

[00:00:00] Bonni Stachowiak: Today on episode number 335, Mays Imad joins me to talk about trauma-informed teaching and learning.

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[00:00:20] Bonni: Hello, and welcome to this episode of *Teaching in Higher Ed*. I am 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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Today's guest, Mays Imad, is a neuroscientist and professor of Pathophysiology and Biomedical Ethics at Pima Community College, the founding coordinator of the Teaching and Learning Center, and the Gardner Institute Fellow. Dr. Imad's current research focuses on stress, self-awareness, advocacy, and classroom community, and how these relate to cognition, metacognition, and ultimately, student learning and success. Through her teaching and research, she seeks to provide her students with transformative opportunities that are grounded in the aesthetics of learning, truth-seeking, and self-realization. Mays, welcome to *Teaching in Higher Ed*.

[00:01:38] Mays Imad: Thank you. Thank you for having me here.

[00:01:40] Bonni: I have really enjoyed getting to learn more about your research and about your work on trauma-informed teaching. Let's begin by having you share a little bit about how you first got interested in this type of pedagogy.

[00:01:54] Mays: Thank you. I teach a variety of science courses and a lot of times when I start the semester, I talk with students about the science of learning and how we could regulate our learning. I spend a lot of time trying to help students become captains of their own learning journey if you will. Over the years, I noticed that

sometimes students would be taking an exam, and they would leave the exam and would leave pages empty.

Eventually, I did a focus group where I asked the students, "What's going on?" because sometimes I would run after them and say, "Just write anything. I know you know the material. I know." I did a focus group. I asked students what's going on, and there was a student that said to me that they freeze. Sometimes they see something and they freeze and just nothing could break that.

It was that moment that I had an aha moment that took me back to graduate school in my own journey as a student. I remember in graduate school, this was during the invasion of Iraq, where my family's there. I remember studying and being in study groups and so on and going to take the exams and just having that same reaction.

At the time when I was a student, I would often think, "Maybe I just became stupid. Maybe I'm not cut off for this. Maybe, maybe." It would take me all those years and for my students to point out to me that no, this was a traumatic reaction. I began to work with the students on the importance of recognizing when we have a reaction that blocks our ability to engage, to learn, to reproduce what we've learned, so that's, in a nutshell, how I became interested in it. It was my own journey but really amplified by students' experiences and students' guidance to help direct me in this direction.

[00:04:13] Bonni: What I find so touching about your story is that this is not the happy part, you experienced this trauma, and then all this time goes by, presumably you're gaining a lot cognitively and perhaps gaining some confidence in your own academic abilities after that point, but it comes full circle around to you becoming the student of students. That they could teach you something like that that you were unable to see with your own eyes is really a beautiful, touching thing.

[00:04:46] Mays: Absolutely. It's been healing. I remember the first time I had that aha moment and how I sat down and I reflected on how many times in graduate school I thought I need to drop out, maybe I became stupid then and how much I wish someone has said to me, "No, you're experiencing traumatic stress and trauma" because when we see that "The deficit is not me, there are variables that are impacting me. My physiology's acting up," we can have compassion for ourselves. I always say that the students, working with my students, have been healing and very empowering.

[00:05:37] Bonni: Let's spend a few minutes now looking at two different types of trauma. Let's first look at, if there are any, the common types of trauma that our students may have experienced that might trigger a similar experience as you had, and then let's then talk about the dynamic of the COVID pandemic because that

really, to me, and what I'm learning so far is that rather than it being an individual trauma, it both is, but it also is a collective trauma. Could we start with just some of the patterns that we might see of traumas our students that we would be teaching might have experienced?

[00:06:15] Mays: Yes, that's a great question. If we are to be honest with ourselves in higher education, we would know that our students were experiencing trauma and chronic stress before the pandemic. We know that trauma can be physical. Getting into a car accident can be traumatic. Witnessing someone getting into a car accident can be traumatic, but so is experiencing poverty and oppression, and uncertainty.

