

**[00:00:00] Bonni Stachowiak:** Today on episode number 311 of the *Teaching in Higher Ed* podcast, Robin DeRosa and Martha Burtis join me to talk about Values-Centered Instructional Planning.

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**[00:00:13] Production Credit:** Produced by Innovate Learning, maximizing human potential.

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**[00:00:22] Bonni:** Hello and welcome to this episode of *Teaching in Higher Ed*. I'm Bonni Stachowiak, and this is the space where we explore the art and science of being more effective at facilitating learning. We also share ways to improve our productivity approaches, so we can have more peace in our lives and be even more present for our students.

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**[00:00:51] Bonni:** I'm joined today by Robin DeRosa and Martha Burtis, both from the Co-Lab, the Open Learning and Teaching Collaborative at Plymouth State University. They're going to share with us today the ACE framework. ACE stands for adaptability, connection, and equity. ACE elevates these three characteristics that are clear, context-sensitive, values-driven, and mission-aligned. They will share ways to help us use them to plan our assignments, our courses, and also our institutional level responses to COVID-19.

Martha and Robin, welcome back to *Teaching in Higher Ed*.

**[00:01:32] Robin:** Thank you, Bonni.

**[00:01:33] Martha:** Thanks for having us.

**[00:01:34] Bonni:** I asked on Twitter if anyone had any questions that they wanted answered by you, and ... asked about a board or a card game that each of you excels at. Let's start with Robin.

**[00:01:50] Robin:** I excel almost at all of them because I cheat. I don't like to think of it as cheating, I like to think of it as subverting, and I am generally not invited to game nights with my friends, so it's been a while. For that reason, I'm pretty good at all of them.

**[00:02:07] Bonni:** I was invited to be on Lillian Nave's podcasts, the *UDL* podcast, and she actually sent. She said she wanted to send flowers, but that the coronavirus was making that complicated for her, so she sent a couple of board games for our families. I'm embarrassed to admit, I didn't even know that this type of board game exists, the Cooperative Board Games. We had so much fun, and I will put a link in the show notes to it because I can't remember the name of it, but it was so much fun. For our kids who are six and eight now, what a wonderful lesson to teach them. We were all battling against the ogre. It was really good teamwork.

**[00:02:42] Robin:** It makes you look much worse when you cheat at a Cooperative Board Game.

**[00:02:45] Bonni:** Yes, yes, yes. We were all in it together. [laughs]

**[00:02:49] Martha:** I don't know, but I couldn't figure it out.

**[00:02:51] Bonni:** Martha, any games that come to mind for you?

**[00:02:55] Martha:** I have a weird-- My family gaming situation is a little bit strange because my husband really hates games, and my daughter is super competitive. Also, she usually doesn't like to play games either because they tend to get her

worked up. We don't actually do a lot of games, but during this bizarre period of our lives, we actually have been playing games. It's not a board game or a card game, but we've been playing these games. Robin knows because we've played with her. They're JackBox Games. They're video games that you play, we use Zoom.

We play them on your computer, and then we Zoom them with friends at a distance, and then your controller is your phone, but they're mostly like word games. I tend to excel at games like this because the more absurd, the funnier they tend to be, and the more likely you are to get people to vote for your answers, and I'm really good at absurd. If I'm in the right frame of mind, and I can channel my inner absurdist, I tend to be really good at those, but regardless, they've just been so much fun for us as a family to just play, but also with friends and family who we can't be seeing right now.

**[00:04:03] Bonni:** I have been getting so tempted by that. They have these packages of the Jack Games. I forget what they're called, but there's one called You Don't Know Jack, that's a trivia game. I used to play that in my 20s as a single person and had a roommate at the time and we got such an absolute kick out of them. I can't believe I'm about to share this story.

