathy, and we really position the relationship as central to any interaction. In my academic context, I work within a Human Service Program because that's where our child youth care courses exist at Thompson Rivers University. In this program, we're preparing students for a helping career and that helping career, it is designed to help them support service users or students or other individuals within our community or families or communities who are struggling with some level of disadvantage support need or looking for some service support. And you can imagine over the last four years that what our students from pre-COVID were anticipating in the field has far surpassed that; the needs of the service users are much greater, just like the needs of our students are much greater, just like many of us are experiencing greater needs as well. At Thompson Rivers University, we have an open entry policy, and I love this because I'm committed to social justice. I love the philosophy that everybody deserves an education and there's education for everybody. To attend TRU and to attend the Human Service Program in particular, you require two letters of reference to speak to your capacity to do this work. And an English 12 or First Peoples 12 minimum of 73% or equivalent. This is all our students need to enter our program. You can imagine that we have students with all kinds of experiences in education, and in community, they carry in their lived experiences. Although our seats are limited, again, it is open entry. What's interesting about our context is that we can start with a first year certificate. We can offer second year diploma programming for students, and then they can also ladder directly into a bachelor of social work. Okay. So this is a little bit about my context. And then my personal context, next.

Sometimes when I go to talks like this and people talk about values within their teaching practice, they often seem to have a lot of time to devote to their teaching and thinking about their teaching, and I admire that, but that is just not my reality. I wanted to share that with you that I do uphold these values. I do practice these values, but I do this within the constraints of my real existence. I am an associate teaching professor. I tell you this to let you know that teaching is the focus of my role right now. I teach primarily first and second year courses and nearly all of my core courses or all of my courses are core. For those of you who teach core courses, you know that some students will take those core courses because they love to take them and others will take them because they have to take them. This can really impact how students engage. I'm a bipartite faculty member, which means I'm four and four. I have four teaching courses, and I am absolved or I'm released from four for coordination duties. In

addition to my teaching work, I am a researcher and a program developer. I am a parent, and as Helena mentioned, I'm also a doctoral student. You can see I have a lot on my plate. And so this commitment to these values or these qualities in my teaching practice, they can't take up a ton of time. Okay. Next. All right.

So one of the things that brought me to thinking about how these qualities can exist within my teaching practice and within my classrooms is by noticing student experiences within the classroom. And these experiences are reinforced through recent studies. So a recent survey on student stress showed us that 89% of surveyed students reported feeling overwhelmed by their responsibilities. 67 reported feeling overwhelming anxiety, 46 feelings of depression that affected their functioning. 53%, apologies, reported feeling overwhelmed with their stress within the past year and 64% reported feeling financial stress. When I think to my own teaching practice in my own student groups, surprised to me that's only 64%. I suspect that that number has gotten higher. And when we look at what's contributing to the stress, we see academic demands, we see financial challenges, we see social and peer pressures, and of course, we know that the peer pressures and the social pressures of my day are different than the social peer pressures that students are experiencing now. They have the whole world to compare themselves against. Then they're also experiencing a lack of support or resources. Then in some programs as well, and with some students, they also are balancing full-time work and full-time schooling, they are balancing child care, they're carrying lived experiences. It probably doesn't surprise you to know that since COVID and during COVID, depending on where your views are on that, students have had some exceptional challenges. You know, having to or getting to learn online and then having to or getting to return to the classroom. All of this has contributed to my thinking about how can we can think about openness, flexibility, and kindness in our teaching and in our classes. Next.

So when COVID happened and we went from the classroom to online. I started to think about how I could approach the students differently because I teach interpersonal communication courses, and it was important that some of those values that I teach be experienced even in a virtual learning environment. And so we use this textbook called *Natural Bridges* and it's written by Randy Fujishin who you see quoted here. And he identified three qualities of an effective interpersonal communicator as openness, flexibility, and kindness. Now, I have to tell you when I first read that I thought that was really nice. That's as much as I can say about that. I thought it was really nice. I thought it was a teachable moment and I thought that those were qualities my students would definitely take into practice. But I didn't really think about the implications or the opportunity to really embed them in my pedagogy. It wasn't until COVID that I really thought about how I could model these qualities and make them a pedagogical focus. Fujishin says that "If we are able to hold these qualities, we can offer a safe harbour for individuals to feel free to express their opinions, their feelings, and who they are, They can authentically engage." And so, you'll notice that I don't have a background screen on, you're seeing my mess. And one of the reasons for this is because I learned in COVID from my students that they really needed to see me transparently. They needed to see my authentic self, and this

is why I don't use a background, although I would love to be able to use one sometimes. Okay. Next.

What does this look like? When we think about openness, we can think about displaying a willingness to be accepting, we're welcoming, we're encouraging a person's or ideas. I bet many of you do this. When people come in, you welcome them. If you know their names, you use their names, you smile at them, nod at them, you do this. We practise flexibility, meaning that we're able to adjust to situations and environments. But in order to practise openness and practise flexibility, we have to be well and supported for ourselves. There's a question around trauma-aware or trauma-informed practice and how openness, flexibility, and kindness relates to trauma-informed practice. We know that when we are feeling regulated, when we're feeling supported, we're much more likely to be open, we're much more likely to be flexible, and definitely much more likely to be kind. And when we think about kindness in our practice and in our educational settings, we can think about access, sincerity, and authenticity. We can be thoughtful and compassionate and we can be helpful as well. Now, Fujishin reminds us that kindness is love. I know in a Western academic tradition, we don't often make those connections between kindness and love and academia. But that's a very Western perception of kindness and of academia. I can tell you that a lot of my colleagues who've come from different academic traditions or who are newer to our campus or newcomers, they will tell me that kindness and love and academia, those makes sense to them. Next.

I mentioned that the pedagogy and the theory behind using openness, flexibility, and kindness is very important to me. I'm an academic first. I really thought about how adult learning theories support or don't support the incorporation of openness, flexibility, and kindness in my practice. So, I thought about andragogy, which is the art and science of helping adults to learn. When I think about the instructor role here, I'm thinking about facilitation, encouraging collaboration and mutual respect and openness with and amongst the learners. Really here, I'm a facilitator, just really paying attention to what's available in the room and respecting it and being open to what emerges from the learners. With experiential learning, here we see learners are directly experiencing a theory, a concept, a fact, or a practice, and they're also learning it at the same time. So here, my role would be to practise engagement with learners in identifying and creating and valuing learning beyond the formal classroom-based cognitive activities. So I'm creating experiences. I'm embodying these values. So I'm not just saying you be open, flexible, and kind with each other. They're actually experiencing this with me. I see in the chat someone has posted, "Actions and words need to be in harmony. Words can say I espouse kindness, but actions may seem to students to put a lie to the words." Absolutely. Absolutely. That's my experience. Well, and that's our experience as well, right? Like we know when people say they're kind. And when they're actually kind. Here with our students, when we talk about kindness, I'll come back to the theory, I promise you, but I think this is important. When I talk about kindness with students, we really unpack what kindness means. We're really detail oriented, and we differentiate between kind and nice. We understand kind as constructive. We understand kind as boundary setting, we understand kind as a value that serves others, but also serves us. Then we have the theory of integrated learning. Here all aspects of self are engaged

in the learning process, including emotions, including spirituality, values, and the physical self. Here my role would be to establish and maintain a responsive, predictable and regulated learning environment. Again, we see this tied to trauma-informed or trauma-aware practice, which really reinforces the importance of a responsive, predictable, regulated learning environment. So here you would see me telling students at the beginning of class, exactly what they can expect from me and exactly what they can expect or what I planned with the class. And then at the end of the class before we farewell, I'm going to forewarn them on what to expect next week. There's also communication through our Moodle classroom and lots of communication in our course materials as well. And then finally, transformative learning. Again, if we're lucky enough to have this experience in our educational experiences, that's amazing. If we're lucky enough to inform a transformative learning experience, that's amazing too. Because here, learning moves beyond knowledge acquisition and leads to a fundamental shift in who we are and how we view ourselves, each other and our experiences in the world. For us to be the instructor who supports this, we have to establish a courageous learner-centred environment where students feel empowered to engage authentically, who they are, not who they think we expect them to be. In order to do so, they have to bring in their experiences, their formal and non-formal experiences with learning. They have to think about their learning relationships. They have to connect with us and they have to connect with their classmates. Here I say what can be harder to resolve is that kindness and holding students accountable don't need to cancel each other out. Absolutely. But you have to be cruel to be kind as a guiding thought must go. Again, kindness is constructive. You know, and we'll talk about how I do this, but absolutely. Part of being kind is trusting that we can hold each other to account. You can hold me to account and I'm going to hold you to account too. Absolutely. Next, I should say, if you have any comments or questions as you're going through, please feel free to feel free to throw it in the chat. I am paying attention.

