Responsibility, Respect, and Relationships:
Creating Emotionally Safe Classrooms

A Distance Learning Graduate Course
Featuring Dr. Jane Bluestein
and
Dr. William Glasser

Course Syllabus

This course was created with the cooperation of:

Fenton Avenue Charter School
99th Street Elementary School
Figueroa Street Elementary School
Charles Maclay Middle School
Placer High School
Heartland Area Education Agency
West Virginia School Counselors Association
The Educator Training Center

Course Instructors

Dr. Jane Bluestein is author of *Creating Emotionally Safe Schools*, *Being a Successful Teacher, Parents, Teens and Boundaries, Parents in a Pressure Cooke*r, and the critically acclaimed *Mentors, Masters and Mrs. MacGrego*r. Dr. Bluestein, an internationally renowned speaker, is on the board of the National Council for Self-Esteem, and specializes in programs that promote positive adult-child relationships. Dr. Bluestein is president of Instructional Support Services, a company specializing in teacher training materials and workshops.

Dr. William Glasser is well known for his many books on mental health and education including, *Every Student Can Succeed*, *Reality Therap*y, *Schools Without Failur*e, *Positive Addiction*, *Choice Theory*, *Choice Theory in the Classroo*m, *The Quality School,* an*d The Quality School Teache*r, an*d Choice Theory: A New Psychology of Personal Freedom.* Dr. Glasser is the founder and president of the William Glasser Institute, an organization formed to educate the public about Choice Theory and its applications.

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Rationale

The Need for Emotional Safety
By Jane Bluestein, Ph.D.

What makes school a caring place to be? In recent years, there has been a tremendous emphasis on physical safety, often associated with the presence of metal detectors and video monitors. But while this focus may be understandable, there is evidence that such a presence can actually be more unnerving than comforting to students and staff (some of whom see these devices as evidence that there is more to fear than they imagined, or, as some report, simple as inconveniences that a truly determined student could circumvent). What if, instead, we take a harder look at the contribution made by school policies and accepted practices, and at the way individuals connect, interact, and relate to one another? What if we examine the opportunities for success for each student, and the impact such experiences have on how schools feel for kids? What if we shift our attention to the degree to which each child (and teacher) in a school environment feels visible, valued, and supported? For despite any effectiveness or good intentions that security devices may have, in a caring and supportive environment, that is, an environment in which the emotional well-being of the entire school community is provided for, these elements become somewhat redundant.

I don't think we can expect to see sensational media accounts any time soon of the student who is berated for a wrong answer or a child who is teased and humiliated by her peers, unless, of course, these events end in violence. And no one would presume to compare the relative traumas of a scolding to a shooting, make no mistake about it, these and countless other interactions compromise and erode the emotional climate in schools on a daily basis. These incidents, and the hundreds of other situations, techniques, and exchanges that do not support basic safety needs, may be harder to spot, document, or measure, but they deserve our attention, and they deserve to be taken seriously, for they, too, leave scars.

In a hierarchy of more than two dozen human needs complied from the works of Abraham Maslow, Alice Miller, Andrew Weil, and William Glasser, "safety" is number two, just behind basic survival needs, like food and shelter. The need for safety – and I want to stress that I am talking about emotional and psychological safety as well as the absence of physical threat – is so basic and important, that unless this need is met, all

other higher-level needs, like the need for belonging, success and purpose, to name a few, become extremely difficult to satisfy or achieve in healthy ways. Oh sure, most of us become masters of adaptation, and anyone who spends much time with kids with a history of not feeling safe can probably reel off a long list of behaviors and attitudes used to compensate. But this is hardly the same as learning, inquiring, and relating, much less self-actualizing, and few parents or educators would suggest that we should be satisfied with compensation.

