

CREATING TIME AND SPACE TO REDISCOVER



A collaboration of the 2024 3M National Teaching Fellows

Artwork by Hawlii Pichette

A Resource for Instructors

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National Teaching Fellowship
Programme national d'excellence en enseignement



The Joy of Learning Project

3M National Teaching Fellows Cohort, 2024

Artwork by Hawlii Pichette

A Resource for Instructors



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Samanti Kulatilake (Mount Royal University)
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Richelle Monaghan (Wilfrid Laurier University)
Libby Osgood (University of Prince Edward Island)
Rosemary Reilly (Concordia University)

Prologue

The **joy of learning**—a beautiful concept, isn't it? And yet, if we're honest, it's a joy that too often feels fleeting in the busyness of our daily lives as educators, learners, and creators. In conversations among our 2024 cohort of 3M National Teaching Fellows, one theme kept surfacing like a shared heartbeat: the lack of sufficient **time** and **space** to teach, learn, and innovate in the ways we dream about. It wasn't just a lament—it was a call to action. So, we asked ourselves: What if we could craft something tangible, something that makes space—both literal and metaphorical—for the joy of learning?

This journal is the answer to that question. It's a journal, yes, but more than that, it's an invitation to document, ideate, experiment, or simply reflect. Maybe it becomes your sketchpad for bold new ideas. Maybe it holds the sparks of inspiration that will grow into your next big project. Or maybe it's just a quiet place to jot down a thought, a doodle, or a line of poetry on a day when the joy feels far away. Whatever form it takes, this journal is yours to use in any way that furthers your journey toward joyful teaching and learning. Let it be your space, your guide, your companion.

But let's also take a moment to celebrate what brought us here: the energy and creativity of educators who refuse to let time and space (or the lack thereof) define the boundaries of what's possible. This journal is a celebration of you—your persistence, imagination, and belief that learning, at its best, is not just meaningful but deeply joyful. In some ways, this journal can be considered a gateway to “creating a love letter to learning” to rediscover your fire and passion.

So, consider this your invitation to pause, to breathe, and to dream a little bigger. Fill these pages with your questions, discoveries, and messy, fantastic ideas. Use this space to rediscover the joy of learning—and to share it with others in ways we can't yet imagine.



Ways To Use This Resource

This resource is designed to meet you where you are—whether you're seeking structure, reflection, or community. Use it in a way that best fits your schedule and practice. Here are a few ways to engage with it:

1. **Use it as a personal planner or journal.** Keep it simple. Use this space to organize your time, capture ideas, and reflect when and how it works for you and your role.
2. **Pair it with a course—or several.** Let the journal accompany your teaching. Use it to reflect on your practice, document key moments, and track your growth over time.
3. **Make it a shared experience.** Gather a few peers and use the journal together. Create a space for collective reflection, encouragement, and shared learning.

Resource Legend

Look for these icons and themes throughout the resource!



Time-saving Tips



Building Community



Moments of Delight



Learning from Failures



Recommended Readings



Technology or Tools



Reflection Prompt



Self-Care or Brain Breaks



Notable Quotes

Find the Joy

Goals



TEACHING GOALS







PERSONAL GOALS







OTHER GOALS







ADDITIONAL NOTES

Interfaith and National Holidays

Taking time to reflect on and record important interfaith and national holidays is a simple yet powerful practice. Some observances, like Christmas or Canada Day, fall on the same date each year, while others—such as Eid, Diwali, or Easter—follow lunar or seasonal calendars and change annually. As educators, being aware of these dates is a small but meaningful act of inclusion. Fill out the dates below based on the calendar year of this journal.

Month(s)	Holiday or Observance	Date(s) Observed This Year
January	New Year’s Day	
January–February	Lunar New Year	
February	Family Day	
February–March	Ramadan Begins	
March–April	Passover	
March–April	Good Friday	
March–April	Easter Sunday	
March–April–May	Eid al-Fitr (end of Ramadan)	
May	Victoria Day	
July	Canada Day	
August	Civic Holiday	
September	Labour Day	
September	National Day for Truth and Reconciliation	
September–October	Rosh Hashanah	
September–October	Yom Kippur	
October	Canadian Thanksgiving	
October–November	Diwali	
November	Remembrance Day	
November–December	Hanukkah	
December	Christmas	
December–January	Kwanzaa	

Additional dates to note:

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Slow things down with **bullet journaling** and using the muscle memory of handwriting to help recall dates and events but also to tap into your creative side. Play with writing, colours, stickers, and organizational hacks.

