

Coaching Through the Low Points

Elena: If you've ever found yourself staring at a team member who is clearly struggling and wondered, what do I even say right now? 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 real change.

So today we're talking about how to coach through the inevitable dips that happen during the school year. You know the ones when energy is low and emotions are high, and even the most dedicated educators start to feel like they are running on fumes. So let's get into it. If you've been in schools for any amount of time, you probably know this rhythm by heart.

There's the optimism of August, then the momentum of September. And then somewhere around late October or November, it hits the dip. It's that stretch where morale fades. Progress feels hard to see, and people start saying things like, I don't know if I'm cut out for this. Or, when is winter break coming?

And if you somehow dodge the fall dip, then just wait. Because for many educators, another one hits right around February or March, cold winter and long weeks, and the grind sets in. So these dips are real and we need to tend to them because they are often the moments when people start to disconnect from their purpose.

From their team, from their own belief in their capacity. So the question becomes what do we do as leaders and coaches in those moments? So let me take you back to a coaching conversation that I had a few years ago with someone, I'll call her Rosa. She was a high school department chair. She was smart and passionate and deeply committed, but when I met with her in early March, I could see that something was off.

She looked down, her voice was flat, and before I could even ask how she was, she said. I just don't think I'm helping anyone. I'm trying, but it's like nothing I do makes a difference. Now I'm gonna confess that the old version of me, the one who felt like I had to fix everything, wanted to jump in with a pep talk, wanted to say something like.



That's not true. You're amazing. Look at all that you've done. But what Rosa needed in that moment wasn't a fix. She needed a witness. So I said, it sounds like this has been really heavy. I'm here with you. And then I just let the silence be after a moment. She kept talking about the student that she couldn't reach, the new curriculum rollout that was floundering, the meetings.

That felt like a waste of time, and as she spoke, her shoulders softened. She was making space for her own truth. She didn't need me to pull her out of the hole. She needed someone to sit beside her for a moment and remind her that she wasn't alone in it. So this is what I mean when I say witness without fixing.

It's one of the most powerful tools that you can use when someone is in a low place. But what does that actually look like? When someone is struggling, start by creating space, and you do this by resisting the urge to solve or reframe or redirect too quickly. You might say things like, it sounds like this is a really hard moment.

I'm here with you, or I'm hearing that you feel discouraged. You don't have to carry that alone, or would it feel helpful to tell me more about what's weighing on you? So these are invitations. They don't assume, they don't pressure. They allow the person to be where they are and to know that they're still worthy of care in that place.

Now after someone has had some space to be heard, there might be a gentle opening to support a shift, and you might ask, what would feeling even a little bit better look like? Or is there something that usually helps you when you feel this way? Or you could say, can I remind you of something I've seen in you?

Now that last one, that offering a reminder is powerful. 'Cause when people are in the dip, they forget who they are, they lose sight of their impact. You can be the mirror that helps them see. Again, you might say, I've seen how deeply you care about your students. That hasn't gone anywhere or. I remember the energy you brought at the start of the year.

That part of you is still there. It's just quiet. Now, these aren't empty compliments. They're anchors. They help someone locate themselves again. So here's your challenge this week. Identify one person who might be in a low point. You don't need them to tell you outright. Look for the signs. Those could be pulling back, exhaustion, irritability, silence, and reach out, ask how they're doing, invite a conversation, and then practice witnessing without fixing.



And if you're thinking, I don't know how to do that without getting awkward or overstepping. Then I wanna invite you to our Coaching for Retention and Resilience Workshop. In that workshop we walk you through how to enter these conversations with presence, compassion, and clarity, without burning yourself out in the process.

You don't have to have the perfect words. You just have to be willing to show up with care. 'Cause sometimes that's all someone needs to begin finding their way back. Friends, thanks for being with me today. And if this episode gave you something to think about or a tool to try, then please share it with someone else who supports others.

And if you are listening on Apple Podcasts, then a five star rating and review goes a long way to help others find the show. And if you're watching on YouTube, hit like and subscribe so you don't miss what's coming next. And if you're not watching us on YouTube yet, then come and check it out. There is a link in the show notes.

Alright folks, this show is produced by LesLeee Bickford and Stacey Goodman does the sound engineering. Take care and be well, and I'll see you next time.

