“I went from being a teacher in need…”

Kelly Camak is helping teachers cultivate confidence.

**Inspiring Students to Discover Their Gifts**

I never realized I could be good in science,” said one teenager, who had just learned a new way of appreciating his natural talents. That insight arose because a teacher learned to engage her students in a new way thanks to some insightful coaching.

Kelly Camak had been teaching for four years serving at-risk youth when an unexpected move to Seattle resulted in a new job as a school development coach. At the time she was halfway through a Courage & Renewal four-retreat series.

“I went from being a teacher in need, really grappling with my issues in the classroom, to immediately being a coach who supports other teachers in need.”

Knowing the value for herself as a teacher, she immediately began incorporating Courage & Renewal practices into coaching, helping teachers across the country.

Kelly recalls introducing the Courage & Renewal concept of exploring birthright gifts to a science teacher, the idea of noticing the natural talents you are born with. It was just in time for assigning science projects to her class.

“The teacher was really excited because she had a student who rarely did work in her class, who was never excited about anything and resisted working with his peers.”

The student asked “Does this mean I have to be smart? Or does this have to be science related?” The teacher said, “No, no. We’re just discovering ourselves and our birthright gifts.”

By the end of class that student said, “Today I recognize that because I have really good eye-hand coordination I could be really good in lab. I could really contribute to my group because I know how to organize all the lab equipment and it will be safe for me to conduct the lab. Now I’m really excited about our next lab.”

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A Note from the Executive Director

I had the privilege of spending last weekend with 26 accomplished, big-hearted men and women eager to become Courage & Renewal Facilitators.

They’ve all been through programs that helped rekindle their lives and work, and now they seek to give back and bring such opportunities to others.

I couldn’t get through residency without a session like this,” said a new pediatrician at Massachusetts General Hospital.

For three hours every three weeks, a group of pediatric residents meets with Dr. Rob Meyer and two of his colleagues to reflect on their experience of practicing medicine. It is a new requirement of the residency curriculum for pediatric residents to participate in personal and professional development.

“Medicine is undergoing such enormous change, not all of it positive,” says Rob. “There is such an emphasis on productivity. Some of the reasons people go into medicine, such as creating healing relationships, are being pushed into the background. For providers to be able to reflect on what gives them meaning is invaluable.”

“Reflective practice is not unique to this pediatric residency, but it is a perfect fit to bring the Courage concepts that I’ve learned over five years to this work.

“It’s important for these new physicians to have the time and space to reflect on what’s happening to them. We’ve carved out this protected time in which they don’t have other responsibilities and won’t get paged, where they simply get to talk and listen to each other.”

With each session, the residents have increasingly created a community of shared experience, says Rob. So far, they’ve talked about work/life balance, medical error, the sacred connection between doctors and patients, as well as getting and giving bad news.

Your generosity is the catalyst for the hopeful stories in this newsletter!

Gratefully yours,

Terry Chadsey
Executive Director
Center for Courage & Renewal

Connecting to the Heart of Medicine

We’ve carved out this protected time

Rob Meyer, MD, helps new pediatricians explore meaning in medicine.
Learning the Power of Authentic Questions

It took courage for me to ask the question, Who am I?” said educator Debbie Stanley.

Debbie was just finishing a doctoral program in education and seemed to have no courage left. It was all expended. Despite her PhD, she felt a sadness that her work still wasn’t making a difference in the lives of students.

Then Debbie met Parker Palmer. “It changed my life. It actually changed my life.”

Debbie entered a two-year retreat series and had the chance to be a focus person in a clearness committee.

“I remember being asked many significant questions about my professional life and my personal life that were not invasive, but truly embraced me and allowed me to think to clarity.”

“It was like an epiphany. I went back to the Dean of the School of Education where I worked. I said, ‘I need to leave. I need to go back to the classroom. That’s home for me now.’ And I did.”

“I decided, divided no more. I am going to go with what I think is right, and that is to be with children in a way that is humane, authentic and loving. That is really important to me. I teach who I am.”

Debbie became a kindergarten teacher and brought Courage & Renewal practices into her classroom, such as asking honest, open questions “to hear each other into speech.”

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Students Discovering Their Gifts
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“Such transformation happened because he was able to focus on his talents, and see how that applied to his work in a way that wasn’t academically intimidating. It was really powerful.”

“Education is supposed to make students feel inspired and ready to take on the world and do great things,” said Kelly. “In order for teachers to cultivate that in students, they have to have that within themselves. That’s why Courage & Renewal is such an important investment.”

“Teachers take a great risk in making time to do reflective activity, because there is so much else they need to do each day. When kids respond so well, the teacher knows it was worthwhile.”

Thanks to you, teachers are engaging students in powerful ways to discover their own gifts.

Connecting to the Heart of Medicine
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“I hear them say over and over how important it is to make a deep connection when listening to families. It’s important to connect on more than a superficial basis when you’re talking to someone whose child is in the hospital.

“Being able to provide these three hours of uninterrupted time is truly a gift, not only for them, but for us as faculty. It gives the residents a chance to reflect on the reasons they went into medicine in the first place. Incorporating reflective practice into their lives will help them be better physicians now and for the long run.”

The Power of Authentic Questions
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“I did a series on Martin Luther King, Jr. and his works, and I had my kindergartners ask questions of themselves, not just me. We talked about his dream and asked questions like ‘What would make his dream continue?’

Afterward, she had parents ask, “What are you doing in there?” The children had begun asking open and honest questions at home.

Debbie responded, “We are asking the questions we really don’t know the answer to, but we really want to listen to the response of the other.”

Thanks to your generosity, teachers are inspiring their students to ask significant questions that help them learn and grow.

I support more great change!

Yes! I want to support excellent teachers, physicians and leaders like Kelly, Rob and Debbie in their good work to help others thrive.

Please accept my gift of:

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