

Lesson One – Everyone is Going Through Something You Can't See

“ There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.
– Maya Angelou ”

CREATIVE ACTIVITY – LETTER WRITING

Lesson Intention:

Kevin Love's letter is the touchstone of this curriculum. Kevin is featured sharing his story in a video in this first lesson. The purpose for this first video is twofold – Kevin normalizes the presence of difficult emotions while also modeling vulnerability. This will help to open the door to talking about emotion in a school setting, a context where emotions are often not included in the daily curriculum. After Kevin shares his letter and story, the teacher or counselor will also share a letter that models vulnerability for their students. Next, students are invited to write their own letters. **The intention for this activity is for students to see that emotions are welcome in the classroom.** The benefit of the letter writing activity is that it does not push students to share too much at the start of this curriculum. They are simply sharing one story – and it does not even need to be an entire story from beginning to end. Rather, the students are writing what they are feeling in a certain moment – whatever memory, person, or small part of a story feels most important in their lives on this day. It's a way of warming them up to be able to express themselves by focusing on a piece of the puzzle, not feeling the pressure to examine every aspect of their emotional life.

Social Emotional Learning Goals:

- Destigmatize emotions that are often labeled as negative by our culture.
- Raise awareness that students are not alone in their sadness or anxiety or challenging emotion.

In Preparation for Lesson:

- Prior to teaching this lesson, **watch all of the videos** and read Kevin's letter, then write your own letter that you will share with your students.
- Have paper and pens or personal electronic devices (i.e. laptops, tablets, and Chromebooks) available for writing time.

Materials for Lesson:

- [Featured Video \(1\) – Kevin Love](#)
- [Additional Videos \(4\)](#)
- Lesson Plan (this document)
- [Lesson PowerPoint](#)
- [Kevin’s Letter](#)

Videos:

Featured Video:

Kevin Love introduces the curriculum and describes the first lesson.

Additional Videos:

1. Cathyana Marcel shares a letter to her brother who was incarcerated.
2. Charles Benitez shares a letter to his dad expressing anger and beginning to work on forgiving him.
3. Bryanna Daniel shares a letter to her brother who passed away suddenly several years ago.
4. May Kim shares a letter that she wrote to her past/teenage self, offering herself hope and courage to get through a dark time.

Watch Videos:

<https://kevinlovetfund.org/for-teachers/lesson-one/>

Lesson Plan:

Display the ‘welcome slide’ from the Lesson 1 PowerPoint as you begin.

**Slide 1*

As discussed in the teacher training, remember to make the suggested language below authentic to yourself and meaningful for your students.

Launching the Lesson:

** Slide 2*

- Explain that this curriculum reframes the rules around emotion. Describe that you are willing to be vulnerable first.
- Hand out Kevin’s letter for students to read. If time is limited, explain that they can read the bolded sections now and return to read the rest of the letter after class.

Example of What You Could Say:

“Today we are going to begin a journey together that is really different than what we usually talk about in school. There are a lot of rules around how emotions get expressed in school, where they get expressed, and which emotions are considered “good” and which ones are considered “bad.” We’re going to rethink a lot of those rules. We’ll have many examples of people sharing their emotions and stories with us. I am going to do this too. I will not be asking you to do anything that I am not willing to do myself.

We are going to start this project together by reading a very brave and vulnerable letter written by Kevin Love, an NBA basketball player who is currently playing for the Cleveland Cavaliers. I want you to read this letter silently to yourself.”

(Hand out Kevin’s letter and allow students to read silently for a few minutes. Depending on how much time you have, you can have students read the entire letter or focus on the bolded parts of the letter.)

”Now that you have read Kevin’s letter, I want to share a video that Kevin recorded to introduce himself to you and talk about how the creative expression of writing has impacted his life.”

Notes on What You Plan to Say:

Play Guest Artist Videos:

Play two guest artist videos for students. In this video, Kevin Love tells the story and introduces students to the main idea of the curriculum – everyone is going through something you can’t see. He offers students a model of vulnerability and begins to destigmatize anxiety, depression and other emotions that have been historically labeled as “negative” by our society. After playing Kevin’s video, you can ask if the students have any questions or you can share a thought specific to Kevin modeling vulnerability. After a very brief discussion, play the additional video that you have chosen ahead of time that you think will resonate with your students.

Before you play the guest artist videos, remember to give students a description of the video content, so that they can decide if they would like to view the video. The video descriptions are listed above each video. Prior to playing the videos, you will remind students- “Stories hold potential for various forms of connection to the lives of those who hear them. This story may connect deeply to others who have had a similar experience. In this video, (read the one sentence description that is above each video). At this moment, you may welcome that connection or you may wish to make a different choice to delay or opt out.”