I mentioned also that I think that openness, flexibility, and kindness in the classroom and in my education practice is a social justice commitment. I think it's really important to push back on what's happening in the world right now and engage authentically, openly, flexibly, and in a kind way. Again, in a constructively kind way, right? I think that students recognize it. They know if I'm being kind or if I'm being nice. They know the difference, and we'll talk a little bit about how I know they know the difference. I think we can be subversive in turning the education system as it's evolving on its head by privileging relationships, by privileging the opportunity connection evenly with each other through our academic experiences, whether we're students or faculty or support. The nature of this connection between kindness and teaching rests on the fact that both kindly acts and pedagogical acts require us to identify with each other. So there's really a place within our academic practice and our attention to pedagogy and the theory of our work. And we can really see this as acts of solidarity. If we are acknowledging the difficultness of environments right now for students, you know, we are being kind, and we're acting in solidarity. If we are, if we're resisting some of the pressures or we're resisting contributing to more pressure on students, I think this matters. They tell me it matters. These ethical foundations of social work that I bring in or child youth care that I bring in. I don't think they just exist within our classroom. I think they exist within chemistry

classrooms and physics classrooms and economics classrooms. I think they have a place everywhere because we're all educators, and we all have a genuine interest in working with students. Next.

I know I sound Pollyanna, but I'll show you how I do this. I promise. Before I do continue though, I want to mention that positionality matters. Positionality refers to, for those of you who may not be familiar, refers to where we are located in relation to other folks, to our very social identities, whatever they may be. They have those combinations of identities and intersections shape, how we understand ourselves and each other, our experiences within educational environment, whether or not we are present in the academic materials, and whether or not we see ourselves as being connected or having a connection with the faculty member or the students we spend time with in the classroom. As individuals and instructors, we occupy multiple identities, and these are fluid and dialogical in nature, and they're contextually situated as well. We're continuously growing these, amending these, reproducing these, and evolving our understanding of these. Here I've offered you the wheel of power and privilege. This is by Sylvia Duckworth, but there's many and there's an academic wheel of power privilege as well. My students really like this wheel, so this is the one I show to you, but we talk a lot about positionality and we talk about why it matters. One of the reasons it matters within my educational practice is I'm keenly aware that I embody through my positionality, my whiteness, my femaleness, my kindness that until you know me might be perceived as niceness. I'm keenly aware that I embody many of the people who have been in their life before, who may not have been helpful, who may have made educational experiences or lived experiences more challenging. Maybe I embody a social worker who was engaged in a child removal. Or I embody a teacher who shamed them for the student they were. I think about that. It's important to us to be able to talk about who I am in the room so that they have permission to think about who they are in the room as well. Not that they need my permission, but they certainly have my invitation. Next. And we don't do this without. Thank you.

We don't do this without thinking about what supports this work? Because when we engage in concepts of positionality, or in social work, we often talk about social location rather than positionality that really sits with education and child and youth care. We have a process that we engage and I can tell you that students love this process. So this is not my work, I won't take credit for it. This is the work of Loretta Ross and this article is called "Speaking Up Without Tearing Down." And really she provides a template, if you will, for calling out and calling in. And so this article is in the chat for you if you're interested. She says that when we are engaging authentically in educational environments, sometimes we make mistakes, and it's imperative that we are open to people making mistakes, but it's also imperative that we're open to being supported in evolving our understanding of a situation. So sometimes we might have to call people out. And so when I'm presenting this template, I tell students that I might be the person who calls them out because I am responsible for the space, right? So calling out happens when we point out a mistake not to address or rectify the damage, but instead to publicly shame the offender. I'm not calling out in the sense that, I'm saying, hey, I'm shaming you, but I'm attending to that moment and I'm going to try to not privilege the person who requires some