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Time to Think: Listening to Ignite the Human Mind

by Nancy Kline

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Find the Joy



Moments of Delight



The spark of learning

Profound teaching delights happen every time I see students joyfully and authentically connect with learning. Recently, my class was on a field trip. Their professionalism, preparedness, and willingness to work through their discomfort was something so inspiring to watch. In our debrief of the day's events, I spent the first ten minutes outlining how I couldn't have been prouder of how they represented themselves as learners, and that they catapulted past my high expectations. While I think my comments were appreciated, what was more important is that I got to witness their excitement in recognizing their own growth, pride in their work, and professionalism. I could see the spark of learning that wasn't about learning for the credit, the grade, or to please me—but learning as part of their own identity.

~3MNTF 2024

When have you felt most proud to witness someone's learning journey?

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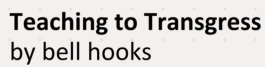


Make time to get to know your students' names and pronunciations. There are tools available to learn names or you can get students to record an audio file. Students can also share information with you in a survey.

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The learning process is
something you can incite,
literally incite, like a riot.

AUDRE LORDE



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When are you resting and recovering each week/day?

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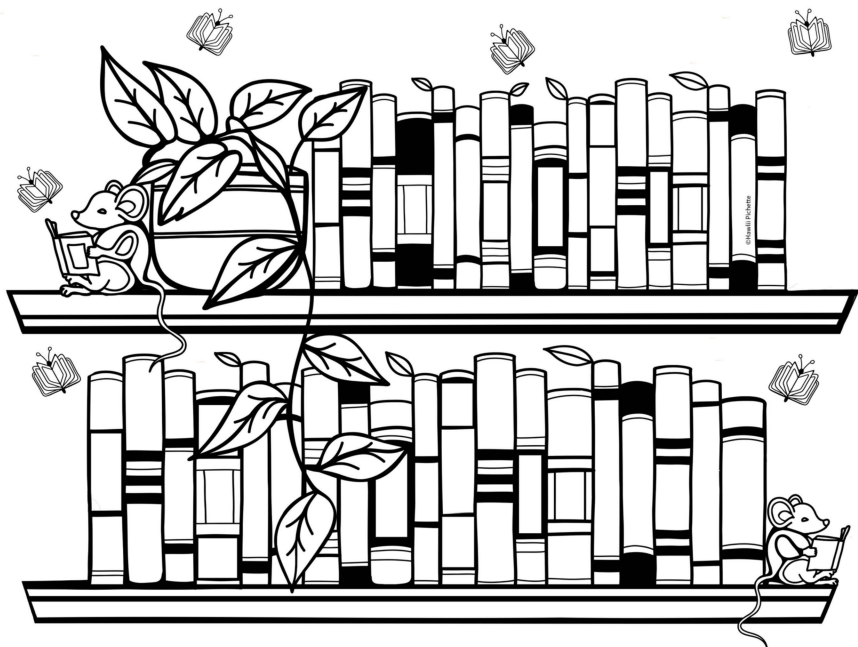
Set boundaries by allocating an amount of time to **block your calendar** and respond to emails, participate in meetings, write, and create new materials. Don't forget to make time for self-care and joyful activities.

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What was most surprising in your teaching this week or term?



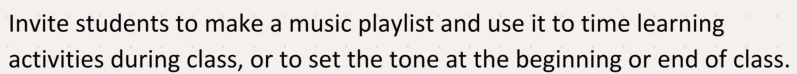
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Stories can conquer fear, you know. They can make the heart bigger.
Ben Okra

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Learning from Failures



Getting help after a stumble

My very first teaching opportunity was a 90-minute lecture. I really wanted to impress my students, so I spent weeks preparing this lecture! After ripping through 80 densely packed PowerPoint slides without a single pause, I looked up at the class for feedback and saw... blank stares. One student stood up and said, "Well, that was something!" and walked out. In that moment, I realized that my expertise and my enthusiasm didn't count unless I could be effective as a teacher. Thankfully, two people helped me immediately after that lecture: a 3rd-year student gave me feedback (reflecting her own opinion and that of her classmates) on each one of my lectures for a year, which pushed me to make my lectures less overwhelming and content-driven, and more interactive and oriented towards three or four specific objectives. Also, my faculty mentor and fellow professor helped me create lesson plans with clear testable objectives and strategies to break didactic content into manageable chunks. I also decided to "be me" in lectures and to remember that it was supportive learning environments that had shaped my own learning.