We react to tragedy wanting to know <u>why</u>, but I want us to start asking different questions before another tragic event occurs. For the moment, at least, I'm far more concerned with how schools feel, and if kids – and their teacher – are not looking forward to school each day as an exciting and enriching opportunity to meet their higher-level needs. I want to know what we can do to make it right. I want to know how kids and grownups are treated in school, and the degree to which all are (and feel) valued. I want to know what kinds of opportunities exist for <u>all</u> students, not just for learning, but for success as well. I want to know how we are listening, and how we let kids know they are worth listening to. I want to know how we're supporting personal and social development, and teaching kids ways to deal with problems and hurt feelings with out hurting themselves or anyone else. I want to know, if I walk into your classroom as a student, if I will be welcome there, regardless of my previous grades and tests scores, my appearance, my personality, my learning preferences or how much I love your subject area. As counselor Barbara Wills reminds, "Emotional safety is in the eye of the beholder. A place can be very safe, but if the student perceives it not to be, it isn't."

Much of the research I uncovered and many of the people I interviewed point to large numbers of individuals who are working very specifically on quests that will ultimately contribute to advances and improvements in emotional safety. And I have seen much evidence to suggest that as we strive to eliminate the emotional, psychological and even instructional injuries that children sustain in schools, we're going to see fewer and fewer headlines of horrifying violence, despite numerous other influences that could, indeed, lead children this direction.

Course Title

"Responsibility, Respect, and Relationships:
Creating Emotionally Safe Classrooms"

Course Description

"Responsibility, Respect, and Relationships: Creating Emotionally Safe Classrooms" is a course designed to teach school professionals the knowledge and skills to provide their students an emotionally safe classroom that fosters responsible behavior and improved academic performance. The course is based on the textbook *Creating Emotionally Safe Schools* by Dr. Jane Bluestein. Course content is based on the premise that emotional safety is a prerequisite to effective teaching and learning.

Course participants will learn how to make their classrooms more emotionally safe by:

- understanding emotional and psychological safety needs of their students.
- creating a classroom atmosphere that is caring and encouraging.
- teaching lessons that are need satisfying and that engage students.
- eliminating practices that result in student fear and apprehension.
- teaching to include students' various learning styles and strengths.
- building self-management through choices, boundaries, and negotiation.
- teaching social skills needed to develop positive, supportive relationships.
- identifying, reaching out to, and helping students in crisis.
- promoting responsible behavior with a non-punitive approach to discipline.
- using mistakes and misdeeds as opportunities to teach rather than punish.

Course learning activities guide participants through an assessment and analysis of the current level of emotional safety in their classrooms. Based on their analysis, participants will then develop, implement, and evaluate a program of learning activities designed to increase emotional safety, caring relationships, responsible behavior, and academic achievement.

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Course Goals

The goals of this course are: 1.) to provide participants with a professional opportunity to study the effects of emotional safety on student learning; 2.) to have participants analyze course content presented in the text and videos in terms of their own teaching situation, and 3.) to have participants utilize course content in creating an emotionally safe learning environment for their students that promotes responsible behavior and academic achievement.

Course Outline

In the following outline, the term "Course of Study" refers to a study plan that includes required reading, video viewing, discussion questions, learning activities, worksheets, application assignments, and progress reports.

Session #1: Emotional Safety and Student Achievement

Objectives: To have participants understand course goals and objectives; to have participants determine and analyze the current level of emotional safety in their own teaching situations.

Video Program #1: "Creating Emotionally Safe Classrooms: An Introduction."

Session #2: Physical, Psychological, and Emotional Safety in Today's Schools

Objectives: To have participants understand how emotional safety relates to brain function research; to have participants be able to identify student behaviors that indicate the absence of emotional safety.

Video Program #2: "Emotional Safety and Today's Schools."

Session #3: The Lack of Emotional Safety and Compensating Student Behaviors

Objectives: To have participants understand why students choose irresponsible behaviors to compensate for lack of emotional safety: acting out, engaging in violent behavior, withdrawing, lying, and non-conforming.

Video Program #3: "Emotional Safety and Student Behavior."

Session #4: Emotional Safety as a Prerequisite to Effective Teaching

Objectives: To have participants understand the effect emotional safety has on the classroom learning environment; to have participants understand the ineffective responses to the lack of emotional safety: over-simplification; reactivity, scarcity thinking, and product orientation.