DACA students and all of the uncertainty and the marginalization and just this agony were undoubtedly experiencing traumatic stress but also their friends because when I see that my friend is experiencing oppression and I am unable to help out, that can also be secondary or vicarious trauma. We know, actually, research from, for example, Nadine Burke, who is the Surgeon General of California, who wrote the *Deepest Well*, and she did research.

She and others have done research on the adverse childhood effects. We know that a lot of our students were coming to us carrying the impact of adverse childhood effects. We also know that there's rampant loneliness and anxiety, and there's this obsession with perfectionism. The students were definitely experiencing, let's say, an above-average stress. When that stress is day in and day out, whether it's coming from socioeconomic factors or racial inequality, the day in and the day out, the chronicity of it becomes really overwhelming on our brains and our overall wellbeing.

Now, that's before the pandemic. The pandemic has introduced another set of challenges. A lot of traumatologists clinicians have been saying that all the ingredients that would cause somebody to experience a traumatic event are there. We are social creatures. When I see somebody at the store, I smile, and I want to chat with them. Now, what has happened is we have become just reflexively averse to being close to each other. There's also the uncertainty of what's going to happen.

What's going to happen in terms of income, in terms of health? Without any forewarning, we've been confronting the vulnerability, our vulnerabilities, our mortality. We're doing a lot of this in a vacuum, so yes, we're experiencing this collectively, but also, there is a social isolation, and that is on top of what was already there for a lot of our students and a lot of our colleagues. It's definitely challenging.

[00:09:34] Bonni: We have looked at some of the types of traumatic experiences our students may have and then the ways in which COVID has compounded those things. I know we have more to explore in terms of trauma-informed pedagogy, but let's begin with a definition. What can you tell us about trauma-informed pedagogy as a way of thinking about our teaching and a way of approaching it?

[00:09:59] Mays: In its simplest definition. Basically, it is a lens. I the teacher or as a faculty developer, I view my colleagues, they come to me with a background, with experiences, and those experiences are going to impact how they interact with the materials, with their classmates, with the classroom, their ability to engage, to learn, to thrive, their overall well-being. I recognize that, and I'm able to recognize when they are triggered, when they feel disengaged.

I also am able to recognize it in myself that we can't give what we don't have, which is why part of this trauma-informed lens is the well-being of the teacher as well. I recognize it in myself, I recognize it in the students, but I don't stop at recognition. At the heart of experiencing trauma is lack of safety, lack of agency, lack of feeling connected, so I'm going to be intentional as a teacher to help students feel safe beyond the physical safety, beyond the emotional safety, safety holistically.

I'm also going to help cultivate a connection between me and the students, among the students. I'm also going to help the students feel empowered, give them a voice and a choice. Those things, ultimately, will not only help the students feel engaged and learn but also, it can lead to recovery. I often talk about the concept that I've been working on, the learning sanctuary where the classroom, whether virtual or physical, can be a place where the students come in and learn to cultivate the world within but also connect with the world without. It is through that we can begin to grow and heal.

[00:12:13] Bonni: I was thinking back to the closest thing I think I've probably had to trauma, and that was that we had a very challenging time having children. There were many years of lots of medical adventures. At the time, I wouldn't have described myself that way. I would have thought that this was just normal. This is just a lot of doctor visits, but it's very normal. Then every year, we would go back to the doctor's office, we still do now.

They have Halloween little get-togethers. They call them the Miracle Babies, and the kids all come dressed up in Halloween costumes. It's adorable. I would give a hug to the doctor, and I would smell the smell of his disinfectant on his coat, and my heart rate would instantly elevate ... go, "Oh, okay" because I'm not literally afraid of him, but your brain doesn't work. It doesn't necessarily work that way.