This is a weird podcast day, I feel like. [laughs] Let's just say I had a rough breakup at the time, rough, rough breakup, and let's just say that said boyfriend had the high score on You Don't Know Jack, and we sat there. You can pause the game in the middle of it if you wanted to. We sat there and tried to beat his high score so many times. We'd put it on pause, we'd call friends and try to figure it out. I'm not sure we actually ever accomplished that feat. I think we just reset the game and just gave up and reset the life and moved on to other people, so there you are. [laughs]

**[00:04:58] Martha:** We did play that one with my kids once, and I remember it too from my college days that it was like a computer game people had. My husband and I played that with the kids one night and the kids were just so perplexed by it because most of the trivia is just like, but then my son kept just guessing and getting the right one. I think he won actually.

[laughter]

He doesn't know any of the answers.

**[00:05:19] Bonni:** Unfair, unfair, it really is. Well, we are here today not to talk about games, but I do appreciate that way to bring back Martha and Robin into the show. We're here to talk about a framework that you developed. It has the acronym ACE, and one of the things I get really excited about talking to you about is you're not, neither one of you, I followed your work for so long. I know this about you. You don't create an acronym just for acronym's sake like happens at many institutions.

I believe in your word choices here that you didn't just force your way into this acronym, and I'm really excited to hear how this project came about and a little bit about the history and then us to walk through each of these aspects of it. Let's start out with really some of the challenges that you were seeing that made you want to formulate this framework. What were some of the reasons why you just started thinking we need something to help people navigate this time? Let's start with Robin.

**[00:06:20] Robin:** Well, I think as soon as it became clear that there was going to be this thing, people started calling up pivots. The pivot to remote or online instruction during COVID, I started getting emails really quickly from vendors who are trying to sell me the solution to help make that pivot frictionless, and frictionless-ness was often the word that they wanted to make the transition seamless. That so did not align with my experience in faculty development, or at my experience as a faculty member teaching where the friction was the only place the work got done. I started immediately, and also thanks to my community of scholars that I work with Martha, being one of them, I was immediately skeptical of anything that seemed like a frictionless solution to education during a global pandemic.

**[00:07:24] Bonni:** What would make you cause that you could have any suspicion around that?

**[00:07:27] Robin:** I know, Bonni. I know, it's surprising. What I really wanted, because I knew there was lots of anxiety and I didn't want the fact that the friction is essential to augment the anxiety that people feel when they're trying to do this work, faculty trying to do this work of transforming the courses. I wanted to create, we have used already in the CoLab, which is where Martha and I work the Open Learning and Teaching Collaborative at Plymouth State in New Hampshire.

We had already developed a tool called the Rule of 2s, which was basically a way of just getting people to focus on the big picture ideas that they thought were important to them as they were managing the transition. I think we wanted to develop an alternative to a solutions-based approach that was also still a little bit soothing in its simplicity. We thought a framework was a better idea than a solution.

This would allow faculty to have the autonomy to make their own decisions about their own students and their own disciplines, but it would still provide them some guidance for those decisions that had to be made. The framework aims to push back against solutionism, to give people something that's a little bit coherence in a time where there's lots of confusion. Then finally, the most important thing was to keep it aligned with mission.

I think in the context of emergency or disaster or fear, a lot of times we look for easy solutions that come from outside of our situations, and, unfortunately, even though that can sometimes feel simpler because you can purchase it and bring it in, when you do that, you lose sight of your core missions, and a lot of the online teaching pivot resources were aimed at institutions that were nothing like our small public, residential based college that really focuses on collaborative learning and gauged and applied pedagogies. We knew that we needed to create a framework that was aligned with the way we teach and learn at Plymouth State.

**[00:09:42] Bonni:** Martha, what were some of the early conversations that you remember in trying to arrive at said framework? Were there sticky notes involved, any sorts of mind maps involved in terms of like trying to formulate all the ideas you were having, the challenges as well as the opportunities into something that made sense? What was your process like?

**[00:10:02] Martha:** Actually, I think the process was all in Robin's head for this one because-- I mean, I think she would say that it grew out of lots of stuff that we've been doing in the CoLab. Because we haven't been in the same space together for, I don't know, two and a half months, this didn't emerge the way a lot of our projects have, which tends to be a lot of what you're describing, sort of sitting around a table and throwing ideas around until something emerges. As soon as she began talking about it with us, and to us, it was really clear how useful it was going to be.

