

The 6 Pillars of a Brave Space

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Brave Space-a classroom environment that acknowledges the challenges that both students and faculty have when attempting to have discussion around difficult and/or sensitive topics such as race, power, privilege and the various forms of oppression for the purpose of learning. Brave Spaces are created when both students and faculty commit to actively engaging in the *6 Pillars of a Brave Space*.

The *6 Pillars of a Brave Space* speaks to the struggle with creating “safety” in a classroom and recognizes the humanness of all involved and the need for individual and collective responsibility and accountability. The 6 Pillars provide a framework for much of the Teaching Support Program.

The 6 Pillars of a Brave Space

1. **Vulnerability**-Brene Brown defines vulnerability as-uncertainty risk and emotional exposure. Brown also states that “vulnerability is the birth place of innovation, creativity, learning, accountability...” When both faculty and students give themselves permission to be vulnerable in the classroom, they are making a conscious effort to create space for deeper engagement both with themselves and with each other. The key to creating a brave space is for faculty to model vulnerability with boundaries.
 - a. **We do this by**: asking questions about things we don’t understand.
 - b. **We do this by**: sharing parts of our story so that the complexity of who we are frames the context of our comments.
2. **Perspective Taking**-Our lens is influenced by our own lived experiences. We must listen to the truth as other people experience it and acknowledge their experience as the truth. We don’t need to take on the other person’s perspective, but we must become curious about it and seek to understand what they see and why they see it that way.
 - a. **We do this by**: listening to understand instead of listening to respond.
3. **Lean into Fear**- When faced with fear we are standing on the learning edge poised to discover something new about ourselves or others. Step out and take a risk to experience and offer something that might be different for the purpose of creating a learning opportunity or a teachable moment.
 - a. **We do this by**: doing the very thing that makes us nervous.
 - b. **We do this by**: reframing our mindset about fear. If we let it hold us back, we miss opportunities for change. If we let it propel us, we move in the direction of change and growth.

4. **Critical Thinking**-“Critical thinking involves the careful examination and evaluation of beliefs and actions...[it requires] a genuine effort to critique fairly all views, preferred and unpreferred using rigorous criteria”(Gambrill & Gibbs, pg.4). By questioning and being open to questioning, we can more easily understand one another’s perspectives and allow space within discussions for the complexity of thoughts and ideas.
 - a. **We do this by:** being open to the possibility that our thoughts might be limited
 - b. **We do this by:** not taking critique as a personal attack, but seeing it as a way to expand our way of thinking

5. **Examine Intentions**-Examining our intentions helps us to have and check our boundaries- Is what I am about to share for the purpose of advancing dialogue or merely self-serving? Am I oversharing? Is what I am saying operating from a place of personal integrity? Examining our intentions also enables us to hold ourselves accountable for our words and actions thus promoting a deeper level of self-awareness.
 - a. **We do this by:** asking ourselves a few questions – Is what I am about to share for the purpose of advancing dialogue or merely self-serving? What’s the reason for my actions? What do I want to see happen as a result of my words and/or actions?

6. **Mindfulness**-Allowing one’s self to be in the moment with intention. This may seem obvious, but when dealing with difficult or challenging topics in the classroom, we can easily begin a mental dialogue that could cause us to be somewhere other than the present moment or wanting to Be somewhere other than the present moment! The practice of mindfulness helps us to be aware of our inner chatter and emotions and quiet them without judgement. Thus, allowing space for pillars 1-5.
 - a. **We do this by:** slowing down, pausing before reacting
 - b. **We do this by:** enacting pillars 1-5