The reason I bring that up is not to share a needless personal story but to try the best that I can to attempt to have greater empathy for students to try to think about what it would be like to have had that in my entire life. When you mentioned about experiencing poverty, experiencing racism, et cetera, and trying to really connect with what that might be, the other thing that, as you were sharing, I was thinking about, I know we exchanged a little bit about this over email,

I was joking. I don't know if you got my joke over email. Sometimes it doesn't land, but you said that these can sometimes be controversial things. There's two things I'd love to bring up and then hear your response to. I certainly won't be in support of either of these things but the idea that there are trigger warnings that we might give to students, for example, a student has been raped, perhaps give them a warning before you assign reading that depicts a rape scene, for example, just one of many.

There's that part of it and then there's this, that they're going to become too soft, that they just won't have the tenacity or the grit to keep going. Again, I'm not an advocate for either of those things, but I wonder, though, if you would share just a bit on your reflections and response to people who are concerned about either one of those things.

[00:14:32] Mays: Absolutely. First, I want to thank you for sharing this story, and I want to acknowledge that we can heal from trauma. I talk to the students about how trauma affects the brain and our body and our ability to learn, but the brain is also plastic and resilient and brilliant. Healing from trauma begins with the awareness. I think it's wonderful that you noticed that your heart rate goes up, and then you're like, "What's going on?" It's this "What's going on?" without judgment that can help us understand ourselves and why our body is scared so we could negotiate with the brain to calm the body down. Thank you for sharing that.

[00:15:20] Bonni: Oh, thank you for that. I really appreciate that. I'm a big believer in naming things. Exactly what you said, you name it, how do you name it without that judgment?

[00:15:30] Mays: Let's take a backward design approach to this. I the teacher, my goal is to help the students learn and apply the material so they could go on and thrive in society and become a contributing citizen, and so on. I am interested in, what is the best, the most effective, humane, fun way to get to that, to get to my goal, to engage with students, to help them feel empowered and liberated, and so on?

Knowing what we know about the brain, knowing that we are not just thinking machines, but we're feeling machines capable of thinking, as Antonio Damasio says, we can't separate our feelings from our thoughts. We also know that we

process information at an emotional level before we process it at a rational level. If I'm sitting in a classroom and somebody presents something that triggers me and I don't have the tools to negotiate with my brain because I just haven't learned, that experience can trigger me, and it can hijack my ability to engage with the material.

Then I is a teacher, what have I accomplished? Nothing. It's not about babying students, it's not about rigor, it's not about content, it's about being strategic. How can I engage them so they can engage with the materials? It's giving them the opportunity to pause and prepare for what's to come let's say if it's something that's going to be triggering. To your second question, that this trauma-informed pedagogy is going to coddle them, it's going to prevent them from having grit, on the contrary, it's actually going to help them empower the students to learn about the biology of learning so they could regulate their emotional response, so they could own their experience.

I often say I'm subject number one. I go back to my experience as a graduate student and how often my visceral reaction was "I think I became stupid" and then I look at my students and how often they say, "I'm sorry. I can't focus. I'm sorry." It's this self-blame, internalizing, it's a deficit model where in reality when you say to the students or yourself that "My brain is scared, my body is scared," that's not going to mean that okay, take the day off, but it's like, what can we do about it?

A lot of my students, overwhelmingly, they are earnest, they work hard. They don't want a free ride or no deadlines. On the contrary, when I say, "Do you want an extension?" they're afraid that they're going to fall behind. This trauma-informed pedagogy, really, it's a way to help the students regulate their emotions so they can engage with difficult concepts and learn and become complex problem-solvers.

[00:19:09] Bonni: Tell us a little bit about that two things are not mutually exclusive, this idea. You were already starting to introduce this, but we can both have a quality education while also utilizing this approach. Would you speak a little bit more about--

[00:19:27] Mays: Yes. When I know myself and when I know what triggers me and when I have that self-awareness, I can then learn to work with that so I could focus on the materials. That's me as a student. Let's talk about me as the teacher. I teach, for example, pathophysiology, and there is a lot to cover. The students are going to go become nurses and doctors. For me, I have 15 chapters to cover, I can't say, "Well, I'm just going to cover 5 of them." I have to negotiate with and really interrogate, what does it mean to cover 15 chapters for the students to memorize and regurgitate or for the students to perhaps go in-depth with 5 chapters, with me

walking with them so they could learn how to, on their own, work through the other 10 chapters?

I think, with respect to this quality education vis-a-vis trauma-informed pedagogy, I want to spend a little bit of time talking about the rigor, the content, assessment, and I often think about where this notion of rigor comes from, who dictates what is rigorous and what is not? The group of people who dictate it, where is that coming from? We haven't really interrogated it in a way that tells us that "Oh, it's evidence-based. There is a longitudinal study that shows the quality of life improves if you adopt this type of rigor."

Also, assessment, are we assessing so we could give a numerical number so we could weed out, or are we assessing so we could incentivize students to learn the material, to grab the challenge so they could learn it? I'll give you an example, and I've been using this trauma-informed lens before the pandemic, but I recognize that failing can be jarring. Actually, there's a form of loss. I, the students sit and I study, and I spend a lot of time, and then I take the exam, and I fail, and there is this experience of loss and even grief, and then there is no closure, oftentimes.

What I've done in my classes is if you want to learn it, still, let's learn it, and then you could retake a different form of an exam or you could-- What happens or what has happened over the years is I've seen students get an 88 on an exam and come to me and say, "That 12 points, I want to get that." Not because they're competitive or they're perfectionists, but they want to learn what they missed.

That's not coddling the students, that's an approach that's empowering the students to say, "No, I'm up to the challenge. 88 is great, but I want to learn what I missed." It's empowering the students, it is taking away, it's helping them deal with perhaps the loss or the grief of what happened if they fail, and it focuses on learning, it's learning-centered. Are we compromising the rigor? Not really, because the focus is still on the material and on the students learning it in a deep and meaningful way.

[00:23:18] Bonni: Oh, I so appreciate you saying that. I'm reminded of a young woman, who stayed-- I keep joking I have my main class via a web conference and then I have what I've started to jokingly call the after-party.

[laughter]

Essentially, what I started to do is be an audiobook for them if they'd like to stay around, and I share a few stories, and I also shorten some of the parts I think are less important for them. Anyway, she stayed after the after-party and wanted to chat with me, and essentially, she wanted to share that she had not finished an assignment on time. I have not been particularly strict about deadlines, so I was

interested in where this conversation was going to go. She said, "I saw the clock, and I was surprised and embarrassed that I had forgotten about it."

She had something else that had happened or whatever, and then she said, "I could have done it. I could have just rushed, and I could have just not done a good job but done good enough that I know it would have met your expectations." I'm doing a version of specifications grading, and I think it's probably the closest although I don't tell them that's what it's called, but here's the bar, no surprises, and so there's nothing--

She knew she could have checked my boxes, but she said, "I just really wanted to learn from it" because they're all assignments where they're putting together tools that are around a book called *Getting Things Done*, so they're figuring out how to-- In this particular case, it was for setting up a workspace, it could even be a workspace in transit that was a backpack, for example, but just a space that would help them be able to be at their best in an environment that they created for themselves.

She could have done it in 10 minutes before I was there, but she said, "I really wanted to do that. I really did." That's exactly what you're talking about where it's not about the grade, she knew she could have gotten the grade, but she actually wanted to create that for herself and then also have the learning, which is just so rewarding, so, so rewarding.

[00:25:16] Mays: That's a beautiful story. Don't we want our students to-- This is an example of a student that is falling in love with learning and learning more and going deeper. Don't we want our students, who are the future of our humanity, to have that? You're telling me the story, and I just feel my heart just expand that you cultivate this environment where a student feels empowered to make the decision that "I want to go deeper. Good enough is not what I'm after."

[00:25:55] Bonni: Yes. I can't say that I accomplish that as often as I would like to but boy, is that an exhilarating feeling it actually happens that they do want to go deeper? I also don't want to necessarily put that entirely on me. I'm always working at becoming better. I love that Steven Brookfield talks about becoming, and he's been at this, he's written 30 books about teaching, and he's still is becoming, and I love that as a frame.

