Trauma, Attachment, Educators, and Ted Lasso: The Importance of Relationships and Connection

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Abstract

The TV show *Ted Lasso* provided a unique and insightful lens into the importance of developing trust and relationships between teachers and students. This article underscores the importance of developing relationships and attachment in classrooms, particularly with students of trauma and various mental health challenges. I explore specific moments within the show that drew connections between Ted Lasso's personality, coaching style, and attachment style to those that exist within the classroom. Teachers can adopt these strategies to foster safe, supportive, and trauma-informed environments for their students while developing positive connections and trust. This article provides a look into how Ted Lasso builds connections through the employment of core counseling techniques such as empathy, patience, tone, cadence, and consistency to build connections. This article demonstrates that educators can utilize similar techniques to build trust with students who may struggle due to trauma or mental health issues. I examine the importance of developing trust and positive relationships with students that are crucial for social and emotional regulation and academic success. Schools must provide teachers with knowledge, tools, and training to better address the growing and complex emotional needs of students. By integrating core counseling concepts into practice, teachers will be better positioned to meet student needs. This article suggests that, like Ted Lasso, a blend of kindness, insight, and emotional intelligence, can provide teachers with skills to transform their classrooms to foster trust, understanding, and a trauma-informed approach to teaching and building relationships.

Keywords: relationships, student-teacher connections, attachment, trauma, trust, ACEs

Educators are tasked with a complex, rewarding, and difficult job. Their job is to provide an education to all students and help prepare their students for success in the present and preparation for future success. By sharing knowledge and skills that students can take with them in one way, shape, or form, educators are meeting those tasks each and every day. Whether educators are working in private or public educational settings, in elementary, secondary, or higher education, the difficulty, complexity, and responsibility are equally as great. As noted, the role that educators play, on a basic level, is to provide students with learning opportunities with the intent of helping them transfer that knowledge to future tasks. There are many qualities, that I am sure could be debated, that an educator must have in order to stand with students and provide the knowledge they need. However, the question has to be asked, not of what the educator can provide to students, but what has to be present in the student for an educator to be successful in their ability to reach and engage with a student and have the student learn?

Garner (2007) discussed cognitions that are needed in order for a student to learn. Garner illustrated that cognitive structures need to be present such as "comparative thinking structures, symbolic representation structures, and logical reasoning structures" (p. 2). Garner talked about cognitive structures being used to organize information and to analyze patterns to identify relationships and asked the very question posed at the beginning of this article, what is needed for a student to learn? The goal of this article is to advocate for another concept to be added to the skill sets described by Garner and be in the forefront in the minds of educators. That is to provide educators with the strategies and knowledge about what students need to learn and to further make the case for four other components equally important to learning and classroom engagement: trust, attachment, relationships, and connection. Naturally, a key to success for teachers and their students is the ability of educators to implement effective classroom strategies for building the four components.

Before I get to the inspiration for this article, I feel that it is important to start with an observation. It appears that the power of positive attachment and the development of relationships and trust with students is often underestimated. Each educator, I believe, understands that these concepts are important, but some do not necessarily understand the degree to which these are critical to not only child development, but also to that of academic growth. Attachment, relationships, trust, and connections help students grow and learn. Specifically, through the lens of child development, relationships and attachment are critical to the life cycle and development of a child in that attachments developed in infancy, assist in determining attachment styles and relationships through the individual's entire life cycle (Beebe & Lachmann, 2014). To illustrate this point and to get into the inspiration for this article, I will take a step back several months prior to my sitting in front of the computer to put these ideas together.

Inspiration for My Article

It was not long ago that I found myself needing to decompress and practice some "self-care" after a really long week. As the definition of a difficult week is subjective and may differ from person-to-person or situation-to-situation, for myself as a mental health clinician in a private practice and a school mental health counselor for a public school, this particular week was one of those weeks filled with client and student difficulties, 504 and IEP meetings, and continued work on a doctoral dissertation. In my quest to "unplug" from the world for a bit, I did what so many people do in this situation. Rather than going outside for a walk or taking in the beauty of mother nature, I found myself engaging in that age old activity of watching television. With the type of week that I had experienced, my goal was to find a movie or a show to watch that would allow me to completely detach from the world around me, for at least a short time. Lying in bed, I continued to hit the buttons on the remote searching for something to watch. As I navigated through the usual streaming services and live television, I stumbled onto Apple TV,

the streaming service owned by Apple Incorporated. I had gone back and forth until I happened to stumble upon the show, *Ted Lasso*.

