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Mr. Speice

ISM 3A

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Shame and Empathy

Assessment 18

Brown, Brené. "Shame & Empathy by Dr. Brené Brown." *YouTube*. Ed. Steve Alley. YouTube, 17 Apr. 2007. Web. 16 Feb. 2017.

For this assessment, students were required to once again study and gather information through researching a primary source that is relevant to the topic we are studying. Because I am studying my topic of elementary music education focused through the lens of shame and worthiness, I was able to find an informational video from Dr. Brené Brown based on shame and empathy. I chose to study this topic once again this week as it will assist in my further understanding of the impact that shame has on the human individual, allowing me to incorporate this extended knowledge and research into my Final Product, which will include in depth analyses of both shame and worthiness, as well as types of worksheets based on these topics. In order to have the ability to create these, however, I will first need to expand my knowledge on the idea of shame, as well as its opposite idea, empathy, because I was unaware of the power of empathy on shame as I began my studies.

This video from Dr. Brown opened my eyes and allowed me to further understand the aspect and idea of shame, beginning by proposing the following question: What is shame, and how does it work? In order to explore the answers to these questions, Dr. Brown introduces this

topic by first explaining three basic ideas based on shame. Number one, shame is a universal emotion that all humans face. Number two, although everyone has it and experiences it, no one wants to talk about shame. Finally, the less we choose to talk about the shame we are feeling, the more power we give it in our lives. Because the idea and emotion of shame is such a ‘touchy’ topic, many people tend to ask Brené Brown why she chose to study it. This question launched a full discussion based on the many different aspects behind shame, and the ways in which we can avoid the negative emotion. This is what I have become increasingly interested in understanding, so that I may have the opportunity to later create a safe and productive learning environment.

Empathy, defined as the ability to understand and share the feelings of another, is said to be the only way that shame can be ‘killed’ in a sense, permanently ending its ability to further impact a victim. However, one can not seek empathy unless they have connection with others. Dr. Brown defines connection as “our ability to forge meaningful, authentic relationships with others,” claiming that it is the essence of a human experience, giving meaning to our lives. When an individual possesses empathy, they are moved toward connections and relationships with others. Shame, however, has an opposite impact on connections, ultimately tearing them apart and destroying the relationships that once provided comfort. When dealing with connection, two individuals must be willing to be completely vulnerable with each other, sharing both the good and the bad of their lives. The ability to share and or listen to shameful situations, however, has the ability to ultimately result in shame for the listener. This shame and vulnerability together causes people to shut down and feel extremely uncomfortable in opening up to others, opting to instead close themselves off to any emotion whatsoever.

Finally from this video, I was able to understand courage, compassion, and connection, and the ways in which that can increase an individual's quality of life as a whole, seemingly disabling shame from having a lasting negative impact. In this sense, courage is described as the ability to speak one's mind with their heart, which is derived from its Latin roots. Ordinary courage can come from our willingness to be vulnerable and tell our own stories, rather than confining ourselves. Compassion is created and showed when connections are formed through our willingness to listen and hear the stories of others while they may be at their most vulnerable. While listening to shame can be shaming for us, being open to listen to others can create unbreakable bonds between individuals, ultimately having the ability to create empathy between them, which was earlier discovered to eliminate shame.

Through studying this video, I have been able to drastically increase my understanding of both shame and empathy, which was my original intent as I began this assessment. However, I was also able to gain an in-depth idea of the many different factors that play into these emotions such as connection and compassion. With this video, I plan to further extend the scope of my research so that I may have the ability to form meaningful connections with students in my future classroom setting. In forming these relationships, as well as having both empathy and compassion with students, I will have a much greater chance of avoiding shame in my classroom, creating the productive and safe learning environment that I have come to support.

Notes:

What is shame? How does it work?

We all have it

No one wants to talk about it

The less we talk, the more power we give it

Why are you studying shame?

Connection - our ability to forge meaningful authentic relationships with others...the essence of a human experience; gives meaning to our lives

Empathy moves us toward these relationships

Shame - opposite results; tears apart relationships

Understanding connection - what anchors both ends?

Vulnerability: 'knob on a stereo that controls'

Being open with people

Be vulnerable with people in their own vulnerability

Shame and vulnerability: negative end of spectrum...people shut down and do not feel comfortable opening up to others, instead closing themselves off

Central Idea: Courage, compassion, connection

Courage - to speak your mind with your heart (simple definition from Latin roots)

Ordinary courage - telling our story...how do we do that in a culture of fear?

Shame --> fear, blame, and disconnection

Fear of not fitting in - not telling stories of the imperfect life moments

People haven't changed, the culture has - we are wired to tell our stories. We are not born to keep secrets

How do we embrace and share imperfections that make us who we are in a culture where we are afraid to fit in?

Compassion - stories are only a form of connection when someone is listening and hearing us

Must find compassion to hear other people's stories

Shame is universal, but triggered differently with each person

If you were to share your story with me, how do I stay open, as opposed to moving to blame and judgement

Listening to shame can be shaming for us