



Teacher Priming

Humor & Inner Critic

It is important to acknowledge the tender edges of human experience you will be navigating when you invite your students to “play” with their inner critics. Choosing to bring this experience to your students means taking risks and modeling vulnerability.

There are five essential prerequisites for the inner critic lesson. Please engage in all of them with your full attention before beginning the Humor lesson sequence with your students.

1. Watch this [keynote address on Daring Classrooms](#)

Brené Brown addresses the question: What would it mean for our schools and classrooms if we showed up for tough, honest conversations about what it takes to bring our best, most authentic selves to learning?

Reflect: how does Brown’s framing of shame, vulnerability, and learning relate to your current experience with students? What is something you can do, as their teacher, to support their willingness to “take off their armor”?

2. Take some time to work through your own inner critic.

Generate a list of 5-10 things you don't like about yourself— maybe you're insecure about your teeth or dislike your tendency to stay silent when you have a valuable opinion.

Arrange the list from least sensitive to most, then read it to someone. Research suggests that this vulnerability exercise greases the wheels for future levity.

Then, practice making jokes about those things, as a way of “strategically desensitizing yourself” to their power over you. Come up with a few self-referential jokes about the less weighty stuff and eventually work your way up to the more painful things.

This exercise is borrowed from the NYT article [How to Laugh at Yourself](#) by Malia Wollan