I want to preface what the rest of this article will relay with an acknowledgment. I understand that with movies and shows there is a lot of work that goes into the script, increasing the understanding that there are significant differences between real life and imagination. As with any show, I envisioned several screenwriters sitting around a table, looking at story boards, talking back and forth with each other with a primary focus on gaining as much of an audience as they can get to increase profit, advertising, and the hope for future seasons and possible awards. They pre-determine the premise of the show, the character development, the characteristics and personality of the main characters, and everything the character will say (with the exception of extemporaneous and ad-libbed phrases). Ted Lasso stars actor Jason Sudeikis and follows his titular character, Ted Lasso, who is an American football coach from the mid-west of the United States who is offered and accepts a position to lead and coach a struggling British football (soccer) team in England. Expecting a simple comedy, much like Sudeikis' other comedic works, like the movies *Horrible Bosses*, *We're the Millers,* and *Hall Pass*, I resigned myself to the fact that this would be a show that I could plainly and simply "binge-watch" with a little laugh in between and would allow me that disconnection from the stress of the week that I was seeking.

How mistaken I was since, after two episodes, I was quickly thrown out of the realm of entertainment and locked into critical thought, drawing connections between the show and the experiences of educators and students in schools. As each episode progressed, by the end of the weekend, I had successfully watched all three seasons and drew connection after connection to the work that is being done in schools, and what we can do better as educators. The show became a testament to the power of connection, belonging, leadership, and attachment with many of the concepts being relatable to students, learning, and education. To better understand the connection between Ted Lasso and education, I feel it is incredibly

important, first, to describe my impression and perception of Ted as a character to include his

relationship style and how he interacts with the other characters in the show.

Ted is surrounded by an entire cast of characters some with overwhelming eccentricities

while others appear to be less eccentric and more normalized. Ted is able to consistently be

himself and holds onto his values, and at some points, shows the difficulties in coming to terms

with his past and his experiences. Simply put, one of the most important qualities about Ted is

that he is human. In being human, I do not mean this in terms of Ted being of a particular

species, but human in his capacity to feel. Ted understands that he does not know everything,

especially as it relates to British football. Despite this lack of knowledge, he looks past the

differences between American football and British football and returns to the basics of being

human and understanding the needs, possibilities, and potential of others. In understanding this,

he sees the potential and capabilities to succeed in the people around him and looks at ways

that the individual can positively impact the group and, vice-versa, the group on the individual.

This is evidenced by Ted's relationship with the team's equipment manager whom he

affectionately calls, "Nate the great." Although there have been articles written about *Ted Lasso*

and the combination of both comedy and drama, one of the most significant takeaways from the

show is Teds' ability to radically accept the moment, work through adverse events with

resiliency, accept people for who they are, meet people where they are at emotionally, and

show immense loyalty to his team and co-workers. Although amazing in his capacity to show an

unwavering ability to rise to the occasion for the people around him, Ted also struggles with his

own mental wellness and his own relationships.

Ted experienced the death of his father due to suicide at a young age as well as other

experiences in his life that ultimately helped shape who he has become. These experiences

have affected his relationships with others and, at times, his capacity to be present and mindful

in the moment, as when he begins to suffer from panic attacks. Two things that Ted does well is

his constant reflection regarding his bias and worldview and to seek out ways to channel biases

for his personal evolution and to further assist others. In subsequent seasons, Ted's sense of humor is found to psychologically be a defense mechanism to combat uncomfortable feelings and situations that he does not wish to acknowledge or confront. With all of Ted's qualities, there is one trait that Ted possesses that provided me with the most insight. This is Ted's ability to connect with others in various situations, especially his relationships with the more complicated characters in the show. Ted has remained consistent and patient in his approach, even when discounted by others in his attempts to connect. Ted's vast potential to feel empathy and to assist others in being the best versions of themselves through the power of connection and attachment became the mainstay of the show for me.