What I love about it, and it's the reason I love this approach, is I'm a really big fan of critical lenses as a way of tackling difficult situations or tackling challenges instead of saying, "Okay, here's the problem, I'm just going to figure out the steps to a solution, framing that problem in such a way that we're forced to grapple with the complexity." For example, with the ACE Framework, we've even had people say things like, "Well, it feels like there's a tension between this piece over here and this piece over here, these practices that you've identified."

Of course, there's attention, that's the whole point, is that by having a framework, it's not that it suddenly points us in frictionless directions, it's that it exposes to us that complexity, and forces us to make critical choices about what it is we're going to do, and also it forces us to acknowledge that friction is going to exist, and we're going to have to figure out how to negotiate that both between us and our course but between us and our students.

**[00:11:47] Bonni:** The thing that I like about the framework is that you didn't just stop at the acronym which ACE stands for adaptability, connection, and equity, but you also have the additional, I was going nuance, but that's stronger than a nuance, but just looking at this from an assignment level, from a course level, and from an institution level, and as we've been trying to navigate this at our institution, I don't think we've done a good enough job of really parsing those things out.

It's like just a haphazard, and mostly probably we've been at the course level when what people really need to do in some cases was the assignment level and other cases, the institution level. I mean, I really, really liked the way that you broke those

things out so that people can picture this because this is a podcast and you can only hear us right now, is adaptability, connection and equity are going across the top, and then across the left-hand side, assignment level, course level, and institution level. Robin, talk a little bit more about the framework and then we can start going into some of the specific areas.

**[00:12:52] Robin:** I think the two things I'll say to just follow that thread a little further, in lots of Teaching and Learning Centers, I think there's a sense that you are generally working with faculty at the assignment and course level, and that somebody else at the administration is handling the institution level. That gap is sometimes exposed when you find challenges in what we call shared governance. I'm interested in models that try to bring those worlds together a little bit so that we can see that the decisions that we make about, for example, how we grade something, or how we make a rubric or how we design a module in a class, are linked to structural decisions that the institution is making.

If you can do those things in alignment, and again, all of these things align not just with each other, but with your mission. I think faculty would be well served by using them institutional missions more in their course designs and insisting that those missions really inform all of the work that everybody's doing together. The other thing is like when you're asking about, how many post-it notes and how many mind maps. Some people might look at the ACE Framework and say, "Wow, you took 11 minutes and just poured this thing out, because that's how it happened. That's how you want it to happen. You do not want a global pandemic.

This is not a time to innovate with brand new things that grow from, I don't even know where. In the Romantic period, we talk about the genius, that would just come to Wordsworth and his creative genius would just explode and he writes some amazing poem. This is not divine genius that informed the ACE Framework, and it's also not crazy design thinking project planning.

What this was, was looking at the stuff that we've been saying for years at Plymouth State about what's important in teaching and learning, and saying that if we're going to have challenges in remote teaching, it's probably because we're going to

get alienated from the things that we know are important to our students. Let's return to those things and build a framework that helps us do the remote learning in a way that's true to those things.

The reason we made this openly licensed and encouraged people to either change, even adaptability, connection and equity to things that resonate specifically with your mission statements, or keep those and change the ACE-informed practices inside the grid, is that you really want to grow these from the things that your institution knows is important to teaching and learning. In our institutions, the reason we protect them so much and care about them so much, is they are special, and it's the specialness that we're trying to retain in this transition.

We don't want everybody to create online, competency-based individualized work-at-home modules that might be really great for, say, adult learners and Online Learning kinds of settings, but might not work quite as well in settings where the students had expected to have more of a traditional residential college experience, or be working more on project-based learning. It didn't take long to come up with this stuff, because this is the stuff that we have cared about for years.