We do the best that we can and then we also recognize just the situation and how much students could potentially, in another time in their lives or at a time in our lives, really be able to go that deeper and right now, that it just isn't possible for them. It doesn't mean we necessarily have to have failed as a teacher when that doesn't get achieved, it's all this collective thing. If we can even just get them excited

about learning in another class, it doesn't have to necessarily be that the world wraps around us.

[00:26:52] Mays: Yes. I remember a student who was a single mom, and she was working two jobs, one in the evening and one actually at the school, and she had almost a perfect attendance, but she would sleep in the class, probably catching up on her sleep, and she would email me and ask questions about the assignment, and she was not going to pass. I will never forget an email I received from her, and she said, "I know it's not me, I know I am capable, but the time is not right." I was and I am so proud of her for recognizing that it's not a deficit that she has, that the circumstances right now and this pivot in "I know I can do it, the time is not right" is really powerful. It's an internal shift about "I am capable" versus this deficit, self-image.

[00:28:00] Bonni: I wish I could go back, too. I don't often have students fall asleep in classes. I think I've learned some approaches to prevent a little bit of that, but oh, gosh, 12 or so years ago, I didn't have the greatest reaction to a young man, honestly, from my class, and I asked him to leave, and it was rather rude and embarrassing for him. I don't love that memory.

The only part I can take out of it is to talk about it, because I think we can learn from our own failures and also from other people's failures, so anyone hearing me tell that story that may have had similar feelings but just hasn't had it happen yet, not a good choice for a number of reasons. It's like so many things, whether it's academic integrity, whether it's falling asleep in class, any time, we make that about us.

"You fell asleep in my class," "You cheated on me." I look at the failures that I've had over the years, they're almost all centered on not being able to get out of my own context and understand others' contexts. It really comes down to that almost every time. I love where I am today, I love that I can hear you tell that story and instantly go, "Oh my gosh, she must have been so tired." She doesn't have to become a rude person in this story, and you don't have-- just that it's so easy for me to enter into that space.

I also, of course, want to ask myself, and we should be asking each other, I must still be missing some of it, so it's that idea of becoming, where are we missing it that we aren't able to see how tired our students must be, of course, in another context, though? Let's look at what trauma-informed teaching is not. We've looked at what it is, could you share a bit about what it is not?

[00:29:58] Mays: Yes, of course. I think there is this notion that I need to be a therapist, a psychologist, that I am going to be a healer, and that is not what trauma-informed pedagogy is. You don't need to be a healer, you don't need to

be a certified psychologist or a psychiatrist, we just need to be in tune with the context of the students we are inviting into our classroom and also to ensure their safety, their connection, their sense of belonging, their self-empowerment.

Also, trauma-informed pedagogy is not about telling the student, for example, "You can do it, you're resilient, pick up yourself by your bootstraps, you've got the grid, et cetera"

because in that case even though I have good intentions and I want to help the students and encourage them and so on, I'm also perhaps putting pressure on them. How do I know they can do it? That, inadvertently, will take away their choice and could put pressure on them.

There are examples of what to do and what not to do when you're using a trauma-informed lens. One of them is this, as said, that the teacher has to also be in tune with her or his or their own trauma and what triggers them. It's really important that when I use this trauma-informed lens, that I also ensure that I don't carry the burden, I am not solving the problem. The problems are sometimes too difficult to solve. If somebody is getting evicted from their home, I can't solve it. It's important to also protect my own heart that I don't, how should I say it, take on the emotions of the students. Then in protecting my own heart, I can continue to give, I can continue to help the students.

[00:32:11] Bonni: Oh, it's so important. Before we get to the recommendation segment, I would love to hear you reflect on some intersections, the intersection between equity, justice, and trauma-informed pedagogy.