Oftentimes and like Ted, through worldviews, bias, a lack of knowledge and confidence, educators may feel unable to reach some of those more difficult students due to student mental illness or trauma. To meet the needs of these students, educators, like Ted, can work with individuals on their potential through developing positive connections and mental wellness. They can do this by not only understanding trauma, but by also developing some core counseling principles and effective strategies to develop rapport, connection, and attachment with some of the most difficult students while also recognizing their own relationship with trauma and adverse circumstances (Bhatnagar & Many, 2022, p. 520). This is where the intersection of trauma and education meets and outlines the critical role that educators play in minimizing the effects and sometimes the reversal of the ill effects of student experienced trauma and adverse experiences. Paramount to foundational understanding of educators meeting the social, emotional, and mental health needs of students, is understanding trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) on student attachment and relationship development and the implications they have on student learning and engagement.

Trauma

When a child experiences trauma, the autonomic nervous system becomes compromised. McCorry (2007) described the division of the autonomic nervous system in two

parts, the sympathetic nervous system which activates the fight, flight, freeze, and fawn response, and the parasympathetic nervous system that acts to calm after danger or when the adverse experience expires. In children, when there has been prolonged exposure to trauma or adverse experiences, the child remains in a constant state of fight, flight, freeze, or fawn and is not able to calm themselves bringing about a lack of learning, engagement, relationships, and potential future medical issues such as substance abuse, obesity, depression, and suicidality (Ross et al., 2020). To put this into plain terms, the sympathetic nervous system handles the stress response for the brain through activation of the limbic system consisting of the Amygdala and Hippocampus and the parasympathetic nervous system consisting of the Vagus Nerve serving to calm the nervous system when taxed. When children experience enhanced and prolonged periods of trauma and adverse experiences, especially during the periods of early childhood development without proper mitigation, the trauma and experiences become a part of the child's DNA and can become embedded into a child's biology (Garner & Yogman, 2021). There have been several studies that examined trauma in children and the effects that trauma plays on the developing mind, but few are more common and spoken about than the adverse childhood experiences (ACE) study (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023) and the Adolescent and Behavior Survey (ABES) study (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023).

In the 1990's, Kaiser Permanente and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) studied the effects of trauma on children. Known as the CDC-Kaiser Permanente adverse childhood experiences (ACE) study (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023), the researchers studied roughly 17,300 respondents who were adults at the time of the study, and asked about their childhood experiences. The ACE study examined respondents' childhood experiences with abuse, neglect, poverty, parental death, parental divorce, parental incarceration, familial mental health issues, and substance use. What this study concluded was that the more negative or adverse experiences a person had or the higher the ACEs score, the

higher the likelihood that the child would display both psychological and physiological issues later in life, to include significantly lower ages of mortality. In students, according to Sacks and Murphey (2018), the prevalence of students with 3 or more ACEs was very high estimated at 1 in 10 for most states with some states showing much higher at 1 in 7. As a result of ACEs, students with 3 or more ACEs are 3 times more likely to experience academic failure, 5 times more likely to exhibit attendance issues, and 6 times more likely to exhibit behavior problems (Sacks & Murphey, 2018).

In 2021, the CDC received federal funding through the Corona Virus Aid Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act providing emergency money to companies, citizens, industries, and corporations. With this money, the CDC sought to study the effects of COVID-19 on high school students. As a result of the study, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2023) found that 1 in 3 high school students suffered from mental health issues in the wake of COVID-19. Although the Adolescent Behaviors and Experiences Survey (ABES) study was generated to examine the effects of COVID-19 on students, the study indicated the trauma caused by the entire set of experiences of that time was having very negative effects on the mental health of millions of young Americans. Another study completed by the CDC, the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), produced a larger and more systemic issue than did the ABES study. Arguably, both studies indicated a significant issue with child, adolescent, and teen mental health. The CDC (2023) reported that data from the YRBS indicated 18% of high school students reported having a plan to die by suicide. The ABES study (CDC, 2023) data indicated that when students felt connected, they exhibited better mental health and that there was a positive correlation between connection and relationships to that of mental health.