**[00:16:20] Bonni:** The other thing that's been coming up for me with what you said, and it's funny, as you're talking, I'm looking at it. I know things are just popping out at me, of course, oh, we are adoption is not new for what you've been doing both of you in your work, open tools reduce disposable. These are things that have been core to your personal missions and also wrapped into your institutions as well.

Something that I found was that people wanted that perfect recipe not to be deferred from, but as soon as you would even attempt to be specific, because, of course, that's a good tension. People feel lost, you want to help them, but then as soon as you think you're helping them, then they're like, "Wait a second, academic freedom."

It's this real good tension that we had. By the way, at my institution, I feel closer to my colleagues than ever. This has not been an adversarial thing at all for me. If I

sound frustrated, it's about the frustration of me not being able to help in the ways that I wish I could have, and I hope it's coming across like that.

What I just found over and over again, what they would ask for, give me that recipe, was really, let me experience it, but they didn't really know that that's what they really were asking for. Instead of like sessions about Zoom, where you click when you want to share a video, I came up with this name, which is I call it the worst name I've ever come up with for anything before, but people loved it. We called it Zoom and Bloom.

Part of this session, we would tell you something about Zoom, but part of this session, we would have a stretch together, or one of my colleagues, Shannon, she cooked in her kitchen and taught us about meal prep, and someone else where it's a religious institution, so they would do devotionals and share stories about their faith, and all kinds of different things. All this to say, I want to know where you also saw, here's a framework, this is stuff we've been telling you for a long time. Did you also have that tension of like, we also have to show people- not show them, we need to have them experience? What kinds of things came up for you?

**[00:18:25] Robin:** I don't know if this answers your questions. One of the things that's really important to me as a practitioner in this field, is how we communicate this stuff to our audiences, and in this case, to our faculty, how we take something like, as you said, it's difficult on a podcast to really explain a framework. How do we create a place for people to go that will help them understand what this is. Like that web page that you're looking at is just the very first attempt at trying to help them with that visualization and help them see their place in it?

Where we're going from here is really developing, that's my next big project sort of curriculum around this for faculty to work with over the summer, so that they can **[inaudible 00:19:11]** faculty are off-contract so they're not technically being paid over the summer, which we want to be really aware of but also recognize that it's absurd to say faculty work over the summer.

It's absurd to assume that anybody is going to just be like, "Oh, I'll just think about this thing in August", that people will obviously be wanting to work on this in different ways over the summer, but then we can't necessarily require them to do things and we can't necessarily engineer that as a program the way that we might during the academic year. We want to create a resource that faculty can use the summer as they are dipping in and out, thinking and rethinking, responding to whatever the latest news we're getting is because that's going to be evolving for the next couple of months. My mission really is not only to think about that curriculum but to think about the communication of that and literally the design of that as a communication tool on our web page, which is something I love to do. That's great but also challenging because, as you said, there is no recipe here.

It's funny, my kids-- Every Wednesday, my daughter bakes with my mom over facetime, and my nephew who lives in Germany. When I came up here today, they were down there making spice cake. I was listening to my mom give-- My mom has made this for decades. I was listening to my mom give my daughter and my nephew this recipe, and it was so improv. She's like, "Why don't we try two tablespoons of molasses and half a cup of brown sugar?" My nephew was like, "We don't have any molasses." She's like, "Okay, you put in three quarters of a cup of brown sugar." I was just thinking about that adaptability, what it takes to become a practitioner where you're confident enough that you can say, "You know what, let's try and close this time, or let's see what happens if we use a little bit more brown sugar and a little less white sugar." Whatever. I don't make spice cake, so I'm not good at improving the way my mom improves.

It reminds me a little bit of this too about helping faculty to realize that they have those skills. They've been chefs of their own courses for a long time, and that in the normal course of events, they adopt and they rethink and they restructure and they reshuffle, and that what we're asking them to do, not to diminish it at all, not to say it's easy, but that we're asking them to call on those skills that they've been developing and reapply them in a new way, and to let go of this presumption, as you said, that there's a recipe that we all need to follow, that really there's just a whole lot of, I'm going to push the metaphor and break it probably, but a whole lot

of ingredients that are at our disposal that ACE framework tries to layout what some of those are.

