



Teacher Educator Story 11



Read through this story and see what teacher educator dilemma(s) you can spot.

When I was giving some induction for the next year's cohort, and the student-teachers were discussing a learning point in groups, a panic-stricken colleague called me over and asked if I had a minute to help.

In the office, one of our current student-teachers – Kate – was sitting slumped at a computer in tears, having walked out of a nearby lecture about preparing for the next year as a newly qualified teacher. Colleagues were uneasy about how to help.

We went outside the building and sat on the grass in the sunshine. She proceeded to talk about the situation which she had been facing recently. This situation had brought about uncontrollably strong emotions for Kate and she felt overwhelmed with emotion and unable to stay for the rest of the lecture.

She apologised for taking up my time. I reassured her that this is what I was here for. She spent a long while talking about the highs and lows of the training year, now almost at an end, about the holiday to come and about wishes for next year. We spoke about the passing nature of highs and lows and how even the very lowest lows can pass.

Having approached her and assessed the situation; listened to her outpouring of strong emotion; given information about sources of support; encouraged her to continue to seek professional sources of support; and encouraged her to continue to see the benefit of seeking other sources of support from social circles and from her dog; I realised that what had happened was the running-through of the process of mental health first aid and was time worth spending.

As usual, we arranged a follow-up time to meet and see how things were going and she left in a considerably calmer state than when she had needed to leave the lecture.

She is still teaching high quality lessons in her employing school, looking forward to Master's research and developing her teaching over the next few years with the support of her colleagues in school. She is lucky to be working in a school where the head teacher, induction colleagues and teaching team recognise the importance of emotional wellbeing. And they know they are lucky to have her.

As for Kate, life is not always easy. She has ongoing access to support from us and from local support services. She speaks confidently and with overwhelmingly positive feedback to large audiences involved in education regarding the importance of increased mental health awareness. This is what keeps her going.



What strikes you?

Issues and outcomes

When you read through the story, identify the main issue that strikes you, and the outcome that is associated with that issue. What do you think about the outcome? Could it have been improved in any way for the participants in the story? Consider situations that you are aware of in which student mental health has been an issue, and how it has been dealt with. Are there lessons to learn?



ALGEE

The Mental Health First Aid Action Plan in England uses the acronym ALGEE, which stands for:

- Assess for risk of suicide or harm
- Listen nonjudgmentally
- Give reassurance and information
- Encourage appropriate professional help
- Encourage self-help and other support strategies

<https://portfolio.cssd.ac.uk/artefact/file/download.php?file=81485&view=9093>

- Could you use this first aid action plan with teacher educators in your partnership?
- What other resources and professional sources of support are available through your schools and HEI for student-teachers and for teacher educators?
- Is any further training needed?