In Ted Lasso, there is a time where Ted begins to experience panic attacks. The more stress that Ted was put under to win games and certain triggering events, the more pronounced the panic attacks became. This eventually led to his seeking help through the team doctor, Sharon. During these sessions, Ted escapes and avoids the pain and acceptance of his past

trauma through the use of humor. In sessions, Ted also begins to exhibit anger towards Dr. Sharon, as he is displacing and projecting his anger towards the doctor and not looking inward at himself. Through empathy, gentle challenging, and allowing Ted the space to feel safe in expressing his feelings, there was finally an emotional breakthrough.

Like students who have experienced adverse events and trauma, educators need to be in a position to provide empathy and a safe space for students to not only be physically safe, but to feel emotionally safe. As traumatic events compound within a child, felt-safety, described by Purvis et al. (2013), as the state in which a child feels capable of expressing and advocating for their needs, decreases and leaves the child unable to respond to sometimes even the most menial tasks. In order to feel safe and emotionally regulate, it is important to understand what happens to the body with experienced trauma and stress, which like Ted's panic attacks, the stress may manifest in emotional and behavioral challenges inside of the classroom. When a traumatic experience occurs, the limbic system becomes activated and sends a signal to the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis (HPA-axis). The brain tells the adrenal glands, a part of the endocrine system that there is a problem, and the adrenal glands produce cortisol. Cortisol acts, in generic terms, as the alarm system for the body and the brain. Cortisol plays a large role in how our bodies regulate different things and through the hypothalamus and pituitary glands, which are both located in the brain, not only assists with emotional regulation but also assists the human body in keeping inflammation down when and if needed, increases blood sugar, controls the sleep/wake cycle for individuals, and controls blood pressure (Bernard et al., 2015). When the stressor is over or the stressful or traumatic event has ended, cortisol levels in a child will decrease and return the body and emotional state back to its normal operating baseline.

In a child who experiences compounding traumatic events, that child's hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis responds to this stress along with the limbic system to produce the required cortisol in response to the stress of the event, but does not return to their baseline levels (Bernard et al., 2015). Simply put, if the brain is in a state of constant stress which

individuals who have experienced trauma and ACEs are, the alarm that is activated under the stress response, remains on and fully activated. This can lead to many different health problems such as obesity, difficulty sleeping, heart disease, but also creates psychological problems such as anxiety, depression, relational issues, and attachment issues within children that can affect their learning and overall academics (Bernard et al., 2015).

Attachment, Connection, and Childhood Development

In *Ted Lasso*, Ted has a strong connection and a strong attachment to his assistant coach, Coach Beard. Ted further connects to the other members of his coaching staff in a little group that he and Coach Beard affectionately called the Diamond Dogs. In this group, the members of the Diamond Dogs are able to express a problem or issue and receive feedback from the other members as to a possible solution. Ted's connection to his staff and willingness to provide the nurturing environment to the members of the team allow them to learn, grow, and maximize their potential for success.

With this in mind, we have to ask what it means to connect with someone. Many of us may describe connection through traditional definitions, while others may use the psychological term of having a "sense of connection" to someone. Martino et al. (2017) defined connection as a "feeling a part of something larger than yourself, feeling close to another person or group, feeling welcomed and understood" (p. 468). Many may simply define connection as a friendship, someone whom one can commiserate with, or a person with whom many interests are shared.

However, connection and attachment go deeper. In his experiments in the 1950's, Harlow (1958) studied the effects of attachment on monkeys. Harlow constructed two metallic monkeys, 1 constructed with fur that provided only warmth and comfort, and another wire monkey with no fur but food. What Harlow concluded was that the baby monkey would stay and remain with the furry monkey for comfort and nurture, although the monkey would leave the comfort of the metallic monkey covered in fur for the monkey that had food, the baby, once

finished eating, would go back to the furry metallic monkey. This experiment illustrated the importance of a nurturing adult or caregiver in a child's life.