Then what their role is, is to figure out, "Which of these are ones that I like that I've used before? Which ones I've always wanted to explore and do more with?" Or, "Are there things missing from this list of ingredients that I want to add and maybe share with my colleagues and pull into this framework?"

**[00:22:17] Bonni:** I mentioned about those Zoom and Bloom sessions, and so I invited a colleague, Bill Dogterom, to come on and lead one of them. He's actually been on the show before talking about mentoring. I'll link to that in the show notes. He's one of those people who-- He just opens his mouth and everyone stops and turns and says, "Wisdom is about to emerge, so get ready everyone." He is not particularly technical, he would say that if he was here, so this is not a big secret.

I was trying to help him prepare for that one and think about how to use his existing skills within a new context, but not try to-- Does he need to learn everything about Zoom? No he doesn't. We started out, and so I decided that for my-- Because the people who are not as comfortable, we're doing the Zoom part to just teach one little aspect of it for like the first five minutes and then we pass it over to the main presenter.

In his case, I decided to sneakily get in there and talk about pauses. It's called the eight-second rule. You ask a question and then you pause, count to eight seconds. I've actually done an entire episode on it before. That really changes in a virtual environment to possibly needing to count to even more than eight seconds. People really have a tough time reading the room if they've not done this before, and trying to create some new norms that will be more helpful in conversation.

Anyway, I ended up talking about pauses and what they can do and then this whole thing of eight seconds, and he used silence. He does this just naturally, but it was then that he was so much more comfortable doing what he does already that I was introducing, "Oh, I can do that here too." It was a really, really great thing.

Are there aspects of this that you can think of? I'm looking across in terms of-- I love all your word choices. I could just do a whole episode or five with you just on the word choices. Not a digital divide like trying to reduce it. That's the word I would have probably tried to use, some sort of like reducing the digital divide. You said ... I can't even say the word ...

**[00:24:25] Robin:** ... If you look at any of the practices inside the ACE framework, and you take them out of the framework, I would say probably about 80% of them, in my opinion, fall apart. They become, actually in my opinion, counterproductive. They only make sense when you think of them as part of a framework. They only make sense when you have the why attached to them. A few examples of that, if we want to look inside the framework itself, and I'll start leaving the digital divide thing for a second.

**[00:25:08] Bonni:** Good because I still don't think I can-- [laughs]

**[00:25:11] Robin:** We also really need to talk about that. We moved that up actually when we presented this to faculty in a certain kind of way that I think is really important. One of the ones that is all over the place that everybody's talking about which is in our framework, is hy-flex design, and it's under adaptability. Hy-flex is one of those things that I think really until about a month ago, even those of us who do a lot with online learning, it was not a phrase that we used very often except in a very small group of folks who were interested in. Now, of course, you see it everywhere, hy-flex which basically means a class is offered simultaneously in a face-to-face and an online version, and students can flow in and out of those options.

Hy-flex, the more we studied it as we put this framework together, is incredibly complex from a design standpoint. You're designing a fully online class, you're designing a fully face-to-face class, and then you're designing the intersection at which those things meet, and when they intersect, both parts really fall apart in certain kinds of ways, but I think there are ways of designing around that. It's complicated, especially for people who've never been taught online before.

We thought about presenting this to our faculty, we wanted our faculty to know that hy-flex is an option, we wanted them to understand some of the design principles around hy-flex or around something like modular instructional design. These are approaches to instructional design that have some best practices that you can share, that have some structures that you can share, but faculty need to understand what's being achieved by designing in these ways.

When we linked these to the broader idea of adaptability and how adaptability helps you engage with students, how it affects your content, and then we took all that adaptability stuff and we said, "We're not going to talk about this in a way that's isolated from connection, the ability to build relationships between people." Sometimes actually that makes adaptability harder because it's very easy to be adaptable when you're a single person, but adapting in ways that keep a group functioning together can be very challenging. Of course adaptability is very challenging when you add in equity. We certainly saw this and we said, "Isn't it fabulous? We can adapt and we can all go online." Then people are like, "I don't have WiFi, I don't have a device."