~3MNTF 2024

Who helped you after a stumble? Or, who can you help?

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Small Teaching: Everyday Lessons from the Science of Learning
by James Lang

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Building Community



This parable embodies the essence of building community in the classroom, your department, or your higher education institution as a whole:

*A holy man wants to know the nature of heaven and hell. So, G*d takes him to visit both. In hell, he observes people suffering terribly as they sit strapped to a chair at a table overflowing with food, unable to eat because the spoons they had attached to their hands were too long to reach their mouths. In heaven, he observes exactly the same scene—but here all are happy. The essential but simple difference between the two is that in heaven they had learned to feed each other.*

When building community, it is always about keeping the focus on feeding each other.

How can you ‘feed’ people in your community or setting?

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Think about three things you're grateful for today.

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Time-saving Tips



Keeping track of reference letters requests

Many instructors receive numerous requests for reference letters, which can take up a lot of time to manage. Here are some steps you can take to make the process easier to track:

- Create a reflection letter form using a survey tool (e.g., Qualtrics or Microsoft Forms)
 - Ask questions about the course(s) they took, their achievements in your course, and examples of skills they acquired
 - Include instructions to receive a calendar invite for the reference letter deadline so that you don't have to do it/worry about it
- Upon receiving reference letter requests, invite students to complete the form if you plan to support their application
- Create a folder in your inbox to store all the completed forms; you can also create an email 'rule' so that the forms go there automatically
- Create signatures for accepting or denying a letter request so that you don't have to take on that cognitive load. If saying yes, include the form link in the signature.

~3MNTF 2024

How can you apply this tip to your own practice? What modifications do you need or want to make?

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How did you inspire hope this week?

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Use a polling tool (e.g., Mentimeter) to take pulse checks, especially in larger classrooms.

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Provide time for students to create a communication group or chat (e.g., WhatsApp or Microsoft Teams) in classes under 30 students; this values how wonderful it is to lean on and learn from each other.

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Find the Joy



Moments of Delight



Examples of delightful moments in education

- That moment when you see a graduating student connect all of the dots to everything they have learned... pure magic!
- Hearing from former students who see the value of their learning as an undergraduate in class with you and their peers in their next chapter.
- Watching students speak without notes or slides and literally own the space in the last week of class after hearing they almost dropped the course because of this final act.

~3MNTF 2024

What is a delight that you experience as an educator?

