

Lesson Two – From Silencing and Stuffing to Expressing and Honoring

“ You will lose someone you can’t live without, and your heart will be badly broken, and the bad news is that you never completely get over the loss of your beloved. But this is also the good news. They live forever in your broken heart that doesn’t seal back up. And you come through. It’s like having a broken leg that never heals perfectly—that still hurts when the weather gets cold, but you learn to dance with the limp.

– Anne Lamott

”

CREATIVE ACTIVITY – “I Could Tell You...” Poem

Lesson Intention:

We’re all taught that some feelings are “good” and some are “bad.” We learn rules and roles about how to manage emotions in our families, schools, and communities. **Because of the often unspoken norms that are reinforced in our society, many of us were taught to stuff and silence emotions such as fear and anger that are often seen as negative.** Norms within certain contexts, like athletics, also impact whether or not people feel comfortable expressing emotions. As a former high school athlete, Kevin is a good example of someone who felt the expectation to be “strong” or “tough” not only physically but emotionally as well. Traditional rules and roles reinforce this idea that feelings need to be controlled, rather than expressed and honored. Today’s lesson models the importance of expressing emotions in healthy ways.

Learning Goals:

- Recognize that most people are not encouraged to express their emotions.
- Understand the way traditional norms have influenced which emotions students feel comfortable expressing.
- Understand the importance of honoring your emotions.

Materials for Lesson:

- [Featured Video \(1\) - Kevin & Leon](#)
- [Additional Videos \(8\)](#)
- Lesson Plan (this document)
- [Lesson PowerPoint](#)
- [Student Examples of Creative Projects](#)

In Preparation for Lesson:

Prior to teaching this lesson, review all of the guest artist videos, and choose one guest artist video that will resonate with your students. You will play this guest artist video in addition to the video where Kevin speaks with a colleague about gender rules and roles. Also, write your own "I could tell you..." poem 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.

Videos:

Featured Video:

Kevin and Leon describe the way gender rules and roles have impacted their ability to express emotion.

Additional Videos:

1. Hussain Manawer reads a poem about his mom and offers advice to students on how to write their own "I Could Tell You" poems.
2. Charles Benitez shares a poem he wrote about his connection with his mom who passed away after her battle with cancer.
3. Jacquay reads her poem about struggling with mental health challenges since she was young.
4. Lizardo Reyes Jr. reads a poem about his late father who struggled with alcoholism.
5. Kennedy shares her poem about 'the weight' she has carried in her life including the anxiety she experienced during the pandemic and how much it helps her to know she isn't alone in this experience.
6. Jaslene shares a poem she wrote to honor her mom's memory after her mom passed away.
7. Adam shares his poem and reflects on the way reading and writing poetry helps him feel less alone.
8. Hannah, an academic counselor for University of Texas Athletics, shares a poem where she reflects on her journey navigating a health challenge while living abroad.
9. Peyton shares a poem she wrote about the way a mass shooting impacted her life, and how difficult it was to support others when she was feeling so much fear.
10. Reychelle shares her writing about moving from one country to another, and the way this experience shaped her identity.
11. Nana, a volunteer from Ghana who works with a non-profit organization called FromHearts2Hands, shares a poem about travel and her love for where she comes from.
12. Seuri, a teacher from a remote village in Tanzania, shares how he was physically abused as a child, and how this experience led to his determination to keep his students safe as the trusted adult in the classroom.

Watch Videos:

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

Lesson Plan:

Display the 'welcome slide' from the Lesson 2 PowerPoint as you begin.

**Slide 1*

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

Launching the Lesson:

- Introduce the idea that society often teaches people to avoid or minimize emotions. Educators will help students understand the way traditional norms have influenced which emotions they feel comfortable expressing and will also highlight the importance of honoring emotions instead of pushing them away.

** Slide 2*

Example of What You Could Say:

"Today we are going to explore the reason why we don't often talk about emotion in our society. We have been taught that certain emotions are more acceptable to share than others. Of course, this depends on our particular culture. For example, in some cultures, we may feel more comfortable sharing happier or more 'positive' emotions than 'negative' emotions such as sadness, fear, or anger. I'm going to share a video of Kevin speaking with a colleague about the way gender roles and rules impacted their comfort with expressing emotion as they were growing up."

Notes on What You Plan to Say:

Play Video Number One:

Play the video of Kevin's conversation with his colleague, Leon. In this video, Kevin and Leon describe the way gender rules and roles have impacted their ability to express emotion.

Reflection on Video Number One:

Share a personal connection about the way rules and roles have impacted *your* freedom to express emotion, whether this be in your family, in school, or in the workplace. For example, you may feel pressure to put on a 'brave' face and hide your emotions from others.