Keeping things like hy-flex connected to the question of why and how adaptability is helpful during this pandemic, and then keeping adaptability tied to connection and equity, creates a very different conversation with faculty. We still were able to show them design frameworks, we were still able to talk about structures, we were still able to, for example, talk about backwards design and how if you tend to teach more emergently, you may need to shift to a more backwards design model if you're interested in hy-flex, but the conversation only started there. We can do that in three or four or five slides. The other slides were conversations that faculty are already good at having, about how you're going to create a community when people are moving in and out of modalities.

I think that's where we're going to end up with what people call quality and an experience. It's not going to be from very quickly transitioning our non-online institutions to some slick Phoenix model where suddenly everything has no friction and you can just go in and get your contents. It's going to be by asking rich

questions about the experience, and that means talking about things like modules or hy-flex in a larger context.

**[00:29:05] Bonni:** Martha, how about for you? What kinds of ways did you see these intersections taking place? I'm also curious too about just how you've experienced people coming into this, whether it's people at your institution or people that you're meeting because of the Inside Higher Ed piece and your Twitter relationships, et cetera.

**[00:29:25] Martha:** The piece of this that I've spent the most time thinking about, and I've talked about a little bit on Twitter with folks, not surprisingly tends to circle around tech because that tends to be my background in this, and the idea of what role do technologies play in how we approach this, and how do we walk the line of using the things that resonate with us as pedagogues and work for us as teachers, balance that with not wanting to overwhelm our students with too many avenues for communication, and too many technology pieces that they then have to juggle. There's been lots of discussion about this since this started, and most people tend to come down along the line of what we really need to do is standardize, we need to limit the tools that our faculty use, we need to limit the expectations that our students are going to be in a lot of different places, we need to be realistic. I understand that, and I'll come back to, I understand, that in a second, but my history with technology and in higher ed is not bad, not because I love to confuse students, but because I think that our choices about technology should be critical choices, not ones dictated by standardization or institutional contracts or relationships between institutions and vendors, which, unfortunately, tends to be how that standardization plays out.

I was really thinking about this, Laurie Gibbs had said something on Twitter, and she had talked about Laurie has been doing this for so long, teaching online, I mean, and doing it so successfully and yet she has her students work in lots of different places and spaces with different tools and tech. She was talking about the fact that it works and she doesn't have students come back and say they felt completely blindsided by that. I was reflecting upon this one night and I thought the reason for that is because of Laura, and that context, the context of Laura as

an instructor, is what makes that work. Our goal shouldn't be let's push everybody into the same narrow channel of how they teach them what they used to teach. It should be, let's help faculty to understand their own strengths and how they're most comfortable applying those strengths to having students work in different spaces and places online.

I thoroughly reject the notion that students are incapable of being in all these different spaces because I'm sorry, I understand it's anecdotal, maybe nobody's ever done a study, but I watch my daughter and her friends, I watch my students, I see them on their phones and on devices easily maneuvering between different places for different purposes using different tools for different things. The difference is that there is intrinsic value in that for them. They have come to see those tools not as a hassle, but as an extension of their relationships with people.

For Laura, she is able to translate that into education, she's able to make the use of those things seem real and seem important and vital to the work of the class, not another hoop or another hurdle that students have to jump. Unfortunately, I think this whole situation has shone a bright light on a lot of our inadequacies and a lot of the missteps that we've made for decades in higher ed, and unfortunately, one of the things we're seeing is you commodify higher ed to a certain degree, you talk more and more about students as consumers, you run your schools more and more as businesses, and that affects our student's relationship with their education.

They don't come into a class expecting to have intrinsic motivation the way that they do in their other aspects of their lives, and that's something though that I truly believe at the course level we can address, that faculty can address that, but they have to do it by being honest about who they are, what their strengths are and how they enact those strengths using different technologies, not by saying, "I'm going to do this because it's what everybody else is doing, or I'm not going to do this because nobody else is doing it." Yes, I feel very strongly that our conversation about technology in this framework and in this entire pivot needs to be a whole lot more nuanced than it tends to be.

