

Lesson One - Everyone is Going Through Something You Can't See

“ We are all walking around with experiences and struggles... and we sometimes think we're the only ones going through them. The reality is that we probably have a lot in common with what our friends and colleagues and neighbors are dealing with. – Kevin Love ”

CREATIVE ACTIVITY - LETTER WRITING

Lesson Intention:

After having a panic attack during a nationally televised basketball game, NBA player Kevin Love published a very brave and vulnerable article sharing his struggles with mental health. The outpouring of support that came from Kevin sharing his story was the inspiration for this curriculum. This lesson opens the door to talking about emotions in a school setting, a place where emotions are often not considered appropriate to share. In this activity, students will learn that everyone goes through difficult experiences in their lives, and they can't always see what others are going through. **Using Kevin's letter as a model for vulnerability, students are encouraged to express their emotions through writing.**

Learning Goals:

- Destigmatize emotions that are often labeled as negative by our culture.
- Raise awareness that students are not alone in their sadness or anxiety or challenging emotion.
- Develop an understanding of writing as a tool to express emotions.

In Preparation for Lesson:

- *Prior to teaching this lesson, watch all of the videos and read Kevin's letter, then write your own letter that you will share with your students.*
- *Have paper and pens or personal electronic devices (i.e. laptops, tablets, and Chromebooks) available for writing time.*

Materials for Lesson:

- [Featured Video \(2\) - Kevin Love, Lin-Manuel Miranda](#)
- [Lesson PowerPoint](#)
- [Additional Videos \(5\)](#)
- Lesson Plan (this document)
- [Kevin's Letter](#)
- [Student Examples](#)

Videos:

Featured Video:

1. This video introduces who Kevin Love is and shares the origin story for this program.
2. Kevin Love introduces the curriculum and describes the first lesson.
3. Lin-Manuel Miranda shares that his mom taught him that in his saddest times he can observe how he is feeling and draw on those emotions to inspire his writing.

Additional Videos:

1. Cathyana Marcel shares a letter to her brother who was incarcerated.
2. Charles Benitez shares a letter to his dad expressing anger and beginning to work on forgiving him.
3. Bryanna shares a letter to her brother who passed away.
4. Sienna shares a letter that she wrote as a senior in high school to her younger, middle school self about being bullied and feeling insecure.
5. May shares a letter that she wrote to her past/teenage self, offering herself hope and courage to get through a dark time.

Watch Videos:

<https://kevinlovetfund.org/for-teachers/lesson-one/>

Lesson Plan:

Display the 'welcome slide' from the Lesson 1 PowerPoint as you begin.

**Slide 1*

As discussed in the teacher training, remember to make the suggested language below authentic to yourself and meaningful for your students.

Launching the Lesson:

** Slide 2*

- Explain that this curriculum reframes the norms around emotion. Describe that you are willing to be vulnerable first.
- If time permits, hand out Kevin's letter for students to read.

Example of What You Could Say:

“Today we are going to begin a journey together that is really different than what we usually talk about in school. There are a lot of cultural norms around how emotions get expressed in school, where they get expressed, and which emotions are considered “good” and which ones are considered “bad.” We’re going to rethink a lot of those norms. We’ll have many examples of people sharing their emotions and stories with us. I am going to do this too.

We are going to start this project together by reading a very brave and vulnerable letter written by Kevin Love, an NBA basketball player.

(If time permits, hand out Kevin’s letter and allow students to read for a few minutes.)

After reading Kevin’s letter, we are going to watch a video or two where we can learn the power of using writing as a form of emotional expression.”

Notes on What You Plan to Say:

Play Guest Artist Videos:

Choose one or two videos to share with your students. The first video is helpful to share if you want to introduce Kevin and his story. The second video of Kevin is him speaking to the students to introduce the main idea of the curriculum – everyone is going through something you can’t see. He begins to destigmatize anxiety, depression and other emotions that have been historically labeled as “negative” by our society. After playing Kevin’s video(s), you can ask if the students have any questions or thoughts to share. After this initial discussion, play the additional guest artist video that you have chosen ahead of time that you think will resonate with your students.

Before you play the guest artist video, remember to give students a description of the video content, so that they can decide if they would like to view the video. The video descriptions are listed above each video. Prior to playing the videos, you will remind students – “Stories hold potential for various forms of connection to the people who hear them. This story may connect deeply to you if you have had a similar experience. In this video, (read the one sentence description that is above each video).”

Reflecting on Guest Artist Video:

- Reiterate the primary message from the videos – everyone is going through something we can't see.

Example of What You Could Say:

"These videos show different people bravely sharing their stories. Even though the stories are different, they share a similar message. Most of us do not always feel comfortable sharing when something hard has happened in our lives. Yet, difficult experiences are a part of life for all of us. Hopefully, hearing these stories can remind you that you are not alone."