Video Program #4: "Emotional Safety and Effective Teaching"

Session #5 Emotional Safety and Effective Behavior Management

Objectives: To have participants understand how emotional safety is related to classroom discipline; to have participants understand how to implement a discipline plan based on boundaries instead of rules; to have participants apply these concepts in their own teaching situations.

Video Program #5: "Classroom Control, Who's Responsible?"

Session #6: Punishment and Its Relationship to Emotional Safety and Responsible Student Behavior

Objectives: To have participants understand the emotional impact that punishment has on students and student behavior; to have participants develop a non-punitive, emotionally safe approach to classroom management.

Video Program #6: "Punishment Doesn't Help."

Session #7: Creating and Maintaining Emotional Safety Through the Use of Positive Boundaries

Objectives: To have participants understand the relationship between using positive boundaries and teaching students responsible behavior; to have participants develop and utilize positively stated boundaries in their teaching situations.

Video Program #7: "Responsibility and Boundaries."

Session #8: Providing Students Choices to Improve Academic Achievement and Responsible Behavior

Objectives: To have participants analyze the extent to which they currently provide students' choices regarding their learning and behavior; to have participants understand and utilize guidelines for the effective use of choices and negotiation with their students.

Video Program #8: "Using Choices to Promote Learning and Responsible Behavior."

Session #9: Fear of Failure and Its Effect on Student Behavior and Learning

Objectives: To have participants examine the psychological and emotional implications of failure on student behavior and learning; to have participants evaluate the effectiveness of their current approach to assessing student progress with respect to their emotionally safety.

Video Program #9: "Responsibility, Learning and the Fear of Failure."

Session #10: Teaching to Accommodate Various Learning Styles and Strengths

Objectives: To have participants gain an understanding of how teaching to accommodate various learning styles enhances students' feelings of emotional safety; to have participants examine, analyze, and plan to improve their instruction in light of students differing learning styles.

Video Program #10: "Teaching to Learning Styles, Part One."

Session #11: Teaching Techniques that Accommodate a Variety of Learning Styles

Objectives: To have participants develop and utilize teaching strategies that address multiple student learning styles; to have participants analyze the effectiveness of the teaching techniques that they created and implemented.

Video Program #11: "Teaching to Learning Styles, Part Two."

Session #12: Violent or Self-Destructive Behavior as a Result of an Absence of Emotional Safety

Objectives: To have participants examine why students in crisis seek safety through irresponsible and destructive behaviors; to have participants learn how to identify students in crisis and help them meet their needs through constructive rather than destructive behaviors.

Video Program #12: "Helping Students in Crisis, Part One."

Session #13: Strategies for Helping Students in Crisis

Objectives: To have participants understand effective and ineffective responses to crisis behaviors; to have participants develop a personal plan for helping students in crisis.

Video Program #13: "Helping Students in Crisis, Part Two."

Session #14: A Choice Theory Explanation for the Increase of Violent Student Behavior

Objectives: To have participants understand how students' lack of supportive interpersonal connections with students or adults can lead to increased irresponsible and violent behavior.

Video Program #14: "The Lessons of Littleton, Part One."

Session #15: Choice Theory Strategies to Help Students in Crisis

Objectives: To have participants learn how to improve their relationships and strengthen their connections with students in crisis; to have participants develop a plan to help students in crisis through meeting their basic psychological needs.

Video Program #15: "The Lessons of Littleton, Part Two."

Participant Characteristics

This course is designed for teachers and administrators in grades kindergarten through twelve. Participants will have a bachelor's degree and a valid teacher credential (if applicable). There are no other prerequisites.

Instructional Materials

1. Text:

   Creating Emotionally Safe Schools. Jane Bluestein, Ph.D. Deerfield, FL: Health Communications, 2001.

