

Scenario 1

As a grade 9 teacher in a middle-class community, I quickly reprimanded my student Briana, an unusually bright girl who was developing a negative attitude, after she swore at another student. I spoke to Briana after school and she admitted to me that she really hadn't been provoked by her classmate. I then asked Briana if everything was okay at home. Briana looked down at the floor and didn't say another word. After a very long silence she told me her parents argued all the time and she got involved in the fights because she had to protect her mom. Briana then pleaded with me not to tell anyone.

What do you do/say?

What resources do you draw upon – people, materials, services, networks?

What ideas do you have for making “space” in your classroom/program to hear/help with this kind of scenario?

Given situations of this sort what do you want to make sure you set in place now to be ready for/avoid future crises?

Scenario 2

As a new volunteer tutor in a community literacy program, I started a weekly numeracy group for 6 participants. Two of the participants, James and Marlene, came to together and I assumed from the way they connected that they were a couple. In group, James was very likeable and friendly to everyone. I counted on him to set a “light” tone. Marlene, on the other hand, appeared shy and reserved. After several weeks, I noticed Marlene had bruises on her arms. Once she came to group with a fresh bruise on her face. I asked if she was okay and Marlene nodded yes. When we were alone, I again asked Marlene if she was okay but she reassured me that she was fine.

What do you do/say?

What resources do you draw upon – people, materials, services, networks?

What ideas do you have for making “space” in your classroom/program to hear/help with this kind of scenario?

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Scenario 3

As an upgrading teacher in a community college, I welcome 20 new students to my program every semester. Shortly after the start of the semester, Nancy, the office manager, called me to the office to tell me a man phoned 3 times yesterday. First, he asked if one of my students, Lorelei, had arrived in class; then he asked if she was in the cafeteria at lunch; and finally he asked if she had left school yet. Nancy told me she was fed up and that I would have to tell Lorelei that the school policy does not allow the office phone to be used this way. When I spoke to Lorelei she appeared very frightened. After I probed a bit more, she wearily told me that the man is probably an ex-boyfriend who isn't leaving her alone.

What do you do/say?

What resources do you draw upon – people, materials, services, networks?

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Scenario 4

As a fifth year experienced ESL literacy instructor, I felt as if I was finally “coming into my own”. I was looking forward to the new year, but right from “day one”, two students seemed to “get off on the wrong foot”. I tried different ways of bringing them together (talk about a disaster) and keeping them apart (much better but you could “cut the tension with a knife”). Even apart Sonia snickered every time Pasha walked by her desk. Soon Sonia started, in her own language, heckling Pasha. I didn’t understand what Sonia said but her tone did not appear warm. Pasha started missing class and when I inquired, she said she was too busy at work.

What do you do/say?

What resources do you draw upon – people, materials, services, networks?

What ideas do you have for making “space” in your classroom/program to hear/help with this kind of scenario?

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Scenario 5

I teach in an immigrant women's program. One student, Fatwa, spends most of the class time staring out the window. After I got to know her a bit better, I asked Fatwa if everything was okay. Fatwa started sobbing and she couldn't stop. I arranged for her to lie down in the staff room and after a while I went to talk to her. She told me that being in class reminds her of school in her home country. She said, "That was a happy time." Her schooling ended with the new government. Fatwa sobbed when she told me that her brother had died at the hands of the new leaders and that she had watched him being killed. She had tried to put all of this behind her when she came to Canada but being in this program brought back a lot of the horrors of that time.

What do you do/say?

What resources do you draw upon – people, materials, services, networks?

What ideas do you have for making "space" in your classroom/program to hear/help with this kind of scenario?

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Scenario 6

I teach spelling at a youth group home in an urban centre. I have always felt comfortable around teenage boys as I have younger brothers. Jamal, a new arrival at the home and a charming young man, made a point of being extra friendly to me. When I strained my ankle, he waited at the window for me to pull into the driveway so he could carry my briefcase indoors. At the end of the two-hour class, Jamal re-appeared to help me with my things. After a few weeks, Jamal started teasingly calling me his girlfriend. While I felt his behaviours and words were sweet and harmless, I felt ill at ease when he started to linger at my car.

What do you do/say?

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What ideas do you have for making “space” in your classroom/program to hear/help with this kind of scenario?

Given situations of this sort what do you want to make sure you set in place now to be ready for/avoid future crises?

Scenario 7

One of your clients who has recently left a violent relationship is attending a literacy program. She often comes back from her tutoring complaining that she is stupid and just can't learn and she doesn't know why she bothers anyway. This time she is angry and she says the staff and her tutor just don't understand. They don't have a clue what she's been through. She says the tutor thinks she is stupid and that's why she is teaching her as if she's a kid. She says the lesson is just too boring anyway – she's not going next week.

What do you do/say?

What resources do you draw upon – people, materials, services, networks?

What ideas do you have for making “space” in your work to hear/help with this kind of scenario?

Given situations of this sort what do you want to make sure you set in place now to be ready for/to avoid future crises?

Scenario 8

Just as you're finishing class for the day one of your students says "Have you got a minute?" and then you're caught standing there for an hour worrying about all the things you were going to do on your way home before your kids come home, as she launches into a long story about her teenage son and how he bullies her. She tells you he's just like his father who left a few years ago. Then she carries on and tells about the problems they have with their apartment and that the roof leaks and landlord won't do anything about it. She tells you that she's tried to get help from welfare but nobody will do anything. She keeps telling you more and more long stories about exactly who said and did what.

What do you do/say?

What resources do you draw upon – people, materials, services, networks?

What ideas do you have for making "space" in your classroom/program to hear/help with this kind of scenario?

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