

Reimagining Teaching: From Crisis to Creativity in Post-Pandemic Times

Peru TESOL Conference
Arequipa, Peru
July 2024

Randall Davis
English Language Institute
University of Utah



Contact: randall.davis@utah.edu

Purpose of Presentation

1. Explore five concepts that have reshaped my teaching and learning during the pandemic era.
2. Suggest ideas that can help teachers reimagine their teaching and personal lives because of the experience.

“Back to the Future: Victories and Visions”

Ultrarunning, the Pandemic, and Our Profession: What are the Connections?

What are some of the greatest struggles that teachers faced every day?

“Back to the Future: Victories and Visions”



Reasons for Discouragement

1. Loss of human connection.
2. A myriad of new and evolving teaching situations.
3. The demands of learning unfamiliar technologies.
4. Anxiety about balancing family and personal goals.



FIVE Keys to Personal Development

1. Realize that I could be wrong about so many things and people and not even know it.

Our Life's Dilemma

We are often so unaware of how unaware we really are: at work, at home, in friendships.

The emotional distress
experienced by teachers,
parents, and students

-The illusion of knowledge

Misunderstanding and judgement

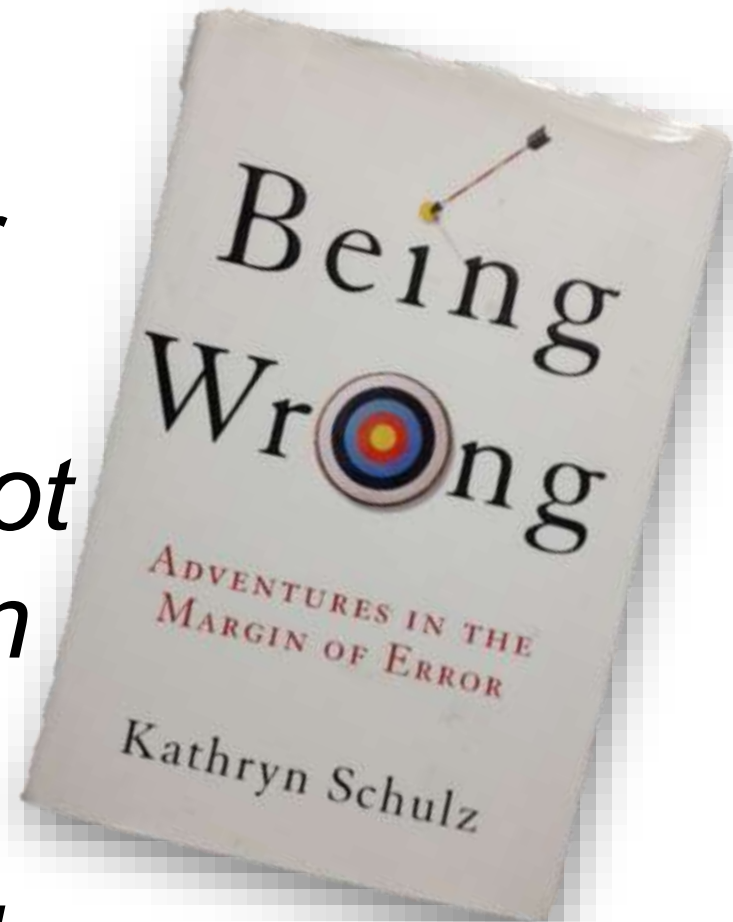
Wrongology

“Your ideas are nice,
Randall, but you don’t
understand the limitations
of technology in our part
of the world.”

Learning Key

“However disorienting, difficult, or humbling our mistakes might be, it is ultimately wrongness, not rightness, that can teach us who we are.”