[00:32:25] Mays: Yes. That is a great question, Bonni, when we use this trauma-informed pedagogy. I'm also going to challenge that we think about trauma-informed education so it's not just in the classroom, it is a school approach, it's an institution approach. When done correctly, and when I say correctly, I mean not in a way that we check a box. "We did this, let's go on to the next shiny object."

It is about restoring justice at the individual and at the community level. When a student has experienced trauma and they come to our spaces and we help them reclaim, for example, their sense of self or safety or connection, it is about starting that healing process. With respect to "What does this have to do with justice and equity?" we know we have overwhelming data that shows us the impact of microaggression, racism, poverty on the development of the individuals.

A lot of times, students come to us carrying all of that with them. I also want to say that we have data and research that shows the impact of trauma not just on individual, not just on generation, but also on intergenerational. I, the educator, if I am interested in diversity, equity, and inclusion, I can't separate that from trauma-

informed education because for a student to thrive, we need to approach education holistically.

It is not possible for us to compartmentalize in a way where I leave everything behind, and I come to the classroom, and I just focus on that. If we want the students to integrate what we teach them in the classroom and with the real world, we also ought to keep in mind that they are coming with their world, with their background, and their context. I see a direct connection between trauma-informed education and justice and equity.

[00:34:56] Bonni: Well, I feel like I haven't timed my recommendations quite as well as I am today. I just pulled it up and went, "Wow, it's like I planned it this way, but I didn't."

[laughs]

[00:35:07] Mays: Oh, wow. Okay.

[00:35:08] Bonni: This is the time in the show where we each get to get to our recommendations. A lot of times I put them in, in advance. I just pulled it up and boy, does this fit? You're going to like this one. I think if you're not going to like it, you're going to think it is a very good example of all of the things that you've brought up for us today. This is a tweet from someone named Hannah, and she tweets, "My mom passed away last weekend, I emailed my professors to ask for a 24-hour extension.

Professor 1 only gave me 12 hours, Professor 2 told me to do the assignments for the week when I could and asked if I wanted to share my favorite memories of her instead." Be like Professor 2. I shared the story about the student sleeping in my class, so I certainly have failures and have moments I'm not proud of, but my goodness gracious if your student emails to say, "Mom passed away," assignments is the last thing that we should be thinking about in that particular situation. Be like Professor 2.

[00:36:11] Mays: Not even mom, if a student emails and says, "My bird passed away," there's a relationship there, and let's believe that the loss that they are experiencing has prevented them from doing the assignments. Let's honor the loss, and let's honor the relationship.

[00:36:33] Bonni: The next one is a little bit on a much lighter note. I want to thank Bonnie Powers, who emailed me, "By the time you hear this show, it will have been quite some time ago, but I've recommended a television show called *Schitt's Creek* before. I also then recently but not when you're hearing this recommended a humorous clip that looked at the Department of Education as one of the

characters in that show versus teachers and this back and forth that was very humorous."

Bonnie Powers sent me a wonderful video that was put together by the cast of *Schitt's Creek*, I believe that it was possibly Teacher's Day. It doesn't necessarily tie to a specific day, but it's really just them celebrating teachers and professors. If you watch the show, you've got to go to the show notes, and you've got to watch it because it's just so much fun. I don't want to give too much away, but all the characters that you've come to know and love are there.

They also do a musical number, which is just so much fun, and there's a special musical guest that shows up. Thank you so much to Bonnie Powers for reaching out. I got it this morning, and you just totally brightened my entire day. It started out right just with getting to see that. I always love it when people share things. Speaking of which, Bonnie mentioned that she had a Wakelet.

Wakelet is a set of bookmarks that are done in a visual way, and I want to recommend that you go over and check out Bonnie Powers' Wakelet that she has from the Antioch University Academic Technology Support Services Department. There's a lot of really good resources in there for our teaching. Those are my recommendations. Mays, I'll pass it over to you for whatever you'd like to recommend.