support and evolving their understanding or maybe some correction around language, but I'm going to address it so students don't feel like they have to, that they don't feel like it's not important to me. That is not part of my value. But calling out in our society right now is a very common response. We see it in social media every day. Sometimes it is necessary when students and I talk specifically about when it's necessary. When someone is being sexist or racist or ableist on purpose. Then we absolutely need to discuss that. But we also recognize that a calling out process sometimes makes it so that people don't feel like they can move forward together, and sometimes it relies on shame, humiliation, scapegoating, and gossip. Classrooms are not like Vegas. What happens here stays here is not a thing. What we hope is what happens here personally, maybe stays here, but what we learn here leaves here. That's what we talk about. In order for that to happen, we really privilege a calling-in process as well. Here we see a process created by human rights practitioners, Loretta Ross being one of them that challenges the toxicity of the call-out culture. Recognizes that calling in is an opportunity to address a misstep without tearing down. Again, I'm listening for it and sometimes I'm the first person to step in, so students don't have to feel responsible for it. It is the less common response, but I can say in my classes, it's become the more common response because we've talked about it. We've set the stage. It supports growth and understanding and connection and accountability. It really does do all that. It allows everyone to move forward, and it can happen publicly or privately. An example, from the classroom, if it helps to think about examples, is that a student might use some dated language. And instead of saying, "You know, we don't use that term anymore." I might say, I might repeat back what I heard from them, but I would use the current terminology, and they hear it every time. I promise you, they hear it every time. So that's a way of me calling in. I'm reinforcing the point without using the terminology. Next.

So, again, we don't use a call in for everything. Some comments don't deserve a call in. Typically within my classes because people are committed to social justice, they're interested in being social workers or education assistants, you know, they're keen to learn and they're keen to understand how to be in relationships with other folks. But, again, if there's cruelty or carelessness, we will address that. And the opportunity for the calling in is it has made students within my classes brave. They're brave with each other and they're brave with me. And they also have the invitation to call me in as well because sometimes, you know, I try to be current, but sometimes I'm not. Language is evolving and I'm in that space as a learner too. It's amazing when I get called in because then they get to see it live in action. They get to see what a fair and genuine response is in the moment. This is what helps us practise kindness but with a template and with a commitment to accountability. Okay. Next. I highly recommend this article.

The other thing that the social justice commitment and using this template and thinking about who we are in our learning environments. The other thing that supports is this commitment to relational pedagogy. I mentioned that my background is child and youth care and within our learning and within our practice, we really privilege the relationship. We put the relationships at the heart of every experience, the teaching, the grading, the connecting, the office hours. Here we're really paying attention to our opportunity to build relationship with the learner. Not as student faculty, but as Tanya and whoever they may be. Then also to facilitate relationships

across the student body. Because we know at least within my discipline, they're going to see each other again and maybe they'll be community colleagues at some point, so I'll even talk about them as being classroom colleagues in hopes of facilitating those connections. They're not competing with each other, but they're seeing an opportunity to learn and grow alongside and from each other. When we privilege a relational pedagogy, we get to see that acknowledgment of the role of emotions and experience in learning. We really are decentring ourselves in the process. We're seeing how the material that we're offering, again, whether it's social work material or child and youth care or physics, how it fits in with students' understanding of these concepts already because they come in with some knowledge. Then it also allows us to increase a reciprocal experience of interest, knowing, trust, and capacity with the learning environment. When we build relationship with each other, we learn what our students are interested in and we learn to trust their continued interest and capacity for the concepts we're teaching. Next.

What does this all mean? How do I do this? Specifically, you want to know specifically. That's at least what I'd want to know. That's what I thought about. The first thing I did was reflect on my role. Because I was, you know, From COVID, when we all went online and then we went back into the classroom. I was feeling really overwhelmed by the shift in student needs and the shift in the experience as a faculty member working with first and second year students in core courses. I had noticed that shift and I was curious about it. First, I reflected on my own role. I understood myself to be a teacher first. That's my value. That's why I'm in academia. And also someone who is invested in ensuring that my community is well supported with students. I also have this coordination role, and I'm responsible for the academic oversight of my program, but I'm also responsible for making sure that my colleagues and my students feel supported. Then I thought about what is important to my discipline or my profession versus what is important to me. Let me give you an example of attendance. Some of us on campus, where attendance is an obligation for our courses are experiencing a drop in attendance. Has anyone had this experience? Let's see if anything pops up in the chat. My colleagues have talked about experiencing attendance drops. Students have pushed back. Yes, definitely. Yeah. Students are pushed back on why they should have to attend. That's not to say that they don't value what we're teaching, but they're telling us they have so many overwhelming expectations on their time right now that they really have to balance where they can put their attention. So attendance was an issue for me, and in my profession, we are a present kind of profession. We have to be in shared spaces with people to do our work. So I thought about how I could shift the understanding of the value of attendance. One of the things I realized is that I didn't assign a grade to attendance. I still don't. Please be reassured. I still don't. But what I did talk about my students or talk with my students or about, was how we could maybe have a different understanding of the importance of attendance, how we could value it differently. We took some of the assignments that would have been done outside of the classroom and we brought them into the classroom. We were able to think about working collaboratively with each other, which is also not something students in my experience have been enjoying doing lately. They're not loving the collaborative work. And being present all the time is overwhelming sometimes as well. The collaborative work and the attendance came together and there's a grade value there.