- Make a personal connection to the videos and model your own vulnerability by sharing the letter that you wrote in preparation for this lesson. In the teacher training, we reviewed that this letter can be to someone you are angry with, to someone you miss, to someone who has passed away, to a part of yourself, or just a letter where you share a little bit about something in your life that was hard. You may want to share an experience of a time when you were going through something difficult and no one would have been able to tell just by looking at you.

Example of What You Could Say:

"For me, Kevin's letter reminded me of _____ (share an experience when you were also going through something difficult, but no one would have been able to tell this just by looking at you.) I want to share the letter I wrote about this experience."

- Read a part of your letter or your letter in its entirety. Then invite your students to make a personal connection to Kevin's letter or to your letter.

Example of What You Could Say:

"As you hear Kevin's story, the other guest artist's story, or my story, does it bring to mind something you've gone through that was challenging?"

Notes on What You Plan to Say:

Introducing the Creative Activity:

- Introduce the creative activity of letter writing. Offer a few example ideas to inspire the writing. Emphasize that the focus is not on grammar. Explain that you will join them and write another letter.

Example of What You Could Say:

“Kevin wrote a letter as a way of telling his story about the panic attack he had during a basketball game. Now, we’re going to write letters too. These are not letters you have to give to anyone. Don’t worry about grammar or punctuation or trying to make the letter sound good. This is not a graded assignment. This is just a chance to take something you have been thinking about and put it down on paper. This letter can be to someone you are angry with, someone you miss, someone who has passed away, a part of yourself you’d like to speak to, or just a letter where you share a little bit about something in your life that happened that was hard. You can take inspiration from Kevin’s letter and my letter to write about something in your life. Take a minute if you need to think about what you’d like to write about. We’re going to write the letter together for 15 minutes, without paying attention to grammar. Even though I already shared a letter with you, I have an idea for another letter that I am going to write along with you.”

Notes on What You Plan to Say:

Creative Activity:

*** Slide 3**

Students spend approximately 15 minutes writing their letter. You can write alongside your students, or you can walk around and help any students who may need extra support .

Lesson Closure:

- Invite students to share their letter (or part of their letter). Another way to invite students to share is to ask them how it felt to do this creative activity. The hope is that one or two students will share even a small section of their letter, but sharing is optional throughout the curriculum. Since this is the first lesson, it may take some time for the students to feel comfortable especially if they don't already know each other. The way to measure the success of the lesson and students' engagement is not through their sharing aloud, but through their willingness to write.
- Once the students are done sharing, you may feel that your students would benefit from a closure activity to assist them in feeling grounded so that they can return to the rest of their school day. Since this lesson asks students to drop into a place of vulnerability, please make sure to leave time to lead one of the grounding activities found under 'grounding activities after the lesson' at the bottom of our lessons page.

Example of What You Could Say:

"Okay, it's been fifteen minutes now, so let's stop writing and feel free to continue writing this letter later if you would like. A lot of people journal every day because they have so much on their minds, and it can feel good to put your thoughts on paper. Would anyone like to share what they wrote about? You can share by reading your whole letter, a part of your letter, by sharing the topic of what you wrote about, or also how it felt to do this activity.

Thank you for sharing some of what you wrote about. I want to make sure that before we move on through the rest of our day, we come back together for a moment to make sure that we feel grounded. Let's do one of the grounding activities that is suggested in this curriculum."

Notes on What You Plan to Say:

Supplemental Information:

If you or your students would like to learn more about the ideas in this lesson, additional resources and third party links are included below.

1. In 2018, Kevin wrote a letter for the Players' Tribune called "[Everyone is Going Through Something.](#)" He shares his experience with anxiety in an open and vulnerable way. Reading the letter will help students feel less alone if they are going through something similar. In September of 2020, Kevin wrote a second letter called "[To Anybody Going Through It](#)" where he shares more detail about his experience with depression.
2. DeMar DeRozan is an NBA player who has been open about his own struggle with depression. An important aspect of this curriculum is the idea that sharing our stories helps others to feel safe to share their story too. Kevin references the important role DeMar played in his own mental health journey in this article: "[The Many Dimensions of DeMar DeRozan.](#)" Students will also be inspired by reading DeMar's story in [this article](#) in The Bleacher Report.
3. In this [interview clip](#) on ESPN, Kevin describes his experience of having a panic attack during a basketball game and also explains the way the experience inspired him to seek support.
4. Kevin participated in an [important conversation](#) about sports and leadership with an expert panel including Chris Paul, Giannis Antetokounmpo, and President Obama. Kevin discusses his experience with anxiety and his desire to destigmatize mental health concerns.