Bowlby (1982) studied the concept of attachment and developed the attachment theory. In his theory, Bowlby defined attachment in children in 4 stages. He described the first stage as the pre-attachment stage in which a baby, aged birth to 3 months, would cry and the caregiver would respond. In his second stage, Bowlby described a child aged 6 weeks to 7 months as the indiscriminate stage in which the preference of a primary caregiver, usually a mother, is developed to meet the child's needs and trust is developed. The third stage, the discriminate stage, Bowlby described as a child, aged 7 to 11 months will have an established preference for one caregiver over another and will react by crying when the caregiver is not around and have increased anxiety around strangers. Bowlby described the fourth stage as the multiple attachment stage in which children 9 months or more begin to seek bonds with caregivers other than the primary parent or caregiver such as siblings, grandparents, and friends of parents. These stages when applied to the stages of lifecycle development provide a comprehensive and robust understanding of what can happen when healthy attachment is not met.

Erikson and Erikson (1998) discussed the different stages that a person goes through within their developmental trajectory. According to the Eriksons, there are 8 stages of development with different conflicts that a person needs to successfully meet and complete in order to progress to the next developmental stage. The stages were defined as 0–1 year, 1–3 years, 3–6 years, 7–11 years, 12–18 years, 19–29 years, 30–64 years, and 65 years plus (Erikson & Erikson, 1998). The conflicts that are associated with these ages are trust vs. mistrust, autonomy vs. shame and doubt, initiative vs. guilt, industry vs. inferiority, identity vs. confusion, intimacy vs. isolation, generativity vs. stagnation, and integrity vs. despair (Erikson, & Erikson, 1998). They theorized, as an example, that a child in the autonomy vs. shame or doubt stage, should they not develop a sense of independence and begin to ask themselves if they can do something by themselves or if they need the assistance of someone else, will not be

able to move onto the next stage of initiative vs. guilt, or asking themselves if they can do this and whether or not that this is going to create a sense of guilt if they are unsuccessful in their task (Erikson & Erikson, 1998). In looking at the stages of development along with the theory of attachment, it is easy to understand how a child who has not been nurtured, shown affection, or had their basic needs met, will not develop trust, and they themselves will not be able to show affection and may struggle to develop a healthy attachment style.

Attachment Styles

Remember when I described Ted as having his own issues that he is trying to work through? Well, Ted demonstrates an attachment style that neglects his own desires and tends to cater to others' needs. One of the things that Ted does when he first meets his boss and the team owner Rebecca, which at first glance appears to be a nice and friendly gesture, is he begins to bring her freshly cooked English biscuits to work every day. However, when put into the context of Ted and his attachment style and relationships, Ted is simply seeking the approval of someone and seeking security and consistency that was not provided to Ted as a child where he had his needs met inconsistently, otherwise known as a preoccupied attachment in adults or an anxious ambivalent style in children. Bowlby (1982) not only discussed the importance of attachment on a child and their development, but also put a description to 4 childhood and 4 adult attachment styles that each individual may possess depending on circumstances.

Bowlby (1982) described the four childhood attachment styles as secure, disorganized, anxious avoidant, and anxious ambivalent attachment styles. In adults, they may present as secure, fearful avoidant, dismissive, and pre-occupied attachment styles. What Bowlby theorized in describing these attachment styles is that secure children produce secure adults, disorganized children produce fearful avoidant adults, anxious avoidant children produce dismissive adults, and anxious ambivalent children make preoccupied attachment styles in adults. In other words, what we experience in childhood affects how we are as adults.

Attachment was not only examined by Bowlby but also Lawrence (2023) who looked at attachment and specifically identified and examined the bond with educators.