**[00:33:47] Bonni:** I'm going to be linking to two things in the show notes that will help people begin to digest this even more, because we're just skimming the surface, I know. There's a wonderful article from the Inside Higher Ed called *Values-Centered Instructional Planning*, and then there also is on the CoLab site, the ACE framework. You can see the definitions for things, and then for all of these components of adaptability, connection, equity, things that you can click on. It sounds like, from Martha's, what she mentioned, there'll be even more things for us to be able to access in the future. This is sadly the time in the show when we get over to recommendations because I would love to continue this discussion for hours and hours, but I want to share about a class that I took in college, it was called Sociology of Death.

You would think that maybe what an odd thing to have learned about in college, but it's carried with me all of these years. The biggest lesson that I took away is that there is absolutely nothing you can say when something terrible happens to someone else to make them feel better. In fact, that it's a very selfish act, by the way, they ease their way into this in the class, but it's a very selfish act to think that there was something that I could say to another person to help them feel better, because really, your grief then is making me feel uncomfortable. If I could just help you feel better, then ultimately, I don't have to feel uncomfortable anymore. What really I took away from that class all these decades later is just that really all we can do is be fully present for other people, and, in fact, I'm pretty sure, Robin, that this phrase, Holding Space for Others, I'm pretty sure that you actually might have tweeted about that. Am I imagining that? Do you remember talking about holding space for people? Is that a phrase that you would use?

**[00:35:28] Robin:** It is a phrase I would definitely use. I feel like when I use it, I'm also getting it from other people. I wouldn't take credit for it, but I'm sure it's been in all of these conversations about care right now.

**[00:35:43] Bonni:** Yes. I remember on Twitter back when I first heard about Peter Kaufman, he was actually tweeting about his terminal diagnosis, and he's basically mourning. He wrote about, in a sociological journal really, the story of coming to terms with his own pending death and what that meant to him to give up teaching.

I remember just thinking, "Oh, I'm going to contact him and I'm going to help him." I'm just was overwhelmed, and literally the same night that I contacted him, he got back with me and he was on the show. As many of you who've been listening for a while know, he did pass away and I just feel it's such a treasure to have a tiny slice of his life captured. I feel so much right now in the last, is it two-and-a-half months or is it two-and-a-half days? I don't know, but just the need for us to be holding space for others.

I just wanted to hold space for two people just for a couple minutes as I close up my recommendations. One is Audrey Watters, who has been on the podcast all the way back on episode 15, and she has shared on a number of spaces publicly. I feel like I can share this here, that her son passed away, and just the outpouring of sorrow. I can recall watching her partner take him on a trip, we never saw pictures of him, but take him on a trip and their experimentations with drones and all the beautiful videos that they captured. Then she also shared a number of photos of him growing up, and just such a beautiful thing. I want to hold space for Audrey Watters and just, again, there's nothing to say. There's nothing to say to make this better. It's a horrible, tremendous loss, and we mourn with you, Audrey.

The second one is Linda Oakleaf. Linda Oakleaf's been with this podcast from the very beginning. She's in regular contact with me, whether it's email or whether it's on our Slack channel, or whether it's on Twitter. I posted an article, I will link to it in the show notes, but I posted an article from someone who had lost their job teaching. I can't recall at this moment what the circumstances were that caused them to lose it, but she mentioned that the article really resonated with her too because she has just lost her job. She works at a large institution. Again, I'll put the information in the show notes, but 30% of their faculty were laid off, and I just-- Berkeley, they have a-- Berkeley has a center for good. I forgot what that what it's called, but they do research on the ...

They've looked at, you can say a number of deaths, but until you tell a story about a particular death, that-- This particular thing sounds cold, but it has to do with philanthropic donations. They're a lot higher if you hear the person's story, a specific individual has a greater impact on us. Something, Linda, about hearing about you

could lose your job, I've just been heartbroken along with you. I am so sad that you're having to go through this now, and I know you will always be a teacher. I just wish you could be a teacher right now and not have to be going through this. I hold space for Audrey Watters, and I hold space for Linda Oakleaf.

