

PEDAGOGY OF EMPATHY CAS TEACHING ACADEMY



COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

em • pa • thy

noun

The ability to step into the shoes of another person, aiming to understand their feelings and perspectives, and to use that understanding to guide our actions.

For our purposes we will define empathy as "a set of interrelated cognitive, behavioral, and biological responses that allow humans to feel, imagine, or explore the position of entities outside of themselves." (Davidson, 2015)

What is a pedagogy of empathy?



COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

UNIVERSITY OF
Nebraska
Lincoln

What problem are we trying to solve

- Observing a number of problematic student behaviors (lack of engagement, absenteeism, late work)
- Recognizing the need to reframe "problematic" as "symptomatic" (related to allostatic load)
- Looking for a pedagogical framework to understand and respond appropriately, know when to refer out to other experts



LIMITS OF EMPATHETIC PEDAGOGY



COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

UNIVERSITY OF
Nebraska
Lincoln

Establishing limits and boundaries

- In order to be useful to practitioners, clearly defined limits and boundaries are necessary
- It does not and cannot mean “anything goes”
- Relies on articulating a sustainable balance between flexibility and rigor
- Application and limits will look different depending on the size of the class, the learning objectives, etc.



Boundaries = expectations

- Safeguards to overextending yourself
- Define roles in relationship
- Communicate acceptable and unacceptable behaviors
- Parameters for knowing what to expect
- Create clarity
- Create feelings of safety



How to set boundaries

1. Communicate the boundary

- Explicitly state the boundary in writing in the syllabus.
- If you want, consider initially explaining why you are setting the boundary.

2. Uphold the boundary

- It is possible to validate the student's experience, show genuine care for them, and uphold a boundary at the same time. (See handout for scripts.)



An empathetic approach to pedagogy does the following:

- Affirms and normalizes student struggle
- Articulates clear expectations and reduces the "invisible curriculum"
- Provides support for individual learners
- Defines and explains the limits of support offered within the course.

What does it mean to enact a pedagogy of empathy?

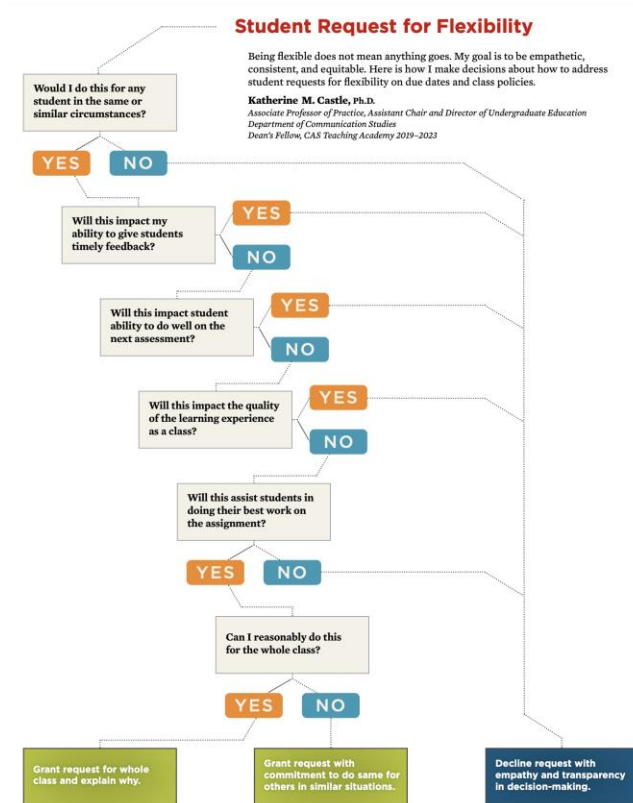
- When appropriate: reframe “problematic” behavior as “symptomatic” behavior.
- Centers and prioritizes learning objectives and pathways to mastery rather than grade achievement alone (objective-centered not instructor-centered).
- Aims to lower unproductive student anxiety (e.g. untimely feedback, high stakes text anxiety).
- Looks for ways to open additional, parallel avenues of engagement and reduces bias toward assertive and articulate student engagement.
- Establishes learning as a partnership between instructor and student.

Empathetic Pedagogy Example 1: Discussion Preparation Notes

Version 1	Version 2	Version 3	Version 4	Current
<p>Unannounced Quiz: Tell me three things you learned</p> <p><i>I like the way she quizzes. They are low-pressure. I read to understand the main ideas instead of being stressed about remembering 'the right' things</i></p>	<p>Turn in your reading notes – Random and unannounced throughout the semester</p> <p><i>I never took notes before. The essay exams are so much easier when I take notes. I started doing this in my other classes, too.</i></p>	<p>Turn in Notes: Three key ideas from reading – Random throughout the semester</p> <p><i>I really like this. At first it felt overwhelming and like a hassle, but now I have come up with a system and it is helping me stay on top of the class.</i></p>	<p>Turn in your reading notes – Three key Ideas + Discussion Question</p> <p><i>I actually feel better prepared to engage in the discussion prompts that you give us in class. I think I ask better questions in class, too.</i></p>	<p>Turn in Notes - Three Key Ideas + DQ+ Practical Application</p> <p><i>This class is really pushing me outside my comfort zone. I think more deeply about the reading and am re- considering how I think about my experiences</i></p>



Empathetic Pedagogy Example 2: Equitable Flexibility Guidance



COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Perspective-taking exercise:

- Imagine yourself as a student juggling five different courses, work, extracurriculars, family commitments/needs, mental health concerns. How might this context affect your experience of:
 - Attendance policies
 - Late work policies
 - Canvas Design
- Now, think about how you might be able to address those issues as the instructor. Is there a way to respond that allows students to meet the learning objectives of the course according to the principles of an empathetic pedagogy?



QUESTIONS?



COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

UNIVERSITY OF
Nebraska
Lincoln



COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES