

Episode 12:

Becca (00:01.774)

Ruth, I'm so excited to be recording this episode because it reminded me of like what I dreamed teacher being a teacher would be like. And as a kid, one of my favorite books was Matilda by Roald Dahl and I was so excited to share it with my students. And I think the first time I picked up the book to read with my third graders, I realized how I was not living the life that Miss Honey did. And I spent years

dreaming of living the life of Miss Honey as a teacher and just, you know, like being swooned over and like braiding their hair and they would bring me flowers and we would play multiplication games while I waved a flower around, right? Like truly in a very dorky way. Like that was my dream as a teacher. And when I pulled it out with my third graders,

And, you know, I have 27 third graders and they're all over the place and all at different reading levels and most of them don't know their multiplication facts. I quickly came to the realization that like, that's just not realistic. And, and I had to kind of decide like, okay, my dream is changing, right? Like, I don't get to be the Miss Honey I thought I would be, but I get to be who these kids need me to be.

Ruth Ayres (01:26.321)

Yeah, I think we all have a dreamy version of who we were going to be as teachers, whether like I used to play school when I was really young. And I think a lot of teachers, I don't think I'm alone in that. Or you're like, we just have this way of how we think things are going to go. And I think that's true for someone who's been teaching a long time and somebody who's just entering into the profession, right? Like we have this

Becca (01:38.808)

you

Ruth Ayres (01:55.263)

dreamy version of how teaching is going to go. And then we land in a classroom and oftentimes reality is very, different. And what happens, I think so often is when there's this gap between the dreamy version and the reality is we feel disappointed.

And you kind of skipped over. You're like, well, I have a choice to make, right? But I there was this moment of kind of disappointment and like, am I cut out for it? Is this like, is this what it's going to be? Did I miss the mark? I know that I had felt some of those things and on some days I still do. Did I miss the mark? Is this really what I'm meant to be? And I think

Becca (02:25.827)

for sure.

Ruth Ayres (02:47.453)

just first of all recognizing that, just that gap and that we are gonna feel a little disappointed until we kind of realign what our expectations are. And so I often tell myself one of my mantras is expect and accept a lack of closure, which is.

Becca (03:09.71)

you

Ruth Ayres (03:10.649)

So difficult for a recovering perfectionist, which I am. And so difficult for a lot of us because we just, we want things to go how we want them to go. And at the end of the day, you know, there's rainbows and sunshine and kids are learning. And, the reality of it is, is that's just not how, every day goes or most days are going that way. And so, one of the, one of the, the

resources that I love to read is Ness Lab and it's all about neuroscience and but it's not for teachers like it's just for anybody and so she's been I've been learning from her just about this idea of befriending uncertainty.

Becca (04:01.59)

Yeah, and you shared one recently with me. And I was so excited. I love things like this, like neuroscience and, and I call it like being nerdy, right? Like, I love to learn new things and understand. And I have had to learn how to befriend uncertainty in pretty significant ways, even like in my personal life in the last few years.

being a foster mom and not knowing how things would end and really understanding that my role in these kids' lives could be temporary and standing in the hard with them anyway, choosing to learn and grow with them, knowing that my time with them was uncertain. And as that has changed and things...

the plan is still kind of up in the air and we're two years in. I have learned to befriend uncertainty to a degree, right? And then I have my days of like, my gosh, I just needed answer. And that's when I reach out to my resources. And when I'm in my classroom, I have to remember the same thing, right? The days that are uncertain and it didn't end, like we didn't get to gratitude because

gratitude circle is how we close our day every day. And there are days we don't get there because everyone's so dysregulated, like it's just a process to get out the door. And I have to remember that like it will be okay tomorrow to get back to gratitude circle and they will still know how it works and it will still mean just as much. And so as much as I can, I've learned to befriend uncertainty, but it's still a process.

Ruth Ayres (05:47.128)

It's a literal lack of closure on those days, right? And we've all been there. Like we've got this beautiful closing routine for our days. And if we don't, gratitude circle is definitely a really powerful closing routine. But like it's a lack of closure and then uncertainty pops up in it.

In our brains, it's interesting to me, there's actually two parts when, when uncertainty is happening that are activated and it's the amygdala and our prefrontal cortex. So in the amygdala is where like our emotional processing is happening. So we have this very emotional response and then the prefrontal cortex is where reasoning is taking place. And so we want, we like, we want to, we're trying to find a.

a right? Like, or the right way through. And they collide and we feel uncertain, right? And it's not a fun place to be at all. But one thing that we can do, like, to be befriending uncertainty can kind of mean, like, I'm just going to try some things out. And I heard you talking like this in episode 11.

where we were talking about everybody has a tough day and your students are processing like you have no idea what to do. They collided. The OT is in there going, whoa, Becca. And you said in that episode, you said, I'm just trying some things and seeing what will happen. And it's like this, I'm just trying it out. I'm trying to discover, I'm trying to explore. And when we're curious, we're actually unlocking.

some of that, just those strong emotions about I've got to get it right.

