

Scenario Response Worksheet

A pair of white middle school teachers recognize that many of their students of color have experienced trauma. As a response, they have students repeat a mantra for 30 seconds each day, which states, “I am perfect and whole, just as I am.” At a faculty meeting, the two teachers talk about this practice, adding how important it is that they offer this positive view since the students receive negative messages from their families about how society is biased against them. They also lament how the negative attitude swirling around the students stops them from feeling free to ask questions, challenge authority, take risks, etc. They also share how useful the mantra has been in their own lives, how it has helped them to push against barriers and ignore unfair criticism. After the meeting, a teacher of color challenges them, saying it’s important for the students’ parents to offer the warning to their children. The teachers become defensive and leave quickly. The teacher of color raises the issue later, telling the teacher that she may be doing more harm than good. One of the white teachers says that she practices non-violent communication and that her approach to her students is 100% loving. Further, she says that she feels like it’s bullying to repeatedly suggest that she is having a negative impact on her students when she is clearly offering an empowering vision of themselves.

1. What are the tensions in this scenario?
2. To what degree do the themes in this scenario play out in communities of which you are a part? Where do you think they come from (culturally, theologically, etc.)? How are they supported?
3. How is privilege and/or racism manifesting?
4. How would you feel if you were in this situation?

5. What would you say in response? (*For faith communities: What spiritual/theological beliefs help ground you in that response?*)

In small groups:

6. How would you hope people would respond to this situation?

7. How could the use of “both/and” thinking inform the response?