In their writing, Lawrence (2023) outlined the importance of educational attachment bonding as a way to influence and improve the relationship between teacher and student. Lawrence (2023) further examined the significant roles that teachers can play in nurturing and supporting students through positive connections and in an environment where the student can feel safe, valued, and have a sense of belonging. The importance of the concept of educational attachment bonding is underscored by educators factoring into 6 out of the 8 stages theorized by Erikson (Erikson & Erikson, 1998). Whether it be pre-school or at an institution of higher learning, educators are in the position to provide the care, concern, and empathy that many students do not have access to, due to maladaptive attachment styles that are formed as a result of trauma and adverse experiences. In order to provide students with the level of care they need, I believe it is incumbent upon us to also understand our own adult attachment styles, how our past experiences affect the way we teach, and, arguably most importantly, the ways in which we are able connect with students, develop trust, and mitigate the effects of ACEs and trauma. There are strategies that educators can take that will assist in developing those relationships.

Effective Educator Strategies

In one episode of *Ted Lasso*, Ted's boss Rebecca is giving a eulogy at the funeral of her father. Rebecca had a complex relationship with her parents and during the eulogy, Rebecca finds it difficult to find words to continue the eulogy and begins to sing "Never Gonna Die You Up" by British singer Rick Astley. Ted, who appears to be the consummate empath and does not let people struggle on their own, sometimes at a detriment to himself, also begins to sing leading to the entire church sanctuary singing along with Rebecca. Ted exhibited the core counseling skill of empathy. Empathy is when we put ourselves into the emotional state of the other person and feel, as much as we can feel, what the other person is feeling. Showing

empathy is arguably one of the first and most basic ways to begin to develop attachment and trust with a student. However, this is not the only counseling competency that translates well into a classroom for educators. As educators, one of the most important counseling theories is that of the person-centered approach.

Carl Rogers (1957) founded the person-centered therapeutic modality which looked at the building blocks of the therapist and client relationship. Rogers described six conditions that need to be met for the therapeutic relationship to be successful. The six conditions include: (a) psychological contact between the therapist and the client, (b) the incongruence of the client, (c) the congruence of the therapist, (d) unconditional positive regard as the complete and supportive acceptance of an individual regardless of what they say, what they do, or their experiences, (e) empathy regarding the clients perception and worldview, and (f) the client's perception of the therapist being congruent and showing the client that they care (Rogers, 1957). Educators can utilize core counseling techniques to assist in developing a positive relationship and trust with students. Many teachers may feel when looking at a person-centered approach, that if meeting a child with a soft tone, a slow cadence, and empathy that this means that there are no consequences being applied. As a person-centered modality, this technique does not mean you cannot challenge or hold a student accountable, it simply means that on a basic level, that someone is showing care and giving attention to another. This includes an educator providing validation of a feeling such as, "I am so sorry that you are working through that and you have every right to be upset," or, "This is a hard assignment and I can understand why you would be anxious when first looking at this assignment." Showing care, validation, and empathy are the hallmarks to building and maintaining relationships between educators and their students.

In contrast, as mentioned briefly, that challenging and holding someone accountable is a part of the effective strategies that educators can use to build trust and relationships with students. Purvis et al. (2013), in their development of the trauma-informed intervention Trust-

Based Relational Interventions (TBRI), suggested that through connection, which utilizes empathy, congruence, touch, eye contact, and levels of engagement as a foundation, trust can be built with children who experience trauma with those counseling competencies having a positive effect on their developmental trajectory and minimizing the long-term effects of trauma of the student. Purvis et al. (2013) described the necessity for caregivers, which includes teachers, to set and maintain boundaries, consistency, and natural consequences for actions that children may take. Many of the strategies that educators can use to develop relationships and attachment with students align with core counseling concepts of eye contact, mirroring a student, tone of voice, cadence of voice, active listening, and playful engagement.

Beebe and Lachmann (2014) discussed the importance of eye-contact and mirroring as they studied the relationship between infants and their mothers. In their study, Beebe and Lachmann put mothers and their infants into a laboratory room and asked them to play with one another without the use of toys. The researchers studied the eye contact and facial expressions between the two as they played then introduced separation between the two. They studied the play, separation, and reunification between them to establish the attachment connection and style. What Beebe and Lachmann found in their study was that through eye-contact, along with playfulness and other forms of communication, the child presented with a more secure attachment style. Beebe and Lachmann surmised that when eye-contact is made between a mother and child, a husband and wife, boyfriend and girlfriend, and teacher and student, it communicates that I am with you, I am joined with you, and I am connected to you (p. 21).