Ten assignments that's 20% of the grade. Now there's the opportunity for students to weigh the value of 20% of the grade versus something else that's calling their attention. I've checked in with students. This is my third semester of doing this and I'm checking in and they really like this approach. I have near perfect attendance and not just near perfect attendance and they're there, but near perfect attendance and near perfect engagement too. It's mattered. They're telling me that they feel valued by being there. You know what? In my discipline or profession, we're paid when we're present. It actually is reflective of that as well.

Yeah. You've been experiencing poor attendance online, the course is required and these are first semester seniors. Yeah, it's tough, finding a way to match the values. I'm not saying that maybe this attendance, this formative assignment piece is right for you, but finding a way to work with the students as partners to say, how could we shift this? How could we change this? We all should be here, and we all should be enjoying our time together. What can we do differently? This is one approach. With my course outline.

"In my own classes, I'm seeing a split between students valuing opportunities to learn online where that opportunity still exists versus those that attend in person. With those in person often having low options of those choosing to learn online." I'm seeing that as well. I'm seeing that also. Yeah. I'm seeing students who do come in person. Not so much in my classes anymore because we've changed the value, and I'm an in-person experience, but I'm also seeing some frustration with students about students who aren't attending as regularly. Yeah. Yeah, I understood. Yeah.

So with my course outline, I clearly state the expectations of the course. I don't know about you, but in my institution. Our course outlines are senate generated, and so it's important that I'm clearly conveying the expectations of the course. I share that the class involves significant group engagements in-class activities. I share that changes to the schedule may occur in response to questions, conversations, and the emerging needs of the students of the course. I'm setting our container, our boundary container, but I'm also demonstrating flexibility with an openness to the needs of the students. I've thought about time availability and support. I have flexible office hours. Even though I teach on campus, I'm happy to meet with students virtually. I've thought about how I can engage more campus supports for students. I've mentioned that boundaries are very important to me, and I think they're important to students as well. I've built new or renewed relationships with campus supports for students. I'm able to send them to the student wellness ambassadors or to the counsellors or to the medical office or to the library and not just say you should go here, but to have a warm handoff. You should go see this person and then I'm sending a joint email to ensure that they're connecting. Then finally, for assignments and opportunities, I think there's an exceptional opportunity for us to engage openness, flexibility, and kindness here. I mentioned that I've moved some activities that don't need to be summative; they can be formative, into in-class exercises. I'm actually seeing the work happening and it's being valued with an assessment. PLAR. As a program, we've really paid attention to the opportunity to value students' prior learning and informal learning and their work experience as well. We've really paid attention to as a discipline. What do we really

need for them to take with us? What can we acknowledge or what work can we acknowledge that's happened before us. Not every student takes advantage of the PLAR program yet. However, they know it's available to them. We talk about it, so they know we're acknowledging and honouring the work that they've done. Then, of course, we've increased our transfer credit exceptions as well. This also acknowledges the work they do. Next.

Being open, flexible, and kindness or kind in the classroom and using those tools, it's allowed me to centre the learning and the learner. I should say, the learner to engage in trauma-award and trauma-informed practice principles in our course design and in our delivery, to create in-class experiences that privilege assignment work, that build capacity for relationship, openness, flexibility, and kindness in their learning and in their practice. To incorporate the development of their self-awareness and my own. To understand how our own positionalities and our own intersectional experiences really inform how we engage with each other. It allows us to value each other's formal and non-formal learning. Again, the call-in versus call-out method from Loretta Ross has really supported our work in this. Next.