Martha, I'm going to pass it over to you for your recommendations.

**[00:38:55] Martha:** Thank you, Bonni, and thank you for hosting this podcast for so long and creating a community around this work that allows us to do that, to share that grief. I think that's an important part of this as well. The piece that I wanted to share is just a blog post by-- I don't actually know this person. It came across my Twitter feed last week. Her name is Heather Castillo or Castillo, who teaches at Channel Islands, and it's a piece that she wrote, she's a dance professor. It's called *Creating in a Chrysalis: Towards Embracing a Liminal State*, and I think she wrote this shortly after the news had come out that the California State system was going to be staying online in the fall. Obviously, for somebody who teaches dance, that presents some really particular kinds of teaching and creative challenges for her and for her students.

She wrote this piece that it really, really struck a chord with me because of how hopeful it was. I just wanted to read one short quote from it and then invite other people to read the whole thing. She's talking about this notion of a chrysalis as a space where transformation happens. What do we do during chrysalis? We prepare, we train, we create art, we do not retreat, we do not give up. It is our job to reflect the human condition. Like I said, it's a really short quote from that piece, but it just set my brain off, and I've been thinking and thinking about it for the last week, because I tweeted a little bit about this last night.

I think reflecting the human condition is part of the job and the work of the universities and colleges. I think it's a super important part of what we're supposed to be doing, and there's one thing that makes me really sad, right? There is a lot of things that make me really sad right now, but about our schools that makes me really sad, it's that I feel like we've lost our way. We've forgotten that we really

should be leading through this, we should be showing people how we survive a situation like this by embracing the human condition.

Anyway, Heather's words just really, really resonated with me. I invite other people to read that blog post and think about how in our own work, we find a way to take this challenge, and maybe use it to remind ourselves what's most important about the work that we do.

**[00:41:21] Robin:** Thank you both, those are beautiful. I think mine is a nice companion for the ease that you've laid out for us. My recommendation is a novel that I came to through teaching. I taught it many, many times in a course called *Wilderness Literature*, and it's by Anne Dillard. Actually, it's not a novel, I guess it's like a memoir or Field Notes that's called *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*. What Dillard really does is she goes into her backyard and appreciates the universe that's contained there, and I live in the country and feel like I have a vast backyard, long past the perimeters of my own stone walls.

The beauty of Dillard is that it doesn't matter how big a space you have, she finds depth in the smallest things. Actually the whole ACE framework is really about keeping bigger pictures and larger connections in mind when you make a small decisions in your corner of the world, and that's what Dillard is all about, is vast, universal connections that she is able to identify right in the dirt under her feet.

It's in the dirt under your feet where the work of the universe happens, and I'm trying to keep that balance and keep perspective when I'm trying to guide other people to decision making that we really need to keep broader humanity in mind right now and not be myopic in our vision.

**[00:42:57] Bonni:** Martha and Robin, thank you so much for this conversation, and thanks for that. It doesn't begin here or end here just for your work, for your service, for your love.

**[00:43:06] Robin:** Thank you, Bonni.

**[00:43:07] Martha:** Thank you.

**[00:43:12] Bonni:** Thanks to Martha and to Robin for being back with me on *Teaching in Higher Ed* today. Thank you for holding space for all of higher education and all the work that you do to help us be working more in solidarity with one another to serving our students better collectively. Thanks to all of you for listening and to being a part of this community. Our work is perhaps harder than ever, and community is perhaps more important than ever. Really appreciate you, and look forward to the next time we get to connect on Twitter, on email, or even by snail mail. Thanks for the gift of the collaborative games from Lillian. I really appreciated that. Our family got to play it last night and we had a great time. Thanks to all of you for listening. I'll see you next time on *Teaching in Higher Ed*.

**[00:44:05] [END OF AUDIO]**

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