

# What If They Don't Want to Come Back?: Episode 271

**Elena:** dreading January. Not sure how to support clients to return from break. This one's for you. Hello friends, and welcome to the Bright Morning Podcast. I'm your host Elena Aguilar, and in each podcast episode you will learn how you can lead conversations that build connection and spark change. Today we're asking what if they don't wanna come back from break?

You've probably heard it or maybe you felt it yourself. That dread before returning from winter break, the questioning, the exhaustion that feels like it will never let up. The wondering, can I really keep doing this? In this episode, we're talking about how to support clients through the emotional terrain of returning to school in January, and how to help them reconnect with hope, purpose and possibility.

So here's the root of this pain point. January can be deceiving. It feels like a fresh start, but for many educators, it's one of the hardest times of the year. Coming back from break can trigger burnout, resentment, doubt about whether this work is sustainable. And if we don't name those feelings and support people through them, then we risk losing them.

Not just emotionally, but sometimes literally. Here is a common trap to be aware of. We often dive into January with urgency. New units, data meetings, second semester goals. But if we don't first reconnect with our client's, humanity, with their feelings, their fears, their hopes, none of that other stuff will stick.

What people need in January is not just a plan. They need to be reminded why they stay. Here's what this looks like in action. Some years back, I coached a veteran teacher. I'll call her Angela, who came back from winter break and said, this might be my last semester. Instead of pushing into goal setting for second semester, I paused and I asked, what did you learn about yourself over break?

What, if anything, did you miss about teaching and what would make the rest of this year feel meaningful? We didn't fix everything that day, but Angela found something to hold onto, which was her connection with students, her belief in their brilliance, and that was enough to start again in January. We need to help people want to begin again.

I have a skill session called Preparing for January, in which I teach you how to make that a reality. And in that skill session, you get reflective prompts to help clients reconnect with their purpose. You get a planning tool to structure the first session back. You get



conversation starters for navigating burnout, doubt and uncertainty, and you get strategies for making January feel like a new beginning.

This session helps you support clients emotionally. And strategically. So here's your challenge for this week. Reach out to one client before break ends. Ask them how are you feeling about coming back? And what would you like to feel? Then shape your first conversation around helping them move closer to that feeling.

So remember this January isn't just a new month. It's a chance to remind people of why they're still here. Help them rediscover what lights them up. In the show notes, you'll find a link to that skill session preparing for January, and it's in the Coaching Learning Library. And in that skill session, you get everything you need to support a compassionate, energizing reentry for your clients and for yourself.

Let's start the year with humanity and hope. Thank you for being with me today. And if you appreciated this episode and you are listening via podcast, please share it with someone you know who would benefit from it. And or hop over to Apple Podcasts and leave a five star rating and a review to help others discover it.

And if you're watching on YouTube, then give this video a, like if it sparked something for you, share it with a colleague. And if you're not watching on YouTube and you want to, then you'll find links to the channel in the podcast. Show notes. Come on over and join us there. All right, friends. LesLee Bickford is the podcast producer and Stacey Goodman, does the sound engineering be well everyone?