Muhlberger et al. (2011) further examined not just the role of eye-contact, but the impact of facial and non-verbal expressions on individuals. What the authors noted was that when the facial expression or non-verbal presentation was angry, the response of the other individual was also angry. In contrast, when the facial and nonverbal expression was happy, it assisted in providing the same and matching facial and non-verbal expression in the individual. The importance of showing students that their teachers are connected with them through eye-

contact, mirroring, and other non-verbal forms of communication expresses to a student that

has experienced trauma or ACEs, that you, the educator, are available for so much more than

simply academics. The teacher is showing that they are there to meet emotional and social

needs of the students as well. As important as eye-contact is, equally important is that of the

tone, volume, and cadence of voice when working with students who have experienced trauma

or ACEs.

In *Ted Lasso*, Ted's voice, for the most part and along with his quirkiness is inviting and

open. The tone, cadence, and volume between two people can set the stage for the rest of their

communication between one another. The power of voice cannot be underestimated and the

cadence, tone, and volume can match the situation and can provide both structure and nurture

(Finset & Piccolo, 2011). Mogel (2018) examined the role of voice in the development of a child

and that with appropriate voice and words, children learn and grow both socially and

emotionally. Using the power of lullabies as a starting point, Mogel examined infants in a

hospital setting and studied brain development and heart rate between children who were sung

to as opposed to those who were not. Mogel found that when the babies were sung to, the brain

grew larger and faster and that the infants heart rate and breathing patterns were also regulated

and steadied. If the power of voice, tone, and cadence can be so impactful to infants and the

physiological effects that soft tones can play on regulation, imagine briefly what impact this can

have on a student who has experienced trauma and ACEs.

As an example, an educator is interacting with a student, who moments prior, had an

argument with their friend. The student begins to kick their locker, crying, and is yelling at their

friend. Although in the moment, the educator may need to raise their voice to get the student's

attention, the goal would be that as the student's voice increases in volume, the educator's

voice would get softer in volume and slower in cadence. As the student begins to increase the

cadence of their speech, the educator would continue with a slow cadence and soft tone of their

speech. In this situation, the tone that the educator takes is one of nurture and understanding

and by controlling the tone, volume, and cadence of voice, the teacher is not only de-escalating the student, but is also role-modeling adaptive social behavior.

As discussed previously, core counseling competencies are there to assist a clinical counselor or therapist to develop an alliance with a student that is not unlike the alliance between a teacher and a student. Within this relationship of nurture and safety, the concept of playful engagement assists in maintaining the rapport between the teacher and the student and allows for both to examine the safety and trust of the relationship through fun.

Playful engagement encompasses a wide variety of techniques that can increase laughter, increase connection, and provide a safe and secure environment that can also assist in desensitizing the effects of trauma and ACEs. Purvis et al. (2013) discussed ways that individuals can interact through games, playful tones of voice, joking, and fun in-class activities that can be used to produce trust and build up relationships. Play and playful engagement is a great way to move past some of the obstacles that may be present between even the most resistant children and students. Play assists in building communication and at times allows for the play to take the place of words (Kaduson & Schaefer, 2006, p. 10). To further illustrate this point, Kaduson and Schaefer (2006) discussed the concept of abreaction, which they defined as the reliving of the traumatic event and the emotions surrounding the event. They explained how structured play and playful engagement can assist students and children in being able to work through these feelings and experiences when they have the difficulty in finding the words to talk about them. Students who have had experiences with trauma and ACEs often times have experienced fractures in relationships and attachment and through the application of playful tones, games, and genuine playful interactions, trust and relationships can be re-structured and developed. Obviously, teachers are not therapists, so they should not try to apply therapy. But, when students are having a difficult time, structured play along with other core counseling techniques can help students change their emotions.

