“I was completely burned out”

“The students were so frazzled, they were like zombies. You could feel the tension.”

Entire Freshman Class Transformed

There is no curriculum, no test prep software, nothing out there that will make teachers better or improve education in this country more than Courage work,” said Ellie Gilbert, a 9th grade teacher from Oregon.

Ellie was a teacher for only three years before she felt completely burned out.

“At 22, I felt passion was all I needed to be a good teacher. It was like having a well that was running dry quickly, with nothing replenishing it.

“I didn’t know how to sustain myself or how to be vulnerable,” she said, “That was my greatest downfall as a teacher.”

So she left the classroom and had a successful career for seven years. She lived abroad and earned more than double what she earned as a teacher.

“But I wanted to go back,” Ellie said, “Teaching is a calling.”

As she re-entered teaching, the old patterns appeared. Ellie felt alone and wasn’t able to be vulnerable with colleagues at school to get the support she needed. That’s when she met Andie Cunningham, a Courage & Renewal facilitator, who told her about a weekend retreat.

“My first Courage & Renewal retreat completely changed my trajectory,” said Ellie. “The Courage retreat made it safe to be vulnerable and feel supported. I left that retreat changed.

“It changed everything—from the way I talk to students, or collaborate with colleagues, to the way I think and treat myself as a teacher.

“I’ve been back teaching now for five years and now I love it more than I ever did.”

continued on page 2 ▶
Entire Freshman Class Transformed  
continued from page 1 ▶

“One year the students at my school were so frazzled, they were like zombies. You could feel the tension.”

So she told her colleagues about a Courage & Renewal exercise called a walk and talk, where you go for a walk and share something on your mind, and the other person just listens without commenting or trying to fix it. All the teachers led their freshmen in some form of walk and talks.

“It changed the dynamics of an entire freshman class,” said Ellie. “That wouldn’t have happened if we hadn’t done the Courage work.”

“I really believe that if every teacher who wanted Courage & Renewal could do it, it would impact the way education is in this country. There’s nothing else we could spend our money on that would have a greater impact, period.”

You help educators like Ellie sustain themselves for the hard job of teaching so that they go on to transform their students’ lives.

Courage to Lead Inspires a Shift

I was in a state of disillusionment,” said Sandra Copley, Director, Maternal Child Adolescent Health at the Santa Barbara Public Health Department in California.

Sandra was working in a fractured system plagued by too many projects, minimal support, and the struggle to maintain its projects in the face of dwindling funds.

Hoping to find some support, Sandra applied for a Santa Barbara-based seasonal retreat series for nonprofit and community leaders. In the year-long work of Courage to Lead®, facilitators Ken Saxon and Kim Stokely guided the group of non-profit leaders through an inner journey of renewal.

continued on page 4 ▶

Your gifts are transforming the vital work of non-profit leaders like Sandra Copley.
I was a good teacher. Why were my students so disinterested?” Amy Swenson asked herself.

Her teacher evaluations confirmed she was good at what she did. “Mrs. Swenson has high expectations, excellent knowledge of content, good classroom management.”

Still she suspected something was missing.

Amy decided to attend a Courage to Teach® retreat led by facilitators Sandy Gehrig and Ron Petrich. The school term was ending, senior projects were due. She was feeling beaten up “holding students accountable.”

“The retreat helped me hear my inner teacher,” said Amy. “I began to rediscover what was once important to me but had been covered up by the noise of my daily life. The seeds of change had taken root.”

A few months after the retreat, Amy made a most startling discovery. For the first time she saw her students as human beings, not as the subject matter.

“I had shown up in my teaching, and as a result, my students did as well. Now as I open up and tell them my stories, they do the same,” said Amy. “As I spend time each day checking in with them, the trust between us grows, and our relationship deepens.”

“How do I see the changes that Courage work has brought to my life? Yes, and I have proof—”

It’s in the notes and random gifts saying “Thanks for helping me” and “You made a difference in my life!”

continued on page 4

Amy Swenson is growing trust in her classroom
Courage to Lead Inspires a Shift
continued from page 2

“I began to gently hold and nurture my role as a leader,” said Sandra, “And accept my worth as a unique force in the community.

“My paradigm shifted. I no longer felt confined to work within the role of the organization, but rather to be guided by the whisper of the inner voice of wisdom.”

Sandra then noticed interesting phenomena emerging. Other Courage to Lead graduates were bringing this approach into the community. Sandra attended a meeting of community leaders to discuss how to collaborate more effectively for grants that would benefit the county’s residents in need.

She saw Courage to Lead alumni at every break-out table, holding rich and engaging conversations.

“We were all impressed by the creative ideas and camaraderie at the end of the meeting.”

“I feel that Courage to Lead is slowly penetrating and inspiring a shift in how we work together here in Santa Barbara,” said Sandra.

“I truly believe that engaged leaders trained in Courage & Renewal methods can share the values inspired by this series and create a shift that will be passed forward in profound ways. Ultimately, this has the potential to change the fabric of our society.”

Reflection
From Parker J. Palmer

Think back to a teacher who made a difference in your young life, a teacher who saw more in you than you saw in yourself.

Spend some time contemplating how much richer your life has been because of that teacher’s life-giving and perhaps life-changing support.

Feel the gratitude that comes from realizing that a teacher went above and beyond the call of duty to help you become who you are today.

Then consider supporting the work of the Center for Courage & Renewal, as we in turn support teachers and others who are devoted to nurturing the human spirit during these challenging times.

From Good to Great
continued from page 3

It’s in the emails saying, “I finally got what you were telling me! Thanks for teaching me! Just wanted you to know what I’m up to…”

It’s in the visits from former students—the new cadet who struggled all last year—who came back and asked to sit through one of my econ lectures.

Has Courage work made a difference? “Yes! I find it to be some of the most meaningful and relevant training that I as an educator can undertake.”

You made a difference in my life!

Thanks to your support, teachers like Amy make a great difference for thousands of students.

I support more great change!

Yes! I want to renew and transform teachers and leaders like Ellie, Amy and Sandra as they work hard to make classrooms and communities thrive. Most of all I want to support the Center for Courage & Renewal and make sure this program is available to those who need it most!

☐ $ 50 ☐ $ 100 ☐ $ 250
☐ I am enclosing a gift of $ ___________ to help.

All gifts to the Center for Courage & Renewal are tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law. 1402 Third Avenue, Suite 709 Seattle, WA 98101

www.CourageRenewal.org/donate