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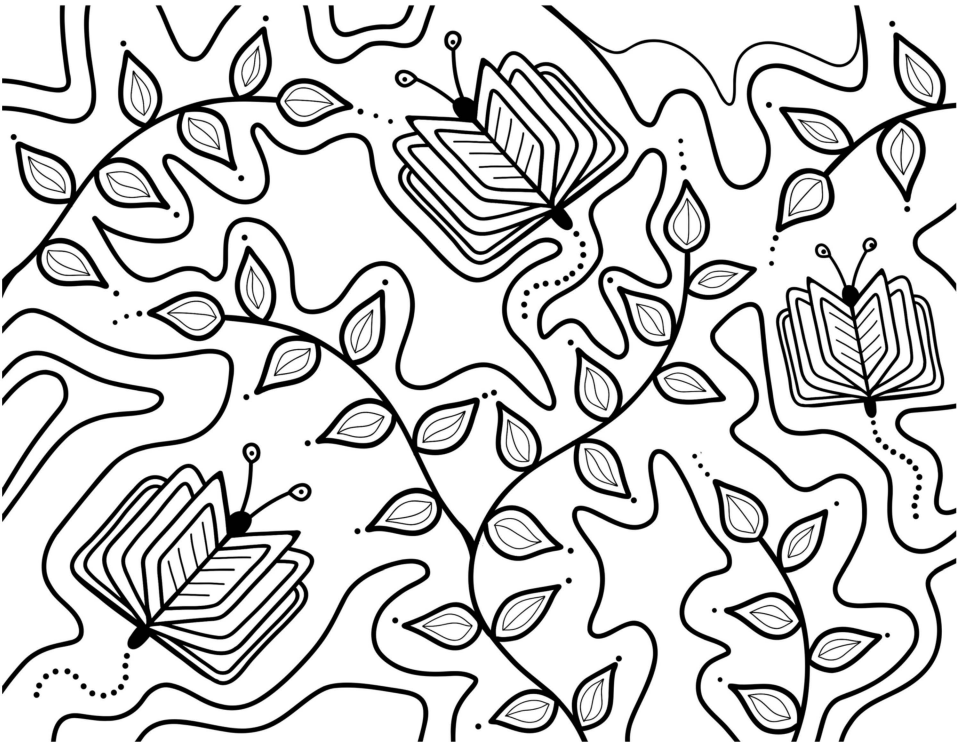
This may sound counterintuitive, but **taking a brief walk** is a great time-saving tip. If you find yourself working on a task, and are tired, you might become less productive. Taking a brief walk will help you reset your brain.

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What do you need to spend time thinking about and discussing with a trusted colleague?

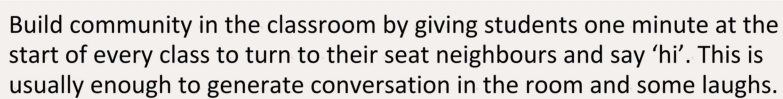


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Burnout: The Secret to Unlocking the Stress Cycle

by Emily Nagoski and Amelia Nagoski

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Find the Joy



Learning from Failures



The value of simulation

"Right after the pandemic I was excited to get students actively involved in their learning. I implemented scaffolded multipart group projects with brainstorming activities, group contracts, group norms, assessments along the way, and a pathway for dissemination. It all seemed fine at the start, but I was so enthusiastic about the active learning activities that I missed seeing how students were struggling with in-person interactions. Some students came to my office in tears saying that they could not make progress due to communication challenges among group members. In hindsight, I realized that students struggled to connect, coming out of an isolating experience of the pandemic. Over the weeks leading up to the final presentations, I was troubleshooting, providing flexibility (deviating from my rigid guidelines), and frantically working to prevent everything from falling apart.

Silver linings: Despite the challenges, student groups developed competency in creating accessible yet scientifically sound materials. The presentations were open to the campus community, where faculty, student peers, and staff had an opportunity to chat. There were animated discussions, food sharing, and group photos!"

~3MNTF 2024

What is a silver lining you can identify in something you tried that did not initially work or turn out as you expected?

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Try executive function tools (e.g., Goblin Tools) to help you break your task down into manageable steps or subtasks.

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What was affirming this week?

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Find the Joy



Building Community



Appreciative assessment is all about helping students find and build on their unique abilities and aptitudes by providing positive, supportive feedback with a focus on capabilities and possibilities.

Use positive stories and anecdotes about best learning practices. Ask positive questions to lead to constructive change. When applied to teaching, educators feel upbeat about the power of their work to effect positive change. When it is applied to learning, students feel good about their accomplishments and are motivated to work on their challenges.

The following questions can initiate discourse and validate the student learning experience:

- What did you learn from this process?
- What do you know now that you wish you had known when you started this course?
- How can you apply what you have learned?
- How can I provide the support you need?
- What do you hope to accomplish as a result of your learning?
- What will you remember about today's class?
- What is still not clear to you?

Appreciative assessment:

Moves from this....	...to this!
What is wrong with the answer?	What is right about the answer?
Here is where you went wrong.	Your reasoning was sound up to this point.
You made a mistake here.	What can you learn from this incorrect answer?
You are in danger of failing.	You will have to put in more effort to pass.
This work is sloppy.	With a bit more effort and you will meet the standards.

What strategies do you use to provide supportive feedback for students and how do you help them identify their skills and abilities?