Examples of What You Could Say:

"This video brought up a few things for me that I would like to share. Societal roles impacted what I learned about how I was allowed to express or not express emotion. For example..."

Notes on What You Plan to Say:

Introduce Video Two/Guest Artist Video:

- Introduce the guest artist video to offer students an example of the poem they will write for the creative activity. There are multiple videos to choose from. Select the video that you feel would most resonate with your students.

Example of What You Could Say:

"Now we are going to explore one way that people have found to break out of the family and cultural rules and roles, and learn to express emotion through creative expression. In this next video, a guest artist shared a poem that allowed him to talk about something that has been really difficult to put into words. Poetry helped him to tell his story, and to do so without having to share every detail."

Notes on What You Plan to Say:

Play Video Two/Guest Artist Video:

The guest artist models the creative activity by sharing a poem about a challenging life experience.

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 video, 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 the video)."

Introduce the Creative Activity:

- Share your example poem with the class.

Example of What You Could Say:

"The artist in the video shared a method for writing a poem, using the phrase 'I could tell you...' as an anchor for their writing. I was a bit nervous to write a poem myself, but watching this video inspired me to try to be more vulnerable than I normally would. I would like to share what I wrote with you." (*Read your poem.*)

Notes on What You Plan to Say:

- Invite students to think about a story or experience that is important to them and one that holds a lot of emotion. Describe the way the phrase “I could tell you.....” will serve as an anchor for their poem.

Example of What You Could Say:

“I want you to think of an important memory, something you went through in your life that was challenging. It can be anything. Even if it is something you don’t usually talk about in school. Use the phrase ‘I could tell you...’ as your starting point for this poem. If you feel stuck, you can simply return back to the phrase. Do not worry about rhyming, grammar, or making a polished final product, just focus on expressing your emotions and following your stream of consciousness. We will write for about 15 minutes. You will get to choose if you want to share what you’ve written. It is completely up to you.”

Notes on What You Plan to Say:

Creative Activity:

**Slide 3*

Students are invited to write a poem that begins with the sentence stem “I could tell you...” This phrase becomes the anchor for the entire poem. If the students get stuck, they can simply go back and write this phrase “I could tell you...” again and see what else comes up for them. The goal of writing the poem is not to create a cohesive final product, but instead, to prioritize the process of connecting to emotions and expressing feelings through the writing.

Please plan to offer your students at least 15 minutes to work on this creative activity. If you see that they are still engaged, and you have the time, let them write for five minutes longer.

Lesson Closure:

- After about 15 minutes of writing, bring the class together again. While the students are doing this activity, please be aware if any need additional support.
- Once the students are done sharing, remind them that there are additional resources on the Kevin Love Fund website, and encourage them to let you know if they feel like they need additional support.
- Lead students in a closure activity of your choice to assist them in feeling grounded. 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:

"In about two minutes we will pause in our writing, put our pens and pencils down and come back together again as a group.

Ok. Let's stop writing. You don't need to be completely finished, and you can always return to your writing again later. I know it might be difficult to write about the story you just told, and I appreciate you trying this activity. There are several ways we can share if we would like to. Would anyone like to either read what they wrote, share a part of what they wrote, or even just share what the topic was about? Another way to share is to say how it felt to do this writing activity.

"Thank you for sharing. As a reminder, there are student resources on the Kevin Love Fund website, and if you feel you need additional support, please let me know.

I also 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... (*lead students in a grounding activity or play 'Lengthened Exhale Breathing' video*).

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. One article that does a particularly good job exploring this topic is: "Today's Masculinity is Stifling" by Sarah Rich in [The Atlantic](#).
2. Black feminist and cultural critic Bell Hooks has written two books that speak to the key learning goals for this lesson. Teachers and students who want to explore this topic in greater depth might be interested in reading: *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity* and *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity and Love*.
3. Megan Boler's book *Feeling Power: Emotions and Education* describes the way emotions are regulated in schools. She argues that unspoken norms are reinforced from the very start of schooling and eventually the rules are self-regulated by the children themselves. Teachers are also impacted by these norms, and they carry many rules about emotional expression from their own schooling into their teaching, continuing this cycle of regulation.
4. In her book *Exploring Masculinities: Identity, Inequality, Continuity and Change* C. J. Pascoe takes a closer look at the way cultural expectations of masculinity impact emotional regulation.
5. In the same way that boys and men receive messages about how they should or should not express emotions, women are also impacted by cultural messaging. If students want to read more about this, they can explore resources that speak to women's emotions. They may be interested in reading recently published book on the myth of the strong Black woman: *Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen: The Emotional Lives of Black Women*. There is also ample research on the way gender stereotypes perpetuate myths related to emotional expression. This article provides a helpful introduction to this topic: [Men are just as emotional as women: New research debunks gender stereotypes](#).