# Unit 2: Belonging to One’s Self

Overview

As we began to explore in Unit 1, creating authentic learning communities begins with personal authenticity -- with knowing one's self. Palmer (2017) argues that "good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher" (p. 13, italics added).

In this unit, we will explore the importance of identity and integrity as teachers/coaches, considering our own sense of identity as teachers, and what it means to belong to one’s self.

Topics

Unit 2 focuses on two guiding questions:

1. What is my identity as a teacher/facilitator?
2. What does it mean for me to authentic as a teacher/facilitator?

Learning Outcomes

When you have completed this unit you should be able to:

1. Articulate a sense of identity as a teacher/facilitator
2. Analyze the influence of teacher authenticity on student learning

## Activity Checklist

These learning activities will engage you in considering the guiding questions for this unit. As you plan your week, be sure to include time for these important learning activities.

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| 🗹 | **Activities** |
|  | Activity 2.1: Read. Brown, B. (2017). Chapter 1 Everywhere and Nowhere, Chapter 2 The Quest for True Belonging. |
|  | Activity 2.2: Watch: Maya Angelou. [Interview with Bill Moyers](http://billmoyers.com/content/conversation-maya-angelou/) (7 minutes) |
|  | Activity 2.3: Watch: Brene Brown: [The Power of Vulnerability](https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability) (20 minutes) |
|  | Activity 2.4: Take the “Chance Imposter Phenomenon” assessment, available at: <http://paulineroseclance.com/pdf/IPscoringtest.pdf>  From: From The Impostor Phenomenon: When Success Makes You Feel Like A Fake (pp. 20-22), by P.R. Clance, 1985, Toronto: Bantam Books. Copyright 1985 by Pauline Rose Clance, Ph.D., ABPP. |
|  | Activity 2.5: Read: Gardner, B., Avolio, B., Luthans, F., May, D. & Walumbwa, F. (2005) Can you see the real me? A self-based model of authentic leader and follower development. The Leadership Quarterly 16, pp. 343–372. |
|  | Activity 2.6: Listen to “Brave,” by Sara Bareilles. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUQsqBqxoR4> |
|  | Optional Activity 2.7: Read: Cuddy, A. (2016). I Don’t Deserve to Be Here: Presence and the Imposter Syndrome. Retrieved from: <https://leanin.org/news-inspiration/overcoming-imposter-syndrome-to-reveal-your-presence/> |
|  | Assessment: Blog post |

## Topic 1: Belonging to myself

In order to create authentic, safe learning spaces for others, we must first be comfortable with who we are.

**Identity:** Knowing ourselves as teachers means that we must explore what Palmer (2017) calls the “inner landscape.” We must be aware of the character traits, personal experiences, values, beliefs, and cultural environment in which we were raised and now live. These elements are part of our identity -- and we bring our identity with us into the classroom and learning spaces in which we coach and teach others (Palmer, 2017).

**Integrity:** So, too, our integrity comes with us into the learning spaces in which we teach. Integrity, from Palmer's (2017) discussion, is not about ethics, but about an integrated sense of self -- a self that is whole, integrating life experiences and values and beliefs in a meaningful, authentic way.

Whether we are aware of it or not, our integrity and identity are part of who we are as teachers. It is on this foundation that we build connections with students, and are able to invite them into spaces where personal transformation and authentic learning will take place.

Authenticity is also an essential ingredient for effective leadership. Authentic leadership includes elements of both self-knowledge and identity, as well as collaboration with others within the context of relationship (Northhouse, 2019). Avolio, Walumbwa and Weber (2009) provide a model of authentic leadership that includes "self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency" (as cited in Northhouse, 2019, p. 198).

However, even when we long to be vulnerable and authentic within our roles as teachers or leaders, we are often challenged by our own desire to project competence and strength, thinking that vulnerability and strength are mutually exclusive. Despite our need for authentic leaders and teachers, many of us remain reluctant to share any level of vulnerability – perhaps even more so when we are in positions of influence, as teachers, coaches, or leaders

In her book, *Imposter Phenomenon: When Success Makes You Feel Like a Fake*,” Clance (1985) argues that many of us enter the arena of public engagement and career with concerns about whether we really belong. This fear often means we are afraid that being vulnerable or authentic will reveal to others that we do not truly “belong” in our roles.

The first step to belonging, as seen in the work of Brown (2017) and Palmer (2017) is a sense of our own identity – including both our strengths and our areas of disconnection or discontent. Both these scholars urge us to understand our own humanity – to “learn to trust ourselves and trust others” (Brown, 2017, p. 37).

As poet [Maya Angelou](http://billmoyers.com/content/conversation-maya-angelou) discusses, belonging to one's self is an ongoing journey -- a journey that is not always easy

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| "I belong to myself."  -- Maya Angelou, 1973 |

#### Activity 2.1: Who are you?

For this activity, you are asked to share a little more about yourself with your peers. First, find a quote about either identity or integrity. For example, you may want to perform a Google image search for “identity quote.” Find one that resonates with you, and then include a picture of something that tells us something about you. Post the quote and your image to your blog with a 1-2 sentence explanation. This is a non-graded activity, but may help you reflect on this topic and to prepare for the assignment in this unit.

## Topic 2: Vulnerability in Learning Communities

Learning to be vulnerable enough to share our authentic selves can be challenging – and knowing how much to be vulnerable (and when!) also poses a challenge, both in teaching and leadership. Students also wrestle with similar questions – How much of myself should I share in this class? This paper? This blog? Is this a safe space to express my own feelings of vulnerability?

Authenticity is built on trust – spaces in which you are comfortable enough to share your true self – your identity. Brown (2017) argues that “self-trust” provides a foundation for belonging.

“Authenticity involves both owning one’s personal experiences (values, thoughts, emotions and beliefs) and acting in accordance with one’s true self (expressing what you really think and believe and behaving accordingly) (Harter, 2002, as cited in Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, and Walumbwa, 2005, pp. 344-5).

Gardner et al. (2005) describe authentic leadership is demonstrated when “relationships are characterized by: a) transparency, openness, and trust, b) guidance toward worthy objectives, and c) an emphasis on follower development” (p. 345).

If effective relationships include these characteristics, then authentic teachers and leaders must consider what it means to be transparent and open, as well as what it means to extend trust.

#### Activity 2.2: Vulnerability Video

Watch the TedTalk by Brene Brown: [The Power of Vulnerability](https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability) (20 minutes). As you watch, consider the following questions:

1. What elements of a learning community would create conditions for learners to be vulnerable about their fears about the course, their concerns about learning, and their questions regarding whether they are capable of achieving success in their course?
2. In what ways do you feel vulnerable as a teacher/facilitator? Are there people with whom you can share this vulnerability?

You may want to answer these questions in your Reflective Learning Journal, and refer back to them as you complete the assessment for this unit.

#### Activity 2.3: Reading

Brown (2017) argues that authenticity is essential to belonging.

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| "You will always belong anywhere you show up as yourself and talk about yourself and your work in a real way."  -- Brene Brown (2017, p. 26) |

As you read Brown (2017) Chapter 2, answer the following questions in your Reflective Learning Journal

* Write a summary sentence for each major idea/concept that relates to belonging.
* Choose the concept that you would like to apply in your own learning communities, both as a student and teacher/facilitator.
* Formulate one question that emerged from this reading that you will explore and consider in future course readings and blog posts.
* As you prepare your blog post, refer to these notes.

Activity 2.4 Sharing your identity

Being vulnerable involves sharing something of our true selves, which we might not always be comfortable doing in certain environments. Consider a time when you were your “true self” in a professional or personal setting in which you wondered if you really “belonged.” Perhaps this is a time when shared your spoke up about an issue that was important to you, lead a team in a new direction, or created a process that felt more authentic to you. What part of yourself did you share? How did this make you feel vulnerable? What were the results?