Then these are the considerations. I want to move through this so you can do a little bit of thinking for yourself. I've thought about the pedagogical considerations. One of the things that we've looked at is scaffolding across the program. I mentioned I'm responsible for the academic oversight within our program. Of course, we all have our autonomy, we have our academic freedom. But as a program faculty, we also have a commitment to working with each other. We've thought about how we can scaffold these commitments to openness, flexibility, and kindness within our work. We've provided engagement opportunities, these formative assessments. Constructive faculty and peer feedback are part of this. Again, kindness is constructive, and so that's an important part of this experience. And there's also an opportunity for assignment choice. For example, they can, my students are responsible for a process recording. They can write a paper about it, or they can come and talk to me about it. Either way works. Individual considerations. I'm thinking about intentionality right from the beginning, right from the way I've designed the course, from the way I've communicated the values of the course. I think about the boundaries. I can't do this if I'm not engaging my colleagues and my supports and their colleagues and their supports, and I'm thinking about self-care too. Now, it's really important for me to say that when I think about self-care, I actually think about institutional care. Four and four is a lot. I used to teach five and have a release for three, but have negotiated four because it's much easier to do that coordination work with four releases. Institutional considerations. I recognize that I have a lot of collegial and administrative support to do this work. I have good academic policies that I'm familiar with and that I share with students. Again, we know right from the beginning what to expect. I do have program level buy in. I do have this teacher and leadership role that allows me to do this. Importantly, I also have student buy in. I've brought students in from the very beginning. They've been my partners in this. I do recognize that there are limitations to be able to do this. If you have large class sizes, that might make things more difficult. If you don't have collegial support, you might feel like an island on your own. Time is a difficulty. Feeling institutional support is a difficulty and limited opportunities for interaction. I see my students several times over two years, at least. I wonder

if I could ask for permission to share the slide. Yeah, sure. Yeah. Having those opportunities for interaction matter, but we can build relationships within one course as well. Next.

Okay, just looking at the time here, I'm wondering if we could just take an opportunity. This is entirely optional to reflect on how we might be able to establish some of these qualities of openness, flexibility, and kindness within our own teaching or education practice. Whether we are in the classroom, we're in a student service role, we're in a library, wherever you might be interacting with students, where you can incorporate this. You have the option of joining a breakout room just for 5 minutes to think about how you might do this, or if your preference is to just work quietly, if you're breakout room shy as I am, then you can just maybe work quietly for a moment and then come back in 5 minutes. Yes, everyone's back now. Excellent. Thank you.

Welcome back, everyone. I wonder before we move on to the final few slides. Does anyone have any insights or reflections they'd like to share? You can throw it in the chat or unmute. You're also not obligated to.

DAVE: Hi, Tanya. I'd like to say a couple of things if you don't mind.

TANYA: Yes, please.

DAVE:

So, I teach marine science classes at UVic, and I think one of them was powerful activities that we've undertaken in the last few years. Well, first of all, I have a positionality statement that I share with my students right at the beginning of the course. And over the last few years, we've specifically included content around power and positionality in our marine science lectures. We talk about things like mental health, we talk about life and field, all of that under the marine science banner, and it's really greatly opened up the conversations in the classroom. And especially for science students, I mean, coming from the humanities or the social sciences where positionality statements and research papers are already very common. It's not common for natural scientists to see that or even have encountered it before in any context. So a real positive development in the classroom to have these conversations and students reflect on their own power and place in the work that they do in their relationship with others. And just a quick second comment is that one of the most powerful tools, and we've reflected on this last week, actually. We've had sessions like this within our own little instructional group. One of the most powerful things that we can do in the classroom we find is simply to say, "I don't know," when a student asks a question because it shows your own vulnerability, and as soon as you say that word or that phrase, students already know that you know, putting yourself out there as an instructor as being vulnerable. The students automatically know that they can be too and that they won't be judged negatively by not knowing the response to a question. And I'm actually, if you don't mind, I'd like to share something in the chat as we continue a paper by Clifford Mayes (<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/002202704100022>) that talks to this directly. A wonderful paper, and yeah I'll just drop it in the chat for folks.

