



Life Calling Seminar

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Purpose

- Share research on the causes, effects and symptoms of stress in teachers;
- Share what I've learned from my dissertation work on crisis/critical incidents and teacher growth;
- Share tangible ways to work through stress;
- Have participants share ways to work through stress.

My dissertation

Purpose:

To discover through veteran teacher narratives, descriptions of crisis-like incidents, growth, and transformation they may have experienced in the context of the profession.

Rationale

- My Story
- Study by NCTQ of 40 urban districts (Konz, 2014):
 - \$400 Million lost to teacher absences in those 40 urban districts.
- Multiple studies link teacher absences to job-related stress (Miller, 2012).

Crisis and Critical Incidents

- **Existential crisis** is a pivotal point where we question the very purpose of our existence.
- **Critical incidents** are existential discomfort in interactions with certain people and events which challenge prior knowledge and ways of behaving.
 - Teachers must rethink previous ideas and ways of being and come to new understandings about teaching and learning.
- The Dragon Lady

Crisis-like Incidents

can range from crisis to critical incident
and anywhere in between

Crisis-like incidents act as turning points in
the lives and actions of teachers and
encompass a shift in identity in teachers.

Piaget (1952)

Three types of learning applicable to adult learning:

1. Cumulative Learning
2. Assimilative Learning
3. Accommodative Learning

To which Mezirow (1990) added:

4. Transformative Learning (identity shifts)
(transpersonal or depth psychology)

Think/Jot

How does stress affect you?

Mind?

Body?

Spirit?

Crisis-like incidents arise with:

- Feelings of hopelessness;
- Deterioration of school relationships;
- An inability to express feelings contrary to dominant school policies;
- No longer find job interesting or enjoyable;
- Dissatisfaction;
- Resentment.


Cognitive effects . . .

. . . Stemming from exhaustion and anxiety:

- Loss in cognitive responsiveness;
- Loss of memory;
- Weakening of decision making abilities;
- Lower information processing ability;
- Social isolation.


Physical effects

- Loss of energy;
- Loss of body sensations and emotions;
- Headaches;
- Digestive problems;
- High blood pressure.



Fatigue and stress cause teachers to tend toward rote activities and lose the ability to respond and teach creatively (Blazer, 2010).

This makes good teachers feel even more isolated and guilty.



What causes stress for you?

The effects of Standardization

- . . . and its connection to teacher pay and retention mean that institutions are at “crossed purposes” with teachers.
- . . . in a culture of standards/testing creates a classroom where teachers no longer had as many positive emotional experiences with students.
 - This is catastrophic to teachers who are in the profession as a **calling**.
- . . . are that “teaching no longer feels joyful and the energy, that spirituality, that life force is lacking. I’m not being fed” (Woods & Carlyle, 2011, p. 176).

The effects of Standardization

- . . . are that teachers work in a culture that denies depth of human experience.

The crisis can be simply blamed on stress, overwork and substandard pay.

But the journey is more than this.

Only something we love
could hurt so much.

The Crisis Cycle

- Departure
- Initiation
- Return

Care over Cure

- Deeper crises may require therapy, counselling, medication or caregivers.
- However, for most of us, we need a way to work through the times of difficulty. Care, not cure.

What I Learned:

Teachers who have gone through crisis-like incidents experience:

- Increased understanding of self.
- Increased desire to be of service to others.
- Increased understanding of or appreciation of others

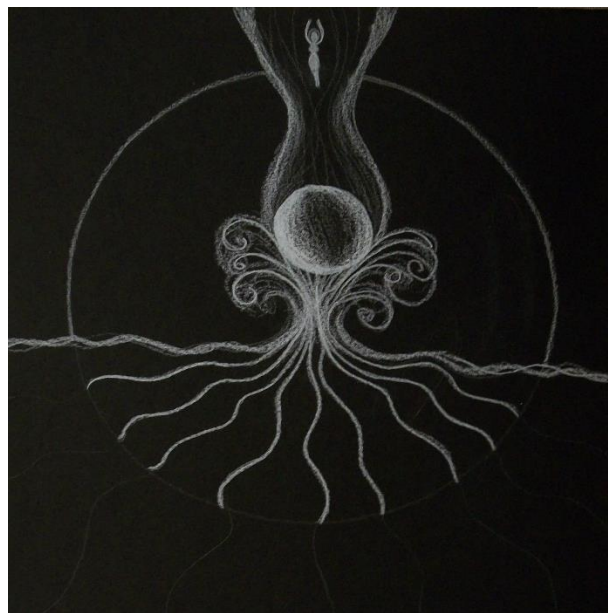
What I learned:


- Teachers often cause crisis-like incidents in other teachers.
- Teachers don't share their stories enough.
- It feels good to be heard.
- Healing comes with sharing stories.

What I learned:

- There is a holistic nature to teacher identity.
- Teachers carry their burdens alone.
 - Ellie's Story
- Teachers are at a high risk for critical incidents and crisis.
- Teachers who have gone through crisis-like incidents show deep thinking about their purpose and place in the field.

Catherine, Ellie and Maggie






The story of the Sacred La

Think/Jot

- why did you enter the profession?
- what mattered to you as a teacher then?



Ideas for your own self care:

The inner and outer life

"If we want to grow in our practice, we have two primary places to go: to the inner ground from which a good teacher comes and to the community of fellow teachers from whom we can learn more about ourselves and our craft" (Palmer, 2009, p. 146).

The outer Life

Teachers Talking

- We need platforms for listening to one another in a deeper way.
- "Identity is formed and reformed by the stories we tell and which we draw upon our communication with others" (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004, p. 123).
- Catherine's quote

Teachers Talking

- Success stories
- Failure stories
- Stories of teaching
- Stories of learning (Alsop, 2006)

Teachers Talking

Questions for talkers:

- Tell a story of how you came to the teaching profession.
- Tell a story of an experience of difficulty or challenge through your career as a teacher.
 - How do you think this has impacted you as a teacher?
- Tell a story that illustrates who you are now as a teacher.
 - In what ways have you changed because of the difficulties or challenges you have had?

Teachers Talking

Questions for listeners

- Do the stories resonate with your experiences as a teacher? In what ways?
- What new understandings and realizations exist as a result of hearing (reading, discussing) these stories?
- What are the recurring group themes from this talking session?
- What knowledge, understanding and wisdom does this group have to offer the profession?