Reflecting on Guest Artist Video:

- Reiterate the primary message from the videos – everyone is going through something we can't see.

Example of What You Could Say:

“These two videos had two very different people bravely sharing their story. Even though the stories are different, they share a similar message. Most of us do not feel comfortable sharing when something hard has happened in our lives. Yet, difficult experiences are a part of life for all of us. Hopefully, hearing Kevin and _____ (*remind students of the name of the guest artist from the second video*) talk about their own challenges can remind you that you are not alone.”

- Make a personal connection to the video and model your own vulnerability by sharing the letter that you wrote in preparation for this lesson. In the teacher training, we reviewed that this letter can be to someone you are angry with, to someone you miss, to someone who has died, to a part of yourself, or just a letter where you share a little bit about something in your life that happened that was hard. You may want to share an experience of a time when you were going through something difficult and no one would have been able to tell just by looking at you.

Notes on What You Plan to Say:

Example of What You Could Say:

“For me, Kevin’s letter reminded me of _____ (share an experience when you were also going through something difficult, but no one would have been able to tell this just by looking at you.) and I want to share the letter I wrote about this experience.”

Read a part of your letter or your letter in its entirety. Then invite your students to make a personal connection to Kevin’s letter or to your letter.

Notes on What You Plan to Say:

Example of What You Could Say:

“As you hear Kevin’s story, the other guest artist’s story, or my story, does it bring to mind something you’ve gone through that was challenging? Or maybe it reminds you of an experience that is different, but it’s something you would like to write about?”

Notes on What You Plan to Say:

Introducing the Creative Activity:

- Introduce the creative activity of letter writing. Offer a few example ideas to inspire the writing. Emphasize that the focus is not on grammar. Explain that you will join them and write another letter.

Example of What You Could Say:

“Kevin wrote a letter as a way of telling his story about the panic attack he had during a basketball game. For our first activity, we’re going to write letters too. These are not letters you have to give to anyone. Don’t worry about grammar or punctuation or trying to make the letter sound good. This is not a graded assignment. This is just a chance to take something you have been thinking about and put it down on paper. The letter can be to someone you are angry with, to someone you miss, to someone who has died, to a part of yourself you’d like to speak to, or just a letter where you share a little bit about something in your life that happened that was hard. We’re going to write the letter together for 15 minutes with our pen to the paper, without lifting it too much or stopping or editing. I’ll watch the time and let you know when it’s been 15 minutes. Even though I already shared a letter with you, I have an idea for another letter that I am going to write along with you.”

Notes on What You Plan to Say:

Creative Activity:

* Slide 3

Students spend approximately 15 minutes writing their letter. Write alongside your students for the entirety of the writing time. Although you’ve written a letter to model the activity, it is important that you also model the practice of writing alongside them.

Lesson Closure:

Invite the class to reflect on the writing process. Was it helpful? Did it bring something new to the surface or offer any realizations? Share how this process felt for you personally. The hope is that one or two students will share even a small selection of their letter, but sharing is optional throughout the curriculum. Since this is the first lesson, it may take some time for the students to feel comfortable especially if they don’t already know each other. The way to measure the success of the lesson and students’ engagement is not through their sharing aloud, but through their willingness to write.

Example of What You Could Say:

“Okay, it’s been fifteen minutes now, so let’s stop writing and come back together again. A lot of people journal every day because they have so much on their minds and it can feel good to get it from the mind onto paper. Think about if you feel differently now than you did fifteen minutes ago. Would anyone like to share what they wrote about?”

Notes on What You Plan to Say:

Supplemental Information:

If you or your students would like to learn more about the ideas in this lesson, additional resources and third party links are included below.

1. In September of 2020, Kevin Love wrote a second letter for The Players Tribune. In this letter, he shares more details about his experience with depression. He also connects his experience with the many people who are grappling with the impact of the pandemic and the other unprecedented challenges of 2020. This second letter for The Players Tribune can be accessed here: [“To Anybody Going Through It.”](#)
2. In this interview clip on ESPN, Kevin Love describes his experience having a panic attack during a basketball game. He also explains the way the experience inspired him to seek support. [Video Clip From ESPN](#)
3. Kevin Love participated in an important conversation about sports and leadership with an expert panel including Chris Paul, Giannis Antetokounmpa and President Obama. Kevin discusses his experience with anxiety and his desire to destigmatize mental health concerns. [Video clip of Conversation with President Obama and Other Athlete Leaders](#)