[00:38:16] Mays: Thank you. The first recommendation I have, it is *On Being*. It is an interview with Krista Tippett with the late Irish poet, philosopher-theologian John O'Donohue. The title of the interview is the *Inner Landscape of Beauty*. That interview, I must have listened to it right now, I don't know, over 20 times. In it, he talks about the pedagogy of inferiority. What does it mean? He talks about beauty and our sense of beauty, but in it, he talks about, what does it mean to cultivate the home within for our students where they're able to see their own beauty reflected around them? I highly recommend that one. That one is just timeless for me.

[00:39:14] Bonni: Oh, it sounds amazing. I love *On Being*. I love a lot of podcasts. I just can't listen to them all anymore. With the commute time cut off, there has not been a space in time that I have managed to insert as much podcasting listening as I'd like to do. I'm so looking forward to listening to that. Thank you for that gift.

[00:39:32] Mays: Yes. I also want to recommend a speech that Dr. King gave to a high school, and it's called *What is Your Life's Blueprint?* In this speech, he talks about the concept of somebody-ness. He tells the student, "It doesn't matter what you do, do it with pride." I give this exercise, actually, to my students. I don't show them who wrote the speech and I ask them, "Please don't go google it just write about it." Then I have this activity, "Who do you think wrote this speech?" and they

love it, they connect with it instantly because they see the struggle in the students that he was speaking to. Again, his advice is timeless.

[00:40:26] Bonni: That sounds like a wonderful speech and also one that would apply to the class that I'm teaching, so you might have just given me another great asset to add to that class in future iterations. That's so great.

[00:40:39] Mays: My last recommendation, it's the show *Ramy*.

[00:40:45] Bonni: It's so good.

[00:40:48] Mays: Yes. The show is witty, and you're crying in one scene, and you're laughing in another scene. He takes these really difficult concepts that I think or it's my experience that the Muslim community have struggled with, and he humanizes them. One episode, in particular, where we get to see the behind-the-scene life of his uncle and the uncle is sitting outside eating the cake and crying, that episode, I think, will stay with me forever because it just humanized the struggle of people who let alone the community doesn't accept them, they're having a hard time accepting themselves as well.

[00:41:38] Bonni: That episode and that character, in particular, it just was so incredibly powerful and then to be thinking back to my own family and some intergenerational stuff with regard to what I would most loosely try to describe as toxic masculinity, you're not allowed to cry if you're a boy or a man, all of this stuff, and it makes me so grateful for my husband because, somehow, he managed to get out of everything in life and realize that it is quite normal and beautiful to be able to cry as a man, as a person.

[00:42:10] Mays: As a person.

[00:42:11] Bonni: Yes, and then to know that our son won't likely have-- I say he won't likely but then, of course, it's bigger than just our family. Our society, really, has still continued to try to tell people what amount of emotion is acceptable to bring, based on one's gender identity. Oh, that was such a powerful one, yes, such a powerful one. Oh my goodness, you have so many good recommendations for us. Mays, I'm so glad to be connected with you. I hope this is just the beginning-

[00:42:40] Mays: Me too.

[00:42:40] Bonni: -because I really have learned already in just such a short time so much from getting to study some of what you've written and some of your videos I will be linking to a lot of it in the show notes, too, so people, if they'd like to learn more, can go because you've got a lot of great resources out there for us.

[00:42:54] Mays: Thank you so much. I'm very grateful for your time, your stories, and your humanity.

[music]

[00:43:03] Bonni: I'm so thankful to Dr. Imad for joining me on today's episode. Mays, it was just a pleasure getting to know you, both during the episode and outside of it. I'm so glad to be connected with you. Thanks to all of you for listening. If you would like to receive the show notes for today's episode, they may very well be already in your podcast player, but if you'd like to access them you can head over to teachinginhighered.com/335.

You also can sign up for the semi-regular, I say with a little hesitation, update on *Teaching in Higher Ed* with the show notes of a recent episode and an article written on teaching or productivity written by me. You can sign up at teachinginhighered.com/subscribe. Thanks so much for listening, and I'll see you next time.

[music]

[00:44:03] [END OF AUDIO]

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