2. Course Videos:

   All videos are 20-30 minutes in length and were produced in 2001. Dr. Bluestein is the instructor for videos 1-13 and Dr. Glasser is the instructor for videos 14 and 15.
   Video Program #1: "Creating Emotionally Safe Classrooms: An Introduction."
   Video Program #2: "Emotional Safety and Today's Schools."
   Video Program #3: "Emotional Safety and Student Behavior."
   Video Program #4: "Emotional Safety and Effective Teaching."
   Video Program #5: "Classroom Control, Who's Responsible?"
   Video Program #6: "Punishment Doesn't Help."
   Video Program #7: "Responsibility and Boundaries."
   Video Program #8: "Using Choices to Promote Learning and Responsible Behavior."
   Video Program #9:   "Responsibility, Learning and the Fear of Failure."
   Video Program #10: "Teaching to Learning Styles, Part One."
   Video Program #11: "Teaching to Learning Styles, Part Two."
   Video Program #12: "Helping Students in Crisis, Part One."
   Video Program #13: "Helping Students in Crisis, Part Two."
   Video Program #14: "The Lessons of Littleton, Part One."
   Video Program #15: "The Lessons of Littleton, Part Two."

3. Course of Study.
   This book contains summaries of course content, pre-video viewing activities, discussion questions, group activities, worksheets, classroom application assignments, and learning reports.
4. Supplemental Readings.
   Where appropriate, additional readings (articles, book excerpts, etc.) will be included in the Course of Study book.
5. Bibliography.
6. Recommended Reading and Internet Links.

Learning Activities

For each of the fifteen (15) sections of this course, participants will complete the following activities:

    a.) Read the assigned chapters of the course text.

    b.) Read supplemental articles in the course of study book.

    c.) Participate in a study/preparation activity with a colleague.

        NOTE: While benefits are greatest when participants take this course as a part of a study team, participants can successfully complete course requirements by working with a friend or colleague who is not enrolled in the course; or, by reflecting upon the material and considering how they might use it in their teaching situations.

    d.) View instructional videos.

    e.) Discuss (see above note) course material in terms of participants' own students.

    f.) Record summary of discussion activities in progress report

    g.) Design, implement, and evaluate an application of course content in their teaching situation.

        NOTE: If participants are taking this course during the summer or at a time when they do not have access to a classroom, they follow these directions with respect to classroom application projects.

        1. If they choose to design a classroom lesson or activity for their project, they design it for a class that they have had in the past.

        2. Instead of implementing their activity in a classroom, they share their activity design with a colleague and ask for their input.

        3. Based on the input received from their colleagues, they make whatever changes they feel are appropriate to improve their activity design.

    h.) Summarize classroom application design, application experience, and evaluation in progress report.

2. Submit a final paper.

Course Outcomes

Our courses been designed to provide a learning environment in which participants' individual and collaborative efforts result in positive change in the classroom. The courses are designed to promote a quality graduate educational experience through the attainment of the following outcomes:

To successfully complete the program, participants will:
1. Identify and assess the emotional and psychological safety needs of their students.
2. Identify and eliminate practices that result in student fear and apprehension.
3. Develop, implement, and demonstrate proficiency in teaching strategies designed to create a caring and encouraging learning climate in their classrooms.
4. Develop, implement, and demonstrate proficiency in teaching strategies and learning activities to increasing emotional safety.
5. Develop, implement, and evaluate strategies for building student self-management skills through choices, boundaries, and negotiation.
6. Develop, utilize, and demonstrate evaluative skills to critically analyze, adapt and continually improve instructional and managerial skills.
7. Develop and demonstrate skills to incorporate student self-evaluation in an approach to authentic and effective assessment.
8. Acquire and utilize the skills in building learning networks that they may continue to utilize as lifelong learners.

Course Assessment

Participant achievement will be measured by a combination of the following:

1. An evaluation of participant's 15 progress reports. (Outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.)
> Each progress report will be evaluated for:
> – Completeness and quality of responses.
> – Accuracy of information.
> – Appropriateness of classroom application.
> – Quality of reflection.

2. An evaluation of participant's professional paper. (Outcomes 6, 7, and 8.)
> The professional paper will be evaluated for:
> – Inclusion of required components.
> – Synthesis and analysis of course concepts.
> – Presentation in an organized, professional manner.

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