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There must be an ongoing recognition that everyone influences the classroom dynamic, that everyone contributes. These contributions are resources. Used constructively they enhance the capacity of any class to create an open learning community.

bell hooks



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How Humans Learn

by Joshua Eyler

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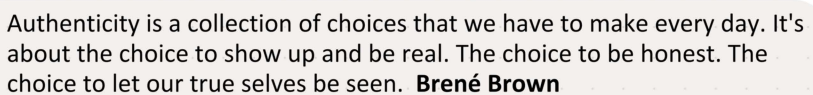


Celebrate examples students bring to class and connect them to other students' stories, experiences, and questions such that the spaces between us are points of connection.

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Find the Joy



Moments of Delight



Sharing the joy

Every sensory moment I experience when a student can't wait to tell me that they achieved a huge goal (scholarship, job offer, grad school, passing grade, etc). From the sound of running footsteps to your office, the squeal of delight when they are sharing the news, the look of joy, disbelief, and pride on their face, the tears of joy welling up in my eyes, and when I'm lucky enough, the tight squeeze of a hug in celebration of the moment.

~3MNTF 2024

When is the last time someone shared their joy with you or you shared your joy with them?

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Take a moment to assess how you feel right now. What will self-care look like for you today?

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Find the Joy



Time-saving Tips



Grade Discussions

A student grade discussion is a conversation initiated by a student to understand how their work was assessed and to seek guidance on improving. However, students will benefit from guidance to keep these conversations focused on learning and growth, while also reducing stress and saving time for everyone involved. Developing a grade discussion plan increases transparency and ensure fairness to all students. To make the most of these discussions:

- Approach grade discussions as opportunities for student learning
- Require students to reflect on their work prior to meeting with you
- Explicitly articulate your grade discussion approach to students

Sample wording to communicate to students about grade discussions:

- Reflect on your work prior to our discussion; think through the grade and why it was given.
- Email me a written summary (50–100 words) of what it is about your grade that is unclear to you or what area you are struggling to understand about the grade. Your written explanation should refer directly to the syllabus, learning outcomes, grading criteria, and rubrics.
- Book a meeting with me to discuss your grade. Please note that I do not hold grade discussions via email. I also do not hold meetings in the first three days after returning grades to allow students sufficient time to review their grades properly against the relevant criteria.

Other considerations to communicate to students:

- Grade discussions will not lead to providing an unfair advantage to students over their peers.
- Requests for re-grading may result in the review of the entire assignment/exam. A grade could go up, down, or stay the same.
- The learning outcomes for the course must be met and external criteria will not be considered (e.g., awards, reaching a predetermined grade or GPA level etc.).

~3MNTF 2024

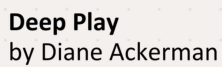
How might grade discussions lead to a more positive grading experience?

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Find the Joy

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Warm up class or a group with some silliness in conversation. Ask: If you had to choose, would you live in a world without waffles? Or a world without pancakes?

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Learning from Failures



Failure is a launchpad for growth

As a scientist, many are surprised that I originally attended university as an English major and a Drama minor. I have varied interests, so it wasn't that I had selected the wrong field, but my failure was in choosing to go to university when it wasn't really what I wanted to do. However, I believe that failures can be the launchpads for growth and that one-year "detour" let me recognize when I was excited and ready for university. I earned my undergraduate degree ten years later.

~3MNTF 2024

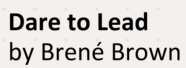
What was a failure-turned-launchpad that you experienced?

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Who do you want to meet and talk with in the next two weeks? How and when will you contact them? What will you invite them to do?



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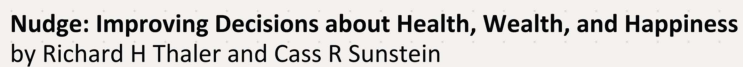


What did you notice during your class/lab/meeting/break?

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Find the Joy



Building Community



Haiku as a metacognitive strategy

Poetry has the capacity to distill meaning down to its essence and can function as a tool for metacognitive reflection, allowing instructors and students to view their learning in a new way. I often ask students to represent their learning at the end of an essay using a haiku format:

Write a haiku that contains the essence of an insight you have about your own learning process.