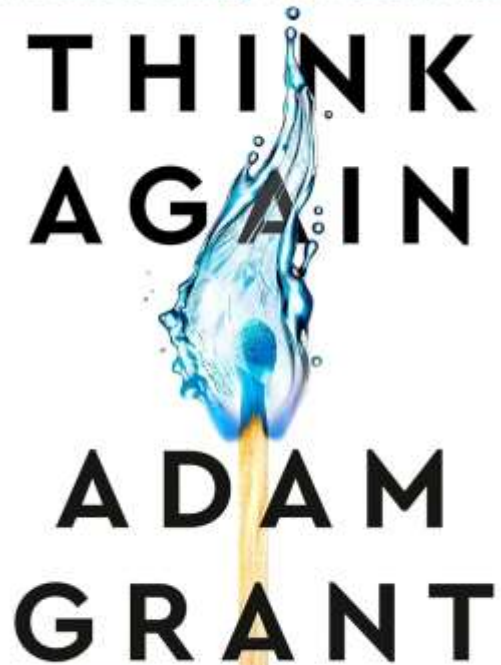
Kathryn Schulz, *Being Wrong*



Resources

#1 New York Times Bestseller
—The Power of Knowing What You Don't Know—

THINK
AGAIN
ADAM
GRANT



"Brilliant...guaranteed to make you
rethink your opinions and your most important decisions."
—Nobel Prize winner Daniel Kahneman



YouAreNotSoSmart.com

Thought

“The only true wisdom is knowing that you know nothing.”

- Socrates, Greek Philosopher

Self-Awareness

“What gets us into trouble is not what we don’t know; It’s what we know for sure that just ain’t so.”

- *Anonymous*

Application

- ❖ Accept the limitations and boundaries of your knowledge.
- ❖ Become more humble and open to new ideas and your lack of awareness.
- ❖ Recognize we don't understand the struggles of our students and colleagues.

Five Keys

1. Realize that I could be wrong about so many things and not even know it.
2. **Be authentic and vulnerable.**

Describe the Pandemic in
One Word . . . or Less

Pandemic Fatigue

“I HATE THIS!!!”



FEAR OF DISCLOSURE

“Will others see me as flawed or imperfect because of my mistakes, uncertainties, or current limitations?”

Quotes

“We often wear ourselves out trying to be someone we aren’t or aren’t meant to be.”



- *We pretend to **be** what we aren't.*
- *We pretend to **know** what we don't know.*

Brené Brown

Researcher on Vulnerability, Shame, and Courage

“Many of us live in fear —the fear of looking weak, flawed, and imperfect.”

“Vulnerability is the birthplace of innovation, creativity and change.”



Vulnerability > Authenticity

Application – Tasteful Vulnerability

- ❖ Authenticity builds honest human connections with others and greater trust.
- ❖ Authenticity attracts real people.
- ❖ Authenticity helps you wear the same face no matter what the circumstances.

Five Keys

3. Reimagine the traditional paradigm of teacher training.

Dilemma

“Professional development cannot be part of the solution until it is no longer part of the problem.”

Hayes Mizell

Professional Development Educator



Source: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/wooden-desk-with-books-on-top-707196/>

Problems with Current Professional Development

- Not relevant to teachers' needs in diverse contexts.
- Too generic and superficial.
- Too short with no follow-up support.
- Focus on novelty tools that assume they are better.
- Too much information to process.
- No specific process to determine PD outcomes in instruction. Examine outcomes in-depth, not superficially.



Point

People sometimes make unfounded assumptions and blame teachers for why they struggle.

Recognize that teachers are human beings with skills to be developed; they are NOT a problem to be fixed.



Avoid the “Drop-in” Training Model



Point

Schools only organize training in short bursts with the hope that such training will “fix” instructional issues.

ACTION PLAN: No “drive through window” workshops.

Provide long-term, sustained, and cumulative practice (job-embedded training).



Point

Workshops dump information without providing time for digesting and practicing the skills.

TRAINING: Avoid the lecture model or marathon training sessions that become an information dumping ground.

Provide small, digestible chunks of learning.

----- No 500-slide show in 15 minutes.



Point

Teachers feel alone without follow-up support after training has finished.

- Develop and assign expert teacher mentors and coaches to other teachers.
- Foster a creative, supportive, and collaborative culture.



Benefits of Collaborative Learning in Small Chunks

- Expand your network of colleagues and online communities (friendships) through Social media and language-teaching events.
- Promote human connection across geographic and cultural boundaries.
- Expands teaching perspectives outside of our sphere of experience.

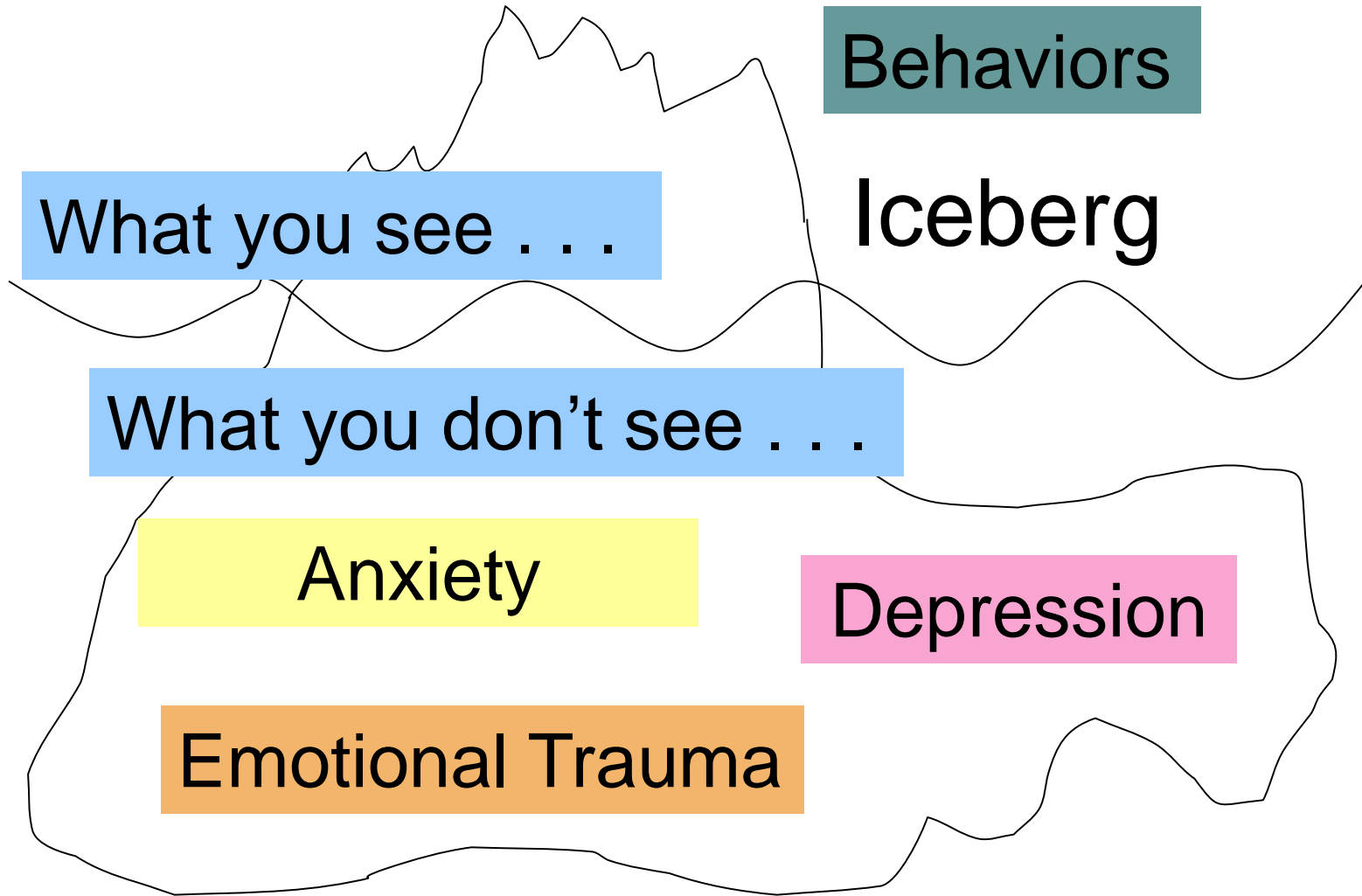
Five Keys

3. Reimage the traditional paradigm of teacher training.
4. Learn and practice the language of empathy.

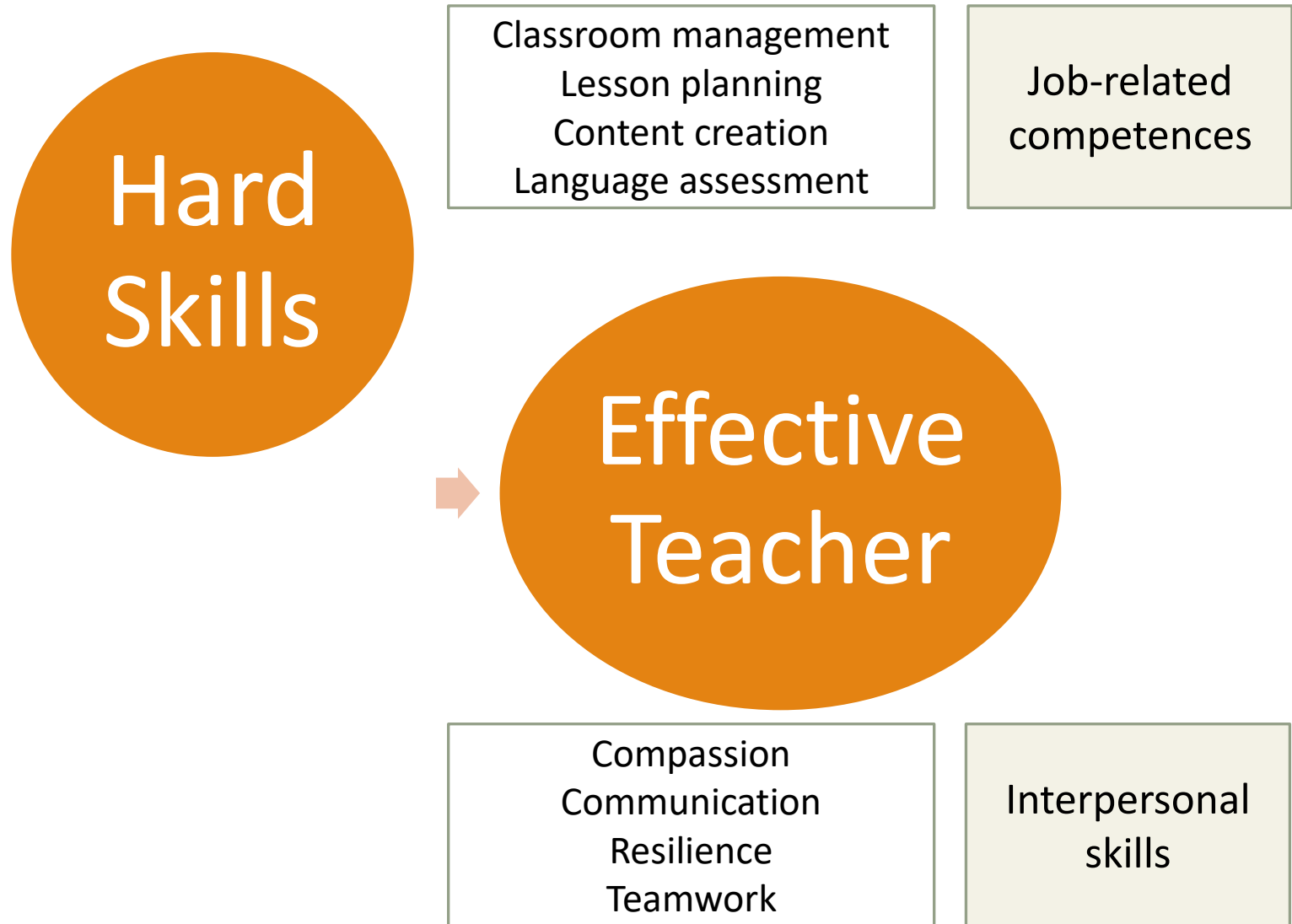
Situations

Teachers sometimes misunderstand students' perceptions, feelings, and needs, especially when they struggle emotionally and academically.

Understanding Others



What About Mindfulness?



What About Mindfulness?

Mindfulness

“Paying attention to what is going on inside and outside ourselves, moment by moment.”



Empathy
Compassion
Healthy
Communication
Teamwork

Be Careful not to Stereotype!

A mental picture that is often not true. Stereotypes can also hurt.

- *“You know how students are from that that country.”*
- *“The most effective teachers are the ones who use THESE technologies.”*
- *“Ah, those students are just lazy and can’t bother to turn on their cameras.”*

Treating People with Dignity and Respect

Golden Rule – Treat others the way YOU want to be treated.

Platinum Rule – Treat others the way **THEY** want to be treated. This accommodates their feelings and personal struggles and their self-worth.

Roman Krznaric- *Empathy: Why It Matters, and How to Get it*

New Perspectives

Let me first understand **your needs,**
your situation, your story, and I will
try to treat you in the way **you** want
to be treated.

Compassionate Listening

Deep listening is the kind of listening that can help relieve the suffering of another person. You can call it compassionate listening. You listen with only one purpose: to help him or her to empty his heart . . . You just listen with compassion and help him to suffer less. One hour like that can bring transformation and healing.

Thích Nhất Hạnh

Application

- ❖ Learn about others and their lives. Validate their perspectives, their struggles, and their challenges.
- ❖ Sit with people in their discomfort and pain, and just seek to understand them. People are often struggling beyond your awareness.

Five Keys

4. Learning and practicing the language of empathy.
5. **Dare greatly.**

Steps to Meaningful Support

1. Realize that I could be wrong about so many things and people and not even know it. (Self-Awareness)
2. Be authentic and vulnerable. (Authenticity)
3. Encourage realistic goals and expectations. (Support)
4. Express deep compassion for others. (Empathy)
5. Dare greatly. (Courage)

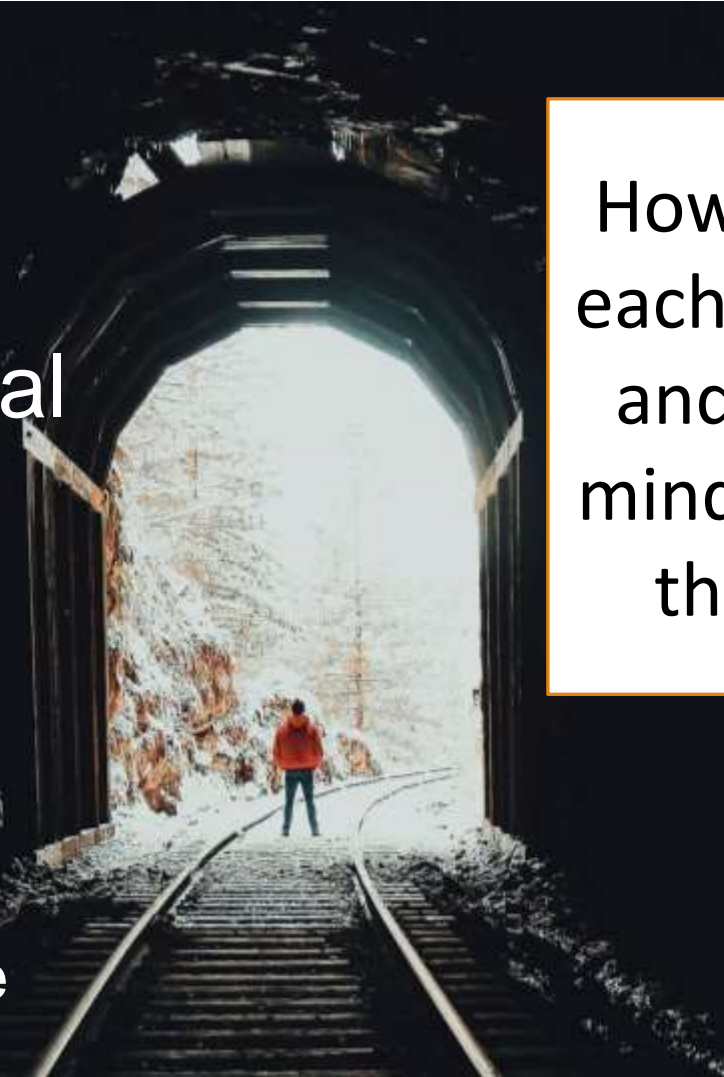


“chameleonic”

"The mind, once stretched by a new idea, never regains its original dimensions."

Oliver Wendell
Holmes, Sr.

Author, Physician, and
Supreme Court Justice



How can we help
each other stretch
and enlarge our
minds and skills in
this new era?

impossible