## Topic 3: Creating connections with learners

In our role as teachers, we are asked to connect students with new ways of thinking and knowing, as well as new knowledge. But the first (and perhaps most important) connections we make (and the connections on which all learning is built) are connections between students, and between students and teachers.

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| "Good teachers join self and subject and students in the fabric of life"  -- Parker Palmer (1998, p. 11) |

Leadership, like teaching, relies not just on the relationships that teachers form with learners, but also on the identity of the teacher. "Authentic leaders understand their own values and behave toward others based on these values" (Northouse, 2019, p. 201).

These relationships will form the basis for learning in the classroom. Learning is, at its heart, a personal activity. Learners often experience vulnerability as they enter into (and continue through) the learning experience, wondering if they belong, if they are up to the challenge, and if they will succeed.

#### Activity 2.4: Listen and Reflect

Listen to “Brave,” sung by Sara Bareilles. Available at:<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUQsqBqxoR4>

As you listen to this song, consider the following questions:

1. Is there an area in my current professional work where I need to be brave and speak up?
2. What fears would keep me from sharing my thoughts or experience?
3. How will I create a learning community that allows learners to share their thoughts authentically?

#### Activity 2.5: Self-Test

Take the Chance Imposter Phenomenon test at <http://paulineroseclance.com/pdf/IPscoringtest.pdf>. As you take the test, consider the areas in which you feel vulnerable in your work as a learner. How would you address these concerns for learners in courses you facilitate?

#### Activity 2.6: Connection Activities / Blog Post

“Liberating Structures” (Lipmanowicz & McCandless, 2013) are used in collaborative learning and work environments to create space for all participants to engage in collaborative inquiry and unleash innovation. One of these “Liberating Structures” is the strategy of the “Nine Whys,” which allows participants to clarify what is important in their work. You may choose to use a strategy like this in your role as a facilitator and teacher. For this learning activity, however, you will use the strategy of the “Nine Whys” to consider your own identity as a teacher/facilitator.

Identify someone in your life who knows you well, with whom you have a history of talking about your goals or dreams. Ask them to participate in this exercise with you.

1. Begin by telling them why you are taking this course, as well as why you want to engage in teaching/coaching/facilitation.
2. When you have finished talking, your “Nine Whys” partner will ask you Why is that important to you?
3. Your partner should continue asking that question up to nine times, or until you cannot go any deeper.
4. At this point, you will have uncovered something fundamental about your identity as a teacher/facilitator.

Write 250 word blog post on this process, including your “why” for teaching/facilitating.

## Unit 2 Summary

In this unit, we have explored the importance of identity, authenticity, and vulnerability in creating authentic learning communities. Our own identity as a teacher will go with us into the classroom, and we will be able to build on our own abilities to create connections as we share our authentic selves with students. In the next unit, we will focus on strategies to create a sense of belonging among students, building on our own understanding of vulnerability to create spaces where students, too, can bring their authentic selves to the learning experience.

## Checking your Learning

Use the learning outcomes for this unit as a checklist of understanding before you move to the next unit. Can you:

* articulate a sense of identity as a teacher/facilitator?
* analyze the influence of teacher authenticity on student learning?

## References:

Gardner, W.L., Avolio, B.J., Luthans, F., May, D.R., & Walumbwa, F. (2005). *“Can you see the real me?” A self-based model of authentic leader and follower development.* The Leadership Quarterly, (16), pp. 343-372.

Lipmanowicz, H. & McCandless, K. (2013). *The surprising power of liberating structures: Simple rules to unleash a culture of innovation.* Liberating Structures Press. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommerical-ShareaLike License. This allows others to reproduce, distribute, adapt, and built upon our work non-commerically as long as they credit us and license their creations under identical terms.