TANYA:

Yeah. I'd love to see that.

DAVE:

It's been really valuable.

TANYA:

Thank you so much for sharing that. I mentioned I'm a parent and I have a child who's very interested in biology and is going to be studying biology at university next year. I find it so reassuring to know that colleagues across disciplines and faculties are thinking about this. I love that. Also, disabusing students of the notion that we know everything, it's so important. It's so humanizing. I absolutely agree because I'm in the people business. I'll very often share with students what I've done wrong. I think that's important for them to know that I can recognize. I can call myself in. You know, I'll share something that I know wasn't my best practice, and I'll say something like, Can you believe I did that? But I did do that, or I did think that. But I'm committed to growing. Thank you. Anyone else feel like sharing before we move on? Thank you for sharing that article. Okay. All right. Well, let's close up here.

These are my hopes in offering these qualities within my teaching practice and in supporting students and incorporating them and sharing them with each other that openness and flexibility and kindness will guide our educational experience as well as our practice experiences. Here's the thing. If I'm offering this, then I'm setting a template for their educational experience. I think it's fair for us to expect this kind of engagement from each other, and I think it's fair for our students to expect this level of engagement from faculty and supports on campus, and it's fair for us to expect it from them too. I think that this is sustainable. I know it's affirming, and I know it's ethical too. Students say that they feel valued, they feel seen, they feel seen outside of their student role. They don't feel like they're just tuition machines. They develop more trust in the process and understand themselves as learners and future practitioners. They're open to engaging within the process, and they're much more likely to be open to a transformative learning experience. I wanted to say also, Dave, with what you were sharing, some of my learning from Elders and Knowledge Keepers within my own community is that we have to think beyond relationships with people and think about relationships with the land. If you're thinking about a positionality statement within a marine sciences room, marine biology classroom, you're asking them to think about their positionality with the lands that they're practicing with as well, right? Absolutely. Yeah. What a gift. What a gift to be able to provide them with that level of awareness. Excellent. Okay. Next slide.

Where's the evidence for this? So anecdotally, my colleagues are seeing that these themes are showing up in all of their assignments. Students are talking about being open and flexible and kind in all of their assignments. We know that they're thinking about it. We know they're incorporating it into their academic work. We also know that they're carrying that commitment

to calling in versus calling out throughout the classes as well and are expecting it of each other. I can tell you, my research is showing that students are reaching out for support earlier. We have seen an increase in retention. We're also seeing an increase in that laddering pathway that I showed you at the beginning. Students are much more likely to move to the diploma into the certificate. And I think it's because they're having a sense of place. Not just their place within the program, but an understanding of themselves as learners and academics. Well, I have definitely seen increased attendance. I promise you, I'm not just saying this. I'm seeing near perfect attendance and near perfect engagement. And I'm also, I think this is important. I'm enjoying my job more. I'm seeing the students through new eyes. I'm certainly valuing the textbook in a way that I've never really valued a textbook before. And really, the students and I have created a template for engaging with each other in a new, shouldn't be novel, but in a more novel way. And next.

I think we have just a few more minutes left. If you have any questions or you want to contact me, you can reach me at tpawliuk@tru.ca. Feel free to send me an email. I'm happy to share any material I might have or simply talk about the role of openness, kindness, and flexibility in all of our disciplines and all of our classrooms. If you have any questions, I'm happy to answer those too.

HELENA:

Thank you so much, Tanya. Let's give her a virtual applause there at the bottom emoticon. Wonderful. I hate that we're at the end. I did text privately that I could listen to Tanya all day long. Thank you for bringing this very important topic to our FLO offerings. We actually have a FLO micro-course coming up next week about boundaries. I think that builds really well on what you were talking about today. If anyone still wants to, I think registration is still open for the hour, and it's led by Matty Hillman, and I think it will be a week spent well if you want to join us. And we have a FLO panel coming up on Accessibility in Post-Secondary Education. Super important topic for us to consider and explore further. Then the next FLO Friday is on June 21, on Enhancing the Human Aspects in Designing Learning with GenAI. I invite you to join us for that too. But please if you have a question for Tanya, hang tight, you can certainly ask. We will stop the recording here for those who have to leave to thank you very much for spending your Friday morning with Tanya, myself, and Kelsey. Thank you. Thanks everyone.