Haikus:

- Juxtapose 2 images with a shift or a connection between them
- Generally written in 3 lines, with the first line having 5 syllables, the second line 7 syllables and the last line 5 syllables (17 in total), when written in English
- Often use a seasonal image
- Can be quirky, impressionistic, or may represent a fleeting moment

To get started:

- Think about the conclusions and insights you came to by writing this paper or assignment
- Brainstorm some key words, images, or metaphors about these insights
- Form the keywords into the haiku structure

Have fun! This is important. Once a student asked me to write the instructions as a haiku:

*Feel them rise within.
Collect them, like fallen leaves,
Thread five, seven, five.*

~3MNTF 2024

What other metacognitive strategies do you use?

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Use a **student booking link** (e.g., youcanbook.me or [Calendly](https://calendly.com)) to help set up appointments and avoid back-and-forth emails. Post the booking link on your syllabus and put it in your email signature.

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Prairie Majesty Oracle: A 52-Card Deck and Guidebook

by Kara Simons

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Find the Joy



Moments of Delight



Tips to curate delight

1. Develop a Ta da! list for students each week followed by a To do list that later becomes the next Ta da! list. Cultivate the feeling of accomplishment of what was completed vs. a continuous pile up of only things in to do lists...
2. Create an email folder that you can move positive feedback from students to and reflect on those moments when days are tough.

~3MNTF 2024

How do you curate or cultivate delight?

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How might you take a brain break today?

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Teaching with Tenderness: Towards an Embodied Practice

by Becky Thompson

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Who is someone that you are worried about, that could use a little “hello”?

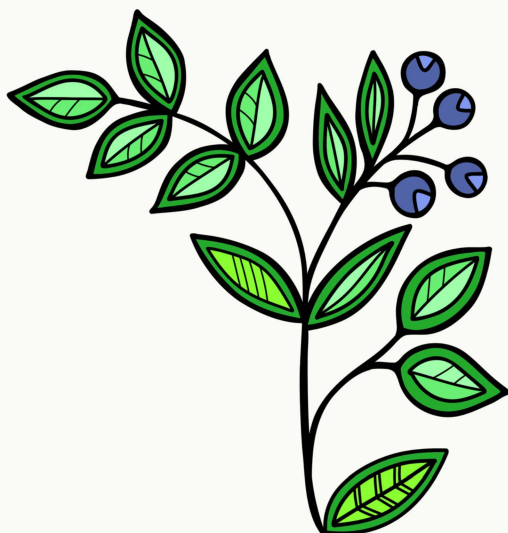
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Don't be afraid of your
heart breaking open. The
heart that breaks open can
hold the whole universe. It's
that big.

JOANNA MACY



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Contemplative Practices in Higher Education

by Daniel P. Barbezat and Mirabai Bush

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Use whiteboards (digital and nondigital) in class to invite student ideas and engagement.

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Learning from Failures



Failure can bring opportunity

I often tell my students that failure isn't a bad thing and that they can learn from it. Still, experiencing failure is never easy, especially when it's fresh. My biggest failure came after defending my Ph.D. and attempting to secure a full-time role. I interviewed for a teaching position at an institution I had been teaching part-time at for years. I didn't get the job, and it hurt. A few years later, I interviewed for another full-time role at a different institution and I felt really good about it. When I wasn't selected, I questioned the career path and considered leaving academia. Determined to stand out amongst applicants, I enrolled in a professional Master of Education. At the same time, another position opened at the institution where I was previously rejected. Surprisingly, I was accepted into the education program and offered the job I hold today within days of each other. This experience taught me that failure, while painful, can lead to unexpected opportunities if you adapt and persevere.

~3MNTF 2024

What's a failure you experienced that led to opportunity?

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As an educator, in what ways are you growing?



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Siddhartha's Brain

by James Kingsland

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The cure for anything is salt water- tears, sweat, or the sea.
Isak Dinesen

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Building Community



Projects create community

Almost every course that I teach includes a course project. It is one of the best ways to help students make meaning of what they are learning. The projects help to create community in the classroom and encourage students to share their ideas and work towards a common goal. The projects also have the potential to positively impact our academic community and the broader community. They are rewarding for all of us (i.e., me as the instructor, for students, and our project partners). The projects are different every year, which can be time intensive, but I love the creative aspect and the opportunity to work with students to focus the project on what interests them the most.