Conclusion

In *Ted Lasso*, there is an episode where Rebecca's ex-husband Rupert walks into a bar and eventually, Ted and Rupert engage in a game of darts. It was decided that whomever wins the game will be able to decide the starting line-up for the team. As the game moves along, Ted finds himself in a position where he needs at least a triple twenty to win. In darts, a triple 20 is the dart hitting the inner circle for 20. Ted throws the first dart and hits his first twenty. As he throws his second dart, he begins to tell Rupert that he was always bullied in school and was always underestimated. Ted continues to describe a moment when he had driven his son to school and observed a quote by Walt Whitman that says, "Be curious, not judgmental." Ted proceeds to throw the second dart and gets the 2nd twenty point that he needs. Down to his last dart, Ted continues to tell Rupert that all of the people that used to make fun of him and belittle him, were judgmental and never held a curiosity about someone else. Ted says, "if they were curious, they'd ask questions" (Sudeikis, et al., 2020). As Ted throws the third dart, he hits the bullseye, winning the match, and states to Rupert that had he been more curious rather than judgmental, he would have known that Ted played darts in a league since he was a teenager.

Looking Beyond Behaviors

As educators, there are times when behaviors are observed of a student by a teacher that are often mislabeled (Pas & Bradshaw, 2014). Pas and Bradshaw (2014) argued that many educators lack the knowledge and training to differentiate between behavior and a trauma or crisis response. This at times can be difficult, since many behavior problems are the result of crisis or trauma. As educators, we need to be like Ted Lasso, and we need to learn to be more curious and less judgmental. Asking ourselves what the crux of the behavior may be or even asking students what they may need in the moment, is an important step in the right direction. Utilizing core counseling skills and a person-centered approach to education can assist in understanding what students may need and where their deficits may exist. Asking questions is

the key to student success, but also asking one more important question, "Who can I ask for help?"

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) Can Help

Many educators participate in professional learning communities (PLCs). These professional development meetings can help educators, because they are based on the elements of adult learning (Merriam, 2004). Knowles (1984) discussed andragogy as a teaching and learning process to work with adult learners who are different from children and adolescents. Knowles (1984) explained that there are four key differences that are important for adult learning. These differences include: (a) Adults want to be treated as mature people. Adults want and need to be more involved in the planning and assessment of processes in the learning. (b) Adults' experiences are important and should be the basis for learning activities. (c) Adults want to learn concepts and skills that have an immediate impact on their jobs and/or personal lives. (d) Adult learners want more problem-centered, more realistic learning rather than curriculum-oriented learning. PLCs are developed by educators for educators, and when run effectively, employ all of the elements of andragogy in the process.

What teachers learn and how they learn it is sometimes not only ours to take in, but to also share with a common goal and mission in mind. The sharing of that knowledge, especially relating to the student experiences and their ability to work through trauma is in the power of collective efficacy. Bandura (1995) and Parker (1994) examined the ways that the knowledge of one person can affect and impact the confidence of the group. Learning with one another and imparting knowledge to one another, through mechanisms such as PLCs, can make a difference in student success. Bandura (1995) estimated that the effects of collective efficacy and working together as a group have a deep impact on teachers and that impact results in more student success.

Final Thoughts

For the question of who we can ask for help? One crucial answer is each other. In PLCs educators gain the time needed to share their knowledge, skills, and talents to learn together how to be more effective with all students. If one educator has a great relationship with a student and another educator struggles to build a relationship, both educators can support one another. As educators, there is a common mission to provide the best education and experience for students. When we apply the core counseling competencies and effective strategies we have reviewed in this article, the classroom experiences and relationships is where abused and neglected students can find safety, security, trust, and their voices. Ted Lasso demonstrated, if educators ask questions and not judge, we can change each student's developmental trajectory. When we, as educators, are human and allow ourselves to feel and demonstrate empathy, we can assist students in healing. When we, as educators, acknowledge our bias and worldviews and depend on one another, we can more effectively meet students' social and emotional needs. This is the connection between trauma, attachment, relationships, and caring classrooms; and this is connection between us and Ted Lasso.

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