Becca (07:47.222)

Yeah, and when you pointed that out to me after we recorded that episode, it made me stop and think, like, because at first it sounded to me like, I didn't know what I was doing. But instead, I was intentionally choosing, like to acknowledge that this situation happened a student collided with another student because they were both dysregulated. And I'm exploring as a teacher, like how to support kids who are feeling dysregulated and behaving in a dysregulated way.

when it's like a low level of dysregulation so that it doesn't hit those extreme levels of dysregulation. And what I'm learning is that in slowing down and getting curious about what is happening and helping them to process and like, walk them through that process of curiosity and what they're noticing, they actually can help identify what is happening in their brains and slow us down to like support them through

If that happens again, here's what will help me. And that gets us back to learning so much faster than if I had sent one kid to one, like take a break spot and another kid to another take a break spot and moved on, right? Like ignored the OT's recommendation, which is kind of what I at first instinctually wanted to do because like I'm supposed to be teaching. I'm supposed to just be getting this done. We're 10 minutes into what I'm supposed to be teaching writing. And now I'm supposed to stop and watch this video.

And I have to stop and make the choice to stop and watch the video and process with the kids because if they're dysregulated again, when we hit that moment again, it won't be any different. And it could be even more significant. But when we slow down, it often becomes less significant over time.

Ruth Ayres (09:32.969)

Yeah, and you didn't know what was going to happen. And you were approaching that really from a researcher standpoint, which is one way to help navigate when we're feeling uncertain. The other part that I think is really interesting, so we can be curious to navigate our own uncertainty, but it's actually really good for kids too. research is showing us that when

Becca (09:39.074)

Yeah.

Ruth Ayres (10:01.833)

kids learn to be curious, we're actually helping them be even more mentally fit as humans. And so it's kind of like this dual purpose. So when we're curious in our classrooms and we're trying to figure things out and helping students to be curious, there's a great article from the Neuron Journal that I want to link in the bottom. like you can read the scientific journal article, like

That's probably where you would go, Becca. Yeah, because you love those scholarly articles. I really appreciated this article that we're going to link. It has a video that kind of summarizes it and talks through it. And it is not nearly as scholarly as working through the article, but it's all based on that article. So I hope people will really enjoy it because it just

Becca (10:32.27)

That is where I would go.

Becca (10:37.87)

I do.

Ruth Ayres (10:59.499)

reminds me like I can be curious in my classroom and approach this from research. I can accept and expect a lack of closure and I'm not negating my job. I'm actually positioning kids to learn as they learn to be curious too.

Becca (11:12.301)

Thank

Becca (11:19.116)

Yeah. And as you said that it just feels important to, to give a reminder that a lack of closure and accepting a lack of closure doesn't mean it's not a failure, right? When things don't have a beautiful finish that you have in your brain that they're going to be that your end product isn't what you expected. You're not accepting a failure. You're accepting the learning, right? It's, it's part of the process and

when you expect to learn, you can't expect the end, right? Because expecting to learn means accepting that you don't know what it's going to look like at the end, you just know you're going to learn. And so instead of feeling like a failure, when you haven't found that closure, or gotten

to what you expected, maybe at the end, you have to stop and think like, okay, but what did I learn so far? And what's next?

Ruth Ayres (12:15.815)

Yeah, so as we're just inviting this idea of being curious, I was reminded my son Sam for a long time when he was in school, like before school, he would sit at the top of the stairs and he would just think. So this was part of his morning routine. He would go and he would shower and he'd sit at the top of the stairs. And if I said, what are you doing? He would say, I'm thinking through my shower thoughts.

Becca (12:45.623)

Okay.

Ruth Ayres (12:46.727)

What is this? then every so often he would verbalize these shower thoughts and it was all just like imagining things that could be. So sometimes it was imagining just a different design for maybe an airplane that he's making or a Lego creation. But I'm really inspired by that idea of just taking time to have, just to think about.

He called him shower thoughts because that's where he was thinking. But being curious and so just inviting people to have a notebook and jot down some of these things that we're wondering, like really begin being curious about what's happening in our classrooms and doing some thinking, whether that's Sam was sitting at the top of the stairs or I would go for a walk. I think you talk about, Becca, that you just like to take a step back.

You like to take a step back in your classroom and just watch students during unstructured play.

Becca (13:54.092)

I do. And I think about like what I'm noticing and what could be next, right? And another thing, as you mentioned, Sam, another thing that I think about when my notebook comes out is often in the car with all of my children. When I'm in the passenger seat, I have my notebook out and I'm just listening to their conversations and the things that are coming to their brain as they're just sitting there and have nothing else to do but think.

it is really interesting to see what they're thinking about and what their curiosities are and that usually like sparks my thinking and my curiosities too.

Ruth Ayres (14:33.523)

Yeah, so the sticky hope kit, our little care package we're putting together, there's a section in it for being curious.

Becca (14:40.631)

Hmm.

Yeah, and we're hoping that you're able to really latch on to that idea and carry your notebook around and be curious as well.

Ruth Ayres (14:53.855)

And we think the best care packages have a little bit of chocolate in it. So there's this recipe for a super simple, um, saltine toffee recipe that has a little bit of chocolate, uh, that you can make and have some of your own thoughts in your notebook.

Becca (15:10.614)

Yeah.