

You Want to Coach Emotions? Start Here

Elena: If you've ever found yourself thinking, I want to support people emotionally, but I don't know where to start, then this episode is for you. Hello friends and welcome to the Bright Morning Podcast. I'm your host Elena Aguilar, and in each episode, you will learn how to lead conversations that build connection and spark change.

So today we are kicking off a special series designed to support you in those emotional dip periods that show up in the school year. Those times when energy is low and tensions are high and people are just trying to make it through, and we're starting where we need to start with understanding emotions.

Because if you want to coach people and not just their performance, you've got to start here. So let's jump into it. There's something I hear often from leaders and coaches, especially around this time of the year, and it's a version of this question, which is. What do I do when someone is having big emotions?

Maybe they're crying. Maybe they are withdrawn. Maybe they are defensive or angry, and maybe you freeze or you try to fix it or you think, I'm not cut out for this. Or you worry that you will overstep and venture into therapy land. And if that sounds familiar, I want you to know that you are not alone. I have been in all of those places.

When I first started coaching, I remember vividly how unprepared I felt when someone cried. I literally felt like I was panicking and I would think, I am not a therapist. I don't know what to do about this. And then I would try to move on. I would try to redirect the conversation and get back to the work, but here's the truth that I had to learn, and it's one that changed everything for me, which is emotions are the work.

When we avoid emotions, we miss the very heart of what people need, which is to feel seen and heard and supported. And when we learn how to witness and honor those emotions, that's when real transformation becomes possible. So let me tell you a story. I was coaching a teacher named Stephanie. Well, that's what I'll call her.



And this was in her second year. And she was committed and thoughtful, and also incredibly hard on herself. And she came into our coaching session one day, quiet and tense, and when I asked how she was doing, she burst into tears and she said. I thought I'd be good at this, but I feel like I'm failing. And everything in me wanted to say, you are not failing.

You're doing a great job. But instead, I paused and I said, yeah, you're carrying a lot. Tell me what you're feeling. And she looked so surprised, like no one had ever asked her that before. And she said. Honestly ashamed, angry, tired, and I'm scared I'm not cut out for this. So in that moment, I didn't reframe.

I didn't try to fix, I just stayed with her and I said, that makes sense. I hear you. And I am here to be in this with you. And because she felt safe, she kept going. She talked about the pressures that she was under, the expectations that she had for herself and her fear of letting students down, and that conversation became a turning point.

Not because I had the right answers, but because I was willing to just be with her, with her emotions, I was willing to stay present. So if you're wondering where to begin, start here. And these are a few foundational truths that I write about in my book *Arise*. So the first one is that emotions are neutral.

They aren't good or bad. They are signals. They're data. They give us information about our needs and our values and our boundaries. The second thing is emotions are universal. Everyone feels them, even if we express them differently. Suppressing emotions doesn't make them go away. It just means they show up in other ways and in other times.

The third thing to note is that emotions are temporary. They rise, they peak and they pass. We don't have to fix them, we just need to stay present.

Fourth, emotions are a doorway to transformation. When we witness and honor emotions, we create the conditions for growth and healing. That's why I often return to one guiding practice in my coaching, which is witness without fixing, witness without fixing. And that can sound like saying, I can tell this is really hard, or it makes sense that you're feeling this way.

Or even just, I'm here with you. Yeah, go on. And that's it. That might not sound like much, but this is presence. This is genuine, grounded presence, and that is what people crave most when they're hurting. So here's a reflection for you for this week. Think back to a moment when you felt a strong emotion at work.



What was it? How did you respond to yourself? What message did you receive implicitly or explicitly about that emotion? And then ask yourself, what do I want to believe about emotions moving forward? And here's a challenge for you. The next time someone expresses emotion, big or small, pause. Say something simple like, that sounds really hard, or I can tell this matters to you.

Just let there be some space and notice what happens. If you want more support in building this skillset, then come to our workshop called Coaching for Retention and Resilience. We will practice exactly what I shared with you today, and you will walk away with the tools and the confidence to navigate emotions with presence and care.

All right. Thank you for being with me today, and if this episode gave you a new way to think about coaching or even just a little bit of relief that you don't have to fix everything, then please share it with someone who might need it. And if you are listening to the podcast, then maybe hop over to Apple Podcasts and rate and review the show.

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All right, friends, this show is produced by LesLee Bickford and Stacy Goodman does the sound engineering and be well everyone. I will see you next time.