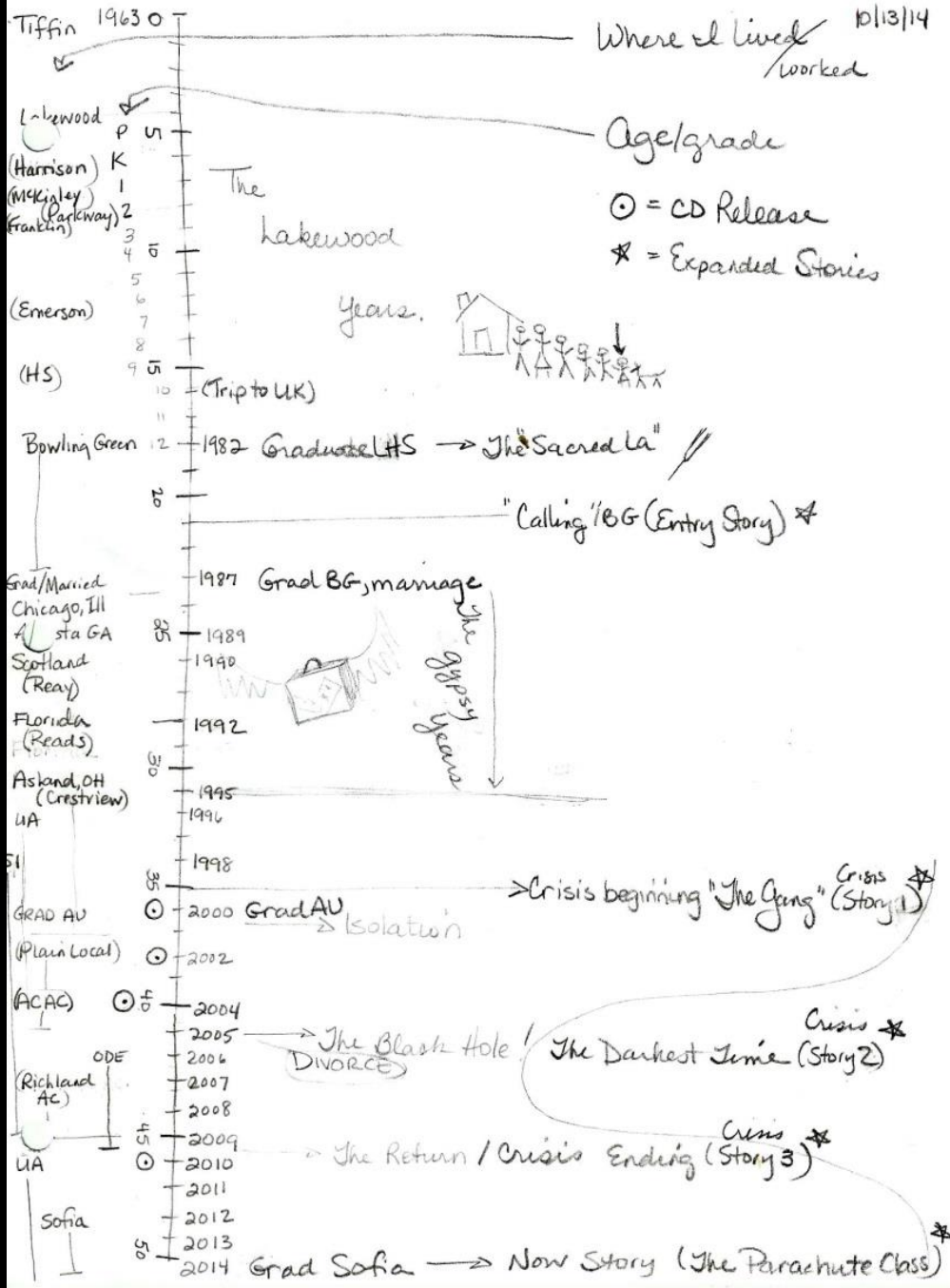
Teachers Talking

How/When/Where do we get teachers talking in this way?

Self-Reflection

We have varying needs and styles of reflection.

- Journals or thoughtlogs*
- Annotated LifeLine*
- Consider the four Jungian functions*:
 - Thinking
 - Sensing
 - Intuition
 - Feeling



Self-Reflection


- Revisit your philosophy of education
 - Realize that others' philosophies are just as true, real, and powerful for them.
 - The Annotated Timeline was invaluable for teachers in identifying early influences (what they bring to the profession), critical learnings and foundational beliefs.

Self-Reflection

- Gratitude Journal
- Stories from your experiences
 - Entry story, beginning of the crisis, the darkest time, the return, who I am now as a teacher.

The Arts and the Creative Process

- Finding Flow



Nourishing the Body and the Senses

- Connect to the earth

Cultivating Soul

- Connect to a holy place.

Cultivating Relationships

- watch for isolated colleagues.
- identify your support system and check in often.

Habits of Mind

- Be present. Mindfulness.
- Mono-tasking.

Other Ideas

- Keep great kids' notes handy
- Honor your scheduled self-times
- Pinpoint what sucks your time and energy
- Do a digital Sabbath



Other ideas?

The Five Whys

What matters to you now as a teacher?

- why?
- why?
- why?
- why?
- why?

The Final Lesson

We cannot wait any longer for the institutions to give us what we need.

We need to talk to one another.

We need to listen.

We need to care without fixing.

God has no other hands than ours.

~Dorothee Solle

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*My hope is that you
take all that I have all that I give you
and grow yourself smarter,
taller, reaching higher
than I ever could.
You emerge from me as I did from my own
teachers,
Smarter, taller, reaching higher
than they ever could.
They are in me.
I am in you.
And when you grow, we all grow;
An Ancient Cycle.*