~3MNTF 2024

How do you encourage shared goals?

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Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life
by Anne Lamott

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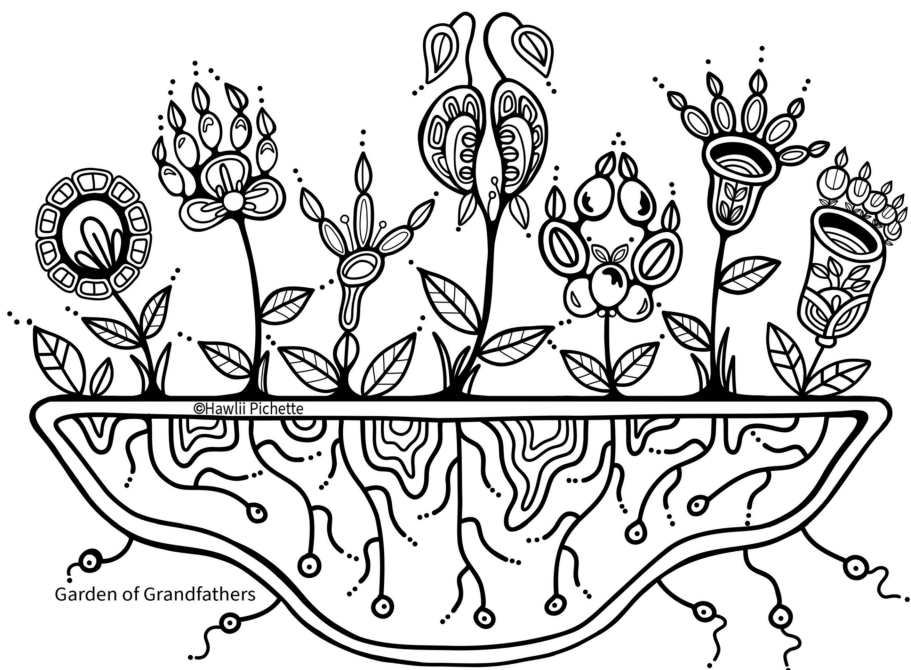
Try using a gaming tool like **Stream Deck** to create shortcuts to improve your workflow and speed up the process. Create comment banks for common feedback, but aim to provide customized feedback as well.

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What do you want to keep the next time you teach this course/class/lab?
What would you change or update and why?



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Perfectionism is the voice of the oppressor, the enemy of the people. It will keep you cramped and insane your whole life, and it is the main obstacle between you and a shitty first draft. **Anne Lamott**

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The Undergraduate Experience: Focusing Institutions on What Matters Most by Peter Felten, John N. Gardner, Charles C. Schroeder, Leo M. Lambert, Betsy O. Barefoot, Freeman A. Hrabowski

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What's one thing you can do to make next week/ time go better?

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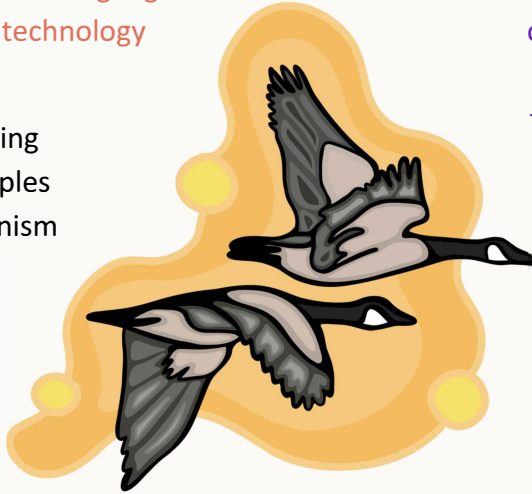
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We Are All Life-Long Learners

Below are some of our individual learning goals...

Learning a new language
or a new technology

Teach using
the principles
of abolitionism



Learning from
colleagues by
observing
them in their
classrooms

Project management
tips and tricks

Using artificial intelligence as a tool
for reasoning and decision-making

Incorporating more
Universal Design for
Learning Principles

How to be kind to ourselves
and practice BRAVING*
(seven elements of Trust)

**Brené Brown concept*

What are YOU looking forward to learning next and why? Is anything holding you back from learning it?



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